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Abstract: The Effectiveness of City Climate Planning  
This paper examines the extent to which local climate plans have a causal impact on greenhouse gas emissions. More than 350 cities in the US have joined the Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) campaign, under which a local government commits to the development and implementation of a climate action plan to reduce community-wide emissions. However, case studies to date have produced little evidence to suggest that the CCP program leads to emission reductions. Rather, the existing literature suggests that environmentally progressive communities are simply more likely to adopt plans to codify their existing policies. This research presents one of the first econometric analyses of local climate policy. Using data on all 478 incorporated cities in California, it examines the relationship between CCP membership and key outcomes of a climate plan, such as green buildings and waste reduction. Initial cross-sectional results show that CCP membership has a large and weakly significant association with the number of registered LEED projects in a city, even after controlling for growth, demographic and physical characteristics, and the environmental preferences of local residents. However, a longitudinal analysis indicates that CCP membership has no relationship with either the number of waste reduction programs implemented, or a city’s success in promoting recycling. Preliminary conclusions are that climate plans may yield results but only in some policy areas, suggesting that actual implementation may be uneven. However, this analysis does not consider the political role of local climate policy in exerting pressure for emission reductions on higher tiers of government.  

Bio:  Adam Millard-Ball is a 3rd year PhD student in the Interdisciplinary Program in Environment and Resources at Stanford University. His research focuses on transportation policy and climate change economics, specifically the effectiveness of local climate action plans; the potential for the transportation sector to provide carbon offsets; and regulatory design for including transportation in cap-and-trade programs. Adam is currently working with the American Public Transportation Association on methodologies for quantifying greenhouse gas emissions from transit. Before coming to Stanford, he was Principal with Nelson\Nygaard, a San Francisco-based transportation planning consulting firm. He has published extensively on transportation and climate planning in peer-reviewed journals and professional magazines, most recently in Planning and Transportation Research Record. Adam holds an MA in Geography from Edinburgh University.