

Mobile Sources

and Rhode Island

Fact Sheet #8—Times are Changing

August 2014

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Transportation is essential to the world we live in. It connects the state with global and regional economies, the home with the workplace, the individual with the community, and all of us with one another. Yet, many of us may not be aware of our travel behavior and the environmental impact that results from how often and the way in which we travel.

Transportation accounts for one third of greenhouse gas emissions in the United States, and over half of transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions come from passenger cars and light-duty trucks. Each gallon of gasoline burned by an internal combustion engine creates 20 pounds of carbon dioxide, which is roughly 5 to 9 tons of carbon dioxide each year for a typical vehicle.¹ Vehicle greenhouse gas emissions contribute to global climate change, which is causing extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and drastic fluctuations in temperature. These climactic changes are having significant adverse effects on our transportation infrastructure. Coastal communities are raising bridges and building barriers around their low-lying roads; flood barriers are being erected to protect transit systems; roads are buckling under heat waves and crumbling as a result of cold snaps. Communities are taking measures to adapt their transportation infrastructure, but strong action is needed to lessen these effects to the extent possible, in order to protect our environment and our communities.

Transportation Trends in Rhode Island

Even with the reduction in vehicle emitted pollutants, Rhode Islanders should still be worried! Mobile Source Pollution is a major concern for Rhode Island because it accounts for a majority of all man-made air pollution emitted in the State and throughout the Northeast. This pollution affects human health and our environment.



Changing trends in driving both create great opportunities and pose significant challenges to Rhode Island. Dwindling demands for driving curbs the threat of traffic congestion, reduces oil consumption and its resulting pollution, curtails the potential need for expensive new investments in highway expansion, and reduces the wear and tear on our roadways. However, reduction in the rate of growth of driving also threatens the stability of the nation's transportation funding system, which is already failing to meet its obligations.

¹ <https://www.fueleconomy.gov/feg/climate.shtml>

Mitigating Mobile Source Pollution in Rhode Island:

Rhode Island's transportation emissions are being reduced by policies and investments promoting shifts of passengers to more efficient, lower-emissions forms of transport as well as by more direct regulatory and policy approaches aimed at encouraging more efficient, lower-emitting vehicles.

The factors that produce emissions are embedded in a complex political, social, and institutional environment that hampers rapid change in spite of signs of increasing pressure and appetite for air pollution reduction. Some challenges Rhode Island is facing to mitigate mobile source pollution is the increasing population and the expanding economy, both of which increase consumption rates and the need for more vehicles. The slow turnover rate of existing gasoline vehicles and the long life of existing diesel engines hinders the rapid change needed to confront mobile source pollution.



Solutions to Mitigate Mobile Source Pollution and Improve Air Quality:

- New cleaner engines.
- Clean-up of existing engines.
- Public Policy to deploy the cleanest commercially available technologies.
- Provide multimodal transportation options.
- Encourage shifts from driving to public transportation and active transportation.
- Reduce idle times.

Rhode Island's Path to Success:

The Mobile Source Program of the RIDEM works together with other state agencies and organizations to control air pollution from motor vehicles through a variety of programs and activities. These programs and activities support the state's commitment to reducing air pollution, protecting our health and improving the environment. Visit the Mobile Sources main page for detailed descriptions about these programs and activities.

Where Can I Get More Information?

State of Rhode Island's [Long Range Transportation Plan](#).

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