



## CLIMATE & CLEAN ENERGY COMMITTEE

### Minutes

Monday, March 17, 2025

- A. **Call to Order:** Chair Mayor Katjana Ballantyne (Somerville) called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM and opened with remarks on the role of the committee in furthering the climate cause through the MBTA, and Massachusetts, and the importance of the work ahead.
- B. **Briefing & update:** Chair K. Ballantyne introduced **Climate Chief Melissa A. Hoffer, Governor's Office of Climate Innovation**. Chief M. Hoffer briefed the committee on the Climate Action Plan and the work of the Office of Climate Innovation. Following the briefing, Chief Hoffer opened for questions.
  - a. Brian Kane (Executive Director) thanked Chief M. Hoffer for her briefing and asked how the MBTA can adequately message that it is part of the mitigation strategy for climate change, when it is often lumped in as part of the problem. M. Hoffer answered that framing the MBTA as an opportunity for people to contribute to the solution just by using it for their daily needs is a strong message. She

emphasized the importance of telling the story of what the funding of this service buys for the Commonwealth.

- b. Chris Osgood (Boston) asked how municipalities can help to move on the broad mission for the T, in addition to the narrative change. M. Hoffer answered that community work to promote transit-oriented development is not only a valuable contribution to the state's climate and transportation goals, but additionally to its economic development, health, and quality of life goals.
- c. Susan Barrett (Lexington) asked what advice Chief M. Hoffer has for communities who have lost public transit service in recent years due to fiscal constraint at the MBTA. M. Hoffer agreed that this is a difficult position for communities to be in, and added that the impacts felt by communities demonstrates the important argument for greater investment and expanded service.
- d. Steve Olanoff (Westwood) asked about the Office's approach to disaster mitigation, given the increasing costs facing states after they experience natural disasters. M. Hoffer mentioned a study conducted by the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research that identified the scale of the costs to all sectors from climate disasters. They estimate that, globally, by 2050 the cost of responding to damages caused by emissions will be about \$38 trillion a year. The costs of mitigation are less expensive compared to the costs of responding to the damages. Additionally, experts are raising alarms about the ways that climate change exerts upward pressure on inflation.
- e. Logan Casey (Marblehead) asked, referencing the previous question about communities that have experienced the impacts of fiscal constraints at the MBTA, how the Climate Innovation Office

advocates for expansion projects and broad visions for future goals.

M. Hoffer mentioned a community college event she attended in Gardner where she discussed with students and faculty the length of time it takes for people to travel between Gardner and Fitchburg. She said the word that came to her mind was “opportunity.” For senior citizens, students, and many more to access important services and opportunities, the state must take advantage of the monetizable co-benefits that expanded service would lead to.

- f. Corey Evans (Cohasset) expressed the challenges that communities on diesel commuter rail branches face when the electrification of their lines remains a low priority. C. Evans also mentioned a bad experience in Cohasset with an electric school bus vendor and emphasized the need for reliable partners in the electrification process.
- g. Brad Rawson (Somerville) emphasized the importance of electrified regional rail, and suggested that the office should look at MassDOT’s project development workbooks and guides and investigate how to leverage highway dollars for equitable, green mass transit. M. Hoffer asked if, in reference to the re-authorization legislation, this suggestion refers to money for road and bridge purposes that can be flexed for hybrid transit benefits as well. B. Rawson answered that MBTA and MassDOT do a good job of collaborating on one-off projects to ascertain co-benefits, but their formulaic approach does not include additional co-benefit analysis. M. Hoffer answered that MassDOT uses Program Management Offices to drive management of projects and standardization has come up in other contexts, but the MassDOT Climate PMO would be a good place to bring this discussion. M. Hoffer added that this would be worth a further discussion, and that it is a great suggestion.

- h. Chair K. Ballantyne thanked Chief Hoffer for joining and extended an invitation for further discussion, which M. Hoffer accepted.
- C. **Discussion:** B. Kane presented the 2025 Climate & Clean Energy Committee Charter and opened for comments and questions.
  - a. S. Olanoff mentioned that his name is not on the list. He asked if the committee might receive a summary each meeting on Fairmount line and bus electrification progress.
  - b. S. Barrett asked if the committee schedule could include discussion on the PMT. B. Kane answered that the committee will discuss the PMT, but the majority of the discussion will likely occur in 2026 as it will not be released until late 2025.
  - c. C. Osgood suggested that “climate resiliency” be added to the committee charge’s language.
  - d. Chair K. Ballantyne asked for a motion to approve the Charter, which C. Evans moved and S. Olanoff seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
- D. **Minutes:** Chair K. Ballantyne asked for a motion to approve the Charter, which S. Olanoff moved and C. Osgood seconded. The motion passed with three abstentions.
- E. **Adjourn:** C. Evans moved to adjourn, a motion which S. Barrett seconded. This motion passed without objection and the meeting adjourned at 1:59 PM.

*Note: These minutes were approved by vote of the committee at their 5/12/25 meeting.*

## **Attendees**

### **Committee**

Chris Osgood	Boston
Corey Evans	Cohasset
Susan Barrett	Lexington
Logan Casey	Marblehead
Hon. Katjana Ballantyne	Somerville
Brad Rawson	Somerville
Sheila Page	Wellesley
Steve Olanoff	Westwood

### **MBTA Advisory Board Members**

Duncan Allen	Needham
Debra Roberts	Stoughton

### **Other**

Climate Chief Melissa Hoffer	Governor's Office of Climate Innovation
Kat Eshel	MBTA
Neha Singh	Somerville
Yasmine Raddassi	Somerville
Kendra White	Cambridge
Marybeth Martello	Wellesley

## **MBTA Advisory Board Staff**

Brian Kane

Hanna Switekowski Isabella

MacKinnon Executive Director

Deputy Director

Budget & Policy Analyst