

Possible Actions for Cambridge Net Zero Transportation Plan

November 22, 2023

This memo includes a list of potential actions that could help Cambridge reach net zero emissions for transportation. In the upcoming meeting – Advisory Group (AG) Meeting #8 on November 29th, 2023 – we will discuss, as a group, the potential for each action to meet the four goals of this project:

- Improve Mobility
- Remove GHGs from Transportation
- Facilitate a Just Transition
- Strengthen Community and Connectedness

All actions listed in this memo and the meeting are draft actions and will likely change after the AG and the community provide input. This is only the first step in beginning to shape the specific actions of the plan.

After AG Meeting #8, the City and their consultants will take a list of preferred actions and model their impact on emissions over time. It is expected that the preferred actions decided on in AG Meeting #8 will significantly reduce emissions. However, it is likely that we will need to adjust the list of actions to reach the City's goal of eliminating all emissions from transportation. This will be discussed in AG Meeting #9.

Focus Actions

In response to many of the conversations with the Advisory Group (AG), we are focusing on the following actions. Many of these actions reflect the interests of the AG, and other actions are borrowed from peer cities. In AG Meeting #8 we will discuss these actions to identify ways to improve them for Cambridge and ensure that we can implement them in an equitable way.

These actions are grouped by general category. Their numbers will help us quickly identify them during discussion, but they are not related to their importance.

Electrification Actions

These actions reduce emissions through a shift to electric mobility:

- E1. Charge less for electric vehicle resident parking permits to acknowledge the reduced community costs compared to internal combustion engines
- E2. Engage low-income households and communities of color to communicate subsidies and available incentives for charging and/or purchase of e-bikes and electric cars
- E3. Create a program that prioritizes the sale of used electric government vehicles to people with low incomes
- E4. Improve access to public curbside EV charging
- E5. Install city-owned public EV charging stations comprehensively throughout Cambridge, ensuring locations near underserved communities in historically excluded neighborhoods

Active Transportation Strategies

These actions reduce emissions through increasing the number of trips taken via active transportation like biking, walking, scooting, and others:

Existing and Ongoing Actions, Plans, and Policies in Cambridge

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This memo includes a list of ongoing actions, plans, and policies that the City and State have already put in place or plan to do in the future to improve mobility and address climate change. These actions are why Cambridge is already on a pathway of reducing emissions. However, more actions are needed to reach the net zero target.

In Progress/Future Actions

- EA1. Create a dashboard indicating ongoing initiatives, progress, and success/failures of decarbonization actions
- EA2. Create bike parking minimums in zoning
- EA3. Electrify MBTA bus fleet
- EA4. Electrify City government vehicle fleet
- EA5. Eliminate parking minimums in zoning
- EA6. Establish additional bus-only lanes to support rapid bus service
- EA7. Expand messaging around climate change, clearly tying it to the tangible impacts communities can feel
- EA8. Increase tree canopy coverage, prioritizing historically marginalized communities
- EA9. Install city-owned public EV charging stations throughout Cambridge, ensuring distribution in underserved communities in historically excluded neighborhoods
- EA10. Improve bike parking and pedestrian safety around transit stations
- EA11. Provide discounted Bluebikes memberships for people with low-incomes through the Income-Eligible Bluebikes Membership program
- EA12. Streamline on-street restaurant permitting process to activate streets

Policies, Plans, and Programs for Improving Mobility and Protecting Against the Effects of Climate Change

Existing Policies and Plans

These policies are hyperlinked below:

[Vehicle Trip Reduction Ordinance – 1992](#)

[Parking and Transportation Demand Management Ordinance – 1998](#)

[Towards a Sustainable Future: Growth Policy – 2007 update of 1993 plan](#)

[Transit Strategic Plan – 2015](#)

[Net Zero Action Plan for buildings – 2015](#)

[Vision Zero Policy – 2016](#)

[Complete Streets Policy – 2016](#)

[Envision Cambridge: Roadmap to 2030 – 2016 to 2018](#)

[School Wellness Policy – 2017 and Implementation Procedures – 2014](#)

Climate Action Plan – 2018 update of earlier plan

Cycling Safety Ordinance – 2019

Retail strategy – 2019

Bicycle Plan – 2020 update to 2015 plan

Resilient Cambridge – 2021

Parking Study – 2022

Clean Fleet Initiative – 2023

[Ongoing Programs](#)

Transit Program

Regional Pathways

Bluebikes public bikeshare system

Safe Routes to School Program

Bicycle Workshops

Street Code: Rules, etiquette, and how to get around town safely

Transportation Demand Management Program

Electric Vehicle resources

Traffic Calming Program

Transportation Evaluations and Studies

- A1. Advertise and increase enrollment in the Income-Eligible Bluebikes Membership program
- A2. Continue building out the Bluebikes network to meet the goal of one station every 2.5-minute walk
- A3. Create laws and awareness campaigns that reduce and discourage the racial profiling of people of color while traveling via low-carbon modes
- A4. Develop mobility hubs that provide access and connection between multiple modes
- A5. Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Reduction Strategies

These actions reduce emissions by decreasing VMT, or reducing the distance or number of trips people take via highly polluting modes:

- V1. Collaborate with neighborhoods, private developers, and employers to provide low-emission mobility options for people to access residential and employment areas, such as shuttles, bikes, etc.
- V2. Develop an implementation plan and increase funding to fill gaps in the Bicycle Network Plan in order to create a citywide network of high-quality, connected bicycle infrastructure
- V3. Increase funding for crosswalks, bus shelters, protected bike lanes, bike parking, and other measures to get to key public facilities such as schools, parks, community centers, recreation centers, retail areas, libraries, and transit
- V4. Establish more additional bus-only lanes to support rapid bus service
- V5. Create transport decarbonization fund for multimodal improvements, public charging station maintenance, incentive programs, and other actions to reduce emissions from transportation in Cambridge
- V6. Coordinate with neighboring municipalities to shift commuter trips out of cars
- V7. Provide incentives to encourage people to take transit, biking, and walking for all trip types

Pricing Related Actions

These actions reduce emissions by using prices or incentives various aspects of the transportation sector to align with their impacts on society:

- P1. Provide subsidies and incentives to low-income households and communities of color to support people in using electric vehicles and e-bikes
- P2. Charge emission-zone fees for vehicles that do not meet specific emissions criteria, to discourage trips in gas-powered single-occupancy vehicles
- P3. Charge vehicle idling fines
- P4. Charge developers a fee for new development relative to a project's traffic impacts in order to support multimodal infrastructure and safety improvements
- P5. Provide commute incentives to encourage transit, biking, and walk to work
- P6. Charge a fee for driving on any street in Cambridge, to discourage trip in a single-occupancy vehicle, regardless of fuel type
- P7. Increase residential parking permit fees
- P8. Charge a higher excise tax for high-emission vehicles

Additional Actions for Cambridge Net Zero Transportation Plan

November 22, 2023

This memo includes a list of additional actions that could help Cambridge reach zero emissions for transportation. These actions could be added to the focus actions discussed during AG Meeting #8 on November 29th, 2023.

The actions listed below are not included in the focus actions list yet because either the AG has not expressed an interest in focusing on them, they may be less effective at reducing emissions, the City may have less control over them, or they may have more difficult tradeoffs to weigh and might be less broadly supported. This list is organized alphabetically. It is provided as a toolbox to pull from if we need other actions to achieve the goals of the Plan of reducing transportation emissions to zero and improving mobility.

AG members should feel free to suggest adding actions from this list to the “focus actions” being discussed in AG meeting #8.

- AA1. Add bike parking requirements for Affordable Housing Overlay projects
- AA2. Advocate for a new funding source for the MBTA and/or regional transit improvements
- AA3. Prohibit gas-powered private vehicle parking through development review
- AA4. Prohibit gas sales in Cambridge
- AA5. Better advertise that the shuttles run by private institutions are open to the public
- AA6. Better enforce truck routes to ensure heavy duty vehicles are kept off neighborhood streets
- AA7. Change the excise tax fees to charge more tax on vehicles that emit more
- AA8. Clarify traffic safety laws and create PSAs to reduce conflicts between modes
- AA9. Close streets to cars and encourage use by pedestrians in specific corridors on weekends and during specific times of dayspecific corridors on weekends and during specific times of day
- AA10. Communicate more broadly about the City’s existing affordable housing mandates
- AA11. Convert school bus contract to use electric buses
- AA12. Create an essential worker public transit discount program for employees who travel off-hours
- AA13. Create community-led art programs to decorate intersections
- AA14. Create flexible curb regulations using new sign designs, pricing, and electronics within business districts at popular times. Regulations should include loading, bike and scooter parking, public transit, and shared or autonomous vehicle loading
- AA15.
- AA16. Create parking maximums in zoning
- AA17. Designate shared zones and pedestrian-only zones to deprioritize vehicle movement in busy pedestrian areas
- AA18. Develop a program for shared micromobility services, including a scooter-share system
- AA19. Develop incentives that support package delivery via cargo bikes
- AA20. Develop a freight consolidation center to reduce the number of truck trips onto neighborhood streets and enable bike deliveries
- AA21. Encourage and incentivize the use of sustainable transportation by City employees through increased transportation benefits and programming
- AA22. Establish a standardized equity assessment for all new projects

- AA23. Expand marketing of sustainable transportation modes within the City, in order to encourage broader participation, with a focus on better translation and interpretation services
- AA24. Expand the Safe Routes to School program to ensure all students, including charter schools, receive pedestrian, transit, and bicycle education and are encouraged to bike or walk (or scooter, etc.) to get to school
- AA25. Implement pricing that increases in high-demand times for some City of Cambridge parking meters to reduce the amount of driving spent looking for empty spaces and to improve parking availability for those driving while shifting people into other modes instead
- AA26. Implement Vision Zero safety improvements in high crash areas
- AA27. Improve traffic signal timing to benefit buses, pedestrians, and bikes where appropriate
- AA28. Incentivize carpooling for Cambridge residents using tax incentives or commuter benefits
- AA29. Incentivize car-sharing for Cambridge residents using tax incentives or commuter benefits
- AA30. Install bus shelters that include heat, cooling, and emergency phones
- AA31. Launch a user-friendly, searchable app mapping all curbside designations throughout the city, as well as bike facilities and pedestrian zones
- AA32. More effectively communicate the benefits and costs of electric vehicles and e-bikes
- AA33. More effectively communicate the benefits and costs of sharing vehicles instead of private ownership
- AA34. Pass anti-displacement laws to ensure transportation improvements don't result in negative outcomes and that communities remain intact as development continues
- AA35. Pass minimum electric vehicle charging requirements for new developments with parking
- AA36. Pilot fare-free bus routes by partnering with MBTA and large institutions
- AA37. Pilot off-hour deliveries for heavy-duty vehicles
- AA38. Prepare for the introduction of autonomous vehicles and motorized micromobility devices by developing policies that address equity and safety, and ensure that vehicles are both shared and electric
- AA39. Program key traffic lights to give buses a head start green light ("bus priority") to allow them to avoid traffic congestion.
- AA40. Program key traffic lights to give bikes a head start green light ("cycle priority") to allow them to avoid traffic congestion
- AA41. Provide after-hours shuttles using battery electric buses
- AA42. Schedule regular community outreach and listening events focused on including people who have been underheard, underserved, and historically excluded
- AA43. Study the idea of adding a cost to using loading zones during peak times to reduce double-parking for deliveries
- AA44. Work with regional partners to study a Charles River ferry or water taxi service
- AA45.