



# ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## JANUARY 2020 – DECEMBER 2020

### ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

**Governor Baker’s Implementation Advisory Committee:** A Better City continues to serve on the Global Warming Solutions Act Implementation Advisory Committee (IAC), participating in the Transportation and Buildings Sector Working Groups. Over the past several months, the IAC working groups met frequently to develop and refine a list of recommended policy priorities to shape the Clean Energy and Climate Plan for 2030. On December 30th, the Baker Administration released two related, but distinct documents: the final Massachusetts Decarbonization Roadmap to 2050 and the draft Clean Energy and Climate Plan for 2030, which A Better City is in the process of analyzing.

**Buildings Policy Principles & Advocacy Roadmap:** The City of Boston and the Commonwealth are working on pathways to get to net zero carbon in existing buildings and new construction. A Better City convened a group of progressive real estate representatives interested in developing a set of building policy principles and an advocacy roadmap. Nine policy principles were developed and circulated to the City and State. A Better City continues to actively engage with the City of Boston on the development of the Building Emission Performance Standard for existing buildings and the Net Zero Carbon Zoning for new construction and with the Commonwealth through the Global Warming Solutions Act Implementation Advisory Committee.

**Thermal Electrification of Large Buildings Analysis:** In June, A Better City released a report analyzing the current feasibility of thermal electrification in large buildings in the Commonwealth that included the best technologies for our climate zone and building use types, benefits, drawbacks, and high-level costs. The report reviews current barriers to adoption, as well as policy options and strategies for overcome those barriers. Additionally, five case studies demonstrate applicability across use type, at different stages of development, and in varying stages of occupancy. The report was launched at a panel event on June 29th.

**Three-Year Energy Efficiency Plan Advocacy:** The Commonwealth requires electric and gas utilities to comply with the Green Communities Act by developing and submitting three-year energy efficiency plans to the Department of Public Utilities for review and approval. A Better City is committed to shaping the next three-year energy efficiency planning process (2022-2024) and has participated in Energy Efficiency Advisory Council (EEAC) meetings, met with EEAC councilors and consultants, and started to engage with A Better City members. A Better City submitted initial comments to the EEAC in November, in partnership with the Commercial Real Estate Working Group and Healthcare Working Group of the Boston Green Ribbon Commission. Final comments will be submitted in January 2021 once workshops and stakeholder engagement are completed.

**Legislative Advocacy:** The Energy and Environment Unit has been busy attending hearings, providing testimony, meeting with legislators and the administration, and attending cross-sector coalition meetings. The team has continued to advocate for comprehensive climate policy across both mitigation and adaptation at a regional scale:



- Provided testimony on a panel alongside Northeast Clean Energy Council and the Environmental League of Massachusetts in February 2020, in support of Speaker DeLeo's GreenWorks climate adaptation bond bill.
- Submitted comments to the Boston Conservation Commission on the Boston Wetlands Ordinance and the proposed Net Zero Stretch Code before the Board of Building Regulations and Standards.
- Participated in several multi-state sign-on letters, in support of the expansion of offshore wind in New England as well as the Transportation and Climate Initiative (TCI).
- Participated in two sign-on letters with the Alliance for Clean Energy Solutions: one in support of establishing statewide interim emission reduction targets of 50% emissions reduction economy-wide by 2030 and 75% by 2040, and a second supporting the passage of environmental justice legislation this session.
- Submitted our comprehensive climate policy comments to conferees in November 2020. As a result of these comments, ABC was contacted by Climate Committee Co-Chair Senator Barrett for a follow-up deep dive climate policy meeting.
- Submitted a letter to Governor Baker regarding the comprehensive climate policy bill (S.2995) that passed the House and Senate in early January, encouraging him to consider vetoing several bill components, including the net zero stretch code, five-year emission reduction sublimits, sector-specific emission sublimits, and the diversion of \$12 million in energy efficiency funds. (Note: Governor Baker vetoed the bill on 1/14—A Better City looks forward to working with the Legislature and the Administration to quickly advance an improved climate bill that includes science-based emission reduction targets, environmental justice commitments, and renewable energy accessibility measures, while remedying concerns regarding the net zero stretch code process and other elements.)

**BERDO Energy Assessment Compliance Evaluation and Interviews:** A Better City performed an analysis of the City of Boston's Building Energy Reporting and Disclosure Ordinance (BERDO) data specific to A Better City and Green Ribbon Commission member buildings to understand the effectiveness of BERDO's energy assessment or major energy savings action requirement every five years. The analysis included interviews with 15 member buildings to determine the reasons for non-compliance. The interviews led to compliance by all but one building, and provided the City with useful information about energy assessment compliance challenges which can be incorporated in the next iteration of BERDO.

## LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT

**Greenway Business Improvement District:** The Greenway Business Improvement District (BID) continues to advance capital enhancements to the Greenway parks with the approval of funding to improve lighting and safety in the Chin Park/Chinatown area. BID funds are being used to secure matching funds from the Massachusetts Cultural Council for another \$200k to improve the area. These capital projects are scheduled to be completed in early 2021. In October, the BID approved a special funding request to increase financial support for the Greenway parks horticulture and capital maintenance needs that will help the Conservancy manage a dramatic reduction in fundraising and other as a result of the pandemic. The BID is stepping up to make a one-time allocation of enhancement funds to ensure high quality parks and public spaces in 2021.



**Public Realm Projects & Advocacy:** In 2020, A Better City supported the advancement of public realm projects, including the installation of Green Street parklet in Jamaica Plain in September and the approval of additional outdoor seating for the Roslindale Tactical Plaza design that will be advanced for construction in 2021. Additionally, on December 16th, A Better City hosted "COVID-19 + the Public Realm" panel discussion, highlighting efforts of the City of Boston and other cities and towns to provide outdoor dining and support small businesses impacted by the pandemic.

## TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

**Transportation Finance to Support the MBTA and Statewide Transportation Needs:** As a result of A Better City's work, the Governor, House, and Senate all acknowledged the need for additional transportation revenue and supported the enactment of new funding streams to address our statewide transportation needs. A Better City's strategic outreach, advocacy, and legislative briefings resulted in transportation finance becoming a top agenda item for this legislative session, culminating with the passage of comprehensive \$16.5 billion transportation bond bill on January 6th. This bill provides financing authority to support capital investments in roads, bridges, and transit infrastructure in the years ahead, as well as the establishment of higher surcharges on Uber/Lyft rides, expanded borrowing authority through Grant Anticipation Notes, and movement toward expanding roadway pricing. These funding measures are in addition to the investments that will become available through the regional Transportation Climate Initiative and are all consistent with the principles set forth in A Better City's report, *Funding Transportation Solutions: A Comprehensive Transportation Finance Plan*, released in November 2019.

**MBTA Service Cuts:** A Better City has strongly advocated against the MBTA service cuts proposed in the agency's *Forging Ahead* plan. In December, A Better City released *MBTA Transit Service: The Key to Our Economic Recovery*, a white paper that argues against the proposed cuts and offers four options to generate \$300 million in revenue before July 2021—more than 2.5 times the amount of funding that would be generated by the MBTA's proposed service cuts. The report generated media coverage, and the MBTA adopted two of the report's recommendations: 1) revising their economic and ridership projections that would also improve budget forecasting and 2) planning for the inclusion of additional, available sales tax revenue. On December 14th, the MBTA's Fiscal and Management Control Board ultimately voted to adopt scaled back service cuts and A Better City will continue to advocate for the robust, reliable service needed to support the region's economic recovery.

**MBTA COVID-19 Response:** At the onset of the pandemic, A Better City began monitoring and reporting on the MBTA's response to COVID-19, including service delivery levels and crowding, safety protocols, and public outreach. A Better City was asked to staff the Governor's Reopening Advisory Board Public Transportation Subgroup, submitting a robust set of recommendations to the Baker Administration in May. In the spring, A Better City published the following reports that each received media coverage and collectively advanced advocacy efforts to ensure commuter safety: *COVID-19 & Public Transit; Going the Distance to Reopen Boston: Guidance on How the MBTA Can Provide Physical Distancing to Help Riders Stay Apart*; and *Best Practices for Enabling a Safe Reopening of Public Transit*.



**Allston I-90 Multimodal Project:** After months of intense advocacy from A Better City and the City of Boston, on October 6th, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration accepted a version of the A Better City/City of Boston All At-Grade design to carry forward in the formal review process for the I-90 Allston Multimodal Project—it is officially called the “Modified All At-Grade Option” and is designed to minimize impacts on the Charles River and maintain two track Worcester commuter rail operations during construction. Due to advocacy and coalition building by A Better City and others, this design has overwhelming support for selection as the Preferred Alternative from dozens of advocacy and community-based organizations, including Senator Ed Markey, Representative Ayanna Pressley, Boston Mayor Marty Walsh, Cambridge City Manager Louis DePasquale, the Boston City Council, the Cambridge City Council, 19 Boston and MetroWest-area legislators, and 11 Worcester-area legislators agree. On November 18th, Secretary Pollack announced that MassDOT will be delaying the Preferred Alternative decision for the project until next summer. A Better City partnered with the Conservation Law Foundation to run a full-page Globe ad on November 23rd to highlight the remarkable consensus in favor of the all at-grade design, and will continue to aggressively and strategically advocate for this transformational project.

**MBTACapitalInfrastructureProgram:** In July, A Better City released the publication, [\*Three Bets on Transportation Infrastructure: Funding Opportunities to Build Massachusetts Transportation Future\*](#), which identifies opportunities through 2021 for the MBTA to maximize existing and future federal relief funds and advance the unfunded but transformational capital infrastructure projects recommended by Focus 40 and the Governor’s Commission on the Future of Transportation. With additional federal funds now in place, this document presents a blueprint for action in 2021 as the MBTA develops their updated spending plans this spring.

**MBTA Oversight:** A Better City advocacy successfully resulted in Governor Baker signing a one-year extension of the MBTA Fiscal & Management Control Board (FMCB) in July. The FMCB was scheduled to expire on July 1, 2020 but will now continue providing oversight and guidance to the MBTA until June 30, 2021.

**Transportation Dividend Implementation Plan (TDIP) for MBTA Project Delivery:** Despite COVID-19-induced delays, TDIP outputs on MBTA project delivery are advancing and should be delivered in early 2021, including ongoing interaction with senior level MBTA officials on Job Order Contracting to produce a draft RFP, drafting a Public-Private Partnership report, and meeting with the TDIP Advisory Committee on October 30th.

**Transportation Management Associations:** A Better City continued to successfully manage three Transportation Management Associations (TMAs) in a time of disrupted commute patterns. Increased member communication through weekly newsletters, coupled with a pivot to digital program delivery, ensured our member engagement remained robust. The team also finished the year strong by welcoming two impactful downtown institutions to our membership: Amazon and One Beacon Street.

**Northern Avenue Bridge:** A Better City successfully led an advocacy campaign related to the state permitting process to keep the project moving forward towards potential construction in 2021. The team met with City officials and leadership of the Seaport Leadership Group to discuss future financing options for the new bridge. This work culminated in April with the City dedicating \$100 million in their capital budget for the project.



## ADMINISTRATION & FINANCE

**Equity in the Built Environment:** In June, A Better City issued a statement to affirm the organization's solidarity with those protesting against the injustice and violence impacting black lives and communities of color across the nation. Days later, A Better City established an internal Equity in the Built Environment Working Group to develop an Action Plan to reorient A Better City's work in an effort to more deliberately and strategically advance equity in the built environment. After ten intensive working sessions, the working group produced a draft Action Plan that was presented to the Officers in November. A refined Action Plan will be presented to the Executive Committee in January 2021.

**New Hires:** In a year full of challenges and unknowns, A Better City was fortunate to welcome three new team members to the Transportation Demand Management Unit. In March, Marissa Rivera joined as TMA Operations Manager, next came Scott Mullen in the TDM Director position, and finally, Christine Yi assumed the Marketing and Program Coordinator role in October.

## MEMBERSHIP, MARKETING, & COMMUNICATIONS

**Publications & Programming:** A Better City began the year consistently sharing a monthly newsletter to a base of about 3,600 subscribers. Beginning in March and in response to the pandemic, A Better City shifted to a weekly bulletin. Since the start of the year, A Better City has released seven reports and published 75 blog posts, some of which garnered significant media attention. In April, A Better City launched a virtual programming series called *A Better City Conversations* in an effort to engage members and stakeholders in discussions about timely topics. In 2020, A Better City held 53 membership engagement events, including four Board Meetings, five Executive Committee Meetings, and 28 *A Better City Conversations*.

**2020 Norman B. Leventhal Awards:** A Better City hosted the virtual 2020 Norman B. Leventhal Excellence in City Building Awards on Tuesday, December 8th. More than 100 people attended the program to recognize the following awardees for their immense contributions to Boston and the region: Paul Grogan, President & CEO of The Boston Foundation received the City Builder award, Joseph Aiello, Chair of the Fiscal Management & Control Board for the MBTA received the Transportation award, L. Duane Jackson, Managing Member of Alinea Capital Partners received the Land Use award, and Gina McCarthy, President & CEO of the Natural Resources Defense Council received the Environment award. A Better City exceeded their initial fundraising goal by more than 60%.

**Member Development:** In 2020, A Better City welcomed Suffolk Construction, Margulies Perruzzi, an architecture and interior design firm, and RISE Construction Management as new members. There were also five transfers of board seats among existing members. A Better City continues to prioritize maintaining current memberships, while fielding new membership inquiries.