

# City of Cambridge Net Zero Transportation Plan Advisory Group Charter (April 2023)

## 1. Introduction to the Net Zero Transportation Plan

*Why are we doing a Net Zero Transportation Plan?* The City of Cambridge is creating a Net Zero Transportation Plan to remove greenhouse gas emissions from transportation in Cambridge. This plan will help our city fight climate change and will result in changes that the people of Cambridge will live with in the future.

The City Council set a goal for Cambridge to use only renewable energy by 2035 and reach net zero emissions by 2050. To do this, we have a Net Zero Action Plan to remove emissions from buildings and a Net Zero Waste Plan to remove emissions from waste. This transportation plan is the third part of our climate strategy and will be complete by summer 2024.

About ten percent of Cambridge's emissions comes from transportation. The 2018 [Climate Action Plan](#) calls for the City to create a zero-emissions transportation plan. The 2019 [Envision Cambridge](#) plan has the same action. To do this, the City must study and chart out a plan to reduce transportation emissions. The Net Zero Transportation Plan will inform citywide transportation policies.

## 2. Why we've created this Advisory Group

The City has formed the Advisory Group to build a relationship with people who have a variety of experiences. We are trying a new approach to inclusive engagement, where we focus on getting community input starting from the very beginning to guide the development of a plan, rather than creating options or a draft plan and then asking for community reactions.

Consultants met with 18 community organizations and service offices to understand how they and people in their networks get around Cambridge, their goals for the Net Zero Transportation Plan, and their advice for involving community members more broadly. From the 18 organizations, City staff invited representatives to join the Advisory Group. The work of the Advisory Group is not the whole process to develop the plan; it is a part of the process.

We hope this process will include many voices—especially those who have been underheard, underserved, and historically excluded in the past. Staff will listen to the mobility challenges that impact community members and ideas about how to make transportation work better in the City. Advisory Group members will learn about transportation issues that lead to climate change. In the end, we will co-create a plan together.

Over the next year, the Advisory Group will make recommendations to guide the Net Zero Transportation Plan. This guidance may include goals, preferred strategies to remove greenhouse gases from transportation in the city, ways to measure progress, and other advice from the group. City staff will use these efforts to develop policies.

The Advisory Group will also be evaluating how this new approach to community planning and engagement is working, and helping improve it as the process unfolds. The group will define ways to

measure success in the process and will document “lessons learned” for how members engaged with one another and City staff to create the Plan. These lessons can help guide future efforts in the City and may be useful to communities running similar processes outside of Cambridge as well.

### 3. Purpose of the Advisory Group

- Share information with and receive information from communities in Cambridge that can inform a Net Zero Transportation Plan.
- Build relationships between City staff and communities – and among community members – to support decision-making now and in the future.
- Explore issues that affect equity and racial justice in transportation, and other challenges that impact people in Cambridge.
- Learn about and expand ideas for removing greenhouse gases from transportation.
- Develop a broader community engagement plan for this process (when, who, how, and about what).
- Propose ways to evaluate the effect of emissions-reduction strategies on equity and racial justice in Cambridge.

### 4. Roles and responsibilities

- a. Advisory Group members will:
  - i. Share life experience and how that connects to mobility needs
  - ii. Raise transportation-related concerns and issues from the communities that they work with
  - iii. Share updates, information, and requests from the Advisory Group with the communities they work with
  - iv. Set guiding principles for the plan
  - v. Discuss options for plan strategies and actions, and make recommendations
  - vi. Give input to guide community engagement
- b. City staff will:
  - i. Listen to Advisory Group member perspectives and share with other City staff
  - ii. Explain options for strategies and actions to remove greenhouse gas emissions from transportation
  - iii. Share information and City perspectives with Advisory Group members
  - iv. Engage with community members to develop the plan
  - v. Turn Advisory Group recommendations into policies
- c. Consultants will:
  - i. Facilitate group discussions and help guide the process
  - ii. Share technical knowledge with the group
  - iii. Document the group’s ideas and decisions
  - iv. Help answer questions

### 5. Making decisions and sharing power

#### *How will we work together?*

Group members and City staff will set the agenda and priorities of the Net Zero Transportation Plan. The facilitator will coordinate.

### *What if I have concerns?*

If members have concerns with any part of the process, there is an open invitation to talk through issues. The project team commits to address these concerns.

- If Advisory Group members have any concerns that would be more comfortable to discuss outside of the project team, you are also invited to talk with [Dr. Neenah Estrella Luna](#). Dr. Neenah is helping the City build relationships with community members. Her email is [neenah@starluna.net](mailto:neenah@starluna.net).

### *What does the Advisory Group have the power to decide?*

The City will make a plan that removes greenhouse gases from transportation. That plan will be a combination of two strategies:

1. Switching from gas cars/buses to electric cars/buses, and
2. Switching some people's trips from driving alone to walking, biking, taking transit, and sharing rides.

The Advisory Group will decide how the City accomplishes this switch. There are many policies and programs that could work, and the Advisory Group will discuss which ones make sense for Cambridge community members.

City staff will provide information and perspectives about implementation considerations to the group. But the recommendations will ultimately come from the Advisory Group's views and deliberations. The group will seek to reach consensus after considering a full range of views and needs. At the end of the process, the Group will be clear about areas of agreement and differences.

### *What are the outcomes of this process?*

The Advisory Group will develop guiding principles, actions, and timelines for a Net Zero Transportation Plan. The Advisory Group recommendations will be the foundation for City staff to write a plan.

The Cambridge City Council will consider whether to adopt and implement the plan. After City Council adopts a plan, the City will track its progress every year. It will review the whole plan and revise it every five years.

## 6. Advisory Group meetings

### a. **Agendas:**

The project team will use feedback from the group to create draft meeting agendas for the group to review and provide input. Group members are welcome to share anything they would like to discuss or add to the agenda at any time.

### b. **Preparing for meetings:**

The project team will sometimes share materials with the group to read between meetings. We can adjust how much we send, based on whether this feels useful and doable.

### c. **How often and where?**

The group will determine where and when it meets. An initial proposal is to meet every 4-8 weeks (more often in the beginning). The meetings will be a combination of in-person in Cambridge and on Zoom.

d. **Technical information:**

City staff and consultants have specific knowledge they will share. This includes tools that remove greenhouse gases from transportation. They will answer questions and share information that can help the group make decisions.

e. **Meeting notes:**

The consultants will write up meeting summaries to share with members and people in the public. Members may review these summaries and have a chance to revise them before City staff shares them publicly.

f. **Public participation**

Advisory Group meetings will be open to the public, starting with meeting 2. There will be time for public comment at the end of the meetings, after the Advisory Group discussion.

## 7. Guiding principles for working together

- a. Respect each other's opinions and thoughts.
- b. There are no "stupid" questions.
- c. One person should speak at a time.
- d. Step up and step back.
- e. Strive to make decisions by consensus. If consensus cannot be reached, then be sure to document the opinions of those who are in the minority.
- f. Be mindful of how power shows up in conversations and be responsive to everyone's views and needs.
- g. Be as inclusive as possible and aim to include voices from beyond traditional power structures.
- h. Be specific about what the Plan will need to address in the short term vs. the long term.