

Memorandum

To: Nick Roloson, Chief of Staff

From: Nick Widzowski, Legislative Director
Terence Cullen, Communications Director

Re: New York City Climate Mobilization Act

Date: 03/26/19

Background

New York City will cease to exist in its current form without real action by 2100, as rising sea levels will reclaim Coney Island, the Rockaways and Lower Manhattan. This massive displacement will create tens of thousands of climate refugees without real action, as multiple reports continue to warn, adding to the City's already overwhelming housing crisis. Droughts and violent weather in the Midwest will begin devastating our food supply within the next decade without serious action. Then, historic neighborhoods will begin to become uninhabitable as regular flooding menaces these communities as early as 2050. Under the recently released Lower Manhattan Climate Resilience Study, scores of buildings south of Canal Street will be at risk of destabilization over the coming decades due to groundwater table rise. New York City has never faced an existential threat of this magnitude.

The Council has an opportunity to show the nation and world how we can enact a policy framework that will bring the aspirations of the Green New Deal into reality. This will most likely be done in several phases, as a number of bills are either still yet to be heard or are in the drafting process. A push from advocacy groups would be critical in getting this across the finish line. With these bills we are addressing the bulk of New York City's greenhouse gas portfolio (i.e. buildings, transportation, power generation). Future packages could also include the waste/sanitation sector as well as any bills relating to the proposals made in the Speaker's State of the City Address.

The Climate Mobilization Act (CMA)

Int. 1253 (Retrofits): This bill would establish the Office of Building Energy Performance as well as greenhouse gas emissions limits for existing buildings. This bill would also expand existing retro-commissioning requirements to certain buildings over 25,000 square feet.

Int. 1252 (PACE): This bill would establish a sustainable energy loan program for the purposes of providing certain building owners with funding for the installation of renewable energy systems or energy efficiency improvements.

Intro. 1318, Power Plant Closure - This bill requires the city to conduct a feasibility study on closing the 21 gas-fired power plants within the five boroughs in favor of renewable sources with batteries large enough to store excess energy. This report must include a time frame on how long it might take those batteries to be installed, consult with the various state agencies involved, set a energy storage goal for 2030 along with a roadmap for how the city will meet that target.

Intro. 1317, Large Wind Turbines - This bill would clarify DOB's obligation to include wind energy generation in its toolbox of renewable energy technologies. It would also require the department to develop or support standards and technologies and authorize the installation of large wind energy turbines in appropriate locations.

Int. 1031 (Green Roof Info): This bill would require the office of alternative energy to post and maintain links on its website to information regarding the installation of green roofs and other resources and materials regarding green roofs.

Int. 455 (Electric School Buses): The local law will require DOE to phase in electric school buses over a 20 year period. Electricity for such electric vehicles shall be generated on-site. This local law further requires that all other school buses, shall, after ten years of use, be replaced by compressed natural gas, hybrid school buses or all electric, and further provides that use of such compressed natural gas or hybrid school buses is limited to ten years and such school buses must thereafter be replaced with all electric zero emission school buses, and as long as the particulate matter emissions of all such school buses does not exceed emission levels permitted in the most recent diesel engine emissions standards issued by the EPA and the mileage meets the most recent corporate average fuel economy standards for compact and large trucks.

Int. 1032 (Green Roofs): This bill would require that the rooftops of buildings or structures in occupancy groups B, I-4, M, or S-2, as defined in section BC 302 of the New York city building code, be covered in plants (known as "green roofs"), solar panels, small wind turbines or a combination of all three. This legislation promotes energy efficient building practices, as green roofs filter pollutants and add agricultural space, solar roofs encourage renewable energy generation and reduce air pollution and small wind turbines generate heat and electric power in an environmentally conscious manner.

Impact

When passed, this package will be the largest single carbon reduction effort that any city, anywhere, has ever put forward. By our calculations, it will result in the equivalent of taking more than one million cars off the road by 2030 and create measurable decreases in the nitrogen oxides, sulfur oxides, and particulate matter that fouls our air. A significant swath of New York City's 1 billion square feet of rooftop can help bring temperatures down with green plantings and other measures, a critical measure when all projections show that the number of 90 degree days the city experiences will likely triple by 2050. It will also lead to the creation of thousands of good, middle class jobs that pave the way for a 21st century green economy.