



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE Zero Emissions Transportation Plan

2025 | Translated Summary

Executive Summary

Why Zero Emissions Transportation Plan, and Why Now?¹

The climate crisis is already impacting Cambridge through extreme heat, poor air quality, and more frequent weather emergencies. The City has committed to net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050. Net Zero² refers to the balance between the amount of greenhouse gas that's produced and the amount that's removed from the atmosphere. Transportation is a major source of greenhouse gas emissions, with 94% of city emissions coming from private on-road vehicles³. The Zero Emissions Transportation Plan (ZETP) aims to eliminate these emissions while creating a more accessible and equitable transportation system. Achieving this goal requires urgent action and an understanding of past planning inequities that shape how residents experience and adapt to changes.

How We Made the Plan

The Zero Emissions Transportation Plan was developed through an inclusive process to bring in a wide range of voices, especially those who are underheard, underserved, and historically excluded. The goal was to build trust, strengthen relationships, and support ongoing engagement efforts.

We worked with an advisory group, City committees, and the broader community to develop and refine potential actions. This included input from more than 50 public events, focus groups, and meetings, which helped shape how potential actions were refined and which ideas were adapted or removed from consideration.

Four key goals guided the Zero Emissions Transportation Plan:

1. Remove climate pollution from transportation
2. Make moving around Cambridge more accessible, safe, and enjoyable
3. Improve economic opportunity and address historic injustices
4. Create a stronger and more connected community

City staff also worked with consultants to estimate transportation emissions in Cambridge and model the impact of potential actions. This baseline was used to determine how many emissions need to be reduced by 2050 and to evaluate how proposed actions would contribute to those reductions.

What We Learned From Community Members

- People are open to changing how they travel but need support.
- People want to feel heard and see action.
- Higher costs for owning or parking a car can feel unfair and inherently inequitable.
- Better communication about changes is needed.

- Seniors and people with disabilities need reliable, convenient and dignified transportation alternatives.
- Electric vehicles (EVs) are only part of the solution.
- Different solutions work for different needs, so a range of options is important.

What is in the Plan?

The Plan describes and recommends actions in six categories:

- 1. Community engagement:** Engaging people equitably to improve their transportation experience
- 2. Buses and shuttles:** Improving bus and shuttle service
- 3. Bike, walk, and micromobility:** Making it accessible, safe, and enjoyable for people to walk, bike, and take a scooter
- 4. Reducing car trips:** Giving people more travel choices to reduce the need to drive
- 5. Reducing car ownership:** Making it easier to not own a car
- 6. Electric vehicles:** Encouraging a shift to electric vehicles

The City has prioritized near-term actions based on impact, feasibility, cost, and community input.

These include:

- Helping residents access transportation options and discounts
- Improving bus speed and reliability on key routes
- Expanding access to biking and Bluebikes
- Increasing public EV and micromobility

charging

What Comes Next?

Cambridge's next step is the development of a Cambridge Access and Mobility Plan, a citywide transportation planning process launching in 2026. It will build on the ZETP's foundation and further integrate land use, safety, accessibility, and sustainability to create a transportation system that meets the needs of Cambridge residents now and in the future.

Endnotes

- 1 The Cambridge “Zero Emissions Transportation Plan” was originally called the “Net Zero Transportation Plan” while it was in development. Staff changed the name after community members asked for a clearer term than “Net Zero.”
- 2 For more information on what it means to be “net zero,” visit <https://www.nationalgrid.com/stories/energy-explained/what-is-net-zero>.
- 3 See page 27 of the 2019 Cambridge Community GHG Inventory: https://www.cambridgema.gov/-/media/Files/CDD/Climate/ghginventory/2019cambridgecommunitywideghginventory_summaryreport.pdf

