

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.

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