

# On the Grid: Winning the 21st-Century Economy 2/18/22



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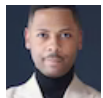
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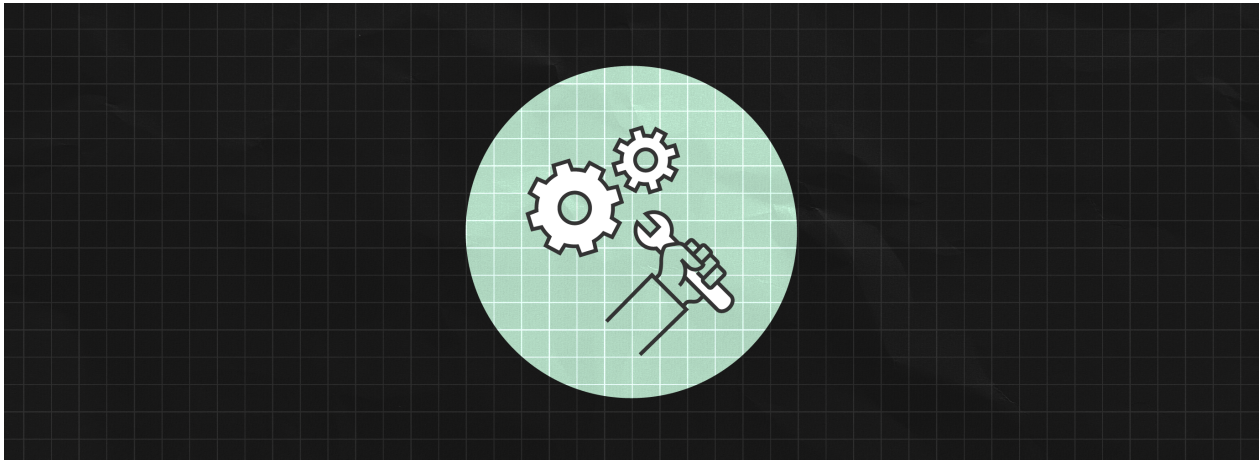
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Over the last several weeks, headlines have rightly focused on the threat of Russian invasion of Ukraine and persistent high inflation in the US. On the climate side, we've been greeted with news that the Southwest is facing its worst drought in 1,200 years and sea levels on the Atlantic Coast could rise by as much as one foot over the next thirty years.

These are grim reads. Just beneath the surface, however, the currents are moving in a more hopeful direction. Recent actions by the White House are transforming the federal government to become a market-mover and investment engine for clean energy and innovation across the industrial, power,

and transportation sectors. This accomplishes two big things: first, it's providing a signal to the private sector that there will be sustained demand for clean technologies, energy, and products in the US and around the globe. Second, it helps shift the politics of energy by expanding what jobs, businesses, communities, and sectors are part of a clean, robust, non-fossil fuel economy. Today's *On the Grid* looks at a couple of those recent trends.

## 1. New White House Announcement Targets Industrial Emissions



On Tuesday, the Biden-Harris Administration announced a slate of new executive actions that will cut industrial emissions, expand clean manufacturing in the US, strengthen domestic supply chains, and secure our competitiveness in emerging clean industries. The announcements reflect a long-term investment in American economic competitiveness and security, as well as a commitment to build out new industries in the US that will provide jobs and economic benefits to workers, families, and communities for decades to come.

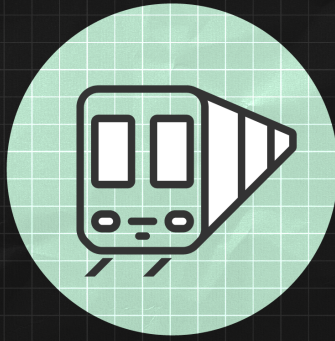
Among other provisions, the announcement includes:

- The creation of a first-ever Buy Clean Task Force to guide clean procurement efforts across federal agencies that will source low- and zero-carbon materials for construction purposes
- Requests for Information (RFIs) soliciting stakeholder expertise for the implementation of funding for clean hydrogen research, development, and deployment
- New guidance to responsibly deploy carbon capture, utilization, and storage technologies

These announcements lay the groundwork for the US to become a world leader in clean manufacturing and industry.

Read our full statement [here](#).

## 2. Improving Transit Part 3: Case Studies



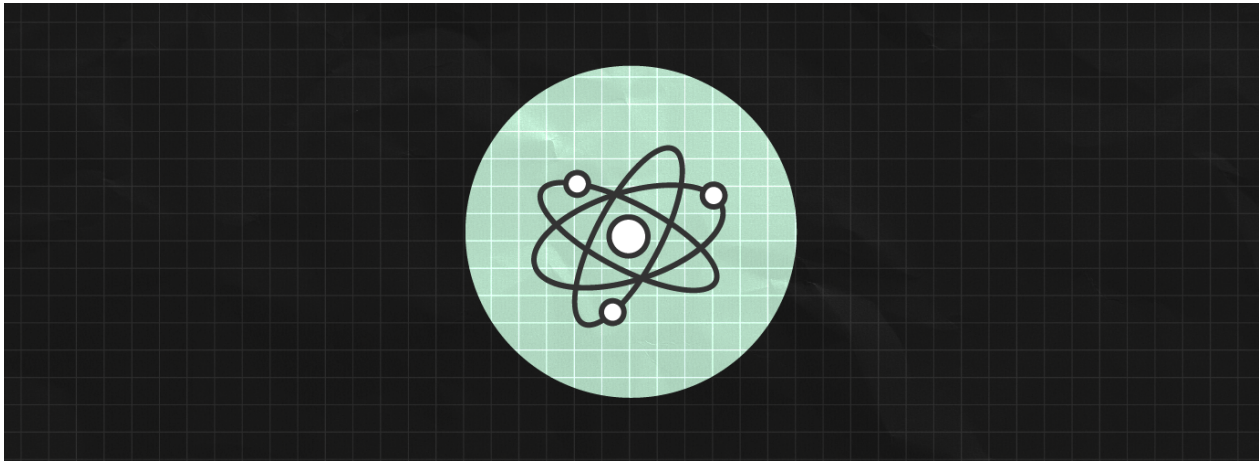
Last week, Third Way released the third blog post of a series with Transportation for America that explores how we can improve public transit as a way to reduce carbon pollution. The first two blog posts discussed how proper funding for transit operations and expanding access to public transit will take more cars off the road, reduce emissions, and connect more people with the places they need to go.

In the third blog post, we looked at specific case studies in cities around the US where local transit agencies used data to understand the service needs of residents and rethink route structures to provide better access.

- Columbus and Houston redesigned their bus routes to focus on giving as many people as possible access to frequent, high-quality transit, which led to an increase in ridership in both cities even as the nationwide ridership rates decreased.
- Austin successfully launched and grew a rapid bus network after failing to grow its ridership on a 32-mile commuter rail line that misses much of the city's density.
- In Minneapolis and St. Paul, the local transit agency began upgrading some of its busiest bus lines and integrating local buses into larger regional networks. When COVID hit, they also responded accordingly by meeting transit needs and providing better access.

These studies show us how transit agencies can effectively develop transit systems that provide better access for people most reliant on transit and keep up with changing development patterns.

### **3. Nuclear Expansion in Europe Continues**



Earlier this week, Poland announced a new agreement with US-based NuScale to construct a small modular reactor that will support Poland's copper and silver production.

The agreement is just one in a long string of announcements from European countries looking to reduce their carbon emissions, diversify their energy mix, and strengthen their energy independence. Between the [UK](#), [France](#), [the Netherlands](#), [Czech Republic](#), [Romania](#), and more, the market for advanced nuclear energy is rapidly heating up in Europe.

As Josh Freed told Sonal Patel this week in *Power Magazine* this week:

*“Countries need to decarbonize and they need to do it with firm and clean power, especially in the heavily industrialized parts of Eastern Europe that want to replace their coal fleets, want to maintain manufacturing, and become leaders in innovation and clean energy.”*

Similarly, these countries are looking to make themselves less vulnerable to global oil and gas price shocks and reduce their reliance on Russian natural gas:

*“Even before the most recent crisis that we’re living through now with Ukraine, we heard and saw from a number of countries in Eastern Europe that we engage with a recognition that reliance on Russian natural gas, on Russia nuclear for firm power, was not safe. And they were looking for opportunities to ensure their own energy autonomy, and to strengthen ties with countries that would enable them to maintain their autonomy, and so they look to the U.S. amongst others for that.”*

The US has a unique opportunity to capitalize on this growing demand for nuclear energy by rapidly moving to demonstrate and deploy the advanced reactor technologies that are under development in the US. With the right policy investments and regulatory reforms, we can act quickly to fill the need for advanced nuclear energy and export this valuable technology around the world.

## **4. Looking Ahead: Surging Oil Prices and Inflation**





On February 3, oil prices hit a 7½ year high amid concerns of Russian military action against Ukraine, reaching over \$90 per barrel. High energy prices have already put a tremendous strain on US households and prices are continuing to skyrocket after experiencing a significant slump at the onset of COVID-19.

With Russia's next steps still uncertain, oil prices could stay high for a while. There is no question that the prospect of a Ukrainian invasion is influencing the price of oil and natural gas. Moreover, as global energy demand recovers from its pandemic slump, supply remains short asil-producing countries struggle to meet their output targets.

What can the United States do? Releasing more oil from the strategic petroleum reserve, like we did last fall, in conjunction with our European allies, could help alleviate the pressure. Temporary cuts in gas taxes could also provide some brief relief, but run the risk of spurring higher demand that will drive prices back (and pollution) up.

The pace of global economic recovery is still uncertain, and geopolitical pressures will continue to unfold as long as Russia threatens to invade Ukraine. We're still waiting to see where oil markets will go next.

## **5. We're Hiring**

**JOIN OUR TEAM**

The clean energy policy conversation is expanding...and so are we! The Climate and Energy Program is looking for people with talent and a passion for climate solutions to fill two new roles on our team. If you've got anyone in your mental rolodex who you think might be a fit, please send them our way. And if you wanted to circulate these job postings more broadly with your networks, we wouldn't mind that either!

Deputy Director for Innovation and Industry: This person will help set policy, advocacy, and product strategy and supervise multiple team members working on issues surrounding energy innovation, carbon management, and industrial decarbonization. (5+ years of experience in clean energy policy)

Development Advisor: This person will work directly with our Senior Vice President, Josh Freed, to increase our engagement with current and prospective donors and will oversee the development of proposals and reports for the funders who support our team's work. (2-3 years of relevant writing and research experience)

## 6. What We're Reading



- In the *New York Times*, [Ezra Klein](#) explains why Democrats must embrace the government's role in shaping our economy and driving forward economic growth and technological innovation. According to Klein, Democrats need to resolve two fundamental tensions in how we conceive of what the economy needs but what the government can do to help.
- Also, in the *New York Times*, [Blad Plumer](#) explains why transportation infrastructure funding must be invested carefully so as not to exacerbate our existing challenges and increase greenhouse gas emissions. Plumer cites several examples from transit agencies around the US that are deciding how to best put infrastructure funding to use.
- In *Slate*, The Breakthrough Institute's [Seaver Wang](#) asks us to imagine a future in which climate impacts are severe and widespread because we failed to properly meet our goals and reduce our greenhouse gas emissions because we left nuclear power out of the mix.