

As we all deal with a global pandemic with COVID-19, we wanted to let you know [how the Sierra Club is adapting and responding](#), so we can keep doing the important work of helping our communities, protecting our natural environment and fighting for a just, clean energy future.



April 2020

## CLIMATE LEADERSHIP NEWSLETTER

### NOTES FROM MASSACHUSETTS CITIES AND TOWNS

Dear Supporter,

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).

### COVID-19 Resources for Municipalities

Sierra Club continues to track resources to help cities and towns respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The enclosed resources add to those from our [last newsletter](#).

- The Massachusetts Municipal Association has put together [guidance and other resources](#) for municipal officials. It includes latest updates, local response strategies guidance for local leaders, and more.
- The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) has assembled a [list of COVID-19 resources](#) and is also helping facilitate conversations among municipal leaders across the state. To join the group, local officials can reach out to MAPC Director of Government Affairs at [eweyant@mapc.org](mailto:eweyant@mapc.org). Fill out a [brief survey](#) to share with MAPC what information will be most helpful.
- The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has a number of resources for municipalities
  - A list of [COVID-19 Municipal frequently-asked questions](#)
  - Resources for [Maintaining Emotional Health and Well-Being](#)
  - [Fact sheets](#) with tips on preventing the spread of COVID-19, at-home quarantine measures, coping with fear, and visual communication tools.
  - Information about legislation to address challenges faced by [municipalities and school districts](#)
- [Mutual aid resources for the Boston area](#) covering health, housing, childcare and more and a [comprehensive coronavirus resource kit](#).

# Clean Energy and Climate

## The Commonwealth Sets New Emission Limits for 2050



On Earth Day Massachusetts [issued a formal determination letter](#) announcing that the state would create plans to achieve at least an 85% reduction in emissions from 1990 levels by 2050. This follows Governor Baker's announcement earlier this year of the Commonwealth's intent to pursue more aggressive net zero targets to further reduce emissions. The new limit that is 5% more than that required by the Massachusetts Global Warming Solutions Act has met with pushback from [advocates](#) and the [legislature](#).

Over 600 Sierra Club members and supporters submitted comments during the public input process asking for at least net zero and ideally net negative emission by 2050, 100% clean energy by 2040, and at least 50% emission reductions below 1990 levels by 2030. Later this year, the Commonwealth will release a 2050 Roadmap outlining pathways to achieve the emissions limit and set interim emission reduction targets for 2030.

## Massachusetts Updates Regulations for Solar Program

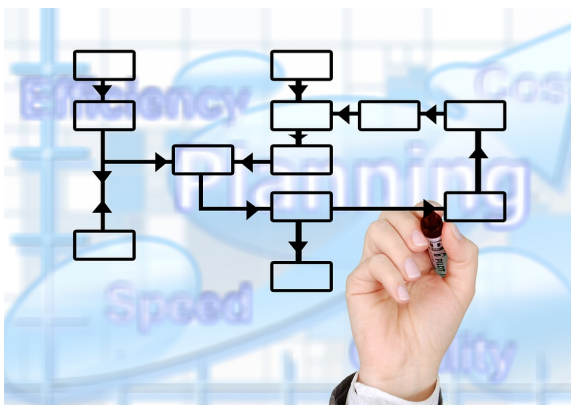




The Department of Energy Resources (DOER) released revisions to its Solar Massachusetts Renewable Target ([SMART](#)) Program doubling the program capacity to 3,200 MW. The new regulations effective April 15 expands ineligible land use areas, creates a set aside for low income projects, strengthens consumer protection provisions, and requires energy storage on all projects over 500kW. [Regulation details can be found here.](#)

In addition, DOER has also filed three regulatory guidelines regarding land use and siting, statement of qualification reservation period, and rate adders. A virtual public hearing will be held on May 13th from 10:00 - 12:00 pm to receive input on the regulations. [Click here to register.](#) Written comments on the SMART regulation and guidelines can be sent electronically to [doer.smart@mass.gov](mailto:doer.smart@mass.gov) with subject line "SMART Public Comment" and will be accepted until 5 pm on May 22, 2020.

## Free Training on Heat Pumps for Municipal Officials



DOER and UMass Clean Energy Extension (CEE) are offering a free training on heat pump and variable refrigerant flow systems with a focus on municipal applications for Massachusetts cities and towns. The training will cover different types of systems and how to select one for your project, financial incentives and grants available, and lessons learnt.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the training will be offered online or later this year. [Click here](#)



to register for the May 20th session at UMass Amherst; [click here](#) to register for the June 9th session in Lakeville.

All registrants will be placed on a list to be notified if the training sessions are rescheduled.

## Lowell turns Online for Community Input on Climate Resiliency Projects

During this time of social distancing, the city of Lowell is turning to online efforts to keep citizens updated on climate resiliency planning and seek public input on projects that could mitigate the impacts of climate change. The city plans to create a dedicated webpage to provide updated information on the planning process and will release videos and surveys to allow citizens to weigh in.



The planning process will focus on infrastructure, societal and economic resilience. It will evaluate the likelihood of severe climate change related impacts like severe storms, flooding, extreme heat and identify past successes in dealing with weather related events. This effort is funded by a \$77,750 grant from the [Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program](#), which provides technical and financial support to communities to plan for climate change. As a part of this process Lowell will also update its [Hazard Mitigation Plan](#) to maintain eligibility for future grant funding.

## Three Rural Communities to Benefit from Federal Solar Grant



A \$113,000 federal grant is being awarded to the [University of Massachusetts Amherst Clean Energy Extension](#) to help the Western Massachusetts towns of Blanford, Wendell, and

Westhampton [develop community-based plans for solar siting](#) and financing models to keep solar benefits within communities.

This grant from the [US Department of Energy's Natural Renewable Laboratory Solar Energy Innovation Network](#) intends to increase the input of rural residents and town officials during the planning process and reduce solar 'soft costs' such as architectural, engineering, financing, legal fees and construction expenses for rural communities. For more information, [click here](#).

## MassSave Expands Passive House Incentive Program



The successful MassSave Passive House Incentive Program has been expanded to include multi-family buildings of five or more units. Earlier, only buildings that were four or more stories were eligible. Incentive payments are staggered throughout feasibility, design and construction phases and covers 100% of the cost of feasibility studies up to \$5000 and up to 75% of the cost for energy modeling. [Click here details on the incentive structure](#) or contact [multifhr@icf.com](mailto:multifhr@icf.com) if you have questions.

In addition to the MassSave incentive, the MassCEC passive house [design challenge](#), and the [low income housing tax credit program](#) that includes incentives for passive house projects has helped Massachusetts take a lead on low carbon construction. To learn more about passive house standards for new construction and how designing and building to these standards can reduce costs for builders and occupants [listen to this recent DOER webinar](#). [Click here for slides](#). Additional recorded training is available at the [Passive House Massachusetts video library](#).

## Harvard Commits to Net Zero Emissions by 2050





Harvard has [announced](#) plans to move its \$41 billion endowment to a net-zero investment in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. This does not represent a divestment in fossil fuel companies but an increased commitment to investing in sustainability efforts. According to documents in the Harvard Management Company (HMC), which oversees the endowment, the strategy ["transcends the binary divestment debate."](#)

Details about how Harvard plans to reach its net zero goal are still being discussed. The university will work with faculty and asset managers to develop a methodology for calculating the greenhouse gas emissions of investments in its portfolio.

## Clean Transportation

**Strategies to Create Safe Streets and Outdoor Spaces During COVID-19 and Beyond**



Health professionals have made it clear that practicing physical distancing is necessary to stop the spread of COVID-19. However, maintaining the recommended six feet distance on narrow sidewalks and public parks, especially in dense urban areas has been difficult. How we get around safely whether it is for essential trips, exercise, or fresh air is more important than ever.

With [car traffic dropping dramatically](#), our streets and public spaces are being reimagined to create space for social distancing. Cities across the nation are adapting to the new situation by implementing a range of strategies to make our streets safer, relieve crowded spaces and keep pedestrians and bikers safe. Transit agencies are also taking steps to keep riders and transit workers safe. [Learn more about these strategies and access resources here.](#)

## **Federal Stimulus Package Brings Crucial Aid to Massachusetts Transit Agencies**





The [federal CARES Act has allocated \\$25 billion](#) in funding to help transit agencies across the nation respond to the COVID-19 public health crisis. In Massachusetts, transit agencies will be receiving \$1 billion of this emergency aid. An estimated \$840 million will go to transit agencies in the greater Boston urban area, \$37 million each to the Springfield and Worcester urbanized areas, \$13 million to help rural transit. Additionally, the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe will receive approximately \$63,000. This will serve as a crucial injection for systems that have seen [ridership plummet and a range of new costs](#) for safety precautions.

These funds can be used retroactively for expenses starting January 2020 to reimburse public transit agencies for operating costs to maintain service and lost revenue due to the coronavirus public health emergency, including the purchase of personal protective equipment, hand sanitizers, and paying administrative leave of operations personnel due to reduction in service.

## **Dedicated Bus Lanes to Help Manage Traffic During GLX Construction**





The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) in collaboration with Massachusetts Department of Transportation's (MassDOT) [announced](#) plans for two temporary dedicated bus lanes on Charles River Dam Road to manage traffic during the planned suspension of Green Line service between North Station to Lechmere Station [during construction](#) of the Green Line Extension Project (GLX).

The plan preserves existing bicycle and pedestrian accommodations and will maintain two vehicular travel lanes. During construction, the frequency of buses is expected to meet or exceed current Green Line service. Modeling of traffic volumes indicate that bus lanes are projected to save up to 15 minutes, round trip, per passenger during peak travel times on weekdays.

## Resources and Reading List

- [We Must Protect Massachusetts Residents from more Pollution](#)
- New report by UCLA School of Public Health: [Effects of Residential Gas Appliances on Indoor and Outdoor Air Quality and Public Health in California](#)
- [Faces of Clean Energy](#), Sierra 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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## ABOUT

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