



May 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 [Veena Dharmaraj](mailto:Veena.Dharmaraj@sierraclub.org).

### Massachusetts Chapter Response to COVID-19

Sierra Club continues to track resources to help Massachusetts cities and towns respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Resources from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts include:
  - A [COVID-19 State of Emergency page](#) with updates, emergency orders, and guidance on the phased reopening.
  - [COVID-19 Response Reporting](#) with daily and cumulative data on Massachusetts COVID-19 cases and testing, and weekly data on confirmed cases by city/town, and residents subject to quarantine.
  - A list of [COVID-19 Municipal frequently-asked questions](#)
  - Resources for [Maintaining Emotional Health and Well-Being](#)
  - [A number of printable Fact sheets](#) on dealing with COVID-19
- The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) is [constantly updating resources available](#).
  - MAPC in partnership with MassDevelopment is [now offering state-wide emergency grants](#) to provide funding for state and municipal agencies that coordinate transportation services, regional transit authorities (RTAs), and Health and Human Services Transportation (HHST) providers to contract with taxicab, livery, and hackney businesses for transportation needs for vulnerable populations during this state of emergency.
  - [This map](#) highlights work done across municipalities to increase testing sites, available shelters, and isolation centers for people most impacted by COVID-19.
  - You can track upcoming MAPC webinars and access the recording of earlier ones through this [COVID-19 Response Webinar Series](#).

- The [Massachusetts COVID-19 Relief Fund](#) supports those across the state most impacted by the COVID-19 health crisis, focusing on essential frontline workers and vulnerable populations including the homeless, immigrant populations, people with disabilities and those facing food insecurity.

# Clean Energy and Climate

## **BBRS Accepting Written Comments on the Net Zero Stretch Code**



Last June, the [Board of Building Regulations and Standards \(BBRS\)](#) tasked its Energy Advisory Committee (EAC) to work on developing a net zero building stretch code for the state. At the virtual BBRS public meeting on May 12, several municipal leaders and industry professionals offered public comments in favor of a net zero stretch code.

One of the proposals under consideration by the BBRS is the [Massachusetts Energy-Zero \(E-Z\) Code](#) developed by the Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnership (NEEP) in collaboration with other partners. The code has passive house as the foundation, does not allow for on site combustion with a few exceptions, requires MA Class 1 Renewable Energy Credits (REC) and offers a prescriptive zero energy compliance pathway. [Click here to read the E-Z code.](#)

Several communities across the state are already taking steps to reduce emissions from the building sector and are working on net zero planning. Hearing directly from municipal leaders like you from the City Council, Mayor's office, Sustainability Committee, and Energy Committee will encourage BBRS to adopt a swift timeline for the development and adoption of a net zero stretch code. Please consider submitting written comments to BBRS in support of a net zero stretch code. While the BBRS has requested that letters be submitted by June 1, 2020, they will accept letters beyond that

date. [Here's some guidance on submitting written comments](#) from our partners at the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). For more information contact [Veena Dharmaraj](#).

## Act Now in Support of No Fossil Fuels in Schools



There is an opportunity with the Mass School Building Authority (MSBA) to push for building electrification. Right now cities and towns can get ~30-40% of new school buildings paid for by MSBA. That means, in theory, MSBA would have a lot of leverage to require non fossil fuel heating and electrification or at least demonstrate that they considered it and provide an explanation for why they are not moving ahead with it.

We're looking for municipal officials (city councilors, school committee members, town administrators, select board members etc) to call for no more fossil fuels in our schools! We're collecting signatures for a letter to be sent to Treasurer Goldberg and members of the MSBA Board. [Click here to view a draft of the letter](#) and [click here to sign on](#). For more information contact [Jacob Stern](#) or [Emily Norton](#).

## Proposed Eversource Pipeline Project Found Unnecessary





An independent consultant hired by the Ashland Select Board has concluded that the Eversource project to replace the existing 3.7 mile fracked gas pipeline through Ashland and Hopkinton is not needed to meet current or long term demand. The proposed new 12 inch gas pipeline would run for 2.5 miles in Ashland and intersect more than 80 residential parcels and a number of environmentally-sensitive areas.

Eversource claims that the project is needed to address pressure drops in the line and provide reliable service to consumers in Greater Framingham. The consultant report points out that demand projections are higher than those by the federal or state government and does not comply with the requirements of the Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA). The states Energy Facility Siting Board (EFSB) is reviewing the proposal and has granted the Ashland Select Board intervenor status. [Click here to read the draft report.](#)

## **Tool to Track Community Greenhouse Gas Inventory Launched**



The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) has created a [new tool and guide](#) to improve how communities in Massachusetts catalog greenhouse gases emitted by sector and year. The Community Greenhouse Inventory Tool will better equip municipalities to accurately and consistently track sources of greenhouse gas emissions and help communities reach their climate goals. The tool provides instructions on what data to collect, how to access it, and calculate estimates of emissions where there is no primary source of data.

Last year, as part of MAPC's [Planning for Net Zero by 2050 Project](#), [Natick](#), [Melrose](#), and [Arlington](#) received a joint \$150,000 grant from the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) and worked with MAPC to pilot the program and help develop the tools needed.

## **Studies to Examine Relationship Between Offshore Wind and Fisheries**



Massachusetts and Rhode Island in collaboration with the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) have announced grants of \$1.1 million to carry out studies to assess the interactions between offshore wind development and fisheries in the northeast. The studies will establish baseline datasets on fisheries and seabed habitat to support environmental assessments of offshore wind projects. Additionally, the studies will support and inform a regional fisheries science and monitoring program being developed under the [Responsible Offshore Science Alliance](#) (ROSA).

The grants will go to four institutions to conduct research on recreational and commercial fisheries, seabed habitats, and offshore wind policies in Europe. The studies will be managed primarily by the [Massachusetts Clean Energy Center](#) (MassCEC) and conducted by [INSPIRE Environmental](#), the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, the University of Rhode Island, and the New Bedford Port Authority.

## Toxics and Pollution

**School Districts Receive Grants to Replace Lead Positive Water Fountains**



Schools in 32 school districts across the state that tested positive for lead in drinking water will receive grants for new filtered water bottle filling stations through the [School Water Improvement Grant](#) (SWIG) program. The SWIG program encourages communities to test school drinking water for lead and address elevated levels with help from state experts. The first round of grants totaling \$675,000 was approved by the trustees for the Massachusetts Clean Water Trust.

Grant recipients include schools in Holyoke, South Hadley, and Greenfield, Braintree, Gardner, Fitchburg, Hopkinton and Douglas. The SWIG program is funded through a \$5 million appropriation filed by Governor Charlie Baker and [approved by the Legislature](#).

## **Clean Transportation**

**Boston, Newton, and Weston Consider Bike Lane Improvements**





Bike lane improvement projects are being considered in Boston, Newton, and Weston along stretches of Route 30 to form a vital commuting link tying the western suburbs to the region's urban core.

In Boston, plans include redesigning one stretch of Commonwealth Avenue to include a one-way buffered cycle track within the carriage roads on both sides of the street. Boston is seeking input for the project [via this online](#) survey. Weston is considering a reconstruction of Route 30 through the entire town that would include dedicated bike and pedestrian paths along the road. In Newton, two-way bike traffic along a roughly 5-mile stretch of Commonwealth Avenue's carriage lane is being considered.

These new bike lanes are critical for encouraging people to use bicycles instead of cars and will help ease the region's [traffic congestion](#). These three separate projects are part of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council's proposed [LandLine initiative](#), which incorporates about 1,400 miles of connected trails and greenways in the Boston area. Additionally, this summer Newton will also be implementing other bicycle lane improvements including raised bike lanes, shared use path and new sidewalks as part of a \$31.1 million project approved by the State Department of Transportation.

### **New Design for Northern Avenue Bridge Includes Lanes For Pedestrians, Bikes and Transit**





The City of Boston has unveiled their latest plans for a new Northern Avenue bridge spanning the Fort Point Channel. In addition to two 24-foot spans for bike-and-pedestrian access, new plans include a transit lane for private shuttles that advocates fear could be opened to car traffic. Plans also show a sunken mid channel promenade that will function as a public plaza. Questions are also being raised about the bridge's climate resiliency.

Project costs have increased from the initial \$46-\$83 million to over \$100 million. Of this \$31 million has already been pledged from Boston taxpayers, Mayor Walsh's 2021 street budget would authorize an additional \$54 million and the remaining \$15 million would come from federal funds and local developers.

### **MOR-EV Rebates for Electric Vehicles**



The [Massachusetts Offers Rebates for Electric Vehicles \(MOR-EV\)](#) program is offering at least \$27 million per year in 2020 and 2021 to incentivize consumers to purchase electric vehicles. MOR-EV provides rebates of up to \$2,500 for the purchase or lease of new battery electric vehicles and fuel-cell electric vehicles. New plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs) with +25 mile electric range are eligible for a \$1500 rebate. To qualify, the final purchase price of the vehicle must be below \$50,000.

MOR-EV is funded by the MA Department of Energy Resources (DOER) and administered by the Center for Sustainable Energy (CSE). For more information on eligible vehicles, [click here](#).

## **Boston to Repurpose Streets as a Part of Pandemic Recovery Efforts**



Boston is planning to expand sidewalks into on-street parking areas, build temporary bike lanes, and expand waiting areas at busy bus stops to facilitate physical distancing. These short-term reversible strategies will help the city test and revise new street designs quickly, which may lead to longer-term spaces and lanes for pedestrians and bikers.

Small business districts will be allowed to convert parking areas to additional pedestrian spaces and some residential streets will be opened to more walkers and bike riders by limiting through traffic. The city also plans to expedite projects in the city's planned network of protected bike lanes and paths, called [Better Bike Lanes](#).

## **Grants**

**Applications Now Open for Climate Resiliency Grants**





[Action Grants](#) and [Planning Grants](#) are now available through the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs [Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness](#) (MVP) grant program. Grants will help Massachusetts cities and towns plan and implement key climate change adaptation actions for resiliency. The program will help communities address climate change impacts related but not limited to extreme weather, sea level rise, inland and coastal flooding, and severe heat. Projects that propose nature-based solutions or strategies that rely on green infrastructure or conservation and enhancement of natural systems to improve community resilience will receive higher scores.

This grant will allow communities to define extreme weather and climate change-related hazards, use this MA specific [climate change clearinghouse](#) to understand how their community may be impacted by climate change, create vulnerability assessments, and implement action plans. Applications for Action Grants are due Thursday, June 11 at 2pm. Applications for Planning Grants are accepted on a rolling basis until Friday, August 7 at 4pm.

## Resources and Reading List

- [Gas Stoves: Health and Air Quality Impacts and Solutions](#) - New report by Rocky Mountain Institute, Physicians for Social Responsibility, Mothers Out Front, Sierra Club
- [Building Electrification Action Plan for Climate Leaders](#)
- [New Analysis: Heat Pumps Slow Climate Change in Every Corner of the Country.](#)
- [Strategies to Create Safe Streets and Outdoor Spaces During COVID-19 and Beyond](#)
- [Things to Ponder During Asthma Awareness Month](#), Dorchester Reporter
- [Clean Energy Lives Here](#) - This MassCEC campaign aims to raise awareness of clean heating and cooling systems and other clean energy technologies that are modern substitutes for carbon-intensive, fossil-fueled home systems and appliances. [Check it out](#), take the Pledge, and start your Clean Energy Home Plan today!
- [We Need to Start Using Less Natural Gas](#), Commonwealth Magazine
- [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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