

Cambridge Climate Protection Action Committee

CPAC BULLETIN

February 2013

MEETING: The next meeting of the Climate Protection Action Committee is scheduled for February 14, 6:00 pm, City Hall Annex, 2nd floor meeting room. The [agenda](#) will be posted on the Community Development Department website. The featured topic this month is Planning for Transportation Mode Shift in Cambridge.

EVENTS & MEETINGS

- **Climate Change Politics** – *The Politics of America's Fight Against Global Warming*, February 14, 4:15 pm, Tsai Auditorium (CGOS South Building, 1730 Cambridge St.), Harvard University. Panel including Larry Schweiger, President & CEO, National Wildlife Federation; Gene Karpinski, President, League of Conservation Voters; Lee Wasserman, Director, Rockefeller Family Fund; Theda Skocpol, Harvard Professor of Government; Mary Ann Hitt, Directorm, Sierra Club Beyond Coal Campaign. For more info, [click here](#).
- **MIT Energy Conference** – March 1 & 2. The theme of the eighth annual conference is “From Idea to Impact: Collaborating to Meet Global Energy Challenges. Registration fees apply. For more information, [click here](#).
- **BuildingEnergy 13** – March 5-7, Seaport World Trade Center, Boston. Sponsored by NESEA. This is the leading regional conference on sustainable buildings and clean energy in the Northeast. For more information, [click here](#).
- **Greenport Forum** – *Supporting Local and Regional Food Production: What Can We Do?* February 19 at 7:00 pm. A lively discussion of practical actions to promote local and regional food production. What new actions can support farmers' markets, CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture), and sustainable regional land use? What can be done to grow more food in Cambridge? Is there an initiative that you personally would like to join or support? This Forum was requested by participants as a follow-up to GreenPort's January discussion of a sustainable food system in New England. Cambridgeport Baptist Church, 459 Putnam Ave (corner of Magazine and Putnam).
- **Landscaping with Climate in Mind** – April 6, Public Library, 7:00 pm, Sue Reed, Author of *Energy-Wise Landscape Design*. Learn how to manage your landscape to save energy and reduce your carbon footprint—essential actions in this era of climate change. Sponsored by [Grow Native Massachusetts](#).
- **Friends of Alewife Reservation Walks** - Wildlife walks sponsored by [FAR](#) impart the history and background to the DCR's Alewife Reservation, a rare urban wild in Cambridge. The walks are led by a professional wildlife assessor, Dave Brown. Tours last 2 hours. To prepare for the tour, or to get a "Virtual Tour", [click here](#).
- **Green Streets** – This initiative encourages people throughout Cambridge (and Somerville and surrounding cities and towns) to use a green form of transportation (transit, bicycle, walk, skate) on a designated day of the month and to wear a green-colored item of attire. The goal is to make Cambridge and neighboring cities safer, quieter, and friendlier for pedestrians and cyclists, and to minimize the use and impact of cars. Generally, the designated day is the last Friday of the month. Check the [Cambridge Green Streets Initiative website](#) for more info and incentives.

- **350.Org** - 350 Massachusetts is a volunteer-led, campaign-focused initiative connecting and organizing a strong grassroots coalition to address climate change and build a just and secure future beyond fossil fuels. Meetings are held every two weeks. All meetings are held at First Church Cambridge, 11 Garden Street, Cambridge, MA and begin at 6PM for potluck and networking, with the general meeting and working groups at 7PM. More info at www.350MA.org.
- **Green Cambridge** - Green Cambridge is a 501(c)(3) not for profit organization and a founding chapter of the Massachusetts Climate Action Network (MCAN). Green Cambridge works to create a more sustainable Cambridge, and to protect the environment for the health and safety of all. Green Cambridge meets monthly at the Eastern Bank community room in Harvard Square, usually on the first Thursday of every month at 6:30pm. All are welcome and invited to attend! For more information and a listing of community events, please visit: <http://www.greencambridge.org/>

NEWS

- **2012 Hottest in Continental U.S.** – The [National Atmospheric & Oceanic Administration](#) announced that 2012 was the hottest year on record in the contiguous United States. For all of 2012, the average temperature was 55.3 degrees Fahrenheit, a full degree warmer than the previous record set in 1998 and 3.2 degrees F warmer than the 20th Century average. Globally, 2012 was the tenth warmest year on record. 2012 was also the 36th consecutive year to exceed the global average temperature of the 20th century. The last colder than average year was 1976.
- **National Climate Assessment** – The [draft Third National Climate Assessment](#) has been released for public comment. The assessment is required by Congress under the Global Change Research Act of 1990 and a report must be submitted to the President and Congress every four years. The assessment provides the latest understanding of climate change science and presents likely impacts on the United States and on a region-by-region basis. The findings are used by federal, state, and local governments as well as businesses and other entities to plan for climate change. The report states: "Climate change is already affecting the American people," ... "These changes are part of the pattern of global climate change, which is primarily driven by human activity." For the Northeast, the report's key messages include:
 1. Heat waves, coastal flooding due to sea level rise, and river flooding due to more extreme precipitation events will pose a growing challenge to the region's environmental, social, and economic systems. This will increase the vulnerability of the region's residents, especially populations that are already most disadvantaged.
 2. Infrastructure will be increasingly compromised by climate-related hazards including sea level rise and coastal flooding, and intense precipitation events.
- **Boston Sea Level Rise Report** – The Boston Harbor Association released its report on how sea level rise may affect the city and how commercial property owners and public agencies can begin preparing. [Preparing for the Rising Tide](#) reports predictions that sea level may rise by up to two feet by 2050 and up to six feet by 2100. The report also analyzed what would have happened if the recent Hurricane Sandy had hit Boston at high tide, instead of low tide as it did, and if it hit after sea level rises 2.5 feet. If Sandy arrived at high tide (about 5 hours earlier), about 6% of Boston would have been flooded. If it hit at high tide with 2.5 feet of sea level rise, about 30% of the city would flood. At risk properties include the Boston Convention Center, Seaport World Trade Center, Conley container port terminal, Logan Airport, Harvard Stadium, New England Aquarium, and the Bayside Expo Center. Mayor Menino issued a plan to respond to the risks including forming a cabinet-level Climate Preparedness Task Force and working with the Boston Green Ribbon Commission to develop private sector actions. [[The Atlantic Cities, 2/5/13](#)]
- **NRG and GenOn Merge** – As a result of a recent merger, the Kendall Square Station powerplant is now part of NRG Energy. [GenOn and NRG completed their merger in December](#). NRG has the largest independent power generation portfolio in the country and is a Fortune 300 company. Kendall Square

Station is a very efficient combined cycle co-generation plant that produces both electricity and steam. Veolia distributes steam produced largely from waste heat at the plant to buildings in Cambridge and Boston.

- **States Agree to Reduce RGGI Cap** – The nine northeastern and mid-Atlantic states, including Massachusetts, that participate in the [Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative](#) have agreed to lower the cap on greenhouse gas emissions from powerplants by 45% for 2014. The regional CO2 budget will go from 165 million tons to 91 million tons. After 2014, the cap will decline 2.5 percent each year until 2020. In addition to reducing emissions of CO2, the major greenhouse gas, the auction of emission credits will generate an estimated \$2.2 billion for reinvestment in energy efficiency and renewable energy and thereby create more jobs. Electric utility customers will see only a slight increase, less than 1%, in their bills. The RGGI states have agreed on a model rule which must be adopted by each state for the new cap to go into effect. [[New York Times, 2/7/13](#)]
- **MIT Clean Energy Prize** – The competition for the best clean energy ideas or technology in energy efficiency, renewable energy, and infrastructure and resources. The grand prize is \$150,000. Entries are due February 28. The submittals will be showcased in May. For more info, [click here](#).
- **Mass. PACE Study** – The Mass. Department of Energy Resources has released a [report on the Property Assessed Clean Energy \(PACE\) financing mechanism](#) for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects in commercial buildings. PACE financing programs have been introduced in several states, mostly for commercial buildings. Massachusetts law authorizes PACE financing programs which places a voluntary property tax assessment on specified parcels of property to finance energy improvements. A key advantage of PACE financing is that the obligation runs with the property, not the owner. The report recommends that a PACE program for commercial buildings be administered jointly by the DOER and MassDevelopment.
- **Boston GHG Emissions** – The City of Boston has issued its update of the [community and municipal greenhouse gas emissions inventory](#). The report indicates that total GHG emissions for Boston have decreased by 9% since 2005. Municipal GHG emissions were 192,594 tons CO2e in fiscal year 2011 compared to 210,063 in FY2005.
- **GHG Mitigation Still Matters** – Dr. Henry Jacoby, MIT Sloan School Professor and former co-director of the Joint Program on the Science and Policy of Climate Change, argues in WBUR's [Cognoscenti](#) that reducing greenhouse gas emissions still matters. While acknowledging that climate change is already occurring and that our children and grandchildren will have to live with the consequences, reducing GHG emissions can limit the damage and avoid the worst consequences. Based on estimates by the MIT Joint Program, there is about a 50/50 chance that without additional mitigation global temperatures will rise by as much as 5 degrees Celsius by the end of this century. There is a one in four chance that global temperatures will rise by 6 degrees Celsius or more. Nations have tried to set a goal to limit temperature increases to 2 degrees Celsius by 2100 by keeping GHG concentrations in the atmosphere to around 450 parts per million (ppm), which Dr. Jacoby notes is daunting. The MIT Joint Program's calculations however indicate that limiting the concentration of GHGs to 650 ppm would virtually eliminate the risks of temperatures increasing by 5 to 7 degrees Celsius, the higher end of the projections and thereby spare future generations from the most catastrophic effects.
- **Plants Blooming Earlier** – A new study from Boston University researchers finds that flowering plants in the eastern United States are blooming earlier than at any point in recorded history. Historical observations, including those made by Henry David Thoreau and Aldo Leopold, were used in the study. They found that for each one degree Fahrenheit increase in average spring temperatures, plants bloomed 2.3 days earlier. [[National Geographic Daily News, 1/16/13](#)]
- **State Transportation Plan** – Governor Deval Patrick has made transportation improvement and reform a major priority. The [21st Century Transportation Plan](#) for Massachusetts shows that the state needs \$684 million to operate the system we have today. The plan calls for an additional \$5.2 billion over 10 years in road and highway repair to reduce the number of structurally deficient bridges and ease congestion on

major arteries; \$3.8 billion to improve existing transit services; and \$275 million for Registry and airport maintenance. The state also identifies a \$1.02 billion average additional need each year to create a 21st century transportation network. The plan recommends various ways to raise additional revenue to move the plan forward. [[MassDOT press release, 1/14/13](#)]

RESOURCES & IDEAS

- **Cambridge Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment** – The City is working on preparing a vulnerability assessment that will serve as the foundation for a climate change preparedness plan that will follow. The [project webpage](#) provides background information and documents from meetings. Interested people can send an email to jbolduc@cambridgema.gov to be placed on the project email list.
- **Northeast EV Network** – The [Northeast Electric Vehicle Network](#) is a collaboration of Northeastern states laying the groundwork for the regional deployment of electric vehicles. The website includes useful information about owning and driving EVs.
- **Cambridge Solar Map** – The [Cambridge Solar Tool](#) provides a web-based interactive tool to find out the potential for installing solar photovoltaic systems on rooftops in the city. The tool also evaluates the financial feasibility of installations and makes comparisons to alternative investments. The tool is designed by Modern Development Studio and based on the research of the [MIT Sustainable Design Lab](#) led by Dr. Christoph Reinhart. The City's [Cambridge Energy Alliance](#) program can assist interested property owners with finding installers and understanding the financial aspects.
- **Opt Out of Unwanted Mail** - Do you get unwanted mail from retailers, credit card companies, or cable/phone companies? You can opt out of mailings from over 4000 companies with Catalog Choice and help reduce waste. For example, you can stop getting weekly circulars from Global Direct, they will honor opt-out requests, so add them to “your choices”. Just register for FREE at <https://cambridge.catalogchoice.org> to create an account to start cleaning out your mailbox. To date, over 3700 Cambridge residents have signed up and opted out of nearly 25,000 different unwanted mailings!
- **Check Out Watt Meters at the Library** – Cambridge residents can borrow a “kill-a-watt” meter from the Main Public Library to measure how much electricity their home appliances and devices use. The meters come with a guide on how to use them and information on how to save energy. The meter kits and guide were developed by the [Sprouts of Hope](#) group based at the King Open School.
- **MBTA Rider Tools** – The MBTA has a number of [rider tools](#) that help riders to anticipate arrival times of buses, subways, and commuter trains and to receive alerts of delays. These tools can be used on iPhones, Android phones, text messages, emails, and the Web. There is also a trip planning tool.
- **NSTAR Green** – Residential and small business electric customers of NSTAR can opt to purchase renewable electricity generated by wind energy farms. To sign up for the service, visit the [NSTAR website](#).
- **Cambridge Energy Alliance** – The [Cambridge Energy Alliance](#), a program of the City of Cambridge Community Development Department helps residents, businesses, and organizations to obtain energy efficiency and renewable energy services. You can sign up for energy audits and ask questions through the energy advisor service.
- **Sustainable Business Leader Program** - SBLP is a comprehensive certification program that supports local businesses in improving their environmental business practices and reducing their carbon footprint. For more information please visit the [SBLP website](#) or email to katrina@sbnboston.org.
- **MCAN Low Carbon Living Program** – The [Massachusetts Climate Action Network](#) works with its local member organizations to develop teams of 5 to 8 households to assess their household carbon footprints

and undertake actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The program is based on the Low Carbon Diet workbook and involves 3 to 4 meetings.

About the CPAC Bulletin:

The Climate Protection Action Committee (CPAC) is a City of Cambridge advisory body appointed by the City Manager to assist in the implementation of the Cambridge Climate Protection Plan. Please forward this bulletin to other interested people. Anyone who would like to be added to the email distribution list should contact John Bolduc at jbolduc@cambridgema.gov or 617-349-4628. For more information about Cambridge climate protection activities, see <http://www.cambridgema.gov/climate>. Recent issues of the CPAC Bulletin are posted on the webpage.