

Climate and Clean Energy

A Metropolitan Area Planning Council Legislative Priority

Photo via Broadway Electrical

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) is the Regional Planning Agency for the people who live and work in the 101 cities and towns in the Metropolitan Boston region, which includes roughly half the state's population and two-thirds of the state's jobs.

Massachusetts is a leader in clean energy – a win not only for our state's economy but also for our planet – and our cities and towns are at the front lines of the effort. In order to lessen the magnitude and impacts of climate change, we must cut carbon emissions by phasing out fossil fuels, switching to low- or zero-carbon energy sources, and increasing energy efficiency.

S.1987
H.2841

Green Plus Communities

"An Act to Expand the Green Communities Program to Mitigate Climate Change"

Sponsors: Senator Jason Lewis & Representative Carolyn Dykema

Massachusetts has committed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 80% from 1990 levels by 2050. This expansion of the Green Communities program will allow municipalities the opportunity to lead the way.

Building on the successful Green Communities program that more than half of MA municipalities have adopted, this bill creates a new designation, "Green Plus," which focuses local efforts on greenhouse gas emissions reduction. To apply, municipalities first establish a community-wide GHG emissions baseline and then put in place a comprehensive program to reduce GHG emissions by at least 20% within 5 years. Participating municipalities then have access to funds to implement their plans.

It also includes a provision to allow DOER to develop alternate regulations to allow those communities served by municipal light plants to participate in both Green Communities and the new Green Plus Communities programs.

S.1941
H.2831

Property Assessed Clean Energy

"An Act authorizing resiliency measures under Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy"

Sponsors: Senator Brendan Crighton & Representative Mark Cusack

This bill expands the existing Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) program to include three clean energy technologies, in addition to the current technologies like solar and wind, that could increase a building's resiliency: microgrids, district heating and cooling, and energy storage.

Allowing property owners to finance these technologies under the C-PACE program will ensure that Massachusetts can continue to be a leader in the clean energy sector, while helping municipalities provide financing tools to property owners in their community to enhance reliability, resiliency, and clean energy efforts.

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Other Climate and Clean Energy Policy Priorities

Carbon Pricing and Transportation Climate Initiative

For over a decade, Massachusetts has been pricing carbon within the electricity sector through a cap-and-trade program called the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, or RGGI. But the power sector in Massachusetts accounts for only 20% of the state's emissions and the remaining 80% comes from sources not covered under RGGI—such as heating fuels, transportation, construction, and manufacturing. MAPC supports requiring the Commonwealth to set an economy-wide price on carbon emissions at a sufficient level to have a significant impact on advancing our climate mitigation goals.

To that end, MAPC is supportive of the Transportation Climate Initiative. In December 2018, Massachusetts joined with eight Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states plus the District of Columbia to take a collaborative regional approach to reduce carbon emissions from the transportation sector. This initiative is patterned on the decade-old Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), which reduces carbon emissions from the electricity sector.

Net Metering

The current limitations on net metering for solar installations severely constrain the ability of cities and towns to implement solar projects. MAPC supports elimination of the net metering caps.

When public net metering caps are hit, which has been the case for over a year in many areas of the state, the financial case for municipal solar projects – from town hall roofs to DPW yards and school parking lots – is greatly reduced.

Grid Modernization

A modern grid that is flexible, resilient, and decentralized is necessary to accommodate the transformation required of our energy system to mitigate and adapt to climate change. A key component of grid modernization is the deployment of smart meters and the associated utility communications and data system upgrades. These grid upgrades work together to interface with consumers who both produce and sell their own power.

MAPC supports legislation to modernize the grid through advanced meters, smart rate design, demand response, and other grid resiliency measures.

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