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October 15, 2020

VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

Ms. Katherine Theoharides
Secretary
Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
100 Cambridge St., Suite 900
Boston, Massachusetts 02114

Re: Comments on potential equity-related strategies to include in the final TCI MOU

Dear Secretary Theoharides:

Thank you and the entire Transportation and Climate Initiative (TCI) Leadership Team and Working Groups for your continued commitment to creating a just and equitable regional low-carbon transportation program. The Alliance for Clean Energy New York (ACE NY), on behalf of our member companies, respectfully submits this letter to provide comments on the equity-related strategies proposed at the public webinar held on September 29, 2020.

In their press release on October 7, 2020, the Climate Justice Alliance highlighted concerns over policies disproportionately impacting low-income and communities of color due to higher exposures to transportation-related air pollution. ACE NY agrees with these concerns and strongly supports the inclusion of equity provisions in the TCI final memorandum of understanding that guarantees emissions reductions, public health benefits, and clean transportation options for frontline communities. We fully support the goals of TCI and feel it can be designed to also address equity concerns.

I. 35% Equity Investment

Specifically, we endorse establishing a 35% minimum investment requirement to ensure that underserved and overburdened communities benefit equitably from clean transportation projects in each TCI state. In New York, this complements the equity provision in our climate law, the Climate Leadership and Protection Act, which requires that no less than 35% of overall benefits of climate programs accrue to disadvantaged communities.

II. Transparency

ACE NY also supports equity strategies to enhance transparency through annual reports on proceeds and investments, as well as reviews of the impacts of TCI in each jurisdiction including with regards to equity. With inclusive public participation, comprehensive yearly reports and reviews provide accountability to stakeholders and serve as a mechanism to assess the performance and effectiveness of the TCI program in reducing emissions and addressing equity.

III. Equitable Processes

The designation of an Equity Advisory Body (or Bodies) comprised of diverse stakeholders, including representation from underserved and overburdened communities, will support the best design of the TCI program. ACE NY believes these advisory bodies will ensure that the most affected communities can inform decision making and strengthen the equitable outcomes of the TCI program. In particular, we are in favor of advisory bodies having the ability to provide recommendations and develop metrics for how and where TCI investments and complementary programs are directed to achieve demonstrable benefits for frontline communities. The advisory bodies should also play a key role in annual reviews and reports on expenditures of TCI revenues and equity impacts, further enhancing transparency and accountability. Moreover, ACE NY is in full support of each state conducting community outreach and engagement to garner meaningful input from underserved and overburdened communities on TCI.

IV. Complementary Programs

We recognize that complementary programs, in tandem with the TCI program, are needed to address equity and environmental justice issues caused by the transportation sector. ACE NY commends TCI states that strive to implement programs that provide equitable, resilient, and clean transit and transportation for environmental justice communities. We call on New York and the other TCI states to also invest in complementary programs that promote the deployment of zero emission vehicles powered by renewable energy sources in disadvantaged communities. ACE NY also recommends states adopt initiatives that encourage investment and development of clean energy, energy efficiency, mass transit, and electric vehicles and charging infrastructure which will benefit frontline communities. These complementary initiatives include, for example, a low-carbon fuel standard, a sales tax exemption for electric vehicles, electric rate reform to support vehicle charging, allowing direct retail sales of electric vehicles, and providing incentives for electric school and transit buses. Further, to ensure that the electricity powering electric vehicles is clean, complementary policies include renewable electricity mandates, efficient siting and permitting of renewable energy projects, and standardized taxation for wind and solar projects. In short, our support for TCI does not preclude our equal support of a suite of complementary policies necessary to achieve a full transition to a clean energy economy as well as ensure equitable distribution of the public health and economic benefits of that transition.

We continue to stand in support of TCI and work hand in hand to help shape a sustainable and equitable regional clean transportation program.

Sincerely,



Anne Reynolds
Executive Director
Alliance for Clean Energy New York