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Washington State Releases 2021 Energy Strategy

The Washington Department of Commerce released its [2021 State Energy Strategy](#) this month. The Energy Strategy is, first and foremost, a greenhouse gas reduction strategy. It begins with the declaration that "[a]voiding the worst impacts of climate change requires a comprehensive commitment to decreasing greenhouse gas emissions," and then provides a "roadmap" for reducing emissions.

The Energy Strategy recommends many policy initiatives in multiple sectors.

Transportation: The Strategy emphasizes improving efficiency and decarbonizing the transportation sector. It recommends electric and fuel cell vehicle infrastructure investments, greater incentives to purchase zero emission vehicles, and policies to encourage the reduction of miles traveled through increased reliance on transit, cycling, and walking. The Strategy identifies the adoption of a low carbon fuel standard as a key action.

Electricity: The Clean Energy Transformation Act (CETA), adopted by the Washington legislature in 2019, requires the transition to 100% non-emitting electricity by 2045. The Washington Department of Commerce estimates that electricity load will double by 2050 as a result of the transition from fossil fuels to electricity in other sectors. The Strategy recommends increased investment in efficiency measures, renewable generation and transmission infrastructure, energy market reforms, and the development a smart and flexible electric grid that includes distributed energy resources, demand response programs, microgrids, and storage.

Buildings: The Strategy emphasizes increased efficiency and the transition from fossil fuels to electricity for water and space heating in both residential and commercial buildings. It recommends revisions to the state energy code to adopt zero-carbon and all-electric construction and efficiency requirements.

Industry: The Strategy recommends that industries increase investment in energy efficiency and transition from fossil fuels to electricity. It also encourages the production and use of green hydrogen and renewable natural gas, and the investment in carbon capture technology. The Strategy also recommends that the state consider policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with consumption in the state, such as policies encouraging environmental product declarations.

The Strategy acknowledges economic disparities in the state and related issues of environmental justice. It makes many recommendations designed to address the potential impact of energy policies on low-income households, including a recommendation to achieve universal broadband access. A chapter of the Strategy focuses on building "an equitable, inclusive, resilient clean energy economy."

All told, the Strategy recommends dozens of policies designed to help Washington reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 95% below 1990 levels with net zero emissions by 2050. Some of the actions recommended in the Strategy have already been authorized, but most would require legislative action or agency rulemaking in order to be implemented.

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