



CLIMATE & CLEAN ENERGY COMMITTEE MINUTES (DRAFT)

March 12, 2026

10:00 AM – 11:00 AM

- A. Call To Order:** The Chair, Mayor DJ Bearegard (City of Methuen), called the meeting to order at 10:01 AM over Zoom.

- B. MBTA Rail Modernization Update:** Kat Eshel, MBTA Senior Director of Climate Policy and Planning presented the MBTA's rail modernization strategy through a climate lens.
 - a** Susanne Rasmussen (Cambridge) asked how many locomotives are needed. K. Eshel answered that around 40 of the MBTA's 80 locomotives are at the end of their useful life.

 - b** Steve Olanoff (Westwood) asked how the Fairmount Line fits into the Rail Modernization Plan and what the status of the transition is. K. Eshel answered that Fairmount Line Electrification is fully funded, however it won't allow the MBTA to take any diesel locomotives out of service because the fleet is so old so some slack is still needed. S. Olanoff confirmed if, elsewhere on the system, the new locomotives will carry existing passenger cars instead of replacing the whole fleet. K. Eshel answered that this is the

case because not every line will require the same solution. The BEMUs that will be used on the Fairmount Line can carry fewer people than the regular locomotives and passenger cars so they are a better fit for shorter lines with smaller ridership. The technology is changing rapidly and improvements in battery tech have meant that the Fairmount Line will no longer need catenary as originally planned.

- c Chris Osgood (Boston) seconded S. Olanoff's interest in a Fairmount Line briefing. C. Osgood asked what needs to be done from a rail modernization standpoint to ensure that when the additional 50 locomotives are purchased, they will be battery electric. K. Eshel answered that the main driver is the infrastructure. The voltage required for the locomotives and rolling stock is governed at the ISO-New England level and there is little that the state can do. The timeline from initiating an interconnection request study with ISO New England to when the infrastructure is delivered is historically a 7–10-year period. This study will investigate what impact the request will have on the regional grid and what system upgrades might be needed to handle the new infrastructure and, as a result, the subsequent upgrades that the MBTA will be expected to make are unclear at this time. Right now, the conversations revolve around how to make that process faster, reprocurring the operator, and securing greater capital funding.

- d S. Rasmussen asked to what extent can the layover facility time be optimized for trains that regularly idle there for hours, impacting the terminus communities. K. Eshel answered that there is room for improvement that can be explored in the new operations contract. However, there is also some necessary idling time for inspections.
- e Brian Kane (Executive Director) thanked K. Eshel for the messaging of the MBTA as part of the climate solution. In addition to advancing technology, the best thing the authority can do is increase ridership. B. Kane asked about the future of the South Boston Jet Engine. K. Eshel commented that the MBTA is working with CTPS to commission an avoided carbon study that will update the previous 2012 study and examine the land use impact of transit on emissions to quantify the benefit of transit investments. Additionally, there will be a feasibility study on the Jet.
- f Cathy Bilotta (Manchester-By-The-Sea) asked if the resiliency roadmap will include plans to deal with sections of the service that are in flood zones so the North Shore communities know what options are being looked at. K. Eshel answered that these discussions will take place more over the long-term and the risk tolerance for flooding is higher than people expect.

C. Next Meeting: Wednesday, May 6, 2026, 10AM via Zoom.

D. Adjourn: Chair

Attendees:

Committee Members:

Boston
Cambridge
Manchester-By-The-Sea
Methuen
Westwood

Chris Osgood
Susanne Rasmussen
Cathy Bilotta
Hon. DJ Beauregard
Steve Olanoff

MBTA Advisory Board Staff:

Brian Kane
Hanna Switekowski
Isabella MacKinnon

Executive Director
Deputy Director
Budget & Policy Analyst

MBTA:

Kat Eshel

MBTA Senior Director of
Climate Policy & Planning