



2020

## CLIMATE LEADERSHIP NEWSLETTER

### NOTES FROM MASSACHUSETTS CITIES AND TOWNS

Dear Friend,

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

### Vineyard Wind Project Moving Forward Tentatively



Vineyard Wind, a proposed 84-turbine wind farm situated south of Martha's Vineyard

and Nantucket, has continued to make slow but steady progress toward an operation wind farm. Earlier this month, the developers of the project reached an agreement with the town of Nantucket to contribute \$4 million to a community fund to support island initiatives. In a “Good Neighbor Agreement” between the town and the developer, the town agrees to “use their reasonable best efforts to inform federal, state and local elected officials of their support for the projects” as Vineyard Wind goes for approvals at the federal, state and local levels. In addition, Vineyard Wind has agreed to several mitigation measures, including painting the wind turbines a nonreflective off-white or light gray to blend in with the horizon and installing a lighting system to reduce nighttime lighting.

The project previously faced opposition in August 2019, when the U.S. Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) postponed the issuance of the Vineyard Wind Federal Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), delaying the construction of the project. A 420-page Supplement to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement came out this summer, and the final report is expected to come out later this fall, with a decision expected in December. Still, opponents of the project include local residents and fishermen, concerned with the wind farm's visual and physical impacts.

### **Arlington Awarded \$186K Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Action Grant**



The town of Arlington was recently awarded \$186,200 from the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program for the Wicked Hot Mystic Project. The grant was awarded to the town on behalf of the [Resilient Mystic Collaborative](#), who will lead this project along with the Museum of Science, to mitigate extreme heat throughout the Mystic River Watershed. The project consists of three parts: citizen science efforts to

collect data, the creation of public materials and public engagement events, and work with local artists to create public art. The Resilient Mystic Collaborative is a partnership between 20 cities and towns within the Mystic River Watershed, facilitated by the Mystic River Watershed Association, and is committed to working on projects of regional significance to decrease collective risk of harm from flooding, drought, extreme temperatures, storms, sea level rise and other climate-intensified risks. The Museum of Science will coordinate the data collection, which will help guide all participating municipalities in regional heat mitigation coordinated response efforts and allocation of regional extreme heat reduction infrastructure, such as cooling centers.

## **Worcester Polytechnic Institute Receives \$4 Million Grant**



Image credit: Worcester Polytechnic Institute

The Department of Energy and Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (MassCEC) awarded a \$4 million grant to Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) to support innovative advanced manufacturing research and development with a special focus on energy efficiency in industrial drying. WPI's "smart drying" research is in conjunction with the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign, to develop energy-saving drying technologies, mainly in the food and forestry product industries. WPI's head of the mechanical engineering department, Jamal Yagoobi, said that 1.2% of the US's total energy consumption comes from the drying process.

## **SMART Agricultural Solar Tariff Generation Units Guideline Comments**



Last October, the Department of Energy Resources (DOER) issued proposed changes to the Guideline Regarding the Definition of Agricultural Solar Tariff Generation Units under the [Solar Massachusetts Renewable Target \(SMART\)](#) program, and collected public comments. Following the review of these comments, DOER has drafted a [straw proposal](#) of potential changes to the Guideline. The straw proposal removes many of the changes to the technical and application requirements proposed in October 2019. Written comments will be accepted until Friday, October 9, and may be submitted to [doer.smart@mass.gov](mailto:doer.smart@mass.gov) with “SMART ASTGU Guideline Comments” in the subject line. Comments via mail may be sent to the Department of Energy Resources, 100 Cambridge Street, Suite 1020, Boston, MA 02114, attention Kaitlin Kelly.

## Clean Transportation

### Bike Lanes Taking Hold Across the State



Across the state, local agencies are working to add more bike lanes to streets, as the COVID-19 pandemic has spurred people to opt for transportation options beyond public transit. Over the summer, the city of Boston installed temporary bike lanes using large orange barrels, and [recently announced](#) that many of the lanes will be made permanent before the winter. The state Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) also recently [announced plans](#) to replace motor vehicle lanes with wide buffered bike lanes along three roadway sections of the Arborway in Jamaica Plain. The short-term reconstruction is part of a longer-term project, and the DCR is [soliciting feedback](#) on the design plans until October 2nd.

In Somerville this fall, the Wellington Bridge across the Mystic River will also [receive a road diet](#): narrowing the existing vehicular lanes and adding protected bike lanes in each direction. Currently, the Wellington Bridge has six wide traffic lanes and two pedestrian sidewalks, which are too narrow for pedestrians to pass easily by one another. Funding for the project comes from MassDOT's new Shared Streets and Spaces Program. Finally, the city of Gloucester's Health Department recently received a \$1,000 grant from the Massachusetts Bicycling Coalition to create a Cape Ann regional bike master plan, building upon the existing work of the Cape Ann Mass in Motion Coalition. Officials are planning to launch a survey this fall to collect information, build support, and perform mapping exercises for the Cape Ann regional bike master plan.

## **State Transit Agencies See COVID-19 Challenges—and Successes**



The MBTA—struggling since COVID-19 slashed ridership levels—is considering rethinking how frequently trains and buses run and where they stop. The cuts could force riders to walk further, transfer lines more frequently or switch between buses and trains compared to existing commutes, and some may need to pay more as a result, according to the MBTA. Meanwhile, the T is hoping to maintain, or even increase frequency, for lines with steady ridership, and those serving "transit critical" areas with significant populations of color, low-income residents or households with limited access to cars.

In Worcester, the Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) went fare-free in March due to the pandemic, and recently voted to extend fare-free service through December, when the board will again vote to keep the policy or re-implement fares. While service was reduced through the spring and summer, the WRTA has been operating at 100% service since August 29, though ridership is currently only half of what it normally would be. The lost revenue from the fares is being covered by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, to keep the WRTA afloat.

### **Beverly to Add More Electric School Buses**



The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) has received state funding to develop a regional procurement model that would support expansion of electric battery school bus service across Massachusetts. MAPC shares the grant with Highland Electric Transportation, which currently provides the Beverly Public School District with one electric bus. Thanks to Massachusetts Clean Energy Center's (MassCEC) Accelerating Transportation Now (ACTNow) grant, MAPC will receive \$20,345 to explore scaling the Beverly project to more cities and towns in Massachusetts. The grant will also allow Highland Electric Transportation to deploy a second battery electric school bus in Beverly. The program also includes a new curriculum for students to learn about transportation electrification, provided by the non-profit organization EcoRise.

## **Toxics and Pollution**

**Attleboro Considering Comprehensive Environmental Bill**



Earlier this month, Mayor Paul Heroux of Attleboro filed a comprehensive ordinance for the city to ban the sale of eight different products: Disposable Styrofoam food containers; plastic food containers; plastic straws; single-use plastic water bottles; plastic shot bottles (commonly referred to as nips); plastic microbeads like those found in some facewash and body wash products; compact florescent lightbulbs containing mercury; and neonicotinoids, a type of pesticide considered dangerous to bees. If passed, the ordinance would be the first in the state to tackle a sweeping set of pollutants under one policy — each of the items have been banned in various communities around the state, though no single community has banned all eight products. The city previously banned the use of single-use plastic bags in 2019 (enacted in 2020). The ordinance will go to committee for review before being brought up for public debate.

### **Weymouth Compressor Station gets OK to go online**



This month, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) gave Enbridge, the company behind the Weymouth Compressor Station, [final clearance](#) to begin operations. Enbridge hopes to have the station up and running by October 1st. The decision comes less than two weeks after an incident at the facility [released more than 265,000 cubic feet of fracked gas](#), just days after the facility began testing.

Opponents of the compressor station include the Town of Weymouth, which is an environmental justice community, Senators Ed Markey and Elizabeth Warren, and Fore River Residents Against the Compressor Station (FRRACS), among other local and statewide elected officials and environmental groups.

## Grants and Webinars

**MassSave Announces 2021 Municipal Partnership Program**



The sponsors of Mass Save are [seeking cities and towns](#) interested in committing to set energy-saving goals in both residential and small business communities. Goals would include energy assessments and residential energy efficiency measures completed in a calendar year, starting January 1, 2021. Awards are awarded based on goals achieved by December 31, 2021. All municipalities with at least one Environmental Justice neighborhood are encouraged to apply, especially communities looking to expand energy efficiency participation in the following community sectors: renters; non-English speaking/Limited English Proficiency (LEP) residents; moderate income residents (defined as 60-80% of state median income); and small businesses. Municipalities in Berkshire Gas, Cape Light Compact, Columbia Gas, Eversource, Liberty Gas, National Grid, or Unitil service areas that use either natural gas, electric, or both, are eligible to apply. Municipal electric districts connected to natural gas through one of these sponsors are eligible as well.

To apply: Submit a brief [intent to apply statement](#) by October 9th 2020. Complete the [full application](#) by October 23, 2020 in order to be considered for the 2021 calendar year, and email it to [info@masssave.com](mailto:info@masssave.com). An [informational webinar](#) will be held on October 8 from 10:00-11:00am.

### **Triple Decker Design Challenge**



[MassCEC's Triple Decker Design Challenge](#) is soliciting proposals to identify replicable and scalable all-electric triple-decker energy retrofit approaches. The program seeks to set a new standard for transitioning these iconic New England dwellings into high-performing, low-carbon buildings. With support from [The Barr Foundation](#), MassCEC will be awarding 9 winning submissions, ranging from \$15,000 to \$25,000, with a \$10,000 People's Choice Award. Student teams are invited to compete for a winning prize of \$5,000. The Triple Decker Design Challenge includes two tracks: (1) The Triple Decker Retrofit Design invites proposals focused on a deep energy retrofit using an existing triple decker layout; (2) The 3+ Retrofit Design invites proposals focused adding additional unit(s) to an existing triple decker, in addition to an energy retrofit of the entire structure. Submissions are due by 5pm on November 6th.

**NiSource, Inc. Commits \$10 Million to Merrimack Valley Nonprofits**



The parent company of Columbia Gas, NiSource Inc, announced this month that it has committed \$10 million to support nonprofits in Lawrence, Andover, and North Andover. Earlier this year, the utility company agreed to pay a \$53 million fine for violating pipeline safety rules, and another \$56 million to resolve investigations by state regulators. Though Columbia Gas is poised to be sold to Eversource, NiSource has agreed to finance the new fund even after the transaction closes. Funds will be distributed over five years, with grants ranging from \$25,000 to \$200,000. Groups with a focus on basic needs assistance, economic and workforce development, safety, STEM education, and the environment can apply.

## Resources and Reading List

- [Mass. legislators urge MassDOT to consider purchasing Pan Am assets to secure a Fitchburg to North Adams passenger rail corridor](#), Douglas Hook, MassLive
- [Boston City Council discusses Melnea Cass trees: 'This is an environmental justice issue'](#), Danny McDonald, Boston Globe
- [Students link farms to food banks](#), Edward Fitzpatrick, Boston Globe
- [Smoke from wildfires sweeping east all the way to Massachusetts](#), Joe Dwinell, Boston Herald
- [Amtrak Allows Bikes on More Trains Throughout New England](#), Christian MilNeil, StreetsBlog Mass
- [Baker Pushes Climate Resilience Bill](#), Tim Cronin, Climate XChange
- [Biogen pledges to stop using fossil fuels by 2040, commits \\$250 million to the effort](#), Anissa Gardizy, Boston Globe
- [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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