

SHARE Applauds Governor's \$100 Million to Start Decarbonizing the Empire State Plaza but Calls for a Faster Timeline to Meet Climate Goals and a Complete Plan that Includes the Capitol.

Calls for Hochul Administration to Embrace Transparency in Climate Work

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While the Sheridan Hollow Alliance for Renewable Energy (SHARE) welcomed the [Governor's announcement](#) that she has allocated \$100 million for the first phase of decarbonizing the Empire State Plaza (ESP), SHARE called for a much faster timeline to reach zero emissions than the 15 plus years being proposed, and a plan that includes the entire Capitol Complex.

The Renewable Capitol Act (S2689/A5633) developed by SHARE, which was included in the 2024/2025 Senate budget resolution, has a three-year timeline for conversion of the entire Capitol Complex to zero emissions. The Ramboll study released by the Office of General Services (OGS) and the New York Power Authority (NYPA) on Friday includes the ESP but does not include in its "scope of work" the State Capitol, the Alfred E. Smith building, the State Education building and the Governor's Mansion though these buildings are all heated and cooled by the Sheridan Avenue Steam Plant (SASP). Despite SHARE's request for a full study, NYPA and OGS refused for two years to clarify the scope of work.

"We are pleased that the state decided to include geothermal energy in the decarbonization plan as we first proposed in 2017," stated Merton Simpson, co-chair of SHARE. "However we are concerned that Governor Hochul has not yet actually committed to phase 3 which includes geothermal heating. We would like the state to invest the projected \$150 million for a thermal energy network before the first two phases of the project are completed, which may take ten years or longer. We are also concerned that the study only includes the Empire State Plaza and not the entire Capitol Complex. The first two phases of the plan are projected to only achieve a 50% reduction in emissions within ten years. This is too little, and too late."

SHARE urges the state to rapidly issue a Request for Proposal for the thermal energy network for the entire Capitol Complex, as well as to further evaluate other alternatives to the three options in the plan, such as using an aquifer for the heat source. SHARE also calls for OGS and NYPA to closely collaborate with the district geothermal projects that NYSERDA is supporting in the South End / Mansion Neighborhoods and Sheridan Hollow.

The group strongly criticized the state for its lack of transparency and public input in developing the plan. NYPA and OGS over the last 18 months had repeatedly refused meetings with SHARE or to release information about the planning process despite numerous freedom of information requests. Some of the background studies in the plan were completed more than a year ago. NYPA and OGS only met with SHARE on Friday, July 19 after the Governor issued her news release and the long-delayed plaza energy study.

"SHARE formed in 2017 to oppose Governor Cuomo's proposal to install two new fracked gas turbines in Sheridan Hollow. We won that fight partially because that proposal was full of inaccurate information. Just last week the state comptroller issued an audit that said that one of the reasons for the state's slow progress in meeting its climate goals has been its reliance on incorrect data. Hiding behind closed doors is not how New York will make a rapid and efficient

transition to a clean energy future. The Hochul Administration needs to start listening to community residents and other experts,” said Ruth Foster, Co-chair of SHARE.

SHARE is alarmed by Governor Hochul’s public statement on July 18 that the state needs to adopt slower timelines for climate action since science has changed since the CLCPA (Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act) was adopted. “The Governor clearly doesn’t understand that we are in a climate crisis. She doesn’t understand what climate leadership is. The world is already breaching the 1.5 degrees C target that governments have established to keep global warming from getting worse. The UN Secretary-General has said that slow action by governments has resulted in the opening of the Gate to Hell.” said Mark Dunlea, coordinator of PAUSE (People of Albany United for Safe Energy.)

SHARE also expressed concern about the lack of a commitment to close the Sheridan Avenue Steam Plant which has polluted a low-income community of color for more than a century. The state has also indicated that they plan to keep the SASP operational as a backup even if they fully decarbonize the state buildings using it.

“Local residents have been exposed to the burning of oil, coal, garbage, and now fracked gas, leading to numerous health problems including high rates of cancer. It is time for Governor Hochul and lawmakers to transform their rhetoric about environmental justice into concrete action. In this case, the state government is the polluter,” stated Albany County Legislator Mert Simpson, Co-chair of SHARE. “It is unacceptable for the State to continue polluting Sheridan Hollow for another 15 years - and perhaps longer.”

In its meeting with SHARE on July 19, the state finally acknowledged that it had dropped its plan to obtain renewable electricity for the complex by purchasing solar power from a proposed project in Oneida, New York. SHARE had long expressed concern about the project’s lack of progress and had urged the state to consider more local sources of renewable electricity, including the possibility of expanding the existing hydro facility in Green Island, New York or local solar farms.

Another concern is that eighty percent of the projected cost of the project is for building renovations and upgrades of old energy systems, which includes dealing with deferred maintenance. SHARE has requested more information about these costs. The group was also surprised that the state revealed that a third of emissions (31%) from the plaza are related to the Wadsworth Lab in the basement of the Corning Tower, which is being relocated over the next decade to the Harriman State Office Complex.

SHARE calls on state lawmakers to enact the Renewable Capitol Act, to significantly speed up the timeline to eliminate emissions at the Plaza, to include the entire Capitol Complex in the plan, to shut down the SASP, and to enact critical provisions in the bill which will ensure community input into the project and the enactment of strong labor standards.