

**Connecticut Equity and Environmental Justice Advisory Council (CEEJAC)
Air & Transportation Subcommittee
Meeting Minutes**

Tuesday, April 30, 2024, 5:30 – 7:30 pm

**Location: Hybrid, 79 Elm St., Hartford, CT (5th Floor – Gina McCarthy Auditorium) and
Zoom Virtual Meeting**

[Link to Meeting Recording](#)

Disclaimer: Please note this is not a word for word translation
CEEJAC Air & Transportation Subcommittee Members:

Name
Alex Rodriguez
Jay Stange
Robbie Goodrich
Daphne Dixon
Sharmin Akter
Aziz Dekhan
Dr. Mark Mitchell
Sharon Lewis
Karen Kitsis

1. Welcome
2. Panelist Introductions
 - Daphne Dixon, EV educator and cross-country champion.
 - Karamo Kourouma, Cheshire EV owner.
 - Kristen Barendregt - Ludwig, New Haven eBike owner. Program Manager at Yale Center for Environmental Justice.
 - Jay Stange, Bike Advocate, Transport Hartford Coordinator at Center of Latino Progress.
 - Omar Green, Hartford EV owner and social worker for the state
 - Paul Farrell – Planning & Standards Director of the DEEP Air Bureau.
3. Panel Discussion on Electric Vehicles and eBikes

Electric Vehicles Discussion – can you introduce yourself and talk about your involvement with electric vehicles?

- Karamo shared how they charge their car from home and their office. They talked about how it was difficult to access charging stations, but that has been getting better with more chargers being installed.
- Daphne heard a lot about range anxiety. She traveled from Fairfield CT to Fairfield CA in EV cars they borrowed from a car company. They did not get stranded.
- Omar uses a public charger for their EV. They do not think having an EV is different than a regular car. They also mentioned how they received \$11,000 off from their EV purchase thanks to DEEP's CHEAPR program and federal incentives.
- Paul talked about the state having an EV mandate since 2008 and how it builds off a California. The initial framework was for manufacturers to create EVs in California and it would count for states who adopted the program. California said states should develop complementary policies. Paul shared how there is federal money that DEEP is pursuing to help install charging stations in urban and rural areas. This is an evolving situation they are in and after the 2025 model year they will be out of the California program and join the federal program. It is difficult to see what this is going to look like from a car manufacturer perspective.

Alex posed the question about the legislature reviewing HB5485 An Act Concerning Transportation Infrastructure for EVs. This would establish an EV Infrastructure Coordinating Council that would create EV roadmap. We know HB5485 outlines the goal for distributing 40% of funds of EV rebates for low-income and EJ communities. Can you talk about how these rebate programs work from the state side?

- Paul added how the state works closely with retailers when they initially adopted CHEAPR and continue to work closely with them. You can see the retailers who process CHEAPR incentives on the DEEP website. The goal of CHEAPR was to take away the initial financial barrier for owning an EV car. They built EV plus program that provides additional incentive for new EVs. There's another program for used EVs. They have switched now to a voucher program but before it used to be a post-purchase rebate.

Alex asked the EV owners if they could add anything to what Paul elaborated regarding rebates. Alex also asked if there is anyone they know of who has taken advantage of CHEAPR or CHEAPR plus?

- Karamo purchased a Tesla in 2021 and then replaced it. Used CHEAPR and federal government programs for the new car and saved about \$14,000 off the vehicle. They have other family members who have purchased EVs. Karamo also mentioned taking a trip to Florida in an EV. On the side Karamo works with an organization called EV Options which does EV education and one thing they do is ride and drive events where they bring multiple EV models. Once you put a person in an EV and drive it for a mile it will just click. Karamo mentioned a couple of benefits with owning an EV:

- They do not require a lot of maintenance since they are like a phone and have innovative technology such as a regenerative break. He also mentioned how EVs are less likely to break down, batteries are built to last, and EVs bursting in fire is not as common. It was also mentioned how companies like Tesla base where they put chargers on the rates of EV ownership.
- Daphne shared how on their trips they would stop at the nearest gas stations to see the cost of the gas. It turned out that conventional cars cost almost twice as much to take the same trip Daphne did. They also mentioned how Westport police department has EVs.
- Omar mentioned how their coworkers were interested in seeing their EV which helped make them more comfortable with them. They even went through the rebate programs with a curious coworker. Omar has been working with Clean Cities to sell more chargers to local areas. Spreading the word and educating is crucial.
 - Omar added how most efficient gas cars today are only 30% efficient. Less efficient gas cars are probably 12% efficient.

4. Panel Discussion on Electric Bikes

Alex asked our eBike panelists about how they use their bike in their daily life. What are some of the pros/cons of using your bike in New Haven?

- Kristen talked about how they used their E-bike in their daily life. They started with an electric cargo bike because their son got into a preschool across town and thought it was a better option than purchasing another car since they had just bought a car.
 - As a renter with only one parking space it would also be difficult to store an additional car which is why they decided to purchase an eBike instead. They emphasized how it is important to pick the right bike since for them an eBike worked best due to the hills and long travel distances.
 - Their cargo eBike is expensive but it is cheaper and more convenient than getting a car. Their bike model also has rain gear to ensure their child did not have to suffer from their decision. To charge their bike they take the battery off with a key and charges it inside of their apartment. Kristen does not have to charge the batter every day and when they do have to charge it takes no more than an hour.
- Omar mentioned his interest in eBike ownership. He also observed lower costs for e-bikes – the lowest ones around \$400.

Alex acknowledged how owning an eBike can have similar issues like EV such as inadequate storing and misinformation about the batteries. He posed the following question to the eBike panel: What do you think is needed for eBikes to be financially accessible and safe infrastructure for residents of EJ communities to use these bikes?

- Jay Stange chimed in by talking about two sister programs BiCi Co., a community program, and Transfer Hartford Academy both of which serve the Hartford community.
 - Hartford residents are said to have less automobile ownership compared to others: A third of families living in Hartford own one car. As such, a lot of people are dependent on walking, public transportation, and walking
 - Through Jay's work they get to do eBike demonstrations and when he does them he sees people immediately understand the amazing power of this vehicle. It is important for people to see a way to incorporate eBikes into their lives and maximize its benefits.
 - About 35% of car trips in CT are less than 10 miles which is easy to do with an eBikes. One challenge eBikes have is its weight since its electric motor and battery can be quite heavy.
 - Another challenge is storage which is difficult for those who do not own a garage. This can be addressed through incentivizing landlords to provide spaces for storage.
 - EBike owners might face the same challenges as a normal bike owner: Where to ride safely. What makes road safe is when everyone knows where they are supposed to be: Having sidewalks for people to walk on and then space (i.e. bike lanes or separated pathways) for cyclists. To support cyclists it is important to build an infrastructures for bikes. Church Street, for example, has a new protected bike lane. Weathersfield and New Haven also have these. For a culture of riding bikes to develop there needs to be a demand for more safe bike infrastructure.
- Paul provided more insight into DEEP's eBikes program: When they opened a program they had a lot of applications within the first 10 days. Paul also mentioned how 95% of those who got rebates through DEEP said they would not have bought eBikes without these incentives.

5. Public Comment, Questions and Answers

- What are we doing to electrify public transportation?
 - (Paul) There is a goal to electrify all state buses within the next ten years. As a result, there has been an increase in the numbers of hybrid or fully electric buses. For example, in Bridgeport there are now five electric buses. There is also a statewide program DOT leading to ensure there are electric buses in all parts of the state.
- If you get an EV and cannot charge it at home how does this impact certain communities?
 - There are alternative options such as public chargers or charging at work.
- Does the state have incentives available for converting bikes, trikes, and wheelchairs into electric bikes, trikes, and wheelchairs?

- Paul isn't aware of any.
- Jay said that they do get this question a lot. There are kits for this, but they do not have solid techniques as such they do not have specific recommendations. There are better options than converting kits since the technology is still improving.
- (Participant Question) They commute using an eBike at different times due to their schedule as a nurse. Sometimes they feel unsafe and compared their experience in Hartford to past locations they have lived in which includes San Francisco and Washington DC. This participant has experienced harassment such as getting yelled at by drivers. One benefit of their eBike is that parking at their job is easier. Their ask is what can, and will the state do to make bikes safer?
 - (Jay) DOT has a new Commissioner who is different from previous commissioners and wants to create opportunities for more than just cars. A Complete Streets Policy was created. It is important to acknowledge how Manchester and West Hartford had a huge pushback from the communities who did not understand that organizing the roads to provide opportunity for all to travel safely makes travel easier, safer, and does not increase travel time.

Questions from Zoom Chat:

- (Tony Guy) The discussion should not be limited to environmental concerns. For lower income residents, motor vehicles ownership, maintenance and insurance are a disproportionate financial burden on this community. Serving these communities by providing alternatives (like E-bike subsidies) creates opportunities for the allocation of limited financial resources for better nutrition, healthcare and residences. From the Bureau of Transportation Statistics: In 2022, low-income households with at least one vehicle spent 38% of their after-tax income on transportation, while those without a vehicle spent 5%. This is compared to 11.6% spent by the highest income quintile in 2022. <https://www.bts.dot.gov/data-spotlight/household-cost-transportation-it-affordable>
- (Kate Rozen) If hb5485 does not pass, does CT Deep intend on marketing the ebike program for this next round?
- (Paul Wessel) Good article on affordability of used EVs in today's Washington Post: <https://wapo.st/3JG6JLK>
- (Alicia Clarke-Olen) What kinds of incentives can the government (local, state, and federal) give to individuals and communities to promote electric vehicle usage?
 - CHEAPR (state program) provides incentives for purchasing new or used vehicles - <https://portal.ct.gov/deep/air/mobile-sources/cheapr/cheapr---home>
- (Alicia Clarke-Olen) What about public transportation? How do we make them more environmentally sound

- Here are some DOT/DEEP programs about electrification of buses - <https://portal.ct.gov/dot/publictrans/bureau-of-public-transportation/battery-electric-bus-projects-and-partners>
- <https://portal.ct.gov/dot/publictrans/bureau-of-public-transportation/electric-bus-basics>
- (Reginald Saint Fortcolin) My name is Reggy and I work on ebike conversion kits, a low cost option with a combo of waste prevention. Is there any incentives for ebike/wheel chair conversions? ebike conversion kits?* I work on low cost ebike conversion kits under auspicious of Bridgevolt down in Bridgeport, are there incentives for converting bikes, trikes or wheelchairs?
- (JD Tamucci) How are Environmental Justice communities defined? And what body defines them? Is there an appeal process? I am asking because I live in a rural town with very little low income housing. I am below 300% FPL and live in the only affordable apartment complex in my town. But my complex was not in a Envntl Justice community, which is fine if that's how it is, but I felt confused because the home owners literally across the street were in a Envntl Justice community based on the map I was showed by a CHEAPR representative last year.
 - (Mark Mitchell) EJ communities are defined by law. They are census block groups where 30% of residents are 200% of poverty or lower. Census blocks are defined by the Census Bureau in a manner which is supposed to group people in communities that are similar.
- (Alicia Clarke-Olen) I've heard the construction of bike lines. What are the benefits of having a bike-friendly community (urban, suburban, and rural)?

6. Announcements, Updates, & Events

Park Connect: CTDEEP and CTDOT partnership program that provides safe and reliable transportation to multiple state parks: <https://portal.ct.gov/deep/state-parks/park-connect>

Meeting Highlights:

- To increase eBike ownership it is crucial to build a safe bike infrastructure, educate communities, provide safe storage and more incentives.
- To increase EV ownership there is a need for more charging stations, especially in urban and rural areas, and more education and outreach efforts to counter misinformation and expose communities to EVs.
- EV Benefits: Less likely to break down, batteries are made to last, have innovative technology (e.g. regenerative breaks), cost less money in the long-term due to not relying as much on gas.
- Ebike Benefits: Makes paring easier on the streets and is easier to store compared to cars.
- Work being done:
 - DEEP launched the [eBike Incentive Program](#) on June 28, 2023.

- The Connecticut Hydrogen and Electric Automobile Purchase Rebate ([CHEAPR](#)), a partnership program between CTDEEP and CTDOT, offers incentives to Connecticut residents who purchase or lease an eligible vehicle from a licensed Connecticut automobile dealership.
- DEEP is pursuing to help install charging stations in urban and rural areas.
- In addition to creating the Complete Streets Policy, DOT is also leading a statewide program to ensure there are electric buses in all parts of the state.

Registration List:

Jocelyn Phung	Karen Kitsis	Jacquelyn Torres
Yessenia Santiago-Bejarano	David Michel	Alycia Jenkins
Diane Lauricella	Katie Dykes	Michael Davis
Amanda Proscino	Jen McGuire	Mario Perleche
Carl Stopper	Akiebia Hicks	Annie Decker
Jae Berg	Halle Lisette Pierce	Anstress Farwell
Michael Anderson	Nicole Foertsch	tony guy
Mayor Pete Bass	Kellie Kingston	Rebecca French
Terry Adams	Walter Barozi	Joy Yakie
Mark Mitchell	Joshua Safran	Ian McDonald
Daphne Dixon	Aaron Goode	lynne bonnett
Daniel Awuni	Daniel Mitchell	Reginald Saint Fortcolin
Florencia Bugatti	Stephan Palmer	Inventor eddie Oquendo
Alicia Clarke-Olen	Doug Clark	Kay Lehoux
Paul Wessel	JD Tamucci	Walter Barozi
Pallavi Mande	Theresa Hopkins-Staton	john wooten
Kate Rozen	rachel hiskes	Rob Thomas
Lissette Andino	Delicia Arnold	
Jen McCaffery	Andrew May	
Florencia Bugatti	Alicia Clarke-Olen	Mario Perleche
Caitlin Daddona	Tracy Babbidge	Eyitayo Olaleye
Jae Berg	Sharmin Akter	Andrew May
Tenaya Taylor	Karamo Kourouma	Arleen Cohen
Florencia Bugatti	Jay Stange	Emanuel carrillo
Francesca Torres	Sharmin Akter	Dwight Henderson
Samantha Dynowski	Rahiem Eleazer	Nivjuan Ruiz
Daniel Awuni	Jaimeson SInclair	Andy Bauer
Luigi Sartori	Diane Lauricella	Omar Green
Kristin Barendregt-Ludwig	Allison Pfeffer	