

FRAMING CLIMATE CHANGE

An Analysis of Colorado's Climate Change Policies

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BACKGROUND

Utilizing electrical charging as a means to power the motor, electric vehicles (EVs) remove tailpipe emissions and displace them to power plants (areas of lower population densities). This

provides the benefits of cleaner air in high-density urban areas. As the electric grid decarbonizes, it couples cleaner electric generation with a cleaner transportation system.

Today, states have the choice to adopt either EPA or California's standard with respect to vehicle emissions under the Clean Air Act. In November 2018, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE's) advisory Air Quality Control Commission passed California's Low Emission Vehicle (LEV) mandate in Colorado; in August 2019, they passed the Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) mandate. Both of these mandates promote the use of electric vehicle (EV) within the state.

RESEARCH QUESTION

What can we learn from Colorado's electric vehicle policymaking to better inform climate change policy?

METHODS

An inductive analysis of in-depth interviews with state-level officials.

FINDINGS

1. Colorado's electric vehicle policies are in line with global best practice strategies.

Global studies on best practice strategies for electric vehicle implementation highlight four key factors responsible for successful adoption:

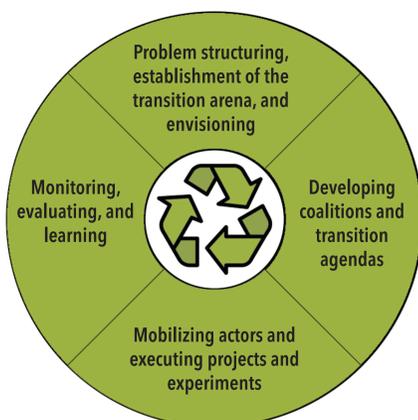
1. Incentives and rebates to reduce the high upfront costs;
2. Infrastructure development;
3. Public education and outreach;
4. Widespread stakeholder engagement: CDPHE, Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), Colorado Energy Office (CEO), and multiple other commissions and groups all work closely together through various weekly meetings to ensure that these four points are met.

2. Climate change policy does not need to be highlighted as such to be successful.

With the three prior state administrations laying the foundation for successful electric vehicle implementation, it is important to highlight that related policies were promoted on the basis of maintaining Colorado's image. The argument for electric vehicles have been founded on Colorado's non-attainment with EPA ozone standards along the front range, and its benefits for climate change are only emphasized under Governor Polis' executive order in January. This point is further developed to argue that a cleaner environment can boost tourism and recreation in the state.

FRAMEWORK

This paper utilizes the theory of transition management as a means of understanding the successes that are seen in Colorado. The graphic on the left shows the four major factors in which successful transition management happens. It is seen as a mechanism to create societal change.



FUTURE RESEARCH

1. Exploring the possible roles of transition management in leveraging climate change policies in divided states;
2. Researching the role and trends of branding in climate-related policymaking;
3. Given that Colorado is set to adopt California's LEV and ZEV standards, exploring climate and state-related policy diffusion.

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