Colorado Communities for Climate Action Highlights (November 2022)

Colorado Communities for Climate Action is a coalition of 40 counties and municipalities across Colorado advocating for effective state climate policy. Our members span the Western Slope and Front Range; small rural towns and major suburbs; counties and municipalities; and wealthy, middle income, and low-income neighborhoods.

Representing more than one-quarter of all Coloradans, with rural communities making up two-thirds of the membership (and half our member communities on the Western Slope), and with populations ranging from under 1,000 to more than 500,000, CC4CA has become a high-impact voice for clean air, climate action, and public health protection.

Legislative Successes

The 2022 legislative session was another impressive session, substantially building on the transformative success of the 2019 and 2021 sessions. CC4CA directly engaged on 29 bills, securing the desired outcomes on 23 of those. This included passing 18 pieces of legislation (among them six of our eight high priority bills) and defeating five harmful bills. Some of the most consequential outcomes focused on creating a producer responsibility system to reduce solid waste and improve recycling, improved local government wildfire/natural disaster funding, creation of a new circular economy development center, expanded affordable housing and building efficiency, funding for coal community transition programs, air toxics reductions, improved building codes, establishing free transit during part of the peak ozone season, and more.

Electric Utilities

In part due to the sustained pressure from CC4CA and other local governments within its service area, Tri-State finally committed to 80% greenhouse gas emissions reductions by 2030, and through our successful campaign in coalition with other aligned groups, we locked this in through the Tri-State Electric Resource Plan. This ERP also dramatically expands the ability of member co-ops to procure clean energy, improves energy efficiency, avoids construction of new natural gas plants, and may even result in accelerated retirements of their coal plants.

The results of our efforts on Xcel’s Electric Resource Plan are similarly substantial, including accelerated coal plant retirements, no new natural gas plants, and retiring the Comanche 3 coal-fired power plant (the worst of the remaining facilities) by 2031.
Pushing for Strong Executive Branch Policies and Programs

December 2021 marked the adoption of two truly landmark, precedent-setting state agency regulations, both of which were top priorities for CC4CA. The Air Quality Control Commission voted unanimously to substantially increase controls of GHG and ozone-forming Volatile Organic Compound (VOC) emissions from oil and gas operations. The centerpiece of the suite of new rules is new toughest-in-the-nation statewide requirements for operators to substantially increase the frequency to find and fix leaks from oil and gas wells and compressor stations. The rules also break new ground in protection of Disproportionately Impacted Communities (DICs) and of buildings, schools, and other public places in close proximity to well sites.

The Transportation Commission adopted a rule establishing GHG budgets for future projects of CDOT and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) through 2050. The rule creates strong incentives for CDOT and the five MPOs (covering the Denver Metro Area, the North Front Range, the Pikes Peak region, Pueblo, and Grand Junction) to include in their project funding plans investments in capital projects that will reduce GHG and VOC emissions. Encompassing a range of important co-benefits for expanded mobility options, better transit networks, and reduced air pollution, the rule incorporates important protections for DICs from further transportation system impacts, as well.

The Transportation Commission also adopted Policy Directive 1610 in May 2022, which established implementation processes for the new GHG rules. This Policy Directive established an ongoing administrative process and guidelines for selecting, measuring, verifying, and reporting on GHG mitigation measures that CDOT and the state’s five MPOs can incorporate into their GHG reduction compliance plans.

The Transportation Commission took yet another major step forward in tackling transportation sector GHG emissions by unanimously approving revisions to the CDOT 10-Year Plan and the Regional Transportation Plans of DRCOG and the North Front Range MPO. These plan revisions substantially improve on emissions reductions by shifting millions of dollars from highway capacity projects to multimodal projects in order to meet the required GHG reduction targets for 2025, 2030, 2040, and 2050.

All four of the new transportation enterprise funds (Clean Fleet Enterprise, Community Access Enterprise Clean Transit Enterprise, and Nonattainment Area Air Pollution Mitigation Enterprise) created by legislation we supported last year are now up and running, incorporating CC4CA’s local government input in their ten-year plans.

There were other significant outcomes over the past year, as well. We successfully supported strengthening the Regional Haze State Implementation Plan by making federally enforceable the retirement of 15 coal plant units at sites statewide by 2029. We celebrated a successful effort to secure AQCC approval of the Ozone Nonattainment State Implementation Plan, which includes provisions to limit future emissions of ozone-forming VOCs and nitrogen oxides (NOx), as well as to require faster repair times for oil and gas leaks discovered within 1,000 feet of occupied areas. In the so-called "industrial rulemaking," the AQCC required energy intensive, trade-exposed steel and cement manufacturers to reduce GHG emissions 5% by 2030, bolstered by provisions for emissions audits every five years testing whether they are using the Best Available Control Technologies and for using the best available energy...
efficiency practices. And earlier in the year, we celebrated a major regulatory success with the COGCC’s adoption of new financial assurance rules followed by successful efforts on the setting of fees for orphan well mitigation and the new transportation enterprise funds.

Local Government Briefings

CC4CA hosted and co-hosted nine briefings for local elected officials and local government staff, with 327 participants, including:

- A briefing on how Colorado’s new plastics rules interact with local ordinances;
- An “Insider’s Guide to the Legislature” training;
- A briefing, featuring CDOT Director Shoshana Lew, on CDOT’s new transportation GHG emissions rule and how it affects local and MPO-level transportation planning;
- A national briefing on lessons learned from Colorado’s first-in-the-nation transportation GHG emissions rule;
- Two briefings at the Mountain Towns 2030 Conference, one on new federal funding opportunities and one on effective state policy advocacy for local governments;
- Two briefings on new local government funding opportunities through the Inflation Reduction Act and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law; and
- A case study briefing on Crested Butte’s new all-electric building code.

Elevating the Local Government Voice

CC4CA ensures that its members – local elected officials and local government staff – have the opportunity to serve as witnesses during legislative hearings, meet with their legislators, testify during agency rulemaking processes, speak to reporters, and publish opinion pieces in local and statewide media outlets. In the past year alone, we supported:

- 62 local officials testifying in 27 regulatory hearings and sessions
- 33 elected officials submitting written comments in regulatory proceedings
- 33 local officials testifying in 10 legislative hearings
- 58 public officials in 19 meetings with state and federal lawmakers

Additionally, more than 240 local officials joined sign-on letters to members of Colorado’s federal delegation, we supported 29 elected officials in publishing guest editorials and letters to the editor, and we helped influence at least 35 news stories.

Importantly, for 119 of the people we worked with in regulatory proceedings, publishing opinion pieces, and in other ways this was the first time we had worked with them, representing a substantial expansion in our network of engaged local officials.

And 268 local elected officials and staff have participated in seven CC4CA-sponsored briefings and trainings.

In just six years, Colorado Communities for Climate Action has evolved from a promising idea into an influential coalition shaping state climate policy.

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