

To: Members, House Transportation Committee
From: Karen Horn, Director Public Policy & Advocacy
Re: Campaign to Reduce Idling
Date: April 13, 2022

Local governments understand the need to reduce emissions and that convincing people to reduce their idling and speed is a component of reducing emissions. Essentially the need is to change personal behavior.

Enforcement of idling and speeding laws or any public safety laws right now is a challenge due to the lack of staff at both the state and local levels. You may have read two articles in VTDigger highlighting the challenges with state police dispatching and state police officer staffing shortages that have led to the Department of Public Safety admonishing local police departments to first exhaust other alternatives before asking state police to cover calls for service because they will only respond to “violent crime, in progress crimes or other calls that are clearly emergencies”. Enforcement is at a premium right now and local law enforcement must retain discretion to decide which crisis needs the quickest and most focused response and where it is appropriate for police to respond.

Based on the testimony the committee received this morning, it seems that public information campaigns around idling have lapsed and the best strategy would be to both reactivate those state level public messages and devise mechanisms for proactively reaching out to motorists. One thought might be to include a message about idling and speeding in notices to register vehicles or renew licenses – points in time when the state has an individual’s attention.

I do not intend to throw Representative McCormack under the (idling) bus because in brainstorming with him last week, I did raise the existence of the energy component of a municipal plan. According to a list compiled by the regional commissions, 69 municipalities have adopted and had approved the energy component of their municipal plan. This represents a substantial body of work and commitment by volunteer planning commissions and energy committees. Incidentally, only twenty one of the 69 towns listed as having approved energy plans also have municipal police departments.

While it may be helpful for a municipality to incorporate objectives relating to reducing idling in the energy component of their plan, we would oppose hinging approval of the energy component or entire plan on inclusion of language on idling.

Additionally, the connection between training the public to not idle and including language in a plan is tenuous. Generally, the municipal plan is an ineffective mechanism for influencing personal behavior.



We recommend directing the Agency of Natural Resources to re-activate their no-idling campaign and provide those resources to other state agencies and municipalities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.