

# City of Cambridge Net Zero Transportation Plan Advisory Group

Meeting #14 notes – Wednesday, July 31, 2024

The Net Zero Transportation Plan (NZTP) Advisory Group held its fourteenth meeting on Wednesday, July 31, 2024 at the Cambridge City Hall Annex and via Zoom. The objective of the meeting was to discuss, improve, and seek agreement on “City Planning” and “Parking” actions to include in the NZTP.

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

## Important points and action items

- The Advisory Group reviewed recent community engagement activities and responded to feedback raised during community meetings.
- The Advisory Group reviewed edits to actions from the previous meeting.
- The Advisory Group reviewed proposed actions for the NZTP under the categories of “City Planning” and “Parking.” Members shared feedback and noted the need for further discussion on Parking actions and on allowing a potential mobility wallet to subsidize fuel purchases.

## Summary of discussions

### Welcome and introductions

Advisory Group members, staff, and consultants introduced themselves for members of the public.

### Community outreach updates

So far, the Community Development Department has participated in community engagement meetings and events with:

- CET@CDD focus group (May 16)
- Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities Advisory Board\* (June 13)
- Cambridge Arts River Festival (June 15)
- Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee Staff focus group (July 12)
- Fresh Pond Apartments Summer Party (July 25)

Members were reminded to reach out to Meira if they would be interested in hosting a community event.

Advisory group members discussed important points made during community engagement events and reinforced the comments about maintaining clean buses, trains and shuttles in addition to bus shelters and train terminals.

## Potential actions for the NZTP

Afterward, members reviewed updates to the actions from the past couple of meetings. These updates were made in response to feedback from the Advisory Group.

### Revised language for CE and AT actions

- **Updated AT-1:** “Improve and maintain walking infrastructure”
- **Updated AT-3:** “Continue adding Bluebikes stations until all Cambridge residents live within a 2.5-minute walk of a Bluebikes station”
- **Updated AT-4:** “Collaborate with existing organizations to increase access to bikes and bike repair and other micro mobility”
- **Updated CE-1:** “Provide a high degree of support and encouragement to help residents access and navigate transportation options and discounts.”

Overall, members were comfortable with the actions as edited.

## City planning actions

**CP-1. Maintain a policy of allowing and promoting mixed-use development near transit stops including more affordable housing.** This action is estimated to account for 5.6% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

Feedback from Advisory Group was as follows:

- In North Cambridge, there are a number of vacant storefronts and spots that are permanently closed. It would be good to have an action to get business spaces occupied and vibrant.
- Members discussed the influence private ownership has on city streets and what effect that may have on the street’s accessibility.

**CP-2: Create better physical connections between transportation modes.** This action is estimated to account for 1.8% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions

Feedback from Advisory Group was as follows:

- One member suggested adding electrical vehicle charging stations at transit connection points.
- Members discussed the new Alewife development and considered what could be included in the development to make easier connections between transportation modes.

**P-1: Increase residential parking permit fee, with discounts for people with low incomes.** This action is estimated to account for less than 1% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions

Feedback from Advisory Group was as follows:

- A few members expressed concern about the decreasing amount of parking spots and the increase in parking tickets. One member emphasized that the actions should make the transition to Net Zero Transportation easier for people rather than penalize people.
- Ticketing is not an effective way to decrease car ownership and there are concerns over equity related to this action.

**P-2: Increase fees at parking meters.** This action is estimated to account for 1.9% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

Feedback from Advisory Group was as follows:

- There were concerns about people needing to identify their income status with a parking sticker. There was also concern over the burden being on people with low incomes to do administrative processes that reveal personal data
- One member posed not increasing additional parking ticket fees for Cambridge residents, but just for visitors
- Boston has neighborhood-based metered parking so parking in the neighborhood is only available for residents. This is a tiered metering system that expands outward from residential areas.
- Could we put the onus on high-income people to pay additional costs for parking? However, that might not lead to behavioral change because those who can afford it will just pay the additional fee.
- People with a disability should not have to pay a meter if they cannot bike or use public transit. Interest in collaborating to make placard parking for people with disabilities consistent across municipalities.

The group agreed to continue discussions on parking pricing at a future meeting.

### Mobility Wallet Discussion

AG members considered whether the previously discussed mobility wallets should allow people to pay for gas. Participants expressed a preference for giving options and personal choice for mobility wallet holders. However, multiple participants noted that the mobility wallet should help incentivize the actions they are putting forward. Members agreed to discuss further at the October 2nd Advisory Group meeting.

### Feedback on Process

Elizabeth Cooper requested feedback from the Advisory Group on the process thus far.

Feedback from Advisory Group was as follows:

- This group is responsive to questions with data. There was a good introduction for people who don't have a background in transportation planning.

- The process has included different perspectives and voices I may not have heard otherwise. This group is not an echo chamber, everyone doesn't necessarily agree on everything.
- It would be good to see this process replicated for other groups.
- It is good to bring up ideas and hear the group's opinions and everyone's ideas.

## Attendance list

- Angela Vierling-Claassen (Cambridge resident)
- Gigi Laurent (Cambridge resident)
- Ibrahim Omar (Islamic Society of Boston Cambridge)
- Lonnell Wells (Cambridge Bike Giveback)
- Nora Sears (De Novo Center for Justice and Healing)
- Omriqui Thomas (Cambridge High School student)
- Rachel Tanenhaus (Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities)

## Community Development Department staff

- Maricela Escobar (Mobility Engagement Planner)
- Stephanie Groll (Mobility Strategy Manager)
- Susanne Rasmussen (Director of Environmental and Transportation Planning)

## Consultant team

- Meira Downie (Consensus Building Institute)
- Elizabeth Cooper (Consensus Building Institute)
- Amy Liu-Pathak (Arup)