

Cambridge Climate Protection Action Committee

CPAC BULLETIN

February 2012

MEETING: The next meeting of the Climate Protection Action Committee is scheduled for Thursday, February 9, 6:00 pm at City Hall Annex, Second Floor. The agenda will be posted on the [CPAC webpage](#).

EVENTS & MEETINGS

- **Boston Green Drinks** – February 28, 6:00 pm, Kingston Station Restaurant, 25 Kingston Street, Boston. [Boston Green Drinks](#) is a group of Boston area people interested in sustainability focused on community building, career development, education, and fun. The group meets on the last Tuesday of every month.
- **MBTA Proposed Fare Increases and Service Changes** – February 29, 6:00 to 8:00 pm, Citywide Senior Center, 806 Massachusetts Avenue. The MBTA is holding a series of public hearings on proposed fare increases and services changes, including elimination of some bus and rail services. For more information about the specific changes and how to comment, see the [MBTA website](#).
- **Building Energy 12** – March 6 to 8, 2012, Seaport World Trade Center, Boston. The annual conference and trade show on renewable energy and green buildings of the [Northeast Sustainable Energy Association](#).
- **MIT Energy Conference** – March 16 & 17, Park Plaza Castle/Westin Copley Place, Boston. The 7th annual conference bringing together innovators, policy makers, financiers, and leaders to explore solutions to our energy problems. For more information, 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.

NEWS

- **CitySmart Report** – The Community Development Department has issued the [final report](#) on the CitySmart social marketing pilot that aimed to shift travel modes of residents away from driving alone. The program used direct mail, outreach events, posters, and electronic media in targeted neighborhoods to spread information about transportation options. Based on pre- and post-outreach surveys, the program found a reduction in driving alone for all trips from 28% to 24%. There was also evidence that these changes in travel behavior persisted. The program was funded by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation.
- **CRLS Solar PV Website** – You can view the output of the 30 kilowatt solar photovoltaic on the recently renovated Cambridge Rindge & Latin School on the Internet [here](#). The City has installed solar PV systems on five facilities that total 72 kilowatts in capacity. Other sites are being studied for project feasibility.

- **MIT Acquires Electric Vehicle** – MIT has added an all-electric Ford Transit Connect van to its vehicle fleet. The electric version of the Transit Connect will be used by the Mail Services office to deliver mail to residence halls, provide courier services, and collect mail from collection boxes on campus. The electric van has a range of 60 to 80 miles per charge but is expected to travel about 15 to 20 miles per day over 8 to 10 hours. The conventional version of the Transit Connect is a popular vehicle used by contractors, service companies, and City departments. MIT's experience with the electric version will help others assess the feasibility of electric vehicles. [[MIT News, 12/19/11](#)]
- **Bicycle Rack Design Competition** – The Cambridge Arts Council is holding a competition between invited artists to design bicycle racks. The competition called [SPUN](#), features the work of five artists: Vivian Beer, Carrie Bodle, Matthew Incman, Case Randall, and Aaron Stephan. Three or four of the designs along with drawings, models, and artist statements are being exhibited in the CAC Gallery on the second floor of City Hall Annex (344 Broadway). Images of the artist-designed bicycle racks can also be viewed online [here](#). The public is invited to check out the designs and vote by March 9 either in person at the gallery or through an [online survey](#).
- **ToExtremes Public Art Project** – A juried exhibition of public art works focused on themes about climate extremes will be held at MIT during the Cambridge Science Festival. Invited artists and designers are being asked to help communicate the essence or significance of scientific findings on climate disasters to a broad audience through artworks. The inspiration for the project is the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's special report on [Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation](#). The exhibition is being curated by Eli Kintisch, report for *Science* and author of *Hacking the Planet: Science's Best Hope – or Worst Nightmare – for Averting Climate Catastrophe*. He is currently a Knight Science Journalism Fellow at MIT. For more information about the exhibition, click [here](#).
- **2011 Was 11th Warmest Year on Record** – According to the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#) (NOAA), the average global temperature in 2011 tied with 1997 for the 11th warmest year since records begin in 1880. The average global temperature was 0.92 degrees Fahrenheit above the 20th Century average of 57.0 degrees F. It was the 35th consecutive year since 1976 that the yearly global temperature was above average. The warmest years on record were 2010 and 2005. All eleven years of the 21st Century (2001 to 2011) rank among the 13 warmest in the 132 year period of record keeping. 1998 was the only year of the 20th Century to be warmer than 2011. According to NOAA, La Nina events, which involve cooler than normal waters in the eastern and central equatorial Pacific Ocean, kept 2011 below recent trends. Compared to other La Nina years, 2011 was the warmest observed.
- **PACE Rulemaking** – Under court order, the Federal Housing Finance Agency is conducting a rulemaking process on its guidance to financial institutions that has stymied residential Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) financing programs. PACE programs harness the property tax system to finance energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. Financing for the projects is provided by local governments or private investors and property owners pay back the loans through the property tax assessment. This has the advantage of placing the obligation on the property, not the owner, and is transferable upon sale. But the FHFA directed financial institutions not to finance properties with PACE loans because of concerns over PACE loan liens taking precedence over bank loans. Commercial PACE programs were not affected by this guidance. PACE programs, which were pioneered by Berkeley, California, were launched in several jurisdictions, especially in the West, but the residential financing had to be put on hold pending resolution of the dispute with FHFA. As a result of litigation, FHFA is now conducting a public rulemaking process and is collecting public comment on specific questions until March 26. For more information about the rulemaking process and to comment, see the [PACENow website](#). PACE programs have been authorized in Massachusetts by the Legislature, but none have been established to date.
- **USDA Plant Hardiness Zones Shift** – The US Department of Agriculture has issued a new [plant hardiness zones map](#) which divides the nation into zones based on the average annual lowest winter temperatures. The map is used by gardeners and growers to determine which plants are likely to thrive in an area. The new map is based on an analysis of the period between 1976 and 2005; the 1990 map was

based on 1974 to 1986. The map shows that plant hardiness zones are shifting northward, an indication of climate change. USDA however is not making any connection to climate change. [[Washington Post, 1/27/12](#)]

RESOURCES & IDEAS

- **Top 25 Employers** – The list of the [top 25 employers in Cambridge](#) in 2011 is out.
- **EPA GHG Data** – The US Environmental Protection Agency has posted data on an [interactive map](#) showing 2010 greenhouse gas emissions from large facilities across the country in nine industry groups. Reporting is required under EPA regulations. Five Cambridge entities are reporting emissions: GenOn Kendall Square powerplant, the MIT powerplant, Biogen, and Harvard including the Blackstone Street facility.
- **2011 Town Gown Reports** – The [2011 Town Gown Reports](#) are available. The reports provide information to the City to help with the annual joint review of university and community needs and plans. The reports provide information on the sustainability activities of the four main academic institutions in Cambridge.
- **East Boston & Sea Level Rise** – [Article](#) on boston.com about community concerns over sea level rise in East Boston.
- **Environmental Value of Building Reuse** – The National Trust for Historic Preservation has a new report that quantifies the environmental value from a life-cycle perspective of re-using buildings. The report is entitled [The Greenest Building: Quantifying the Environmental Value of Building Reuse](#).
- **Preservation & Sustainability** – Useful resources from the [National Trust for Historic Preservation Green Lab](#) on sustainability and historic preservation. The site has a good whitepaper on district energy.
- **Warming World Video** – An [animation](#) created by NASA illustrates how average global temperatures have increased since record keeping started.
- **2010 RPS Compliance Report** – The Department of Energy Resources has issued the [2010 compliance report](#) for the Massachusetts Renewable Portfolio Standard. The report contains interesting statistics on how various regulatory and incentive programs are working to bring more renewable energy online and the status of each investor-owned utility's compliance with the RPS. It covers the new solar renewable energy certificate (SREC) market.
- **Online Climate Change Course** – The University of Chicago is offering online for free its [Open Climate 101 course](#). Videos of the course lectures are posted and interested people can earn a certificate by viewing them and taking quizzes. The certificate is not required. The course is designed for non-science majors.
- **Additionality Papers** – The Greenhouse Gas Management Institute has an article on “how to explain additionality” introducing three papers on the topic. It’s an esoteric, but important concept in carbon offsets and renewable energy certificates. See the article [here](#).
- **Potential Effect of Waste Heat on Climate** – Provocative [article](#) in New Scientist about how waste heat from most energy systems can become a direct effect on climate systems. Not burning fossil fuels is not enough according to this article.
- **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** – Residents, businesses, and organizations can indicate their interest in the services of the [Cambridge Energy Alliance](#) by going to the website and registering. No obligation is implied. Those who register will receive an email in response with a telephone number to call to schedule an energy audit.
- **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.