

NEW HAVEN CLIMATE MOVEMENT

SEPTEMBER 2024

Transportation Transformation Resolution

for a Sustainable, Healthy New Haven and Responding to Climate Emergency

WHEREAS, in 2019, the City of New Haven declared that we face an existential climate emergency

that threatens our City, region, state, nation, human civilization, and the natural world, committing to

ending community-wide greenhouse gas emissions by 2030; and

WHEREAS, NASA scientists have concluded that the complete collapse of the Greenland Ice Sheet

alone could raise sea levels 23 feet, creating several billion climate refugees and a “global-scale

catastrophe”; and

WHEREAS, global warming has already set in motion disastrous changes to the Earth system,

including accelerating ice mass loss from the Greenland and West Antarctic Ice Sheets and the

thawing of the borders of the vast Arctic permafrost, which holds twice as much stored carbon as the

entire atmosphere; and

WHEREAS: the world is on course for 2°C of warming at which point many scientists believe that

this temperature will initiate a chain of self-reinforcing changes (feedback loops) that dramatically

accelerate warming (ex: hotter temperatures cause more forest fires, releasing more CO₂

, causing

more warming, causing more fires, etc.); and

WHEREAS, climate change poses significant threats to biodiversity, ecosystems, and the natural

environment, exacerbating habitat loss, species extinction, and ecosystem degradation; and

WHEREAS, in the state of Connecticut, transportation emissions remain the largest contributor to

greenhouse gas emissions (38% (source)- stagnant at 1990 levels), highlighting the need for New

Haven to decarbonize by transitioning to electric and human-powered vehicles; and

WHEREAS, the City of New Haven has taken some actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions,

including implementing the Community Electrification Resolution in 2021, expanding bike

infrastructure, creating a Climate and Sustainability Office and beginning work on a bus rapid transit

system, but there is much, much more to do to end our fossil fuel dependency, and

WHEREAS, our car-centric transportation network has resulted in high levels of particulate

pollution, which disproportionately affects lower-income neighborhoods (source); and

WHEREAS, air pollution is the second leading risk factor for death and mortality, and according to a

2021 Harvard School of Public Health study, fossil fuel air pollution is responsible for 1 in 5 deaths

worldwide each year; and

WHEREAS, in the state of Connecticut, around 1 in 8 students have asthma, and the incidence of

asthma among Black students is about 50% higher (source), raising serious concerns about

environmental justice; and

WHEREAS, New Haven was ranked the fifth most challenging place to live with asthma in the entire

nation by the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America in 2021; and

WHEREAS, anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions contribute significantly to rising sea levels,

posing a threat to coastal cities like New Haven, which may face up to 20 inches of sea level rise by

2050 (source); and

WHEREAS, almost 18% of all buildings in New Haven are currently at high risk of flooding

(source), and rising sea levels along with more frequent extreme weather events will result in

increased property damage and economic losses, similar to the \$20 billion in damages caused by

Hurricane Ida in the Northeastern United States in 2021; and

WHEREAS, human-induced climate change is increasing the frequency and intensity of heat waves,

and it is projected to increase New Haven's average temperature by up to 5 degrees Fahrenheit by

2050 (source); and

WHEREAS, heat waves are a major public health concern, aggravating existing conditions and

contributing to cardiovascular diseases, respiratory problems, dehydration, and heat stroke, leading to

higher morbidity and mortality rates; and

WHEREAS, urban heat islands, characterized by less tree cover and more paved surfaces,

disproportionately affect low income communities and communities of color, exacerbating existing

social and economic vulnerabilities and contributing to increased health disparities; and

WHEREAS, New Haven's excessive parking infrastructure, which has increased off-street parking

spaces by 542% since 1960 (source), exacerbates urban heat island effects, consumes valuable urban

space, reduces economic vitality, and promotes suburban job sprawl, hindering city residents' access

to employment; and

WHEREAS, the City of New Haven adopted the Safe Routes for All Active Transportation Plan in

2022, which maps out a city-wide bicycle network and lays out plans for pedestrian and transit

improvements, but the City has yet to commit significant resources towards implementing the plan;

and

WHEREAS, owning and operating a car is much more expensive (annual average cost of owning a

vehicle in New Haven is \$12,000 (source)) than public transit or riding a bicycle, making car-centric

road design inequitable for those who cannot afford to own and maintain a vehicle; and

WHEREAS, constructing more roadways and parking spaces has been shown to induce more driving,

while repurposing just 6% of existing publicly-owned street space would provide enough space for a

62-mile protected bike network, incentivizing more low-carbon transportation; and

WHEREAS, speeding and lack of enforcement contribute to a high number of traffic accidents in

New Haven, highlighting the urgent need for improved traffic safety measures and infrastructure to

protect non-vehicular transportation; and

WHEREAS, the fear of sharing roads with fast-moving cars deters many New Haven residents from

biking, negatively impacting their health, freedom, and transportation habits; and

WHEREAS, historically, the automotive and oil industries have made substantial investments in

promoting, marketing, infrastructure design, transportation policy, and fostering dependency on cars

and fossil fuels, overcoming this present paradigm will require that New Haven commit significant

resources and innovative strategies to shift to a sustainable transportation system; and

WHEREAS, there is a need for robust public education programs to promote active and low-carbon

transportation options in schools and communities and raise awareness about the full costs of driving,

including health impacts and environmental consequences; and

WHEREAS, Connecticut does not produce gasoline or cars, so transitioning to a cleaner

transportation system can redirect billions spent on imports each year to local spending, economic

vitality, and family needs; and

WHEREAS, despite some solid progress in transportation infrastructure in recent years, achieving

substantial and measurable reductions in greenhouse gas emissions from transportation and fulfilling

the city's climate commitments requires a significant shift in attention, funding, resources, and

staffing.

NOW BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that the City and Board of Alders recognize the urgent

need for a transformative approach to transportation that prioritizes safety, equity, sustainability, and

environmental stewardship, underpinned by clear commitments to progress and supported by adequate

financial backing; and

1. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Department of Transportation, Traffic & Parking

reports back to the Board of Alders within 6 months with a plan and a timeline to cut transportation greenhouse gas emissions by 25% by 2030 and significantly increase bus, train,

biking, walking, and electric vehicle use by 2030, and what steps are needed to accelerate the

implementation of the Safe Routes for All Citywide Active Transportation Plan.

2. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the City reaffirms its support (2022 Board of Alders

Resolution) for the state of Connecticut to provide free bus passes to all, recognizing this as a

pivotal step towards shifting habits, reducing pollution, supporting low-income families, fostering sustainable urban mobility; and

3. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, encourages the New Haven Board of Education -

recognizing the opportunity to improve the health of its students and help them lead on the

climate emergency and the broad reach the schools have in New Haven communities - to

report back in six months to the Alders Education Committee with a plan on how to educate

students on the impacts of present transportation choices on public health, the possibility of

implementing an in-school bike, walk, and transit curriculum, and overall how schools could

promote the use of healthier public transit and active transportation.

4. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Economic Development Administration report back to the Board of Alders in six months with a plan to promote active transportation in all

their public activities, events, and initiatives (fairs, markets, etc).

5. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Office of Climate and Sustainability report

progress on greenhouse gas and air pollution emissions reductions from transportation to the

Board of Alders in June of each year, to ensure transparency and accountability in achieving

New Haven's climate and transportation goals.

6. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the City commit staff to work with major local employers and stakeholders (Yale, SCSU, YNHH, Gateway, unions, etc) and with CTrides to

encourage people through ongoing marketing and media work to rely more on public transit

and healthier transportation options, and to drive more safely.

7. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Alders recognize the need to for funding to support

increased transportation staffing to lead these critical projects, including a grant writer, a Transportation Planner and a Transportation Engineer, and specifically to implement projects

identified in the approved 2018 New Haven Climate and Sustainability Framework and the

Safe Routes for All Plan approved in 2022.

8. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Alders recognize the need to increase transportation capital funds (given that reaching 2030 goals will need significant investment

before then) and will try to include \$5 million in the City 2025-27 capital budget to accelerate

implementation of the Safe Routes for All plan, especially in the City's "Priority Neighborhoods" as significant infrastructure changes will be critical to people shifting transportation modes.