



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrew Gounardes

Senator Gounardes' Transportation Equity Bill Would Drastically Slash Emissions, Household Costs, and Traffic Deaths, New Research Finds

ANDREW GOUNARDES February 21, 2024

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Legislation from State Senator Andrew Gounardes would require New York to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) by 20% and expand transportation options to meet climate and equity goals.

New research from the nonprofit Rocky Mountain Institute estimates this change could eliminate 227 million metric tons of carbon emissions, provide average annual household savings of \$3,750, and

avoid 4,940 deaths per year.

New York State Senator Andrew Gounardes' proposed legislation to expand transportation options and reduce highway dependency in New York State would significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions, save households thousands annually in vehicle costs, and drastically cut deaths from traffic crashes and poor air quality, according to new research.

The legislation ([S1981A/A4120A](#)) sets a bold but achievable target to reduce the total annual "vehicle miles traveled" (VMT) in New York State by 20% by 2050. In doing so, the bill would channel investments away from inequitable and polluting highways toward more frequent public transit, more accessible streets for walking and cycling, new greenway trails, and more.

The new "[Smarter Mobility Options for Decarbonization, Equity, and Safety \(Smarter MODES\) Calculator](#)," created by the nonprofit Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI), quantifies the benefits of climate-friendly transportation choices that lead to a 20% VMT reduction and find that states can avoid billions of dollars in energy, healthcare, and vehicle costs; save lives; and prevent huge amounts of pollution.

In New York, that amounts to:

- **227 million metric tons of carbon emissions avoided** over 25 years (the second-most of any state).
- **Average annual household savings of \$3,750** in fuel, vehicle maintenance and depreciation (the second-most of any state).
- **4,940 fewer deaths per year** in reduced traffic crashes, improved air quality and increased physical activity (the second-most of any state).

(These statistics assume a “mid-growth electric vehicle scenario.” New York State rules **require** that all new cars, pickup trucks and SUVs sold in the state be zero-emission by 2035, meaning the above impacts could be even more significant.)

"It's time to shift the gears of transportation policy in this state toward more options, better access, and true freedom of mobility for all New Yorkers," said **State Senator Andrew Gounardes**. "As this data makes clear, a new approach can not only protect our climate, but also make New York a safer, more affordable place to live. My bill sets a bold but achievable goal to reduce our reliance on cars and expand safe, sustainable transportation options for every New Yorker, whether they live in a big city, a midsize suburb, or a small town. The time to start building the transportation system of the future is now."

Senator Gounardes' legislation would reduce car dependency by requiring that state, county, and town projects that expand road or highway capacity undergo a VMT assessment prior to approval. If a project doesn't align with climate and transportation equity goals outlined by the **Climate Leadership & Community Protection Act**, the law would require changes to the project to align with those goals or to mitigate impact through strategies like expanding public transit, improving pedestrian and bike infrastructure, creating more micro-mobility options or supporting transit-oriented development.

The bill also establishes a technical advisory committee and VMT assessment working group to ensure assessments are done properly, projects deliver on impact mitigation, and municipalities have necessary resources. It would also require the State Department of Transportation to issue a report on this work every two years.

Other states have taken a similar approach. Last year, Minnesota made history by requiring its DOT to cut vehicle miles traveled by 20%. An RMI analysis found the state would see up to **\$91 billion in benefits** from climate-smart transportation investments. California and

Colorado are taking similar steps. Last month, the state-wide coalition “New Yorkers for Transportation Equity” also [endorsed Senator Gounardes’ bill](#).

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- Signed By Governor

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Establishes clean energy goals of reducing the annual total of vehicle miles traveled within the state by 20% by the year 2050

January 18, 2023

In Senate Committee [Environmental Conservation](#)

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Do you support this bill?