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### New Hampshire the Beautiful

New Hampshire is a beautiful state. It has seacoast and high mountains, small towns and cities, and urban areas and wilderness. The state's natural beauty attracts thousands of tourists everywhere. New Hampshire also has a very diverse economy. The southern part of the state is urban; the Seacoast, the Lakes Region, and White Mountains are involved with tourism; and the North Country is heavily focused on logging. Most of these industries are very dependent on the natural environment of the state. If the environment were to be damaged, the economy could suffer. All of the industries are also very reliant on energy. Therefore, it is very important for the state to minimize the environmental impacts of energy use. This could be done by improvements in transportation, energy efficiency, and energy diversity.

If transportation in New Hampshire was more efficient, there would be less emissions and, therefore, less pollution. Southern New Hampshire (the cities south of Tilton) has a great deal of car traffic, especially during busy times like foliage season. There are few buses and no commuter rail. Certain politicians in Concord are currently advocating for commuter rail, which in the future will definitely become necessary as the state grows. Commuter rail and bus services could be state owned or privately owned - the decision would be up to the voters. Additionally, in the North Country, there is a lot of truck traffic and not much rail traffic. The New Hampshire Central Railroad and the Saint-Lawrence and Atlantic Railroad both operate in the region, and could be utilized more to take trucks off the road. If the State of New Hampshire improved transportation, there would be less pollution.

In addition to transportation improvements, pollution could also be decreased by tighter regulations. New Hampshire's state motto is "Live Free or Die". That means there is no sales tax and few regulations. This seems like a blessing most of the time, but unfortunately also means loose or no emission and efficiency regulations. Vehicles are tested for emissions during annual inspections, but if car emissions were a major issue, they could be stricter. Buildings could also be more energy efficient. Although there are efficiency regulations for new buildings being built, many of the buildings in NH are old and outdated (especially old factories). In the future, a program that would update old buildings to new standards would be helpful. Although we, as a state, value freedom and loose regulations, tighter regulations and system updates could be helpful in reducing environmental impact.

In addition to transportation and regulation updates, New Hampshire could improve its energy diversity, with electricity and heating in particular. About half of all electricity in the state comes from the Seabrook Nuclear power plant, while other energy comes from sources like natural gas and coal. Only about one-fifth of NH electricity is generated from renewable sources, primarily hydroelectric, biomass, and wind. A gradual shift toward more renewable energy would be beneficial; the Merrimack River and our countless foothills could be utilized for more hydroelectric plants and windmills, respectively. Additionally, NH is known for cold winters, so a large amount of energy is used for heating. Oil and older-style electric heating systems are often inefficient and use non-renewable energy, while newer technology, like heat pumps and pellet stoves, and good-old-fashioned wood stoves are often better for the environment and cheaper. Heating also becomes more efficient with better insulation. The New Hampshire Electric Coop currently offers a program where professionals come to a client's house, perform an efficiency evaluation, and split the costs of the improvements. This is a great program, but it is probably underutilized. Although New Hampshire does a decent job with energy diversity, there is always room to improve.

New Hampshire is a beautiful place, to live, to work, or to visit. It's diverse and beautiful geography attracts the numbers needed to fuel the economy. However, as New Hampshire residents, we must ensure that it stays that way, by minimizing our environmental impact and energy usage. This could be achieved by investing in transportation, streamlining energy efficiency, and shifting energy sources. New Hampshire is a beautiful state, and we must keep it that way.

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