

# City of Cambridge Net Zero Transportation Plan Advisory Group

Meeting #8 notes – Wednesday, November 29, 2023

The Net Zero Transportation Plan (NZTP) Advisory Group held its eighth meeting on Wednesday, November 29, 2023, at the Cambridge City Hall Annex and via Zoom. The objectives of the meetings were to:

- Give feedback on community engagement activities;
- Look at current emissions trajectory;
- Give feedback on possible actions; and
- Talk about next steps to build actions into the Plan.

Below are important points and action items, followed by a summary of discussions.

## Important points and action items

- Members reviewed plans for broader community engagement in 2024. Their general advice was to strive for clear and catchy communication, recognize people's immediate needs, and use existing communication lines where possible.
- Members also reviewed potential NZTP actions, and gave feedback on actions related to electrification, active transportation, and reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT). The technical consultants will refine the actions before the next meeting. The technical team will also share peer cities studied as part of this process.

## Summary of discussions

### Welcome and introductions

Advisory Group members, staff, and consultants introduced themselves for members of the public and, in response to the check-in question, shared things that they were grateful for.

### Broader community engagement

Advisory Group members reviewed initial plans for broader community engagement around the NZTP in 2024. The approach is guided by the Advisory Group's process equity approach, which recognizes that an equitable process for developing the Plan:

1. Is guided by community voices;
2. Is transparent;
3. Prioritizes underserved, underheard, and historically excluded groups of people;
4. Reduces harm;
5. Builds long-term relationships; and
6. Is accessible.

Community engagement would take place in two waves. The first wave would take place in January-February 2024, and the purpose would be to introduce the broader community to the NZTP process and gather initial reactions to potential actions. The second wave would take

place in March to April and would be focused on gathering ideas about the draft plan. Both waves would involve a public meeting (or similar event) a brief survey, flyers, and engagement led by the CDD Community Engagement Team (CET@CDD) and Advisory Group members.

Advisory Group members shared feedback and ideas for broader engagement, with highlights as follows.

- Clear and catchy communication: It is important to share clear messages about why the NZTP process will be meaningful for people. This involves using plain language as much as possible and sharing how people’s input will be used throughout the planning process. Interpretation will also be important for non-English speakers.
- Recognizing immediate needs: It might be worthwhile to focus content on areas where people feel like there are problems with the transportation system, as people will be more able to share about their immediate needs. It is also important to be able to point people to resources to address those needs if they will not be addressed through the NZTP process.
- Using existing avenues: Advisory Group members can help gather input from people in their respective communities through their organizations’ existing programming. There are also Facebook groups and newsletters where members can post information about the NZTP process. It would also be good to get on the agendas of relevant commissions and committees across the city. Finally, members liked the idea of a sticky note and poster session in a public space, where passersby can give input quickly and easily.

### Potential NZTP actions

Afterward, members reviewed potential NZTP actions. There are a number of existing trends and policies at play in Cambridge, which will reduce transportation emissions over time. These include:

- Vehicle electrification;
- Improvements in fuel efficiency (miles per gallon); and
- Switching to renewable energy to power the electricity system.

Nonetheless, more actions are needed to reach the goal of zero emissions, which is the purpose of the NZTP. CDD staff and consultants developed a list of possible actions based on the goals identified at the last Advisory Group meeting:

1. Improve mobility;
2. Remove greenhouse gas emissions from transportation;
3. Facilitate a just transition; and
4. Strengthen community and connectedness.

Advisory Group members reviewed possible actions and shared feedback, as outlined below. (See Appendix A for the full list of actions along with their descriptions.)

### Electrification actions

- E1. Charge less for electric vehicle resident parking permits: Some members thought that this action allows people who earn more to pay less for parking (given that electric

vehicles are mainly owned by higher earners at present). Some also questioned whether it would be effective to lower the cost of something that is already cheap.

- E2. Communicate subsidies and incentives for e-bikes and electric cars: One member shared it can be difficult to share a bike lane with an e-bike user as a regular bicycle user and that there may be a safety concern.
- E3. Sell used government electric vehicles to people with low incomes: Members thought this was a good idea and recommended that the vehicles could be sold at a discounted price.
- Other comments on electrification actions: Promote actions that do not require having a car, make charging cheaper or free, electrify door-to-door transportation systems for those who need them, and explore hydrogen vehicles.

#### Active transportation actions

- A3. Reduce racial profiling related to low-carbon modes: It would be important to make sure that these laws and campaigns are actually proven to be effective at reducing racial profiling.
- A4. Develop mobility hubs: It would be good to have pedal and park options closer to downtown areas and more distributed throughout the city. It would also be important to make sure these hubs work for people with disabilities, particularly people with service animals and wheelchair users.
- Other comments on active transportation actions: When not used properly, bicycles can be unsafe for pedestrians and other road users. There may be a need for “Biker’s Ed” training, as is done for CPSD 6<sup>th</sup> grade students. Also, older people generally do not use Bluebikes, so it would be important to give them options that might be meaningful for them (such as accessible taxis, Ubers, or door-to-door shuttles, which could all be electrified).

#### Vehicle miles traveled (VMT) reduction actions

- V3. Increase infrastructure near public facilities: Essential services like courts and hospitals should be included as public facilities.
- V4. Establish more bus-only lanes: Members reflected that bus lanes are somewhat unpopular and that the MBTA has cut bus service since the COVID pandemic. One member suggested expanding to high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes.
- Other comments on VMT reduction actions: It might be helpful to ask people about where they need to be going in order to design mass transit options around those services. It is also important to make public and active transportation a more pleasant service, while being intentional about how these actions will be enforced.

#### Pricing related actions

Members did not have enough time to discuss pricing-related actions, but several members expressed some initial discomfort with the category.

Ahead of the next meeting, CDD and the consultant team will refine the possible actions based on members’ feedback and begin to model their effects on greenhouse gas emissions and other goals.

## Other matters and closing thoughts

Members shared closing thoughts, the themes of which included:

- Making sure we touch as many groups of residents as possible during community engagement and giving people incentives to participate;
- Learning from the Netherlands, which has underground garbage bins; and
- Getting more drivers to take public transit.

The Advisory Group adjourned and will meet next on Wednesday, January 24, 2023, at 9 AM at the City Hall Annex.

## Additional thoughts from fill-in sessions

Members who were unable to attend the meeting met briefly on January 4 and 9, 2024, and shared the following additional thoughts:

- Additional groups for outreach: Members suggested reaching out to business owners, business improvement districts, teachers, and faith-based institutions. It would also be good to create tailored ways for youth to get involved, potentially during the implementation of the NZTP actions.
- Feedback on the potential actions: One member proposed placing more emphasis on widely publicizing Harvard shuttle access for community members. There was also some skepticism about whether middle-aged and older people see biking as a viable option, and interest in understanding the reasons behind this. Another member shared feedback that the recently launched electric Bluebikes are being received well in the community, including by people who have not used Bluebikes before and people who do not own a car.

One member was also interested in understanding how a low-income city-owned EV auction program (action E3) would operate and recognized that it could improve over time through trial and error.

## Attendance list

Advisory Group members who attended on November 29

- Malene Council (DHSP Community Engagement Team)
- Guerlancia “Gigi” Laurent (Margaret Fuller House)
- Nora Sears (De Novo Center for Justice and Healing)
- Ali Sorrels (Cambridge Women’s Center)
- Rachel Tanenhaus (Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities)
- Omriqui Thomas (Cambridge Public Schools student)
- Angela Vierling-Claassen (Cambridge resident)
- Lonnell Wells (Cambridge Bike Giveback)
- Yao Wu (Chinese American Association of Cambridge)

Advisory Group members who participated in fill-in sessions on January 4 or 9

- Malene Council (DHSP Community Engagement Team)
- Karim Elrazzaz (Islamic Society of Boston Cambridge)

- James Pierre (Aduis Arts Initiative)

Community Development Department staff

- Stephanie Groll (Mobility Strategy Manager)
- Marlees West Owayda (Community Engagement Manager)

Consultant team

- Michael Bangert-Drowns (Arup)
- Brandon Chambers (Consensus Building Institute)
- Elizabeth Cooper (Consensus Building Institute)
- Julia Clarke (Arup)

# Appendix A: (Draft) Possible Actions for Cambridge Net Zero Transportation Plan

November 22, 2023

This memo includes a list of potential actions that could help Cambridge reach net zero emissions for transportation. In the upcoming meeting – Advisory Group (AG) Meeting #8 on November 29th, 2023 – we will discuss, as a group, the potential for each action to meet the four goals of this project:

- Improve Mobility
- Remove GHGs from Transportation
- Facilitate a Just Transition
- Strengthen Community and Connectedness

All actions listed in this memo and the meeting are draft actions and will likely change after the AG and the community provide input. This is only the first step in beginning to shape the specific actions of the plan.

After AG Meeting #8, the City and their consultants will take a list of preferred actions and model their impact on emissions over time. It is expected that the preferred actions decided on in AG Meeting #8 will significantly reduce emissions. However, it is likely that we will need to adjust the list of actions to reach the City's goal of eliminating all emissions from transportation. This will be discussed in AG Meeting #9.

## Focus Actions

In response to many of the conversations with the Advisory Group (AG), we are focusing on the following actions. Many of these actions reflect the interests of the AG, and other actions are borrowed from peer cities. In AG Meeting #8 we will discuss these actions to identify ways to improve them for Cambridge and ensure that we can implement them in an equitable way.

These actions are grouped by general category. Their numbers will help us quickly identify them during discussion, but they are not related to their importance.

## Electrification Actions

These actions reduce emissions through a shift to electric mobility:

- E1. Charge less for electric vehicle resident parking permits to acknowledge the reduced community costs compared to internal combustion engines
- E2. Engage low-income households and communities of color to communicate subsidies and available incentives for charging and/or purchase of e-bikes and electric cars
- E3. Create a program that prioritizes the sale of used electric government vehicles to people with low incomes
- E4. Improve access to public curbside EV charging
- E5. Install city-owned public EV charging stations comprehensively throughout Cambridge, ensuring locations near underserved communities in historically excluded neighborhoods

### Active Transportation Strategies

These actions reduce emissions through increasing the number of trips taken via active transportation like biking, walking, scooting, and others:

- A1. Advertise and increase enrollment in the Income-Eligible Bluebikes Membership program
- A2. Continue building out the Bluebikes network to meet the goal of one station every 2.5-minute walk
- A3. Create laws and awareness campaigns that reduce and discourage the racial profiling of people of color while traveling via low-carbon modes
- A4. Develop mobility hubs that provide access and connection between multiple modes

### Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Reduction Strategies

These actions reduce emissions by decreasing VMT, or reducing the distance or number of trips people take via highly polluting modes:

- V1. Collaborate with neighborhoods, private developers, and employers to provide low-emission mobility options for people to access residential and employment areas, such as shuttles, bikes, etc.
- V2. Develop an implementation plan and increase funding to fill gaps in the Bicycle Network Plan in order to create a citywide network of high-quality, connected bicycle infrastructure
- V3. Increase funding for crosswalks, bus shelters, protected bike lanes, bike parking, and other measures to get to key public facilities such as schools, parks, community centers, recreation centers, retail areas, libraries, and transit
- V4. Establish more additional bus-only lanes to support rapid bus service
- V5. Create transport decarbonization fund for multimodal improvements, public charging station maintenance, incentive programs, and other actions to reduce emissions from transportation in Cambridge
- V6. Coordinate with neighboring municipalities to shift commuter trips out of cars
- V7. Provide incentives to encourage people to take transit, biking, and walking for all trip types

### Pricing Related Actions

These actions reduce emissions by using prices or incentives various aspects of the transportation sector to align with their impacts on society:

- P1. Provide subsidies and incentives to low-income households and communities of color to support people in using electric vehicles and e-bikes
- P2. Charge emission-zone fees for vehicles that do not meet specific emissions criteria, to discourage trips in gas-powered single-occupancy vehicles
- P3. Charge vehicle idling fines
- P4. Charge developers a fee for new development relative to a project's traffic impacts in order to support multimodal infrastructure and safety improvements
- P5. Provide commute incentives to encourage transit, biking, and walk to work
- P6. Charge a fee for driving on any street in Cambridge, to discourage trip in a single-occupancy vehicle, regardless of fuel type

- P7. Increase residential parking permit fees
- P8. Charge a higher excise tax for high-emission vehicles