

The Washington Post

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"California has provided a backstop when the federal government refused to adequately protect people from auto pollution," he added.

Transportation Department proposes letting states set their own tailpipe emission rules

The move could pave the way for a broader climate deal with automakers on national mileage standards

By [Juliet Eilperin](#)

April 22, 2021 at 3:01 p.m. EDT

The Transportation Department announced Thursday that it will withdraw its part of a Trump administration rule blocking states from setting their own tailpipe standards, which could help pave the way for a [broader climate deal with the nation's automakers](#).

[The proposed rule](#), which will be subject to 30 days of public comment once it is published in the Federal Register, will no longer bar individual states such as California from establishing their own greenhouse gas emissions standards and zero-emissions vehicle mandates. Early next week, the Environmental Protection Agency is expected to reverse a related Trump-era policy by moving to restore the Clean Air Act waiver the agency gave California in 2009.

The administration's actions will give the liberal state more leverage in discussions between the auto industry and federal and state officials over national mileage and greenhouse gas emission standards for cars and SUVs. Thirteen states and the District of Columbia have [signed onto California's tailpipe emission standards](#): Collectively they represent 36 percent of the U.S. auto market.

"The transportation sector is the biggest contributor to greenhouse gases in our economy — which means it can and must be a big part of the climate solution," Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said in a statement. "This proposed rule would be an important step towards protecting public health and combating climate change."

A year ago, EPA and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration [finalized a rule](#) to improve average fuel efficiency by 1.5 percent per year, compared with a nearly 5 percent annual increase set to take effect under Obama administration rules. It will take a few months for the

Biden administration to restore California's authority to impose greenhouse gas standards on cars and trucks. The president has instructed the agencies to develop a new set of federal mileage and greenhouse gas standards by July.

Biden's EPA administrator, Michael Regan, [told lawmakers Wednesday](#) that the administration will propose nationwide standards for tailpipe emissions in mid-July.

"States like California have historically the right to lead the way," Regan said. "The federal government can indeed learn from states, and that's what we plan to continue to do."

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Dino Grandoni contributed to this report.

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