

The logo for the Tompkins County Climate Protection Initiative (CPI) features the letters 'TC' in a bold, green, sans-serif font above a stylized green 'C' that partially overlaps a larger green 'P'. To the right of this graphic, the text 'Tompkins County' is written in a large, bold, green font, and 'Climate Protection Initiative' is written below it in a slightly smaller, bold, green font.

# TC CPI | Tompkins County Climate Protection Initiative

**Minutes – Friday, February 24, 2023**  
**Video Conference**  
**9 am to 11 am**

**Attending:** Fernando de Aragon, Rick Mancini, Dawn Montanye, Ben Carver, Brian Eden, Dan Lamb, Dave Bradley, Guillermo Metz, Halley Delisle, Ingrid Zabel, Ivony Armel, Jack Wright, Janelle Bourgeois, Leigh Miller, Margaret Johnson, Marie McRae, Milena Bimpong, Paul Moore, Rachel Leon, Sarah Carson, Terry Carroll, Tom Hirasuna, Caitlin Cameron, Nick Goldsmith, Peter Bardaglio

**Transportation Options, Decarbonization, and Equity in Tompkins County** – Dawn Montanye  
*Dawn Montanye is the Environment Issue Leader for Cornell Cooperative Extension-Tompkins County and former Team Leader for Way2Go, the county's transportation information and learning hub. Dawn discussed the crucial role of multi-modal transportation in reducing our community's greenhouse gas emissions and meeting the challenges of climate justice and social equity.*

- Very robust transportation community in Tompkins County – time to talk across sectors in terms of role transportation has in people's daily lives, climate change, and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions
- Providing big picture overview today with hope that it's just start of more in-depth conversations about transportation issues in our community
- Second largest emitter of greenhouse gas emissions in city at 37.7% compared to space and water heating at 57.4%
- Transportation accounted for the largest portion (27%) of total U.S. GHG emissions in 2020 (light-duty vehicles 57% -- in 2022 was 28% in NYS)
- Often transportation is elephant in room that people don't talk about because it's very hard to tackle
- Much more complicated than just shifting internal combustion cars to EV cars
- High emissions in city due primarily to large number of commuters driving in and out for work – in 2020 60.2% of commuters in Tompkins County drove alone – in city 28.6% of commuters drove alone
- Key issues regarding GHG reduction in Tompkins County
  - Getting people out of cars and using multi-modal options where available
  - Transitioning shared/public transportation to electric
  - Transportation access in rural areas
  - Reducing barriers to buying an electric vehicle
  - Improving infrastructure
  - Ensuring equity
  - Funding, planning and policy
- Micromobility one approach to getting people out of cars
- Involves range of small, lightweight vehicles operating at speeds typically below 15 mph and driven by users personally
  - Bicycles, e-bikes, electric scooters, electric skateboards, shared bicycle fleets, and electric pedal assisted bicycles
- Bike Walk Tompkins launched Ithaca Bikeshare in Fall 2022 – successor to Lime Bikes which left following drop in ridership during Covid crisis
- Microtransit another viable approach – form of on-demand multi-passenger transport vehicle for hire

- Offers highly flexible routing and/or highly flexible scheduling of minibus vehicles shared with other passengers
- TCAT in process of procuring four eight-passenger electric vans for county – intends to expand after initial phase
- Multi-mobility offers third option – uses combination of different modes to take trip from start to end – works without having to make major infrastructure changes
- For consumers, being multi-modal means understanding different vehicle options are better suited for different trip needs; bikeshare, carshare, fixed route transit, on demand transit
- Getting people out of cars doesn't necessarily mean giving up cars, just using them less
- Changing culture of how people think about moving around essential to reduce driving alone
- Number of incentives to encourage people to consider alternatives
- GO ITHACA
  - Free program for anyone commuting to and from Ithaca urbanized area
  - 50% off an Ithaca Bikeshare membership
  - \$50 credit for Ithaca Carshare
  - Free 40-ride TCAT pass, then 50% off monthly top ups
- Ithaca Carshare
  - Easy Access program is income qualified
  - 30 vehicles and counting
- School Success-Way2Go/ICSD
  - Rideshare
  - Free TCAT for students 17 and under or older if in high school
- Way2Go CCE-Tompkins education and outreach
  - Transportation options
  - How-to videos
  - EV car show
  - Financing classes for purchasing EVs
  - Buying guidance for used EV
  - 211 transportation troubleshooting
- Bike Walk Tompkins also doing lots of education and outreach
  - Low-cost refurbished bikes (“bike match”)
  - Bike mechanic support & education
  - Bike skills education for adults and kids
  - Advocacy for biking & walking infrastructure
  - Ithaca walking map
  - Travel training for transit use
- Transitioning shared/public transportation to electric another important dimension to reducing GHG emissions
- When we talk about electric vehicles, so much more than cars – also includes bikes, busses, scooters, etc. – how do we use this moment to deemphasize use of cars?
- City is looking at replacing passenger fleet vehicles with EVs
- In 2021 TCAT launched “electric bus fleet” with 4 electric busses – NYSERDA grant for the purchase of six 40-foot electric transit buses
- Carshare purchased first 2 electric cars in 2021 – over next 3 years Ithaca Carshare slated to purchase 9 electric vehicles, several of which will be placed in low-income neighborhoods
- In late 2022, Ithaca Bikeshare launched a 100-vehicle, pedal-assist ebikeshare, with plans to add 150 more in spring 2023
- Transportation access in rural areas another key component to reducing GHG emissions – difficult nut to crack
- Dispersed character of towns and villages combined with fixed-route transit challenging
- Move Together NY, CCE-Tompkins program, working on improving cross-county bus connections
- TCAT diversifying fleet to enhance on-demand-micro transit to reach further and deeper in county

- Also efforts to improve accessibility for purchasing electric vehicles, increase multi-modal options, and enhance culture of rideshare with ICSD students ways to improve transportation in rural areas
- Several initiatives underway to reduce barriers to buying electric vehicles
  - CCE-Tompkins and Energetics: EV Tompkins Drive Electric and EV LMI project
  - Support increase in new and used EV inventory at local car dealerships
  - Increase public awareness
  - Class on purchasing used electric cars
  - Information on rebates and tax credits
- Development of low or no credit programs for purchasing used EVs and leasing new batteries through the Ithaca Electric Transportation Access (ETA) project
- Subsidies available for purchasing electric bike through GOIthaca's Easy Access program
- Improving charging infrastructure crucial to reducing GHG emissions
  - EV Tompkins Drive Electric and EV LMI projects carried out by CCE-Tompkins and Energetics in 2018 installed 11 charging stations in county
  - TCAT working with TC3, New York Public Transit Association, and NYSEG so that park and rides have both public and TCAT charging stations
  - TCAT collaborating with L-Enterprises, Standard Hydrogen, Shift Capital, and City of Ithaca on future Chain-works project to convert hydrogen fuel to electricity to charge TCAT buses
  - TCAT installing 8 pantograph charging dispensers for ease of charging and 1.4mw charger in their own facility
  - City deploying level 2 charging stations in Green St. garage
- Other important infrastructure projects:
  - Bridge construction over Rt.13 for Dryden Rail Trail
  - City identifying funding opportunities for on-street charging analysis, which may include bike infrastructure, and contracted with Siemens for EV load forecasting
  - County updating Countywide Priority Trails Strategy and developing Safety Action Plan project across 10 municipalities with NYSDOT
  - Bike Walk Tompkins promoting networks of protected pedestrian and bike ways
  - Also important to expand broadband for remote work and app access
- Efforts to ensure equity
  - Transportation Equity Coalition working towards equitable transportation sector that advances quality of life for historically excluded people in Tompkins County
    - Coalition currently carrying out Transportation Equity Needs Assessment
  - Easy Access programs available through Ithaca Carshare, GO ITHACA, Ithaca Bikeshare, Bike Walk Tompkins used bikes
  - Unbroken Promise Initiative and Ithaca Electric Transportation Access (ETA) project exploring potential of micro-business development
  - Enhancing shared mobility options where most needed
- What are current and potential sources of funding?
  - TCAT, Community Center for Transportation, GO ITHACA, and Unbroken Promise Initiative received \$7 million NYSERDA Clean Transportation Prize for Ithaca Electric Transportation Access (ETA) project (West End, West Hill, Residents in more rural locations)
  - Go Ithaca awarded \$1.7 million in NYSERDA and NYSDEC grants to support expanding the program and its offerings over the next three years, particularly targeting communities of need.
  - \$463,855 available in Carbon Reduction Program from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Legislation (BIL), County has applied
  - Energy and climate provisions of IRA will provide significant incentives going forward
- Recent planning and policy developments
  - Speed limit reduction citywide to 25 mph – approved, with implementation in 2023
  - Two major Bike Walk Tompkins efforts with the City right now include:

- Supporting the development of a Bicycle Master Plan & Pedestrian/ADA Compliance Master plan
  - Supporting full design & construction of Better Bicycle Network for Ithaca, a network of six connected safe bicycling corridors, for which the City is currently applying for Carbon Reduction program funding
- Strengthening cross-county bus connections
- Key challenges in transportation sector
  - Grid capacity and presence of charging stations
  - Rural parts of the County are not fully served by transit/multi-modal options
  - Shortage of TCAT drivers and mechanics, supply chain issues – transit still recovering from fallen ridership from Covid
  - Ithaca Carshare: affordable insurance poses risks to its continued existence
  - Limited supply of used EVs for low- and moderate-income population
  - Persistent inequities that may leave populations behind
  - Financing, planning and infrastructure that favors cars, not walkers, bikers, transit riders
  - Historical pattern of sprawl, lack of affordable housing at urban core
  - Lack of adaptation measures for accommodating transition – for example, bus shelters for extreme temperatures and impacts from flood events on infrastructure
- Reliance on transition to electrification itself poses serious issues such as ecological and societal impacts from lithium mining for batteries and GHG emissions from EV production
- Next steps
  - Planning, especially with IGND
  - Coordination with other sectors: affordable housing, density planning, health, infrastructure investment
  - Testing models regarding microtransit and how we use our roadways differently

#### Q&A

- Ivony Arnel directed people to Go Ithaca's Commutifi dashboard (<https://dashboard.commutifi.com/to/go-ithaca/>) – helps people plan their commutes and provides carbon score
- Fernando de Aragon explained the insurance issue involving Ithaca Carshare and other carshare programs in NYS and why new legislation is necessary -- without change, won't be possible for Ithaca Carshare to continue operating past May
- Also pointed out that in Tompkins County 63% of all trips are less than three miles and 52% of trips are less than two miles – lots of potential to get people out of cars by making bikes more available
- Underscored how unique and exceptional programs such as Ithaca Carshare, Gadabout, Bikeshare, and TCAT are
- Dave Bradley noted there is no shortage of commercially available lithium in U.S.—also contended that cars are still much more convenient in certain situations
- Dawn pointed out that many people can't afford car and we should work on improving the transit system so it works for everyone – multimodal transit very stressful and can be made to work better
- Peter asked Dawn how transportation needs assessment is gathering input from people in community – she said that planning process was very inclusive so they are getting lots of guidance regarding who they should be reaching out to and questions they should be asking
- Have already held focus groups with priority populations and in process of finalizing survey that will go out countywide soon
- Ingrid Zabel: Very interested in culture change and shifting norms – asked Dawn what approaches have been most effective
- Education and training work well in getting people to overcome their fears – a lot of it just involves becoming familiar with something new and different
- Peter asked about plans to make more level 3 chargers available – Fernando said that there will be funding from federal and state government to install them along Rt. 13

- Also observed that we don't need everyone to stop driving – would only take a shift of 10% of trips to other modes to be transformational
- Ivony emphasized extent to which everyone can make a positive difference by using bike more often
- Peter asked Dawn what her perspective is on the need to bring transportation into the conversation when discussing the IGND given the focus so far on buildings
- Dawn said she thought there was a lot to be learned from people who are already using multimodal transportation – what is possible and how to make it better
- Strong consensus in transportation community about what needs to be done – IGND could really raise level of conversation around transportation by making it more of centerpiece
- Peter wondered what provisions in IRA addressed used EVs – Dave Bradley said that there was a \$4500 tax credit available but that assumed you made enough income for that to be useful
- He pointed out that besides EVs, it makes sense to electrify streetcars and trains as part of creating a less carbon-intensive transportation system

### **TCCPI Issues & Topics for 2023-24 – All**

*We broke into small groups for about 20 minutes and discussed what issues and topics participants would like to see TCCPI focus on in 2023-24 (June to June). Then we came back together and shared out.*

- Paul Moore (for group #4 – Ivony, Nick, Jack, and Paul):
  - Information and updates about federal and state funding available in next year for climate change and energy transition
  - What is best intervention level for action, town, city, county, state, or federal, and how you avoid duplicating effort?
  - How can we better design multimodal transportation to take into account Ithaca's climate?
  - Jack: How can we better translate all wonderful conversations into action?
- Dawn (for group #3 – Ben, Ingrid, Margaret, and Dawn):
  - How do we do better outreach and let folks know what's going on, especially those often left out or hard to reach?
  - Need to think more about equity and how it applies to rural communities
  - Identify areas of transportation where we really want to dig in after today's overview – for example, how do we get reduction goals for vehicle miles traveled into county, municipal, and state plans?
  - How do we do better cross-sector planning with areas such as housing, buildings, transportation, etc.?
  - How do we engage youth regarding the IGND?
  - Climate change adaptation and resilience – impact of extreme weather events on those with fewer resources, especially with flooding
- Tom (for group #2 – Janelle, Leigh, Milena, and Tom):
  - How do we deal with onslaught of misinformation from fossil fuel industry, utilities, and others?
  - Climate adaptation and extreme heat – EMC beginning to deal with these issues – how does community prepare?
  - Land trust efforts in the county such as Camp Barton and role of natural areas in carbon sequestration
  - Regional clean energy hubs once they get underway
- Dave (for group #1 – Hailey, Rachel, Sarah, and Dave):
  - How do we better convey sense of urgency when it comes to climate change and need to accelerate energy transition?
  - Opposition to wind farms in NYS – what are solutions, if any?
  - Ways to leverage new IRA provisions to install municipally owned electricity production
  - NY electricity pricing system (NYISO) and why it's so ill-suited to renewable electricity deployment in state

- Rachel: What are top three challenges for each of TCCPI partners in taking action and what synergies can be deployed?
  - Tracking key dates for communities and state involving IRA incentives and benefits to make sure we don't miss anything important and understand where we need to be connecting and collaborating
  - How do we create better bridges with groups that don't attend TCCPI meetings? Maybe one or two groups each year where we get together with them
- Peter wrapped up with summary of steering committee discussion about issues and priorities
  - Making sure transportation issue is ongoing conversation
  - Pushback on decarbonization – public fears and anxieties and dealing with fossil fuel industry misinformation
  - Monitoring state developments and keeping track of relevant climate and energy legislation in Albany
  - Debate over hydrogen
  - Grid capacity and upgrades needed, as well as ways around the need for these upgrades using virtual power plants
- Peter urged folks to weigh in with their representatives as budget and related climate and energy policies come under consideration – critical time in legislative session coming up