



January 2021

## CLIMATE LEADERSHIP NEWSLETTER

### NOTES FROM MASSACHUSETTS CITIES AND TOWNS

Dear Emma,

The Climate Leadership Newsletter features stories of environmental and climate action in Massachusetts. It provides a platform to highlight work being done by municipalities, climate leaders, and local groups in communities across the Commonwealth. To share local climate actions in your community, email [Emma Brown](#).

## Clean Energy and Climate

### Climate Roadmap Bill Update



A couple of weeks back Governor Baker vetoed the comprehensive climate bill that included a number of progressive policy proposals including requiring Massachusetts to develop and implement a net zero stretch code. A net zero stretch code would make our buildings more efficient, safer, and resilient to climate impacts while lowering energy bills for all consumers.

Now, an identical [bill, S.9](#) (*An Act Creating a Next Generation Roadmap for*

*Massachusetts Climate Policy*) has been refiled by the Senate and House leadership and has already been voted on by the Senate and the House. It is important that Governor Baker hear from local elected officials and municipal leaders from across the Commonwealth that passing a net zero stretch code is important for an equitable transition to a clean energy future and to meet our climate goals.

Please consider [signing on to this joint letter drafted by the Rocky Mountain Institute's Building Electrification Accelerator group](#) urging the Governor to sign the climate bill S.9 into law. Please share this with municipal staff and local elected officials in your network.

## **New Bedford launches climate action plan, NB Resilient**



*Image credit: [NB Resilient](#)*

New Bedford has developed a climate roadmap which sets a number of ambitious climate goals, building on the state's plan for carbon neutrality by 2050. The comprehensive plan has six areas: climate and energy, economy and jobs, infrastructure, utilities and waste, natural resources, public health and safety, and transportation and land use. The plan also includes an "educational and multi-language campaign" to inform residents about the new proposals. Among other actions, the town plans to improve public transportation and bicycle/pedestrian access, continue to improve infrastructure to protect against sea level rise, and expand access to primary and preventative healthcare to address health problems such as asthma.

Additionally, the town has resolved to be zero waste, to use 100% renewable energy, and to plant thousands of trees by 2050. The plans were developed in collaboration with many community groups and local residents, and the proposal's leaders have said that they may consult additional groups in the future to ensure adequate representation. The town has [launched a website](#) explaining its climate goals and action plans.

## **Cambridge Community Electricity Program to offer new prices**





The [City of Cambridge](#) has signed a new, 36-month electricity supply contract with Direct Energy for the [Cambridge Community Electricity Program](#). Beginning this month, participants in the Standard Green offering will see their price drop from 11.12 cents/kWh to 10.20 cents/kWh; participants in the 100% Green Plus option will see an increase from 11.94 cents/kWh to 13.669 cents/kWh. However, by choosing to opt up to 100% Green Plus, program participants increase demand for renewable electricity produced in New England, which helps to drive the development of new renewable energy projects on the local power grid and supports the jobs that go with them. Any Cambridge resident or business can opt up to 100% Green Plus at any time. The City will continue to collect \$0.002/kWh from all participants as part of their regular electricity bill, which will be used to fund a new local solar project, which will provide clean, renewable electricity to all participants in the Program.

Active participants in the Cambridge Community Electricity Program do not need to take any action to participate in the new contract. They will be automatically enrolled with their January 2021 meter read, and the new prices will first appear on February 2021 electricity bills. To switch between the Standard Green or the 100% Green Plus enrollment options, to opt out of the program, or to ask questions, contact customer support with the City's program consultants at 1-844-379-9934 or [cambridge@masspowerchoice.com](mailto:cambridge@masspowerchoice.com). Additional information is available on the program website at [www.masspowerchoice.com/cambridge](http://www.masspowerchoice.com/cambridge).

**Westford and Chelmsford debut municipal clean energy programs**



Westford and Chelmsford recently added more clean energy options to their municipal aggregation programs. The state requires municipal aggregation contracts to get a minimum of 16% of their energy from renewable sources. Westford has added three new “levels” of energy plans that build on this 16% minimum – the “Green” plan, which includes 10% more renewables than the state minimum, the “Silver plan”, which provides 50% more renewables than the state minimum, and the “Gold” plan, which sources 100% renewable energy. Additionally, the “Green” plan has become the default contract. These additions are significant – many towns opt for a default plan of only 5% more renewable energy than the state minimum, and there is momentum in Westford to continue increasing the percentage of renewables in the default plan. The plans could also contribute to significant reductions in emissions -- if everyone in the town chose the “Silver” plan, it would be the [“equivalent of taking 1800 cars off the road”](#). The plans are also affordable; for example, the “Silver” plan only costs about \$12 more per month than the default plan. The new contract started in January 2021 and lasts until December 2023.

Chelmsford introduced similar new options in November 2020. In addition to the default state minimum plan, residents can choose from plans including 56% or 100% renewable energy. Both contracts specify that all renewable energy must be generated in New England, which helps to create local jobs.

The adjustments to both contracts are largely the result of work by local grassroots activists. These local organizations are also running a public awareness campaign to encourage residents to choose a plan with more renewables.

### **Vineyard Wind to resume permitting process**





Vineyard Wind hopes that the U.S. Bureau of Ocean and Energy Management (BOEM) will continue its review of the project after the company retracted their plan from review in December 2020. Vineyard Wind retracted the plan because their original contract for turbines had expired and they wanted to conduct an internal review to ensure that the new turbines would be acceptable regarding foundation construction and staging. However, a spokesperson for the company said that they did not make any changes to the plan, and they hoped that BOEM would be able to continue the review from where they left off using the analyses that Vineyard Wind has already provided.

Although Vineyard Wind announced that the retraction was a “temporary withdrawal”, BOEM stated in mid-December that [the review was “terminated” and a decision was no longer pending](#). BOEM has not released any further comments, and it is unclear whether the review will resume from where it left off or if there will be delays to the project’s timeline.

The Vineyard Wind project already faced delays in 2019 due to an order from the Trump Administration requiring more impact analysis. However, the company hopes that the Biden administration will be more receptive and will “streamline the permitting process”. The Biden Administration posted on its campaign website that it hoped to double offshore wind efforts by 2030. If the Vineyard Wind project stays on schedule, it will be operational in 2023.

## Clean Transportation

### The Transportation and Climate Initiative (TCI-P) Update



Massachusetts joined Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Washington D.C. in signing [the final memorandum of understanding for the Transportation and Climate Initiative Program \(TCI-P\)](#), a cap-and-invest program for reducing transportation emissions in the Northeast. The compliance period begins on January 1, 2023 with the emission cap declining by 30% in each jurisdiction by 2032, by equal amounts each year. The MOU requires each jurisdiction to invest a minimum of 35% in overburdened and underserved communities, establish an Equity Advisory Board, and report annually on emissions, investments and progress towards environmental justice.

In 2020, Sierra Club took some time to re-evaluate our position on TCI through the lens of the Jemez principles and the Equitable and Just National Climate Platform. [Click here to read our statement.](#) While Sierra Club is not supporting the final MOU due to concerns around policy and process, we will continue to advocate for strong equity and environmental provisions in the implementation of the MOU in Massachusetts.

### **Easthampton installs new electric vehicle charging stations**



Easthampton has installed four new electric vehicle charging stations: two near the Ferry Street roundabout and two near City Hall. The stations near City Hall are already operational and cost \$2 per hour, and the stations near the Ferry Street roundabout are slated to open for use in May. Collectively, the stations offer eight charging ports.

The project was mainly funded by the state's Electric Vehicle Incentive Program, as well as by the state Department of Environmental Protection, the state's Green Communities Program, and Eversource. The project was heavily supported by Easthampton's Mayor, Nicole LaChapelle, who said that the stations were important for "greening" Easthampton and the region.

## **Grants and Webinars**

**Massachusetts receives grant for marsh resiliency**





*Image credit: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)*

Six states along the Atlantic coast, including Massachusetts, have received a \$6 million grant to restore their coastal salt marshes. The most recent piece of that award, a \$1 million grant from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, was distributed in January. The award will fund the [“implementation and testing of new management practices”](#) for the Atlantic salt marshes, and specifically aims to increase marsh resiliency, reduce high-marsh flooding, and improve nesting success for saltmarsh sparrows.

Coastal salt marshes are important ecosystems that are also essential for local communities – they provide clean water, aid with storm and flood protection, and are part of the fishery, recreation, and tourism industries. However, over half of the original US salt marshes have been lost. The ecosystems are also important for local birds, such as the saltmarsh sparrow, which only breeds in salt marshes. The grant aims to restore this ecosystem and habitat across Massachusetts, Connecticut, Maine, Rhode Island, Maryland, and Virginia.

### **Green Communities 2021 Competitive Grants**





The [Green Communities Division](#) (GCD) provides grants, technical assistance, and local support from Regional Coordinators to help municipalities reduce energy use and costs by implementing clean energy projects in municipal buildings, facilities, and schools. The Green Communities team is currently revising the grant application and anticipates it will be posted in the next few weeks. Applications will be accepted in two waves: one in the spring, and one in the fall of 2021. [Key application dates](#) are now available on the Green Communities Division website to assist with project planning. [More information can be found here.](#)

## 2021 MassTrails Grants



[MassTrails](#) provides grants to support recreational trail and shared use pathway projects across the Commonwealth. Grant amounts are dependent on the project and its needs, but generally range from \$5,000 to \$100,000 with grants of up to \$300,000 awarded

to projects demonstrating critical network connections of regional significance. Eligible grant activities include project development, design, engineering, permitting, construction, and maintenance of recreational trails, shared use pathways, and the amenities that support trails. **The application deadline is 11:59pm on February 1, 2021.** [More information is available online here.](#)

## Resources and Reading List

- [Massachusetts should say 'no' to biomass incineration in future energy\\_policy](#) (MassLive)
- [Eversource considers Worcester for renewable energy\\_project](#) (Worcester Magazine)
- [City of Boston Cancels Melnea Cass Boulevard Reconstruction](#) (StreetsBlog Mass)
- [Biden puts more stimulus funding on the table for MBTA](#) (Boston Globe)
- [Framingham High students plan to offset school's sky-high paper usage by planting 210 trees in city](#) (MetroWest Daily News)
- [A Daily Ray of Hope](#). The Sierra Club has been offering a “Daily Ray of Hope” email for years, and we could all use a bit of that right now. Subscribers get a beautiful picture from the natural world along with some words of wisdom every morning. [Sign up today and bring some joy to your inbox.](#)

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*Corrin Moss contributed to this newsletter.*



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