



**Greater Boston Breathes Better  
Working Group Meeting  
November 6, 2007**

**MEETING NOTES**

**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS – ONA FERGUSON**

Ona Ferguson from CBI welcomed participants to the Greater Boston Breathes Better (GB3) working group meeting and thanked Harvard University, Jesse Foote and David Harris, for hosting the meeting. Participants then introduced themselves. (*Appendix A: List of Attendees*)

**GB3 UPDATE – KATE HARVEY**

Kate Harvey from CBI provided a brief update of CBI's, as co-administrator of the GB3 partnership, recent GB3-related efforts. She noted that CBI, on behalf of GB3, received two grants to continue work on reducing transportation-based air pollution. One grant is from the City of Boston, Transportation and Air Quality Grants Program and focuses on reducing air pollution from construction vehicles at Boston's health care facilities. CBI is working with several partners on this grant, including Ellen Tohn of Tohn Environmental, Ian Todreas of ERG and Sustainable Belmont, and Laurie Stillman of the New England Asthma Regional Council. The other grant is a Healthy Communities grant from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Under this grant, CBI will continue to build partnerships and support for the GB3 approach to air pollution reduction among greater Boston and New England hospitals, universities, private sector companies, and municipalities. CBI will be working with the Northeast Diesel Collaborative (NEDC) to carry out work under this grant. Kate also welcomed those people who had not previously attended a GB3 meeting.

**NORTHEAST DIESEL COLLABORATIVE (NEDC) - DEBBI EDELSTEIN**

Debbi Edelstein from the Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management (NESCAUM), the Clean Air Association of the Northeast States, and Manager of NEDC offered an overview of NEDC, its structure, key accomplishments, current areas of focus, and scope of work with CBI under the Healthy Communities grant.

Structure – Debbi explained that NEDC is a cooperative effort to reduce diesel emissions in EPA Regions 1 and 2. The partnership includes representation from the eight northeast states (ME, NH, VT, NY, MA, CT, RI, and NJ) and Puerto Rico, EPA Regions 1 and 2, NESCAUM, and three private sector stakeholders. NEDC is one of seven regional collaborations in the U.S, but it is unique because it includes direct state participation, builds

on a long history of strong working relationships between NEDC partners, and expands on the successes of its partners and others.

Key Accomplishments– Some of NEDC’s accomplishments include, helping four northeast states (NY, NJ, CT, and RI) adopt retrofit laws and, in some cases, securing funding for implementation of those laws; promoting clean rail projects in the northeast; and securing funding for retrofitting utility vehicles in the northeast states (allocation of funds is based on state population). NEDC has been able to work with state Departments of Transportation to allow Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) money to support retrofits directly, which will help local communities to implement retrofit policies. NEDC has also worked with other sectors, including the ports sector.

Current Areas of Focus – Recently NEDC has been working on model construction bid specification (bid spec). Diverse construction bid specs are surfacing across the country, and this is an effort to create uniformity across the region. The NEDC spec offers municipalities, institutions, and private sector stakeholders a single (and therefore predictable) bid spec, based on best practices, which may be used to promote cleaner construction projects.

Two committees comprised of state, private sector, and EPA stakeholders have developed the bid spec. One committee focuses on fairness/implementation issues and the other looks at technology issues. Under NEDC’s bid spec, the contracting agency will pay for the retrofits, not the contractor. The bid spec is expected to be completed by the end of this year. The bid spec may be revised, as needed, as technology and the political/environmental landscape changes.

Scope of CBI-NEDC work – CBI will be working with NEDC to do outreach to hospitals, municipalities, and universities in Rhode Island and New Hampshire. The aim is take what GB3 has learned from its work in the Boston area and help municipalities in other areas of the region to implement strategies that reduce diesel emissions, particularly from off-road vehicles.

### ***Questions and Dialogue***

- *What is NEDC’s relationship with the construction industry?* Many industry stakeholders in our region are concerned because they think that the northeast states will adopt the California (CA) model, which includes a non-road rule that tracks every fleet and requires that those fleets become cleaner each year. The CA rule requires early retirement of vehicles and forces contractors to pay for it. We’re trying to explain that the northeast states are not going to follow the CA model. In our region, if rules are passed by the states on retrofit requirements, the states will pay for those requirements, not shift the cost onto contractors.
- *Is there a way to accelerate the retirement of polluting vehicles in the northeast? For many companies, the cost of replacing vehicles is high and it will be 2030 by the time our older vehicles are ready for retirement and are taken off the road. Will there be some incentives for contractors to get rid of their oldest vehicles?* We’re not looking at just replacement, often the cost of upgrading older

vehicles is a lot more cost effective than replacing it. One thing we recommend is that companies upgrade their vehicles with any EPA verified technology.

- *Given the size of the problem, are you forecasting a date by which you'd like to achieve certain goals?* It seems like a slow process to replace vehicles, but the faster way is to regulate, and states don't want to regulate. We're aiming to accelerate retrofits. There is money for diesel particulate filter technology until 2012, which will probably accelerate equipment upgrades.

### **REGIONAL PURCHASING CONSORTIUM IDEA - ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE**

Victoria Mills and Rachel Beckhardt from Environmental Defense explained their idea of organizing a regional purchasing consortium to help bring down the cost of new vehicles and technologies. The idea would be to form regional corporate, municipal or other partnerships to pursue a group purchase of new technologies/vehicles. The result would be to secure better pricing while also creating a critical mass to pursue additional funding from EPA or elsewhere for those purchases. It would also signal to producers that there is demand for their product and provide incentives to speed-up the commercialization of new technologies, such as hybrid trucks. The incremental cost of hybrid vehicles, such as diesel-electric trucks, is still high, and the industry needs incentives to get to full commercialization.

Other regions have done this, for example King County, WA applied for and received funding from EPA to make a bulk purchase of hybrid vehicles for their municipal fleets. King County also got the manufacturer to designate a service representative to their area so that repair services for the hybrid technology are available in the region.

They explained that they are open to any ideas about how this would work and wanted to gauge general interest in developing a partnership.

### ***Questions and Dialogue***

- For Harvard, the maintenance issue is big for us. When you have a problem with hybrid vehicles, the engine service company and the car company both blame each other for the problem. We're lucky that our vendors, Cummins and Allison, have a good partnership and combine their services. You really need to think about how to maintain new vehicles. We'd be willing to participate and send mechanics to discuss problems and ideas.
- Some institutions that keep their buses for only a couple of years might not get a return on investment.
- For hybrid cabs, the gas savings more than pays for the vehicle. It's a good argument for hybrids. However, the maintenance and repair issues need to be resolved.

### **BRAINSTORMING SESSION ON CAR-FREE BOSTON - PHILIP VERGRAGT**

Philip Vergragt from the Tellus Institute presented his idea for a car-free day in Boston. He explained that Tellus is a NGO in Boston with a focus on sustainable society, including

changes in lifestyle, behaviors, and values. A part of this vision is to reduce car transportation in urban areas. The idea is to organize a car free day or days in some part of Boston to raise awareness around transportation alternatives to driving. The car-free days would also involve biking, walking events, public transit, and new technology demonstrations. Philip explained that it is not a new idea, Memorial Drive, Cambridge; Hub on Wheels; Emerald Necklace, Boston; Downtown Crossing, Boston; Livable Streets; and Franklin Park have all worked on or implemented this concept.

Philip added that Tellus would not be the right organization to organize the event, but was looking to the group for ideas, possible allies, and suggestions on how it could work.

### ***Questions and Dialogue***

- You might try one night a month to shut down a square in Cambridge or Somerville. Or try Newbury Street. When it's been done in Harvard Square it creates a nice sense of community, benefits businesses, and makes you want to live in those areas. Whatever is implemented should be a regular event.
- You might go bigger and say that no cars are allowed to enter the urban areas at all. You need to force people to do it or they won't.
- It makes sense to do it once a month or week, not just once a year. You need to demonstrate that we can live like this, so people should know that this is a regular event.
- Several models could be tried simultaneously with one square or area closed on a regular schedule, and more far-reaching attempts occurring less frequently (such as 4 times a year Boston will have no cars in some part of core part of the city and public transit is free).
- You don't want to create a hazard and divert cars to other parts of the city, such as residential areas. You need to think about what you are trying to accomplish. Doing it in a core area is really important.
- Alternative transport must be linked. Maybe the T is free that day.
- Look at North End as model or Cambridge's Green Streets Walk-ride day (the last Friday of every month – wear green and walk or ride and local merchants offer discounts.)
- Should engage a lot of people and get people commuting in from suburbs.
- NYC has proposed a new toll to discourage people from driving into the urban center.
- Talk to: Walk Boston, Mass Bike Coalition, Green Streets, Harvard – get big employers, what can we do with you, MASCO, TMAs, MBTA, traffic and parking departments, climate action networks

## **GB3 MEMBER UPDATES**

Participants gave updates on their major transportation and air quality-related projects of the last year, citing primary challenges and next steps as appropriate.

### **Ellen Tohn – Tohn Environmental on GB3 Hospitals**

Ellen explained that she and others are working to get hospitals to take a cleaner approach to their construction projects. The focus is on getting policies changed, which is challenging because there are not a lot of guiding policies to change and then once you change them, you don't know if they are being implemented. Most hospitals are now building to meet Healthcare Without Harm's Green Guide to Health Care (GGHC) and LEED standards, so the team is helping to modify language in those documents around retrofits and also idling. The team is also working with individual organizations to implement change. To date there has been success with Walsh Brothers – they have adopted our GB3/ARC spec into their general policy; Mass General Hospital - two projects are committed to retrofits; Northshore Hospital; Shepply Bullfinch is going to add our spec to their division 1 spec (basic site specs). The team is also working on making headway with Brigham's, Children's, BU, and new contractors through outreach and presentations.

### **Catherine Maas – Chelsea Collaborative**

Catherine explained that Chelsea, MA has a lot of pollution from vehicles, power plants, transport, etc. They have the highest asthma rates in the state and many other health problems, so they got a grant to do something about diesel emissions. While the City Council is on board with our efforts, the City Manager says that diesel emission reductions is not a priority and other town departments, such as the DPW, don't want to discuss ideas. Another challenge is that many grants need to be written by City, not by third parties, and the City does not have the resources or interest to do this.

- Dennis K. Burke is willing to help work with Chelsea Collaborative to work the City angle. They have good relationships with DPW and other City officials.
- City of Cambridge can talk about working with partners. The City partnered with MIT to get money for retrofits, which worked out well for the City.
- In MA, waste recycling program can get money for recycling truck retrofits. Check out state website.
- Boston Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) has a regional plan and can allocate money through CMAQ. Might want to speak with them.

### **Jeri Weiss – Sustainable Belmont**

Jeri noted that Sustainable Belmont is a working on its anti-idling campaign – they are hosting a breakfast for school bus drivers to find out what their concerns are about anti-idling (they've stopped doing it in front of schools but still do it in the neighborhoods) and they are also working on a faith based initiative where they offer background materials on Sustainable Belmont, no-idle pledge sheet for kids and adults, and other information. Sustainable Belmont is also working on creating a pedestrian friendly town and has a good collaboration with the Safe Routes to Schools initiative. Belmont is only 4 square miles and most kids can walk to their elementary schools. They are also working on clean diesel and

participated in the GB3- MA state Biodiesel Conference. It's been a challenge to keep the energy up among volunteers. They recently applied for a grant from MA DEP for waste reduction, which would include a part time staff person.

### **Ed Dubois – Skanska Construction**

Ed explained that Skanska is working with Harvard on their contracts and their biggest challenge is raising awareness and educating folks in the construction industry – who have done it the same way for decades – on why the environmental issues are important and what they should do. He explained that they are always training people to be aware. The U.S. Green Building Council has been a big help. They are spreading the word to their subcontractors on new standards and requirements. As a contractor they are requiring all subcontractors to do retrofits and when they ask why explain that Harvard is requiring it. They do it because Harvard has a lot of work. If big places with a lot of work require it, then subcontractors will do it.

### **Jake Glickel, City of Boston**

The City is offering a one-to-one (ie. 50% match) retrofit grant for delivery companies who do a lot of work in Boston.

- *David Harris* - Is Boston Globe on board? Harvard had three folks from the Boston Globe talking about biodiesel and said that they were close to making a commitment.

### **John Moore – Boston Cleanair Cabs**

John explained that Boston Cleanair Cabs is working with Massport and City of Boston, and Boston Public Health Commission to offer incentives for cabs companies to purchase hybrid cabs in Boston. They currently have 25 hybrid cabs, and hope it that they'll get 10% of fleet - there are about 1800 cabs in Boston. They have had interest from corporate sponsors, such as Whole Foods, to pay significant money to put their advertisements on the cabs. This is getting the attention of independent car owners as is the idea that they can cover the cost of buying a hybrid with savings in gas. Mechanical service issues are still the biggest concern. In Cambridge they are working on establishing a green cab telephone number.

- *Is there a user support group?* No, but that could be a good idea
- *In New York, the Mayor has said that in 5 years all 13,000 cabs must be hybrid.* They hope that this draws attention and creates more demand around here. Their current goal is to replace all the old Crown Victorias.

### **Jesse Foote, Harvard University**

Jesse announced that Harvard has a new bid specification on retrofits, anti-idling, and ULSD. Getting Transportation Services behind the specification was key to its success. Currently two new projects are operating with the spec: Harvard Law School Northwest Corner Project and the Life Sciences Center in Allston. At the Law School they are using the GB3 spec and in Allston they went a little further and lowered the thresholds on the opt out clause (now opt out is at 15 hp and 10 working days.)

- *How do you monitor compliance?* Spec got written into a mitigation template. That template already had fines for other things, so fines were added for the new specs. Harvard has contractors for each project who monitor and enforce the mitigation plans – they visit the sites regularly and check up on contractors.

- *Who pays for the retrofits?* The retrofits are part of the RFP for contracts, so technically, Harvard does.

### **John Bolduc – City of Cambridge**

John commented that the City of Cambridge is gradually retrofitting their diesel-powered vehicles. The City received a Department of Environmental Protection grant to do school bus retrofits (they have 14 City buses and 14 contracted buses). City contractors must comply with EPA regulation and are updated with retrofit technologies. The City is close to a full retrofit of City buses and is now trying to get 4 particulate filters for the last remaining buses. They also have a green fleet/ new requisition requirement for internal purchasing of vehicles. If a department wants a new vehicle, they must look at three criteria: their functionality needs, safety, and fuel economy (based on EPA emissions scores). Through this program the City's first hybrids are being purchased. The City has also changed its informal policy to buy only US brands, so it is now possible to buy hybrids. They are looking to do more with biodiesel and bioheat.

### **David Harris – Harvard University**

David noted that Harvard has fallen from being the largest biodiesel user in the state to the 4<sup>th</sup> largest biodiesel user, which is good because it means that more folks are using biodiesel. Harvard has added their first hybrid vehicles (2 vehicles) to their fleet – one for parking services and the other in Allston.

David commented that he has promoted biodiesel with Cape Cod Regional Transit Authority and Rep. Delahunt at the Cape Cod National Seashore, and also in his own community – Marblehead. Harvard is also talking about the next generation of shuttles and evaluating the costs.

Harvard also just contract for a nitrogen air and tire system. This means that the university's tires will only use nitrogen air, which helps to keep them inflated at the proper rate. This will help with fuel economy and prolong the life of tires. You need to deflate tires and then re-inflate with nitrogen, so this is being done on the vehicles preventative maintenance cycle.

Harvard has also launched a transit visualization system, which went live on Oct 15. It allows students, faculty, and staff to get real-time updates on where the shuttle buses are and to plan accordingly. Folks were complaining that there were not enough shuttle buses, but this helps them to know when buses are coming and to plan for them better.

### **John Taylor – Cummins Northeast**

John noted that Cummins is supporting distributors of emission reducing technologies. They are currently trying to verify some new technologies (particulate matter devices) and are looking for partners fleets to help with this. It would be for medium to heavy duty, on-road fleets and it would be low cost for the fleet partner. Any interested parties can contact John for more information.

### **Brian Beaulieu – Cummins Northeast**

Brian commented that Cummins is also working on a retrofit project for off-road projects. They are also working with MIT and the Town of Wakefield on biodiesel fueled shuttles - using B20 diesel for year 2000 and on engines.

#### **Peter Mills – City of Somerville**

Peter shared that Somerville switched to a B20 biodiesel for its fleet of 38 vehicles. The City also purchased 4 hybrids for fire inspection services. They are working on Somerville's community paths – extending from Davis to Lechmere. The City's only endorsed cab company, Green Cab, just purchased their first hybrid cab and they are now looking for ways to subsidize additional vehicles. Finally, Peter explained that the City is in the middle of a big air quality study around the Assembly Square redevelopment project.

#### **Carl Spector – City of Boston**

Carl commented that the City of Boston is involved in many of the projects already spoken about at the meeting - retrofits, clean air cabs, hospitals. One big piece of news is that the City is about to release its Climate Action Plan, which should be released and with a new website in the next month or so. The Mayor recently issued an executive order on climate change which codified the City's use of biodiesel and our clean technology procurement rules. They have also created a new bicycle coordinator position, which follows a big push to improve bike use and safety.

- *How many projects have taken up the Boston Redevelopment Authorities new points on construction retrofits?* None to date have taken up the Boston specific points. Would be open to a brainstorming conversation about how to promote BRA point implementation.

#### **Andy Frongillo – Dennis K. Burke**

Andy noted that it's been a banner year for Burke on the environmental front. They are trying to open an E85 station in Chelsea and are hoping to get permits from the state soon. He explained that the future of biodiesel took a good turn this week when the governor committed to 2% biodiesel use in the state by 2010. Burke also has towns signing up for biodiesel one after another, so the word is spreading.

Bioheat is also picking up. So far Burke has had 360 customers convert over and picked up 60 new customers. All eight northeast states are looking at using B5 in home heating oil. Taunton hospital is the biggest bioheat user in the state and has some good slides on their experience with it.

- NESCAUM is looking into low impact fuels – a movement that is being motivated by the states.

#### **Lucy Edmondson – Environmental Protection Agency New England**

Lucy noted that EPA has not received a budget yet, however, EPA's current version of the budget includes \$50 million for diesel available through the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act, or DERA. She will keep the group posted on any updates that come along.

She explained that over the last year or so, her work has expanded to encompass both energy and transportation issues in a new position as leader of EPA NE's Energy and Transportation Team. She's been working on the Community Energy Challenge to encourage local communities to look at their building operations and identify ways to reduce

energy consumption. The Community Energy Challenge project has tools online to help communities who want to measure their progress. EPA needs interns to help with this project.

**Halida Hatic – Environmental Protection Agency New England**

Halida announced that the administrative responsibilities for the Best Workplaces for Commuters Program was assumed on October 1 by the Center for Urban Transportation and Research at the University of Southern Florida. BWC is no longer an EPA program, but CUTR will maintain the national standard for excellence. The Center for Urban Transportation and Research will continue to publish annual Best Workplace lists and EPA will continue to work on a regional level to promote the program.

She also noted that EPA teamed up with Scholastic to publish a book in the Magic School bus children’s series, “The Magic School Bus Gets Cleaned Up.” The books are free and may be ordered off the National Service Center website <http://www.epa.gov/otaq/schoolbus/msb-book.htm>. Teaching materials are also available.

**CONCLUSIONS – ONA FERGUSON**

Ona thanked everyone for attending the meeting and remarked on the very interesting and good work that everyone is doing. She noted that another meeting would likely be held in Spring 2008. She thanked Harvard again for providing a meeting space, lunch, and a building tour.

Lunch and a tour of the building followed.

## APPENDIX A: LIST OF MEETING PARTICIPANTS

John Moore	Boston Cleanair Cabs
Catherine Maas	Chelsea Collaborative
Jake Glickel	City of Boston
Carl Spector	City of Boston
John Bolduc	City of Cambridge
Peter Mills	City of Somerville
Ona Ferguson	Consensus Building Institute
Kate Harvey	Consensus Building Institute
John Taylor	Cummins Emissions Solutions
Brian Beaulieu	Cummins Northeast
Kevin O'Leary	Dennis K. Burke
Barry Coghlin	Dennis K. Burke
Andy Frongillo	Dennis K. Burke
Bashar Zeitoon	Environmental Defense
Victoria Mills	Environmental Defense
Rachel Beckhardt	Environmental Defense
Janet Curtis	EOEEA
Halida Hatic	EPA New England
Jeri Weiss	EPA New England
Lucy Edmondson	EPA New England
Dara Olmsted	Harvard Green Campus Initiative
Jesse Foote	Harvard University
David Harris	Harvard University
Debbi Edelstein	NESCAUM
Ed Dubois	Skanska USA
Philip Vergragt	Tellus Institute
Ellen Tohn	Tohn Environmental