

City of Cambridge Net Zero Transportation Plan Advisory Group

Meeting #7 notes – Wednesday, September 27, 2023

The Net Zero Transportation Plan (NZTP) Advisory Group held its seventh meeting on Wednesday, September 27, 2023, at the Cambridge City Hall Annex and via Zoom. The objectives of the meetings were to –

- Welcome new members;
- Give feedback on ways to evaluate Plan strategies;
- Outline principles for addressing equity in the planning process; and
- Discuss plans for broader community engagement.

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

Important points and action items

- The Advisory Group welcomed four new members.
- Advisory Group members reviewed a draft framework for evaluating potential NZTP strategies. Members discussed the importance of learning about crash incidents and safety, alternative policing and public safety services, affordability, housing, and gathering perspectives from the broader community.
- The Community Development Department (CDD) will share additional information on bicycle crash hotspots.
- Advisory Group members will share any remaining feedback on the draft framework and draft process equity approach before the next meeting (see appendices).
- Advisory Group members also learned about CDD’s Community Outreach Team (CET@CDD) and potential ways that CET@CDD could support outreach for the NZTP process.

Summary of discussions

Welcome and introductions

Stephanie Groll (Community Development Department) welcomed Advisory Group members. Advisory Group members, staff, and consultants introduced themselves for members of the public.

Advisory Group members also welcomed Angela Vierling-Claassen (Cambridge resident), Malene Council (Department of Human Service Programs Outreach Team), Guerlencia “Gigi” Laurent (Margaret Fuller House), and Lonnell Wells (Cambridge Bike Giveback) as new members.

In response to questions from the previous meeting, Stephanie Groll informed the group that the Harvard University shuttle is open to all members of the public, and riders are not required

to show ID. Advisory Group members reflected that the shuttle system does not feel welcoming to non-Harvard affiliates.

NZTP strategy evaluation framework & process equity approach

Advisory Group members reviewed a draft framework for evaluating how the Plan affects transportation equity (Appendix A). The framework proposes four goals for the Plan, each of which features a list of qualities and ways to assess whether the Plan is making progress toward those goals. The four goals are to:

1. Improve mobility;
2. Remove greenhouse gas emissions from transportation;
3. Facilitate a just transition (distribute responsibilities and benefits to redress historic social and economic inequities); and
4. Strengthen community and connectedness.

Members discussed several aspects of the framework and proposed additional ideas that might be helpful:

- Learning about crash incidents and safety: The City works with Cambridge Police to do crash analyses at regular intervals. Members thought that it could be helpful to identify accident hotspots and potentially use technology to notify nearby residents who can assist when accidents happen.¹ Members also shared that many sidewalks in Cambridge are dangerous, particularly for people with disabilities.
- Alternative police response services: Members shared that alternative police response services might be helpful responders for traffic-related accidents. Cambridge HEART is a community-led public safety committee that is working to develop a response service made up of community volunteers. The City also has a Community Safety Department, which is working within City government to develop a program that provides an alternative to police response in appropriate cases.
- Affordability: Members shared that it is important to reduce transportation costs for everyone moving through Cambridge and that certain essential institutions (such as hospitals and court houses) need to have easy transportation options and accessible parking. The MBTA plans to roll out a reduced fare CharlieCard for low-income passengers. However, members received feedback that these fares require photo ID and an address, both of which disenfranchise trans and unhoused people.
- Transportation, housing, and public spaces: The theme of housing has been an important consideration in Advisory Group discussions about transportation. For example, members of Cambridge's unhoused population use public spaces for shelter, and any plans to increase access to green spaces might affect them. The City is also conducting a study of potential future uses of city-owned lots in Central Square which might go toward supporting unhoused people.
- Gathering perspectives from the broader community: Members thought that it would be useful to gather different perspectives on transportation in Cambridge. It would be good to hear from people of different racial identities, socioeconomic statuses, and

¹ [Chapter 3](#) of the 2020 Bike Plan Update contains info and data on bike crash trends in Cambridge (up to 2020).

resident vs. commuter statuses, along with tourists. Members shared that the Port Infrastructure Improvements project would be a good project to learn from as it relates to gathering perspectives. The project has featured tabling at community events and office hours for community members to talk to staff one on one. One member recommended the Remix platform to help community members understand transportation projects.

Members agreed to share any remaining feedback on the draft framework (Appendix A) and the process equity approach (Appendix B) via Google Docs before the next meeting.

[CET@CDD](#)

Afterward, Marlees West Owayda (Community Development Department) gave an overview of the Community Engagement Team at the Community Development Department (CET@CDD). The formation of CET@CDD was inspired by the DHSP outreach team, which was itself the model was born out of an understanding that linguistic isolation was preventing residents from accessing services in Cambridge. CET@CDD hires community members to work as part-time outreach workers and focuses on the following 6 linguistic communities in addition to the American-born Black community:

- Amharic speaking;
- Arabic speaking;
- Bangla speaking;
- Chinese speaking;
- Haitian Creole speaking; and
- Spanish speaking.

In relation to the NZTP, CET@CDD could have a conversation with the Advisory Group about potential options for supporting the process, including sharing a brief survey, hosting focus groups with members of their communities, and contributing to community outreach regarding opportunities to give input at public meetings.

Advisory Group members also asked whether CET@CDD has metrics on equitable engagement. The City does not have standard metrics for equitable engagement, but CET@CDD workers track the numbers of people they engage with and provide qualitative feedback about projects. Marlees shared her thoughts that equitable engagement should be actively anti-racist, inclusive, and responsive to community members. It is also important to be clear about where decision-making power ultimately rests and how community members' input will be incorporated in that process. The NZTP process is a good opportunity to inform how the City thinks about equity in practice.

[Other matters and closing thoughts](#)

The Advisory Group adjourned and will meet next on Wednesday, November 29, 2023, at 9 AM at the City Hall Annex.

Attendance list

Advisory Group members

- Pastor Farris Blount (Western Avenue Baptist Church / Cambridge Black Pastors Alliance)
- Malene Council (DHSP Community Engagement Team)
- Guerlencia “Gigi” Laurent (Margaret Fuller House)
- James Pierre (Adius Arts Initiative)
- Nora Sears (De Novo Center for Justice and Healing)
- Ali Sorrels (Cambridge Women’s Center)
- Rachel Tanenhaus (Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities)
- Omriqui Thomas (Cambridge Public Schools student)
- Angela Vierling-Claassen (Cambridge resident)

Community Development Department staff

- Stephanie Groll (Mobility Strategy Manager)
- Susanne Rasmussen (Director of Environmental and Transportation Planning)
- Marlees West Owayda (Community Engagement Manager)

Consultant team

- Michael Bangert-Drowns (Arup)
- Brandon Chambers (Consensus Building Institute)
- Elizabeth Cooper (Consensus Building Institute)

Appendix A: (Draft) NZTP strategy evaluation framework

What is the purpose of this framework?: This tool is a place to document what we think is important for the Net Zero Transportation Plan (NZTP) to do. Naming what we want will help us look at potential Net Zero Transportation Plan strategies and measure them against each of these qualities to judge if they are a valuable contribution to the Plan goals of eliminating greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from transportation in Cambridge and creating a better, more equitable transportation system. This is a work in progress, based on the Advisory Group’s feedback, and we want your help to improve it!

Qualities	How will we know we’re getting there?	Notes / Advisory Group comments/guidance
Goal #1: Improve mobility		
Reliability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>People traveling in Cambridge can count on consistent and predictable travel times</u> (qualitatively measured on Likert scale) (from Greenlining Institute) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make transportation predictable, reliable, available to everyone • Unreliable transportation is harder for people who are already marginalized
Mode availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>More residents live close to a range of travel options</u> <p>For example, how many residents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • live within a half-mile walking to a subway station • live within a quarter mile walking to a high-frequency bus route stop • live 0.125 miles walking distance to a Bluebikes bikeshare dock • live a quarter mile walking distance to a bicycle facility with a bicycle level of comfort of 1 or 2 (as defined by CDD) • live 150 feet walking distance to a pedestrian crossing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many roads and paths are rated for Bicycle Level of Comfort 1 or 2 out of 5 <p>(all quantitatively measured via Replica)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give people many good options to get where they need to go.
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Transportation modes are accessible to people with disabilities, accessible to people from various cultures and languages, accessible without the need for banking or a smartphone</u> (from GLI) (qualitatively measured on Likert scale) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure transportation system is accessible for everyone (e.g., people with disabilities, immigrants, people with lower English proficiency, etc.)
Affordability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Transportation costs decrease for people traveling in Cambridge. There are more low-cost transportation options and subsidies easily available, especially for low-income people.</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce costs of transportation (e.g., Charlie Cards that are free or free for those with demonstrated low income)

Qualities	How will we know we're getting there?	Notes / Advisory Group comments/guidance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This metric will vary by transportation mode and location, and therefore should be set by the community; a recommended default is that households should spend no more than 20% of budgets on transportation costs (from GLI). Some data sources combine transportation costs with housing costs. 	
Connectivity (Connectivity to Places of Employment, Education, Services, & Recreation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>More households are within walking distance to services and places they spend time</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This access is balanced across race and income For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of households within 30-minute transit ride or 20-minute auto ride of employment center, etc⁴² Number of transit transfers needed, time spent traveling. (from GLI) all quantitatively measured via Replica) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve options for people in different neighborhoods to get around Cambridge
Safety (also contributes to goal 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Fewer fatalities and serious injuries</u> (calls for service with EMS transport) caused by vehicle crashes & physical infrastructure (e.g., sidewalks) • <u>Decrease in interpersonal violence</u> while moving around Cambridge (harassment, profiling, etc.) (from GLI) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make people feel safer and more comfortable traveling by bike, bus, train, ride-hail, and on foot.
Goal #2: Remove GHG emissions from transportation		
Reduce GHG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed in model using outputs from CAPCOA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From City mandate
Reduce air and noise pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall impact to quantities of localized air pollutants (PM, NOx) and noise (qualitatively measured on Likert scale) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From Greenlining Institute
General positive health benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase levels of physical activity in safe environments (qualitatively measured on Likert scale) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Reduce VMT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compact development and greater clustering of destinations, VMT per capita (from GLI) (quantitatively measured via Replica) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From Greenlining Institute
Goal #3: Facilitate a just transition (distribute responsibilities and benefits to redress historic social and economic inequities)		
Quality of life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Improvements to the transportation system make it easier and more enjoyable for people to live in Cambridge</u>, especially for those from underserved, unheard, and historically excluded groups 	

Qualities	How will we know we're getting there?	Notes / Advisory Group comments/guidance
Racial and economic inclusivity (also contributes to goal #4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Improvements in the transportation system make Cambridge a more viable place to live</u> for people of different racial/ethnic identities and income levels 	
Equitable allocation of responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Responsibility is distributed equitably and takes into consideration what privileges</u> community members have and what ways they are marginalized - in addition to ways institutions have benefitted from and are responsible for climate change 	Larger institutions that have built wealth and made climate change worse should take more responsibility for reducing emissions
Investment in historically marginalized neighborhoods and communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Groups that have been underserved, unheard, and historically excluded receive greater investments</u> in transportation improvements and benefits 	This relates to rethinking the PTMD ordinance, parking study findings etc., which tell us we need to be careful of relying on leveraging private investment as a primary strategy, because it can magnify existing inequalities.
Goal #4: Strengthen community and connectedness		
Community agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People have agency to make sustainable transportation choices • People are not shamed or blamed for how they move around 	
Community involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of the community (businesses, residents, etc.) are able to participate in improving the transportation system and have choices in what channels to use to do so • Members are able to see how their input is integrated in the planning process 	
Safety & belonging (also contributes to goal 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements in the transportation system make people feel safer as they move around the city • Improvements in the transportation system make people feel more like they belong as they move around the city 	

Appendix B: Embedding equity in the Cambridge Net Zero Transportation Plan development process (draft)

City of Cambridge Net Zero Transportation Plan Advisory Group
September 2023

The Advisory Group recognizes that an equitable process for developing the Plan:

1. **Is guided by community voices.** Community members with a range of perspectives and experiences learn about and provide direction on the Plan in a way that is meaningful to them and that meaningfully influences the Plan.
2. **Is transparent.** Community members have a clear sense of how the Plan is being developed, what it will do, and how their input will influence the Plan development.
3. **Prioritizes underserved, underheard, and historically excluded groups of people.** The process dedicates resources to engaging community groups based on their needs. This process also prioritizes hearing from groups who have been marginalized or disenfranchised in past processes.
4. **Reduces harm.** The process avoids repeating past harms of inequitable planning decisions and, where possible, contributes to repairing those harms.
5. **Builds long-term relationships.** City staff and community members develop relationships with each other. Community members feel welcome and that it is worthwhile to engage in future processes.
6. **Is accessible.** The planning process takes into account community members' needs and addresses potential barriers (such as physical ability, health conditions, language, and family care requirements). As a result, community members are able to learn about the Plan and provide input.

The Net Zero Transportation Plan (NZTP) development process will be guided by these principles in its community engagement strategy. This strategy has three main parts:

- Advisory Group member-led engagement with their organizations and communities. This will involve sharing surveys and other materials with their communities and sharing insights back with the Advisory Group.
- Engagement led by the City of Cambridge's Community Engagement Team at the Community Development Department (CET @ CDD). The CET @ CDD is made up of individuals who are members of six linguistic communities in Cambridge (Amharic, Arabic, Bangla, Haitian Creole, Chinese, and Spanish) and the American-born Black Community. The CET outreach team will provide advice on the NZTP community engagement plans and assist with outreach.
- Public meetings and other opportunities for members of the public to engage with the planning process.