

# City of Cambridge Net Zero Transportation Plan Advisory Group

Meeting #13 notes – Wednesday, June 12, 2024

The Net Zero Transportation Plan (NZTP) Advisory Group held its thirteenth meeting on Wednesday, June 12, 2024, at the Cambridge City Hall Annex and via Zoom. The objective of the meetings was to:

- Discuss, improve, and seek agreement on “Active Transportation” and “Community Engagement” actions to include in the NZTP.

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

## Important points and action items

- The Advisory Group reviewed recent community engagement activities. • The Advisory Group reviewed edits to actions from previous meetings. Members generally agreed with the edits and noted need for further discussion on allowing a potential mobility wallet action to subsidize fuel purchases.
- The Advisory Group reviewed proposed actions for the NZTP under the categories of “Active Transportation” and “Community Engagement.” Members shared feedback and generally supported the actions proposed.
- Advisory Group members asked the Community Development Department (CDD) to provide info about the percentage of Bluebikes in Cambridge that are electric and the number of stations that have electric bikes. They also asked for more details on the number of lane miles associated with the Bicycle Network Vision.

## Summary of discussions

### Welcome and introductions

Advisory Group members, staff, and consultants introduced themselves for members of the public.

### Community outreach updates

So far, the Community Development Department has participated in community engagement meetings and events with:

- Joint Transportation Committees (February 28)
- City of Cambridge Climate Committee (May 16)
- Focus group organized by Community Engagement Team (CET@CDD) (May 20) • Islamic Society of Boston Cambridge (May 21)
- Community Learning Center (June 6)

Members were reminded to reach out to Brandon if they would be interested in hosting a community event.

## Potential actions for the NZTP

Afterward, members reviewed updates to the actions from the past couple of meetings. These updates were made in response to feedback from the Advisory Group.

- **Updated action to RCT-3:** “Provide a mobility wallet to residents with low-incomes”<sup>1</sup>
- **Updated action to RCO-1:** “Explore meaningful ways to acknowledge residents with no registered vehicles, including eligibility for households that reduce the number of cars per household”
- **Removed RCO action:** “Advocate for higher registration fees for private cars”
- **Updated EV-1:** Added charging for micromobility devices (e.g., scooters)
- **Updated EV-2:** Specified adding charging stations at affordable housing sites that are not open to the public (to make it clear that parking will be for residents)
- **Former RCT action became CE-3:** Supporting community-led initiatives (discussed below)

Advisory Group members shared the following feedback:

- On RCT-3, several members suggested that residents should be able to use the wallet to pay for gas. This approach could improve mobility for residents but would lead to more greenhouse gas emissions. **Members will come to an opinion on this question at an upcoming meeting.** Members also suggested that the wallet could be used for parking.
- On RCO-1, it might be useful to think about expanding the mobility wallet (RCT-3) to people who reduce their ownership of cars. (The current mobility wallet action supports mobility for people with lower incomes, while this action is meant to incentivize people of all incomes reducing their car ownership.)
- On EV-1, there was a request for more detail on what this action could look like.

Overall, members were comfortable with the actions as edited, though they noted need for more discussion on RCT-3.

## Community engagement actions

These actions engage people equitably to improve their transportation experience and make strategies more widely understood so that change is less disruptive.

**CE-1. Improve communication about transportation options that are available, including better support for signing up for income-eligible and youth MBTA passes and Bluebikes memberships.** This action is estimated to account for a less than 1% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

Feedback from the Advisory Group was as follows:

- Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee provides similar navigator services for people in Cambridge, and might be a good partner for the City to implement this action.
- Members suggested focusing on “deeper coaching” for people to be able to use transportation modes in Cambridge. Examples included group bus and bike rides for new immigrants, guides of places to buy bikes and get free bikes, and tours of the T.

<sup>1</sup> A mobility wallet would be the equivalent of a debit card that could be used for transportation-related purchases.

- The MBTA has a [Mobility Center](#) that provides similar services for people with accessibility needs.

**CE-2. Conduct a transportation insecurity index survey.** This action would be a supportive policy.

Feedback from the Advisory Group was as follows:

- Data collection needs to be done in an equitable manner. People with disabilities need to be equitably represented in the sample.

**CE-3. Support community-led initiatives that improve low-carbon transportation options and support deepening relationships between the City, residents, employers, and property owners.** This action would be a supportive policy.

Feedback from the Advisory Group was as follows:

- There should be a focus on education and communication in a manner that respects people’s autonomy. For example, Cambridge could create a “transportation ambassador” program to involve residents in the public education process.
- Some initiatives like Cambridge Bike Give Back already exist and could do even more work with additional support from the City. Others might need some guidance and/or technical assistance to get started.
- “Bike Life” has often been villainized, and young BIPOC people who ride bikes are often profiled by the police. One idea of a community-led initiative might be a “Bike Life” league or tournament. It could also serve as a way to encourage good values around bike culture [as an alternative to policing].

#### Active transportation

These actions reduce greenhouse gas emissions by making it easier for people to use active modes like walking, biking, and taking a scooter.

**AT-1. Complete building the Citywide Bicycle Network Vision.** This action is estimated to account for a 2.6% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

Feedback and questions from the Advisory Group was as follows:

- People with disabilities should be included when planning bike lanes. • Given rising temperatures, it is important to also include supportive infrastructure, like shade facilities and water fountains.
- There was a question about whether the 25 miles of additional bike lanes which would be built includes both directions. [After the meeting Stephanie shared info from the Bicycle Program Manager noting that there is no goal related to a specific number of miles or lane miles. The goal is to create a network of streets that are comfortable for people of all ages and abilities that enables people to access all destinations. Every update to the Network Vision will likely modify the overall Vision so having a specific target of miles does not make sense.]

**AT-2. Improve and maintain walking infrastructure.** This action is estimated to lead to a 2.6% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

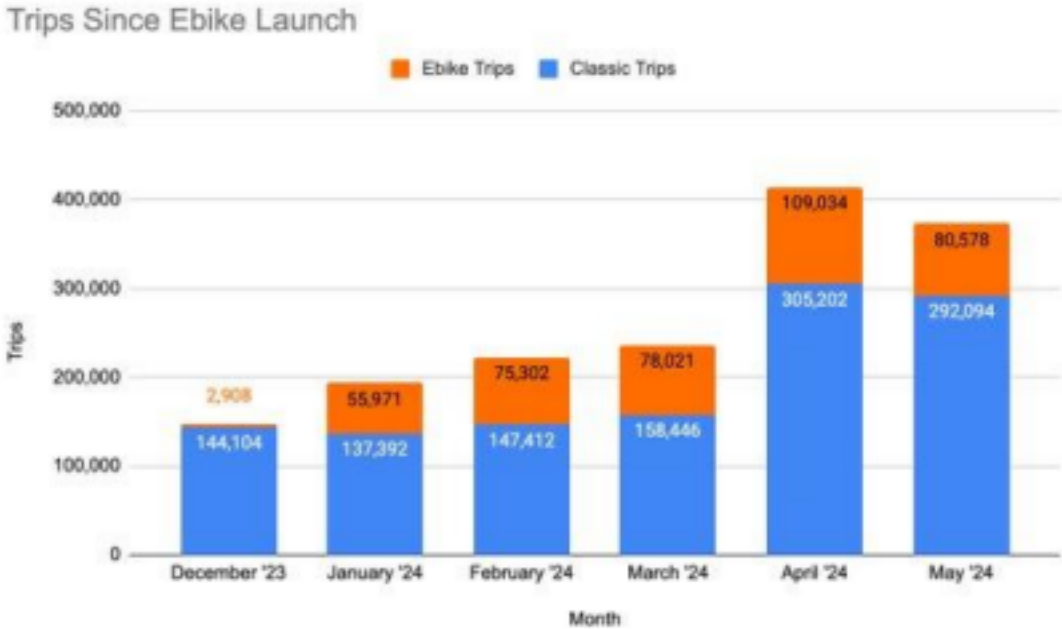
Feedback from the Advisory Group was as follows:

- Brick sidewalks are an obstacle for people with disabilities.
- There is a need here too for supportive infrastructure like shade, water fountains, and benches located away from bus stops.

**AT-3. Continue adding Bluebikes stations until all Cambridge residents live within a 2.5-minute walk of a Bluebikes station.** This action is estimated to lead to a less than 1% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

Feedback from the Advisory Group was as follows:

- One member shared that the electric Bluebikes can be expensive.
- One member asked what percentage of Bluebikes in Cambridge are electric and how many stations are currently equipped. Stephanie shared the following after the meeting in response: *After e-bikes were introduced into the Bluebikes system in mid-December, you can see in this graph how many more trips they brought in those winter months. Current data shows that e-bikes trips represent 30% of all trips taken although they are only about 18% of the bicycle fleet.*



**Overall, the Advisory Group thought that the actions discussed are worth including in the list of actions going forward.**

Other matters and closing thoughts

The Advisory Group adjourned and will meet next on Wednesday, July 31, 2024, at 9 AM at the City Hall Annex.

## Attendance list

- Ibrahim Omar (Islamic Society of Boston Cambridge)
- Marc Roberts (Cambridge Bike Give Back)
- Nora Sears (De Novo Center for Justice and Healing)
- Rachel Tanenhaus (Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities) • Omriqui Thomas (Cambridge High School student)
- Angela Vierling-Claassen (Cambridge resident)

## Community Development Department staff

- Maricela Escobar (Mobility Engagement Planner)
- Stephanie Groll (Mobility Strategy Manager)
- Susanne Rasmussen (Director of Environmental and Transportation Planning)

## Consultant team

- Brandon Chambers (Consensus Building Institute)
- Elizabeth Cooper (Consensus Building Institute)
- Amy Liu-Pathak (Arup)