

Mobility

Goal 1: All community members have access to safe and affordable transportation choices that will result in zero carbon emission, reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), and lead to healthier and stronger communities.

Goal 2: Acton neighborhoods, commercial, and community centers are interconnected through infrastructure improvements and redesign that allows reliable and multiple modes of transportation.

Goal 3: Acton actively influences programs and policies that support zero emission, affordable, accessible, and reliable regional transportation systems

Advocate for community transit service needs, bus stop upgrades, bus rapid transit, and electrification of the regional transit system

M1: Advocate to electrify the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Commuter Rail and other public transit. Currently, the MBTA operates Commuter Rail entirely with diesel-locomotive hauled trains.

In its Rail Vision report, the MBTA has laid out the framework to plan for electrification including feasibility, cost, and ridership benefits. In a line level analysis of Commuter Rail lines, the MBTA Rail Report found that electrification of some of the lines resulted in the highest cost savings and the greatest level of travel time savings. The Rail Report found that electrification of the Fitchburg Line which stops in South Acton, offered the greatest travel time savings and provided the most frequency and connectivity.

M2: Work with local businesses to support public transportation needs and co-fund innovative transportation initiatives (bikeshare programs, EV charger installations, electric car share programs, etc.).

An example of a business supporting public transportation needs: Before COVID-19, the Town of Acton offered a bike share service with locations at the South Acton Commuter rail station and in West Acton Village. The bikeshare program was used primarily by commuters and was sponsored in part by local businesses. The program ended when the bikeshare company went bankrupt due to COVID-19, however, it provided a template and example of a program model that can work to help fill mobility gaps. The Town will explore the possibility of restarting a co-funded bikeshare program, and applying a similar model in other transportation initiatives, such as installing more public EV charging stations as part of this work.

M3: Participate in regional discussions on transportation and increase coordination with neighboring towns; support the linkage of north and south commuter rail lines.

The North South Rail Link (NSRL) project would connect the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority's (MBTA) northside and southside commuter rail networks into one regional system through the construction and operation of a rail tunnel through Downtown Boston. According to an assessment by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) this tunnel would enable through-running of MBTA Commuter Rail and Amtrak trains, increasing system coverage, capacity, and ridership. The Town will advocate for this rail link connection to support greater public transit connectivity between Acton and regional services, jobs and recreation opportunities.

M4: Restart and expand the service region of the Cross-Acton Transit (CAT) by incorporating new fixed routes or providing on-demand services.

The CAT was a shuttle that offered free fixed-schedule and fixed route services to the South Acton Commuter lot. Due to COVID-19 and inability to fill driver positions the service has been paused. The Town will procure new shuttle services to provide more transit opportunities and improve the ridership experience.

Increase the adoption of electric vehicles

M5: Promote electric vehicle adoption.

Create an outreach campaign to connect residents and businesses to state and federal incentives that make zero emission vehicles more affordable. Combined federal and state tax credits can reduce purchase costs up to \$10,000.

Spotlight Corner

The City of Birmingham, Alabama offers on-demand public mobility to complement public transportation services, enabling residents in the city to book a shared ride for a flat rate fee of \$1.50. The program provides accessible vehicles for riders with disabilities and hires local driver-partners. <https://www.birminghamal.gov/via/>

M6: Create an incentive program to help provide increased access to EVs for low-income residents in Acton.

The Town will explore opportunities to develop an incentive program to make it easier for low-income resident to adopt EVs. As part of this incentive program the Town will seek opportunities to provide financial resources and information to meet the demand for additional charging infrastructure (e.g. at multi-unit buildings). Acton will keep up-to-date on potential changes in federal incentives that may provide greater income-tiered incentives for residents.

M7: Implement an income tiered EV car sharing program in partnership with community organizations and affordable housing developments.

The Town will conduct research with nearby towns and cities across the U.S. that have successfully implemented EV car sharing programs to identify the steps to procure a similar service in Acton. There has been success in similar programs in Boston, Portland, OR, and Sacramento, CA. Drivers typically use a smartphone app to book an EV for a time slot and then pick up the car, run their errands, and plug it back into the charging station. Studies show that for one shared vehicle, it can take as many as 7-10 individual cars off the road.

Lead by example: transition to all electric school buses and town vehicles

M8: Adopt electric-first vehicle policy for the Town’s municipal fleet, meaning that electric vehicles, including school buses and micro-transit services like the Minuteman Van and the CAT shall be prioritized when the Town purchases or leases motor vehicles for its municipal operations.

This includes: The purchase or lease of exclusively battery electric vehicles for all light-duty passenger fleet replacements; Pilot, evaluate, and, where feasible, acquire electric vehicles for medium- and heavy-duty vehicle and equipment categories; Minimize vehicle miles travelled and minimize idling.

Expand public and opportunities for private electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure

M9: Fill EV charger gaps near major thruways and at key locations that have frequent visitors, including trailheads, garages, parking lots, and other facilities.

Increase the amount of chargers in town annually as EV adoption increases, considering the three levels of EV chargers as options: Level 1, 2, and 3. Evaluate strategies to reduce the cost of adopting EV infrastructure, including the procurement of chargers in large volumes, expediting the permitting process, and identifying sites carefully, taking into account utility interconnection and the potential to group various chargers and reduce fixed costs. Evaluate pricing structures and benefits to local businesses.

M10: Adopt EV-ready and/or installation requirements for new residential and commercial buildings or major rehab.

The Town will coordinate with utilities and relevant stakeholders to identify opportunities where adopting “make-ready” requirements can save future costs. Make-ready hardware includes distribution feeders, transformers, meters, and the service drop. For example, new development or major rehab projects should consider oversizing the transformer and laying additional conduit to support expansion, where the marginal cost of doing so is not prohibitive. Wherever possible, explore opportunities to also make buildings solar ready via this work as well.

Spotlight Corner

The Affordable EV car sharing program, ‘Good2Go’ is available to drivers in Boston. Low-income members enrolled in a public assistance program pay a \$5 per hour reduced rate, half the standard rate. The program also welcomes market-rate members, and the cost of car sharing remains below the cost of car ownership and other car sharing/car rental options in the area. It is aimed at neighbors who do not need or want to own a car or are looking to replace the need for a second car. According to Good2Go “it also introduces clean, quiet EV technology for those wanting to try an electric vehicle, but not yet ready to purchase one.” <https://evgood2go.org/about/>

M10: Adopt EV-ready and/or installation requirements for new residential and commercial buildings or major rehab.

The Town will coordinate with utilities and relevant stakeholders to identify opportunities where adopting “make-ready” requirements can save future costs. Make-ready hardware includes distribution feeders, transformers, meters, and the service drop. For example, new development or major rehab projects should consider oversizing the transformer and laying additional conduit to support expansion, where the marginal cost of doing so is not prohibitive. Wherever possible, explore opportunities to also make buildings solar ready via this work as well.

M11: Explore policies and incentives to enable multi-family housing residents to expand electric vehicle charging options.

The Town will provide resources and support to pilot an EV charging solution in a multi-family housing complex in an effort to scale these solutions. The Town will coordinate with landlord, property management, and homeowner associations (HOA) to find ways to address network integrations, installations, payment schemes and long-term management and maintenance. One example is enabling Level 1 chargers to operate through existing common outlets, establishing a compensation based on energy use and residential electric rates. This can be achieved through submetering equipment or with a flat monthly fee. Another option for residents who wish to install Level 2 charging is to enable EV drivers in a complex to purchase EV charging equipment for a designated space and pay a third-party network solution handle the billing.

Spotlight Corner

The City of Birmingham, Alabama offers on-demand public mobility to complement public transportation services, enabling residents in the city to book a shared ride for a flat rate fee of \$1.50. The program provides accessible vehicles for riders with disabilities and hires local driver partners. <https://www.birminghamal.gov/via/>

Improve bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure

M12: Develop and implement a bicycle and pedestrian plan.

Incorporate measures to increase bicyclist and pedestrian safety, increase connection to a broader regional bike network and walking trails, and improve ridership and to expand and appropriately regulate deployment micro-mobility options (e-bikes, scooters, bikeshare programs, etc.); consider people with different abilities in these regulations. This includes exploring ecofriendly materials for sidewalk creation and a strategy for snow removal.

M13: Continue implementing, supporting, and evaluating the Complete Streets Policy.

A Complete Street is one that provides safe and accessible options for all travel modes – walking, biking, transit and vehicles – for people of all ages and abilities. The Town of Acton will continue to make Complete Streets practices a routine part of everyday operations, and approach every transportation project and program as an opportunity to improve streets and the transportation network for all users, working in coordination with other departments, agencies, and jurisdictions to achieve Complete Streets.



Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. Photo by Bob Travis.

Mobility

Short = 1-2 years
 Medium = 3-5 years
 Long = 6-10 years

ID	Action	Co-Benefits	Action Type	Implementation Timeline	Municipal Lead Implementers	Potential Community Partners
M1	Advocate to electrify the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Commuter Rail and other public transit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improves air quality Improves public health Centers equity and environmental justice 	Advocacy	Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainability Transportation Green Advisory Board Select Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MBTA MassDOT
M2	Work with local businesses to support public transportation needs and co-fund innovative transportation initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improves air quality Improves public health Centers equity and environmental justice 	Feasibility assessment/ Pilot program	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainability Transportation Transportation Advisory Committee Planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local businesses Micro-mobility companies E4TheFuture
M3	Participate in regional discussions on transportation and increase coordination with neighboring towns; support the linkage of north and south commuter rail lines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improves air quality Improves public health Centers equity and environmental justice 	Advocacy	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainability Transportation Transportation Advisory Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MAGIC communities
M4	Restart and expand the service region of the Cross-Acton Transit (CAT).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improves air quality Improves public health Centers equity and environmental justice 	Feasibility assessment/ Pilot program	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainability Transportation Transportation Advisory Committee Planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transportation services MassDOT
M5	Promote electric vehicle adoption.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improves air quality Improves public health Centers equity and environmental justice Scalable or transferable to other neighborhoods 	Training /Education/ Outreach	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local car dealerships Green Energy Consumers Alliance Energize Acton
M6	Create an incentive program to help provide increased access to EVs for low-income residents in Acton.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improves air quality Improves public health Centers equity and environmental justice 	Financing	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainability AHA ACHC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Car dealerships; Car-sharing services E4TheFuture
M7	Implement an income tiered EV car sharing program in partnership with community organizations and affordable housing developments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improves air quality Improves public health Centers equity and environmental justice Scalable or transferable to other neighborhoods 	Financing	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainability Building AHA ACHC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Car-sharing services E4TheFuture

Mobility (cont.)

ID	Action	Co-Benefits	Action Type	Implementation Timeline	Municipal Lead Implementers	Potential Community Partners
M8	Adopt electric-first vehicle policy for the Town's municipal fleet.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improves air quality Improves public health 	Policy /Regulations/ Standards	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainability DPW Fire Police 	
M9	Fill EV charger gaps near major thruways and at key locations that have frequent visitors, including trailheads, garages, parking lots, and other facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scalable or transferable to other neighborhoods 	Capital Improvement	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainability DPW Recreation Economic Dev. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eversource MassDOT Charger companies Local businesses
M10	Adopt EV-ready and/or installation requirements for new residential and commercial buildings or major rehab.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scalable or transferable to other neighborhoods 	Policy /Regulations/ Standards	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainability Building DPW Planning Economic Development Select Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eversource MassDOT MAPC
M11	Explore policies and incentives to enable multi-family housing residents to expand electric vehicle charging options.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scalable or transferable to other neighborhoods 	Policy /Regulations/ Standards	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainability Building Planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MassCEC Committee for Action on Housing and Climate Change
M12	Develop and implement a bicycle and pedestrian plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improves air quality Improves public health Improves local resilience Centers equity and environmental justice 	Capital Improvement	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainability Planning Natural Resources Recreation Transportation Advisory Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LandLine Coalition Micro-mobility companies (E-bikes, scooters, bikeshare) MassCEC Acton Conservation Trust
M13	Continue implementing, supporting, and evaluating the Complete Streets Policy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improves air quality Improves public health Improves local resilience Centers equity and environmental justice 	Policy /Regulations/ Standards	Short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DPW Planning Transportation Advisory Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developers Businesses Residents