



# Cambridge Net Zero Transportation Plan: Detailed Stakeholder Assessment Findings

*Elizabeth Cooper & Brandon  
Chambers, Consensus Building  
Institute*



CBI

CATALYZING COLLABORATION

# Assessment participants



Participant	Organization	Interest in committee? / Notes
Tina Alu and Rachel Plummer	Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee, Inc.	No, willing to be point of contact
Pastor Jeremy Battle	Cambridge Black Pastor's Alliance (Western Ave Church)	Yes
Elizabeth Brusie	De Novo Center for Justice and Healing	Yes
Tony Clark	My Brother's Keeper	Yes
CET Outreach Workers	Department of Human Service Programs	Cambridge employees
Ben Engle	Food For Free	Yes
Stephanie Guirand	Black Response and HEART Coalition	Maybe (she is in London herself)
George Hinds	MSYEP	Cambridge employee
Tanvir Hussain	Islamic Center of Boston	Maybe (someone else at ISB?)
Darrin Korte	Cambridge Community Center	Yes
Erin Muirhead McCarty	Community Art Center	No, willing to be point of contact
Maria Melo	Multi-Service Center	Cambridge employee
Michael O'Donnell	Prospect Hill Academy Charter School	Yes
Paola Pelletier-Ozuna	Enroot Education	Yes
Arnold Reinhold	Temple Beth Shalom	Yes
Ali Sorrels	Cambridge Women's Center	Maybe
Rachel Tanenhaus	Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities	Cambridge employee

# Assessment themes

*How are folks getting where they need to go?*

- Transit: both access and use are uneven
  - Most interviewees appreciated the range of public transit options
  - Public transit has its downsides – it is often late/unreliable or doesn't go where you need it
  - Large families often weigh the costs of paying for bus/subway vs driving and paying for parking
  - Folks with mobility constraints often can't rely on public transit
- Interviewees appreciated that Cambridge is a walkable city
- Driving
  - Reliance on driving ranged from partial to total for most groups
  - Families with children largely drive to get everyone around
  - Driving is important to many immigrant groups – avoidance of winter weather, transporting larger families, car-ownership is seen as a “mark of status”
  - Most folks don't see electric vehicles as accessible

# Assessment themes

*How are folks getting where they need to go?*

- Using multiple modes
  - For many people who own cars, several factors determine whether they use cars or public transit (availability and cost of parking, distance between transit stops/routes and origin/destination, number of family members being transported)
  - Folks often make mixed trips (combo car/transit) if parking is difficult or if transit is too far away
  - People shared that they would be willing to do more mixed trips if transit options were better
- We did not hear from many bike users

# Assessment themes

## *Who is transportation infrastructure for?*

- Transportation modes are racialized and stratified by class
  - More BIPOC folks use buses, subways tend to be “whiter” than buses
  - Transit access and walkability often require paying more for housing; car-free lifestyle is less available to poorer/more marginalized groups who must commute via car for work
  - White voices dominate bike lane conversations (though many BIPOC groups use bikes, e.g., youth)
  - Certain norms (e.g., cyclists saying “on your right/left” when passing pedestrians) might not be intuitive for immigrants
  - Unhoused people use transit infrastructure to sleep, stay warm, etc.
- Discrimination and disenfranchisement
  - In the past, bus drivers often would not stop for women with strollers
  - Women report feeling unsafe taking public transit
  - People with disabilities/mobility constraints often face challenges getting rideshare services (lack of accommodations)

# Assessment themes

## *Who is transportation infrastructure for?*

- Lower income folks can't access parking
  - Limited public parking + expensive private parking = only higher income workers/residents can get parking
  - We heard that some individuals resort to parking illegally and collecting tickets as a cheaper/less inconvenient alternative to paying for parking
  - Lack of street parking is a deterrent for people who rely on driving to access CBOs (e.g., folks who commute to places of worship)
  - Private Transportation Management Associations (TMAs) (which reduce employees' need for parking) could be used to broaden access

# Assessment themes

## *Policy ideas to address issues*



### **Interviewees shared policy ideas for addressing the issues named:**

- Free or reduced cost transit
  - For all, or
  - For key constituencies (youth/students, teachers, low-income folks)
- Make biking safer (for bikers and non-bikers)
  - “Bikers need to be regulated like cars” (require a license, registration, and insurance)
  - Better enforcement of traffic rules for bikers
  - Traffic safety is a priority for all – separated bike paths & biker training make bikers, pedestrians, and motorists feel safer
- More parking hubs
  - Hubs like Alewife improve access for commuters

# Assessment themes

## *Policy ideas to address issues*



- Improve the experience and convenience of bus-riding
  - More routes
  - More traffic priority – lights and lanes
  - Better shelters with schedules
  - Improved access for limited mobility (due to disabilities, kids in strollers, etc.)
  - WiFi access
  
- Leverage and expand City and employer-based incentives for shifting to sustainable modes
  - City has reduced fare CharlieCard program for City employees
  - Reduced BlueBike membership fees for youth
  - Get the word out about these programs
  - Encourage other employers to do similar programs (public-private initiatives)



# Assessment themes

## *Legacies of exclusionary policies that intersect with transportation issues*

### **We heard that historic and current policies continue to have lasting effects on communities and CBOs in the city**

- Past/present “urban planning” policies have done damage, especially on Black communities
  - Redlining entrenched racial segregation and urban decay across the city (particularly the Port)
  - Statewide abolition of rent control in the ‘90s led to increased housing costs and the exodus of BIPOC residents – historically Black places of worship saw their membership shift from residents to predominantly non-residents
  
- Unaffordable housing results in transportation inefficiencies
  - Housing close to transit costs more – concerns that adding more transit routes will make more affordable housing appealing to higher income earners, leading to higher housing costs and deepening gentrification
  - People who can’t afford to live here commute in for work and rely on cars – making driving harder/more expensive pushes these folks further out
  - “People will continue to be pushed out until affordable housing need addressed”
  - “No equitable transportation without housing justice”

# Assessment themes

*Legacies of exclusionary policies that intersect with transportation issues*

- School lottery & zoning policies have had the side-effect of make getting around harder
  - Students have to travel across the City to get to school
  - Cambridge Public Schools' 1-mile radius minimum for school bus services means that young students (Junior Kindergarten) have to walk up to one mile to school, sometimes alone in the cold

# Assessment themes

## *Other intersections/considerations*

- Livelihoods and business models rely on driving
  - Taxi & rideshare drivers are often lower income and/or immigrants
  - Some CBOs rely on driving for their operations (e.g., food delivery)
  - Several CBOs and places of worship have members/clients who drive to access their services
- Responsibilities and burdens often fall unequally
  - “Saving the planet is everyone’s duty, but poor folks haven’t been using resources the way the wealthy have”
  - Poor, marginalized will be most negatively affected by need for mode shift
  - “Make the people who should pay pay” – well-endowed institutions like Harvard & MIT have benefited from the system for generations and should have to pay back

# Assessment themes

## *Other intersections/considerations*

- **Make net-zero meaningful for communities**
  - While everyone agrees about the importance, saving the planet is not the most pressing issue on the minds of marginalized folks
  - It will be important to show how transition planning relates to people's everyday lives
  - Also be straight with folks about the costs and the benefits
- **Be clear about why the City is making changes & new policies**
  - Folks are happier to get on board when they understand why changes are being made

# Assessment themes

## *Process feedback*



### **Community members shared the following recommendations and considerations for conducting outreach:**

- CBOs (and community members) have limited bandwidth
  - Many happy to support less time-intensive efforts (surveys, focus groups, tabling at events, workshops, distributing materials, social media, etc.)
- Meet people where they are
  - Public housing
  - Youth centers
  - Schools (including parent events)

# Assessment themes

## *Process feedback*



- Tailor outreach toward group needs
  - Translation and interpretation for immigrant groups
  - Considerations for seniors, youth
  - Host meetings after 7pm for families
  - Use Zoom selectively – understand the pros and cons and which audiences will be left out
- Folks doing outreach should look like community
  - Be up-front when that's not the case
- Compensate participants for their time



## About CBI

CBI is a nonprofit organization with decades of experience helping leaders collaborate to solve complex problems.

Our staff are experts in facilitation, mediation, capacity building, citizen engagement, and organizational strategy and development. We are committed to using our skills to build collaboration on today's most significant social, environmental, and economic challenges. We work within and across organizations, sectors, and stakeholder groups.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: [CBI.ORG](http://CBI.ORG)

---

2067 Massachusetts Ave  
Suite 570  
Cambridge, MA 02140  
Tel. (617) 492-1414

**CAMBRIDGE, MA**

**WASHINGTON, DC**

**NEW YORK, NY**

**SAN FRANCISCO, CA**

**DENVER, CO**

**SANTIAGO, CHILE**

**MONTRÉAL, CANADA**

