

## NEW HAVEN CITY PLAN COMMISSION ADVISORY REPORT

**RE:**           **RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF ALDERS** Adopting a Transportation Transformation Resolution for a Sustainable, Healthy New Haven and Responding to Climate Emergency.

**Submitted by:** New Haven Climate Movement

**REPORT: 1660-04**

**ADVICE:** Approval with recommendations

### BACKGROUND

New Haven Climate Movement (NHCM) is submitting a resolution to the Board of Alders Adopting a Transportation Transformation Resolution for a Sustainable, Healthy New Haven and Responding to Climate Emergency. The resolution requests 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. The resolution includes eight stipulations, summarized below:

1. 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. 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.
3. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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.

NHCM cites several reasons for the need for this resolution, including climate change statistics, health outcomes, and other trends related to transportation. These are listed in the resolution, along with sources for some of the statistics that they cite. Some of the key issues cited are the following:

- 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.
- In the state of Connecticut, around 1 in 8 students have asthma, and the incidence of asthma among Black students is about 50% higher, raising serious concerns about environmental justice.
- In the state of Connecticut, transportation emissions remain the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions (38%- stagnant at 1990 levels), highlighting the need for New Haven to decarbonize by transitioning to electric and human-powered vehicles.
- 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.
- 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.
- Our car-centric transportation network has resulted in high levels of particulate pollution, which disproportionately affects lower-income neighborhoods.
- 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.
- New Haven's excessive parking infrastructure, which has increased off-street parking spaces by 542% since 1960, exacerbates urban heat island effects, consumes valuable urban space, reduces economic vitality, and promotes suburban job sprawl, hindering city residents' access to employment.
- 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.
- Owning and operating a car is much more expensive (annual average cost of owning a vehicle in New Haven is \$12,000 than public transit or riding a bicycle, making car-centric road design inequitable for those who cannot afford to own and maintain a vehicle.
- 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.

- 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.
- The fear of sharing roads with fast-moving cars deters many New Haven residents from biking, negatively impacting their health, freedom, and transportation habits.
- 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.
- 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.

## PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

This resolution calls on city officials to act on climate change, specifically focusing on emissions from the transportation sector which remain the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in Connecticut. Vision 2025, New Haven's Comprehensive Plan, calls for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from transportation by encouraging multi-modal transportation systems, particularly enhancing the transit, bicycle/ pedestrian and trails network, and promoting transit-oriented developments along major transit corridors. The proposed resolution is in line with this overarching goal, as well as other more specific goals in the comprehensive plan, such as the following:

*Grow sustainable transportation systems by assessing the capacity of existing transportation systems in relation to the density and intensity of uses proposed in new developments (Vision 2025, page xxiii)*

*Grow the reliability, frequency, and efficiency of existing transit service within the city by partnering with CTTRANSIT to develop a bus transit needs analysis to identify and prioritize underserved routes and develop strategies accordingly and by implementing the recommendations of Parking and Transit Working Group (2013). (Vision 2025, page xxvii)*

*Build a comprehensive and integrated bicycle and pedestrian network within the city by identifying and prioritizing the missing links and implementing solutions accordingly. Improve the quality of existing sidewalks within the Hill, Newhallville, and Dixwell neighborhoods and implement new sidewalks on city's collector streets i.e., Russell Street, Quinnipiac Avenue, lower Valley Street, and Foxon Boulevard. (Vision 2025, page xxvii)*

*Grow public safety by implementing traffic calming solutions at poorly designed, high volume, and/ or accident prone locations of the city including, Ella Grasso Blvd., upper Whalley Ave, upper State St., Clinton Ave., Foxon Blvd., Sargent Dr., and at James Hillhouse and King Robinson schools. (Vision 2025, page xxvii)*

*Build a multi-modal transportation network within the city by developing a transportation master plan that supports the City's land use and development goals and will assist in assessing funding for needed improvements and potential shortfalls, if any. (Vision 2025, page xxvii)*

New Haven Climate Movement mentions in their resolution that much work has already been done and is currently underway to address transportation-related emissions such as building bicycle networks, improving bus transit, and traffic calming efforts on busy roadways. Their resolution pushes for additional benchmarking in the form of a specific emission reduction goal by 2030, the swift implementation of the Safe Routes for All Plan through additional funding and resources, and increasing education, funding, and marketing towards this climate change solution.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

This item has been referred to the City Plan Commission, the departments of Transportation, Traffic and Parking and the City Services and Environmental Policy Committee of the Board of Alders. Given the resource implications of the resolution it may be appropriate to have the Office of Climate and Sustainability, the Board of Education, and the Economic Development Administration report on benchmarking and efforts already in place to advance the goals of this resolution.

### **ADVICE**

This resolution generally meets the goals of the Vision 2025 Comprehensive Plan therefore the Commission recommends approval of the goals of this resolution, with the above recommendations.

**ADOPTED:** December 18, 2024  
Leslie Radcliffe  
Chair

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
Laura E Brown  
Executive Director, City Plan Department