

How Biden's infrastructure plan addresses the climate crisis

2 April 2021, by Lucie Aubourg and Issam Ahmed



Electric energy generating wind turbines are seen on a wind farm in the San Geronio Pass area in Palm Springs

It's no coincidence US President Joe Biden chose manufacturing hub Pittsburgh to unveil his \$2 trillion green infrastructure plan, a bold pitch to Americans used to hearing that climate action will wreck industry.

So how does "The American Jobs Plan" try to place the environment at the heart of America's future economic growth?

Green power

Biden has called for the US energy sector to be fully decarbonized by 2035.

To this end, he has asked Congress for \$100 billion to invest in the national grid and shift to cleaner energy, as well as a ten-year extension of tax credits for renewable generation and storage.

"The tax credit for wind and solar has been quite successful in creating a large scale investment and build out," Dan Lashof, president of the World

Resources Institute told AFP, welcoming the extension.

The plan calls for \$15 billion in prototype projects for utility-scale energy storage, carbon capture, hydrogen, nuclear and floating offshore wind power.

It also foresees a \$27 billion "Clean Energy and Sustainability Accelerator"—in other words a Green Bank to mobilize private investment.

Lindsey Walters, a climate expert at the Third Way think tank, welcomed the idea of introducing a national Clean Energy Standard to seed renewable production and new jobs.

"You are setting smart regulations in place that are providing that long-term market demand for clean energy technologies," she told AFP.

White House National Climate Advisor Gina McCarthy also touted the measure in a call with reporters Thursday.

"We think it's one of the best methods to actually get the reductions we're looking for with a level of certainty," she said.

Electric vehicles

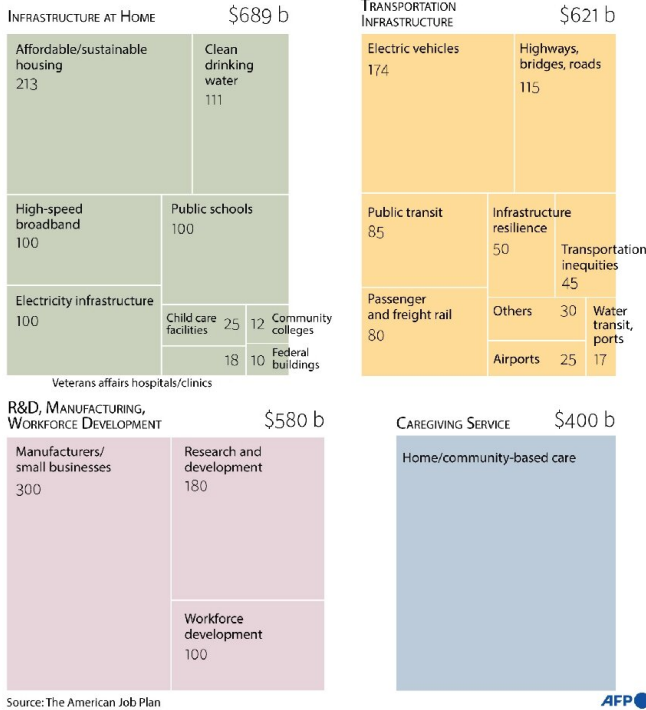
The other major green aspect of the package is an eye-catching \$174 billion investment "to win the EV (electric vehicles) market," where the US currently has one-third the market share of China.

This includes establishing incentives to create a network of 500,000 EV chargers by 2030.

The money will be also be used to spur domestic supply chains for raw materials and parts, and helping factories retool to build both the vehicles and batteries.

Biden's \$2 trillion infrastructure plan

Estimated major spending, the cost of which will be paid for partly by raising corporate tax from 21% to 28%



spending more.

Denali Sai, a spokesperson for climate nonprofit 350.org, acknowledged the plan called for five times the amount spent by former president Barack Obama in his 2009 recovery package.

"But this spending is still way too small to face the climate crisis at scale and it'll take a lot more spending to fully decarbonize the US economy," she added.

The campaign group would like to see a \$16 trillion bill and is skeptical of funding [carbon capture](#) technology, which it believes represents a free pass to the fossil fuel industry.

Another criticism is that the US hasn't said it will follow the lead of several countries that have announced a phase out of new fossil fuel vehicles.

Will it pass?

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell on Thursday vowed Republicans would oppose the plan because of the tax hikes it requires, scuppering Biden's hopes for bipartisan support.

Though most bills require 60 Senate votes to pass, it's possible to pass some using a simple majority of 51, which Democrats have, through certain legislative procedures.

That will still require the buy-in from more fiscally conservative moderate Democrats.

"I would just underscore the cost of inaction," Ali Zaidi, deputy White House climate advisor told reporters, pointing to 22 extreme weather and [climate](#)-related disasters last year that each exceeded \$1 billion in cost.

"On the competition side of the ledger, every year that we delay, we're talking about other countries racing ahead to seize the competitive advantage in these incredibly important industries of the future," he added.

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Estimated major spending in US President Joe Biden's \$2 trillion infrastructure plan.

Some 50,000 diesel vehicles would be replaced, while at least a fifth of the yellow school bus network would be electrified.

"Globally the market seems to be moving more towards [electric vehicles](#)," said Walters, adding the addition of the "right policy landscape" would give the existing trend an extra nudge.

What do climate experts think?

For the most part, experts polled by AFP are happy with the proposal.

UC Berkeley scientist Amol Phadke, who authored the noted "2035 report" on transitioning energy said: "Power and transport are (among) the most important sectors for climate mitigation and this plan is rightfully ambitious on those sectors."

But some climate groups think the US should be

APA citation: How Biden's infrastructure plan addresses the climate crisis (2021, April 2) retrieved 17 May 2021 from <https://phys.org/news/2021-04-biden-infrastructure-climate-crisis.html>

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