GREEN ENERGY CONSUMERS ALLIANCE

2024

STRATEGIC PLAN

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FOREWARD

As Greta Thunberg says, “we need to treat the climate crisis like a crisis.” This Strategic Plan is presented in that spirit. The priorities in our 2024 Strategic Plan are shaped by our belief in the power of consumers joining together to participate in the transition to a zero-carbon world. Through our programs and advocacy, we seek to create pathways for all consumers to access clean, affordable power, homes, and vehicles.

To quote yet another great energy thinker, Amory Lovins, “Markets make a good servant but a bad master, and a worse religion.” This is where Green Energy Consumers Alliance takes its cue. As we shift energy systems from oil, methane gas, and coal to renewable energy, greater efficiency, and electrification, consumers will experience both the costs and benefits of clean energy, including avoided costs. Our Strategic Plan prioritizes approaches that pay close attention to the distribution of costs and benefits: minimizing the costs of the transition to those who can least afford it and ensuring the benefits are shared fairly and justly.

We are excited by the progress that federal policies will cause and enable in the coming years. From the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act to Advanced Clean Cars II and more, Washington has finally stepped up. These policies will bring about dramatic growth in clean energy technologies like EVs, heat pumps, storage, wind, and solar. We are well-positioned to compete for federal grants and look forward to partnering with allied organizations to bring those resources to the Bay State and the Ocean State.

Experience tells us that opportunities that are not apparent today might appear tomorrow. If we see a potential way to achieve our mission, our rubric questions will always be: does it help achieve our mission, and are we the right organization to take it on? We strive to be an innovator in approaches that bring expanded clean energy opportunities to consumers, especially those who have traditionally been left behind.

While growth for its own sake is not our mission, we seek ways to fulfill our mission at a larger scale in an even more accelerated way. For that reason, financial development is a priority for us. We continue to manage within our means, and we are very grateful to those of you who have donated to us.

We hope you enjoy reading this Strategic Plan. We would love to hear your reactions and feedback. We’re not going to wait another five years before acting on good ideas.

Yours truly, Larry Chretien (Executive Director) & Deborah Donovan (Board President)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

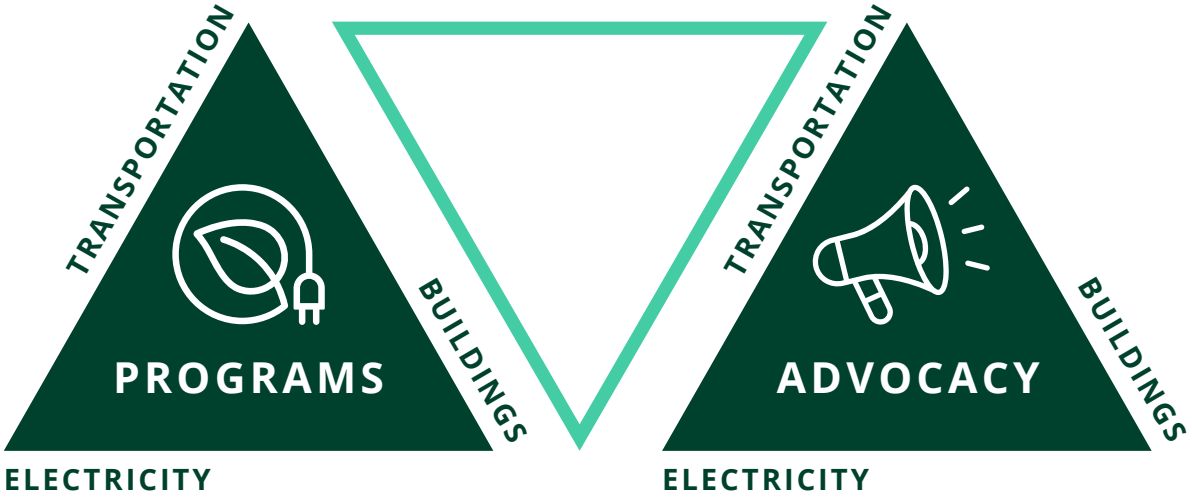
Green Energy Consumers Alliance is pleased to present this Strategic Plan. This document explains our strategic priorities for the next five years as we continue our efforts in Massachusetts and Rhode Island to address the climate crisis.

First and foremost, we have slightly restated our nonprofit mission: We're a nonprofit organization empowering consumers and communities to speed a just transition to a zero-carbon world.

The mission statement is our way of expressing a commitment to treating the climate crisis like a crisis and focusing on mitigation while also ensuring that in reducing emissions and building a clean energy economy, we must do so in a way that equitably allocates the benefits and costs of the transition. We have also added a vision statement that highlights the core principles guiding the work we do and how we relate to one another as colleagues.

This plan includes our statement on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), drawing upon the work that we have done together over the last few years, with a promise to continue incorporating DEI into all that we do.

As this plan explains, Green Energy Consumers organizes our activities into six parts. We address the three major energy sectors of the economy – transportation, buildings, and electricity. For each of those sectors, we influence those sectors in two ways, through programs and advocacy. Furthermore, for each sector, we indicate what our priorities will be and how we will integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion into the work.



There are many nonprofits working in the energy and climate space. We respect them and count them as allies. But we believe that we are unique and add great value to the cause. Our uniqueness comes through a combination of our longevity, approach, and expertise.

We have listed our priorities below in bullet form, which might make each one seem like a dot on the landscape, independent of the others. But make no mistake. We see ample opportunities to connect those dots.

Programmatically, our strategic priorities over the next five years will be:

- Continuing the growth and innovation of our Green Municipal Aggregation, Drive Green, and heat pump programs.
- Exploring opportunities for local ownership of wind and solar generation, particularly to the benefit of low- and moderate-income households.
- Educating consumers and promoting opportunities at the local level made available by state and federal incentives, especially from the federal Inflation Reduction Act and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

Our advocacy efforts are directed at influencing energy and climate policy at the state level. While the landscape will change over the next five years, our strategic policy priorities now are the following:

Electricity

- Increase clean energy standards and procure offshore wind
- Update and improve the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative
- Grid Modernization
- Appliance Standards

Buildings

- Establish Clean Heat Standards
- Building Performance Standards for large buildings (>20,000 SF)
- Building codes requiring all-electric new construction
- An orderly and equitable phase-out of fossil fuel heating and the decommissioning of gas infrastructure by 2050

Transportation

- Create standards, timelines for electrification, and fair incentives for the electrification of all vehicle classes: light-duty passenger; medium-, and heavy-duty (including public transit and school buses); and public and private fleets
- Build out reliable charging infrastructure so that everyone has access to charging
- Implement smart rate structures to protect the grid as electrification increases. This will include rewarding EV owners for charging during off-peak periods and participating in vehicle-to-grid (V2G) programs.
- Encourage mode shift through to active mobility and public transit (regional transit authorities in Massachusetts and RIPTA in Rhode Island should both be expanded).
- Fund the investments and new rate structures we need fairly, without placing undue burden on LMI residents.
- Realize the public health benefits of electrifying transportation.

The list of our strategic priorities is long and none of them are easy, but we are well-positioned to be more impactful than ever thanks to new federal incentives, state programs, and the philanthropic generosity of foundations and individuals. With each passing day, the public is seeing the climate crisis for what is and showing appreciation for what we do. For these reasons, we are confident that we can do our part to speed the transition to clean energy by collaborating with other nonprofits, progressive clean energy companies, partners in government, and citizens throughout the great states of Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

MISSION & VISION

Mission Statement

We are a nonprofit organization that empowers consumers and communities to speed a just transition to a zero-carbon world.

Vision

The climate crisis demands a swift phase-out of fossil fuels. To meet the urgency of the moment, we build power among consumers and communities to adopt clean energy technologies in our lives and advocate for state-level policies to speed the transition. Our work is laser-focused on reducing greenhouse gas emissions 50% under 1990 levels by 2030 and reaching net-zero emissions by 2050 to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. Every ton of greenhouse gas emissions and every fraction of a degree of global warming make an important difference to life on this planet now and forever.

We envision a world powered by clean, zero-carbon energy, where all people enjoy a clean environment and a livable climate.

Our mission is literally about changing the world, but our programs and advocacy are based in Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

Our work is grounded in sound science, smart economics, the lived experience of people adopting clean energy technologies, and the values of open-mindedness, compassion, and kindness.

Our society's reliance on fossil fuels harms Black, Brown, Indigenous, and other communities of color and low-income communities first and worst, across our two states, the country, and the world. We address equity and environmental justice in our work by pushing for emissions reductions consistent with scientific consensus and state laws, paying attention to the distribution of costs and benefits for each intervention, and building relationships across differences. We are aware that our organization and our work are not free from the effects of systemic oppression—particularly structural racism—that impact every institution in our society. We are committed to continuing to learn and interrupt these systems in ourselves and in our sphere.

Our Approach

President Obama's science advisor, John Holdren, put it this way: "When it comes to climate change, we basically have three choices: mitigation, adaptation, and suffering. We're going to do some of each. The question is what the mix is going to be. The more mitigation we do, the less adaptation will be required, and the less suffering there will be." Green Energy Consumers takes Holdren's point to heart. We focus on mitigation by reducing emissions in the three biggest sectors of greenhouse gas emissions in Massachusetts and Rhode Island: electricity, buildings/heating, and transportation. For each sector, we tackle reductions in two primary ways, which feed into each other. Our experience interacting with real people (and suppliers in the energy marketplace) informs our advocacy work, and the policies we push for make it easier for consumers to adopt clean energy technologies.

1. On the program side, we aggregate consumers with suppliers to improve outcomes, whether that's saving money or reducing emissions. As a nonprofit, we can intervene in energy markets, focusing on societal benefits and the long run without being distracted by the short-term wants of shareholders. We to do the research for people, understand when a technology is ready, what the federal/state incentives are, and how to make the switch so that consumers can save time and money. Where possible, we offer programming targeted to low- and moderate-income (LMI) families and people of color to ensure that the benefits of clean energy are shared widely.

2. We advocate for sound clean energy policy on the state level in the legislative and executive branches. States have an enormously important role in this country with respect to energy policy. The two states we work in put their grand ambitions into law with the Massachusetts Global Warming Solutions Act and the Rhode Island Act on Climate. And both states have enacted some excellent policies to achieve the requirements of those binding statutes. But in neither case have they established and implemented what's needed by 2030 (50% greenhouse gas reduction in Massachusetts, and 45% in Rhode Island), let alone to achieve net zero by 2050. We will hold state governments accountable. As a nonprofit, we are not distracted by the election cycle.

3. We collaborate with other organizations to run effective programs and to craft, pass, and implement policies that speed an equitable transition to a zero-carbon future.

4. We connect the dots. Because we work with the buildings, transportation, and electricity sectors, we can apply what we have learned in one area to the others. Despite appearances, the three sectors have never been truly siloed. Today the three sectors are indisputably intertwined and will only become more so in the future. Our understanding of this dynamic is key to our effectiveness.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

Our organization developed within the context of a historically white and middle-class environmental movement. Increasingly, both our organization and the larger movement for climate justice are acting upon the understanding that we cannot reach our climate goals without aligning with both the organizing power and the priorities of communities of color.

Our work aims to rectify the injustices of the fossil fuel economy that generated unsustainable disparities in terms of health, wealth, and well-being. We address diversity, equity, and inclusion in our work by pushing for the steepest emissions reductions, paying attention to the distribution of costs and benefits for each intervention, and focusing on relationship-building to better our work. We know our organization and our work is not free from the effects of systemic oppression – particularly structural racism – that impact every institution in our society. We are committed to continuing to learn and interrupt these systems in ourselves and in our sphere. We are engaged in implementing an Action Plan to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion within our organization.

In summary, we are working on:

- Improving formal and informal structures within the organization to expressly support diversity, equity, and inclusion within the organization. This includes allocating time for a staff DEI committee, for a variety of DEI discussions for all staff, and collaboration between the staff DEI committee and the management committee.

- Addressing DEI in hiring and retention of staff. This includes implementing explicit DEI personnel policies, hiring and onboarding practices, and enhancing strategies for employee retention.

- Analyzing the current diversity of our program participants, working to increase the diversity of our participants and partnerships, and strengthening our ability to address DEI issues in all our programs and policy campaigns. We strive for a future where all people benefit from clean energy – regardless of income or race/ethnicity. On both the program and policy side, we're trying to make it easier for all people to join the push to decarbonize the grid and/or directly access the benefits of clean energy.

FINANCING OUR MISSION

We are proud that our organization has managed its finances responsibly for 41 years, as confirmed annually by our auditors. Credit for this goes to our fiscal team and to our board's Finance Committee. While we are confident that we will be able to produce high-quality work, as we have since 1982, our desire is to do so at higher levels of scale and with a broader constituency. In many cases, we might want to go deeper or wider, but our ability to do so depends upon our financial capacity. To get this far, we have had to match our ambitions with the resources at hand.

Our impulse is to fill the inevitable gaps left by for-profit corporations and the government. We do not seek the path forward that is most "profitable." We strive to reach market segments that are not the most lucrative but where we can make up for deficiencies in the marketplace. Diversity, equity, inclusion, and environmental justice are values that are also not well reflected in the marketplace.

We would make a similar point about our work on public policy. We lobby in the public interest. While we support specific clean energy technologies such as wind, solar, EVs, and heat pumps, our organization does not exist to lobby to enhance the profits of private corporations. These corporations might benefit from our lobbying efforts, but our goal is to make clean energy adopted at scale, affordably, and equitably.

Since the last Strategic Plan, we have increased the development capacity of the organization to capture diversified funding streams and we will continue to build up that development capacity incrementally. For example, the federal Inflation Reduction Act presents enormous new opportunities for federal funding. At the same time, we acknowledge that clean energy is under constant attack nationally, which means we cannot take anything for granted. Green Energy Consumers receives a considerable amount of earned income through our programs. We receive some of what people or communities pay for participating in a program or accessing a service. Expanding these programs while carefully managing risks would increase our social impact and in most cases, raise our bottom line. This is even the case with our largest program by far: Green Municipal Aggregation (GMA).

Our strategic financial goals are to:

- Continue growing the programs that generate earned income, especially GMA.
- Secure increased federal and state funding.
- Broaden our base of individual donors at every level.
- Broaden our base of grants from foundations and corporations.

Strategic Priority

GREEN ENERGY

General Description

Zeroing out emissions in the electricity sector requires increasing the efficiency of electrical end uses such as appliances and replacing fossil fuels with wind, solar, and hydro power. Cleaning up the grid using renewable technologies and using electricity more efficiently reduces greenhouse gas emissions, protects consumers from the price volatility of fossil fuels, safeguards public health, and benefits our local economy by keeping more energy dollars in-region.

In 2020, the electricity generation sector contributed about 20% of statewide emissions in our states. The Clean Energy & Climate Plan for 2025 and 2030 in Massachusetts requires electric sector reductions of 53% under 1990 levels by 2025 and 70% by 2030. Rhode Island does not break out reductions by sector in its 2022 Climate Update, but a 2022 law requires the Ocean State to have 100% of its power met by renewable energy by 2033, thanks in large part to our advocacy work.

Through both programming and advocacy work, Green Energy Consumers has prompted progress in the green electricity supply sector for more than two decades. Thanks largely to this organization's leadership in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, both states have set strong clean energy standards and established a rapidly growing market for GMA.

Programming

In the coming years, our programmatic focus will maintain and expand our ground-breaking work in Green Municipal Aggregation (GMA). In collaboration with Good Energy, we pioneered the GMA model that is now dominant in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, in which cities and towns contract for electricity supply for their residents with a greater percentage of Massachusetts Renewable Portfolio Standard Class 1 or Rhode Island "new" renewable energy than required by state law1. Fifty-five GMAs are now operating in Massachusetts. Of those, we supply renewable energy credits (RECs) to 21. By all accounts, we have set the standard for GMA. In the last few years, communities have attempted to emulate our model rather than deviate in a way that might be considered greenwashing.

We estimate that in 2023, green aggregations in Massachusetts have added approximately one million megawatt hours of Class I renewable energy to the supply mix. This is enough to serve 150,000 to 200,000 homes with 100 percent clean power. GMA has been adopted voluntarily by municipalities and their residents and businesses with zero subsidy from state government and non-participating ratepayers.

In Rhode Island, we supply RECs to all seven communities operating GMA. These seven communities represent almost half the population of the Ocean State.

New Report: Green Power at Lower Cost

Green Municipal Aggregation continues to be a huge success in the Bay State.

Read the full report at greenenergyconsumers.org/aggregation.

GMA benefits consumers by providing stable and often lower-cost electricity and protection against predatory competitive electricity suppliers. Several key reports have documented these environmental and cost-saving benefits: our own and those of the Massachusetts attorney general's office. The Massachusetts AG's office documented in great detail how consumers who choose a competitive electricity supplier unaffiliated with municipal aggregation are paying far more for power than they should. This is a major equity issue because predatory companies have taken advantage mostly of low-income consumers, seniors, people of color, and families whose first language is not English. We will continue our advocacy on behalf of aggregation and rules that prevent predatory behavior.

GMA also benefits our states by pushing us beyond the renewable energy requirements of our clean energy standards. We expect demand for the renewable energy we supply to GMAs to further increase over the coming years for two main reasons. We will encourage many cities and towns in both states to adopt GMA. Also, load growth will increase over time in our existing GMAs as more people and businesses switch to EVs and heat pumps.

This table provides key indicators of our involvement to date.

Green Energy Consumers, FY24 Budget				
	MA	***RI***	***GECA Total***	***MA Overall***
Number of Towns Served	21	7	28	54
Population	652,418	360,509	1,012,927	2,099,224
Households	248,199	132,030	380,229	800,882
Number of RECs Budgeted	234,800	26,666	261,466	757,646

As we detailed in our 2023 report, we tracked the results of 32 cities and towns in Massachusetts (including 22 of our own communities) between 2017 and October 2023 that have aggregations offering default products of between 5-11% more Class I RECs than required by law. (This cohort does not include aggregations with less than 5% additional Class I or aggregations with more than 11% Class I.)

We found that over the default products saved an average of 3.3 cents per kWh over the 6 years. Based on average household usage of 7000 kWhs per year, we estimate a savings of $231 per year per household compared to what consumers would pay for utility-supplied Basic Service.

While aggregation savings cannot be guaranteed, we found that the default products of these 32 GMAs cost less than Basic Service in 83% of the 36 six-month Basic Service cycles from 2017 and 2023.

In Rhode Island, where aggregation has just recently begun, between May 2023 to November 2023, households on the GMA default products are saving about 1 cent per kilowatt hour compared to Rhode Island Energy's supply.

Based upon these results, data from other communities in Massachusetts with aggregation, and the number of cities and towns that have yet to adopt aggregation, we will make expanding GMA a priority for the next several years.

Green Powered is the program we have offered to individual households and business for over 20 years. As community aggregation grows, enrollment in Green Powered, will inevitably decline. Although we feel nostalgic about Green Powered, the evolution towards aggregation is beneficial to the organization and, more importantly, to the states we serve by bringing clean, affordable electricity to scale.

We will continue to promote solar deployment and to connect GMA programs with the growing offshore wind power resource. We are assessing the feasibility of having municipal aggregations sign contracts with offshore wind developers. Another model we are exploring would involve public- and/or nonprofit ownership of wind and solar projects.

We also aggregate consumer behavior. When demand for electricity is high, wholesale prices and pollution soar. Our Shave the Peak program educates consumers about why, when, and how we can reduce or shift our electricity use to times when demand is lower, placing less stress on the grid. We consider the program to be an exemplar of what the utilities should be offering on a larger scale, especially in the near future when advanced metering infrastructure is installed in both states that would enable better two-way communication between consumers and the utility as well as time-varying rates.

Advocacy & Education

We work to increase state commitments to energy efficiency and steadily clean up electricity generation through advocacy and education. We spend a significant amount of time and effort holding the states accountable for keeping the commitments they have already made. Policy formulation is important, but it's not enough without good policy implementation.

Clean Energy Standards & Offshore Wind:

For years, we have been proponents of clean energy standards, such as the Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard (RPS) in Massachusetts and the Renewable Energy Standard (RES) in Rhode Island, both of which require steady progress in decarbonizing the electric grid. We will monitor implementation of these standards. A large portion of our advocacy work will focus on accelerating the pace of decarbonizing our electric grid. Offshore wind presents an enormous opportunity on this front: Massachusetts and Rhode Island have an incredible renewable, zero-emission resource right off the coast. We will continue to support state-regulated procurements of offshore wind power (including the vital buildout of transmission infrastructure), and work to connect municipal aggregations with offshore wind projects.

Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI):

This multi-state pact to reduce emissions from Northeast fossil fuel power plants is critically important. We are part of a regional coalition to update the regulations to meet the goals of our two states. We support increasing the stringency of the annual cap so that emissions will fall to zero by 2050. We also support targeting RGGI proceeds to the benefit of LMI families and those who have borne a disproportionate share of the burden of fossil fuels.

Grid Modernization:

To fully decarbonize our grid, we will need a modern grid that is able to adapt quickly to the variability of renewable energy, manage loads to reduce demand and stay resilient in the face of the impacts of climate change. Key technologies in play are managed charging for electric vehicles, vehicle-to-grid (V2G), and stationary storage. Both states are undergoing grid modernization efforts and will be rolling out advanced metering infrastructure over the next few years. We see the benefits of grid modernization far outweigh the costs. In addition to advocacy, we see a key role for ourselves in educating consumers about the benefits of these technologies and time-varying rates that encourage demand flexibility.

Appliance Standards:

While few people think appliance standards are a sexy green energy policy, they produce huge energy and cost savings for consumers in addition to emission reductions. We will continue working with experts in the field to advance standards.

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion in the Electricity Sector

Our creation and expansion of the GMA model has dramatically increased the number of people who can participate in accelerating the transition to clean energy. It has also made joining the transition feasible for people of lower and moderate incomes. We can point to proven bill savings for participating consumers as described above and in our new report.

We plan to add more communities so that even more people benefit, particularly residents of communities targeted by predatory competitive electricity suppliers.

We will also continue to explore ways to bring down the costs of solar for LMI consumers and to make solar accessible to people of color and non-native English speakers. The federal Inflation Reduction Act is a game-changer on this front and will allow us to be more creative and pursue new partnerships on this front. Building relationships and partnerships will be key to making sure we effectively address these barriers.

On the advocacy front, we support policies that make access to clean energy technologies more equitable. For example, policies that enable and facilitate LMI households to adopt distributed energy resources such as solar, heat pumps, heat pump water heaters, induction stoves, and electrified transportation.

We also support policies that go beyond individual access to clean energy by shifting the overall market (e.g., GMA, RGGI and grid modernization). As a society, we need to both rapidly decrease greenhouse gas emissions and make sure that the financial and other burdens (particularly public health) of maintaining and transitioning our electric system do not fall disproportionately on low-income communities and/or communities of color.

As it stands, many of the pollution-generating facilities on our electric grid—particularly the worst offending "peaker" plants—are located in low-income communities and/or communities of color. This is why we work to increase renewable energy deployment, grid modernization, energy efficiency, programs such as Shave the Peak, and more stringent caps on fossil-fueled power plant emissions.

Strategic Goals

In the next few years, our strategic goals in the electricity sector are to:

1. Expand GMA.

GMA still has a lot of room for growth. Ideally, every city and town in Massachusetts and Rhode Island will adopt GMA by 2030. Many communities in both states have yet to do so. We expect to work with many more cities and towns of various demographic profiles, including those with below-median incomes and larger populations of people of color. In 2024, we are projected to supply about 300,000 Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) to aggregations.1 That number could grow to 500,000 within a few years. However, although we will not be supplying RECs to all aggregations in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, we will continue to be the standard bearer that all stakeholders look to for best practices.

2. Expand solar and wind access.

We also hope to be directly involved in community-based energy projects such as off-shore wind or rooftop solar in order to bring the benefits of direct investment, ownership, and job creation to more people. Given the range of skills and expertise of our staff, we will be involved as practitioners, educators, advocates, or some combination.

3. Push for policies to make the grid cleaner, affordable, and equitable.

We will ensure consumers and communities understand that the full benefit of renewable energy depends on a modern grid and will actively support more sophisticated rate design.

Strategic Priority

BUILDINGS

General Description

Our organization began in 1982 to bring consumers together to get better deals on home heating oil and to promote what was then called “alternative energy” sources such as weatherization and solar. Over time, we broadened our scope beyond heating to include electricity and transportation. Green Energy Consumers’ priority is to make buildings comfortable, affordable, and sustainable.

Programming

The Heating Oil program continues to serve consumers. We advertise that consumers can save 15-30 cents below the state average for full-service heating oil delivery. However, in recent years, savings have been even greater. Many of our members have saved more than $200 per year.

We also provide our heating oil program members with a great deal of information and connections so they can eventually adopt the clean energy options that make the most sense for them, whether weatherization, solar, EVs, green electricity, or heat pumps. Our heating oil members are far better positioned to make the clean energy transition than any other heating oil users, and many have. We will continue the heating oil program for the foreseeable future. We will also support any heating oil dealer interested in establishing a heat pump product line.

More recently, we began promoting heat pumps because they reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve indoor air quality. In both of our states, heat pump adoption is a major part of their energy plans. Our primary approach is to provide educational content, both in person and via webinar to consumers about the benefits of heat pumps and the incentives available from the federal Inflation Reduction Act and state governments. We have become known as valued interpreters of the complicated maze of those incentives and have been asked to present on many occasions. Our audience primarily consists of individual consumers, but we have also presented to nonprofits, businesses, and municipalities.

In our heat pump program, we work with partners Abode Energy Management and Energy Sage that have the capacity to help shoppers choose from among competing bids. We aim to grow our heat pump program over time as more people switch from fossil fuels.

Advocacy & Education

While decarbonizing electricity and transportation is not easy, doing so in the building sector is even more difficult. Every home is different, people are accustomed to their combustion appliances, and the supply chain for heat pumps, whether air-source or geothermal, needs to grow fast to keep up with consumer demand. No single policy is adequate. We see several policies, working together, that can address new construction and the retrofit needs of existing buildings.

In 2050, when the whole economy has to be net-zero, buildings standing today will comprise about 70% of the built environment. This means that new construction needs to be net zero and that we must develop Clean Heat Standards, Building Performance Standards, all-electric building codes, and combustion appliance phase-outs (for space heat, hot water, clothes drying, stoves, and lawn equipment) to make retrofits compliant with state laws by 2050. In both states, some of these policies can be adopted without further legislation because the Act on Climate in Rhode Island and Global Warming Solutions Act in Massachusetts grant the executive the authority needed to reduce emissions, but we will push for action in both the legislative and regulatory arenas to ensure that policies are implemented.

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion in the Building Sector

We share the concern that the costs of transitioning to clean energy could affect those who are least able to bear them. It's in the home that most LMI folks will experience a high energy burden, meaning that their heating bills consume a larger percentage of their income. LMI families should be at the front of the line for heat pump programs. This makes it even more important to make electricity more affordable for LMI homes with heat pumps. For LMI homeowners and tenants who remain on fossil fuel heat, we need to take steps to keep their heating bills from exceeding their ability to pay.

Several states, including Massachusetts and Rhode Island, are contemplating the "Future of Gas" through formal policy proceedings. As many consumers switch from methane (aka "natural gas") to electrification, those who remain on methane could be charged higher delivery rates to finance infrastructure maintenance. Through our advocacy, we will work to make sure that gas utility shareholders bear as much responsibility for this transition as possible in order to protect LMI ratepayers from crushing energy burdens. Resolving this complex issue may also require some form of public financing.

Strategic Goals

With respect to our programming, in the next few years, we aim to reach more consumers in both states with helpful information and advice about how to make their homes more efficient and electrified and the resources available to them.

With respect to advocacy, the next few years will be critical as both Massachusetts and Rhode Island are up against tight deadlines to formulate and implement policies to put the building sector on a trajectory to net zero. Our goal is to guide policymakers to adopt solutions that move the needle on building sector emissions equitably. Our expectation is that we will be deeply involved in the debates around these major building decarbonization policies:

1. Requiring new construction to be all-electric.

2. Establishing building performance standards for buildings over 20,000 square feet, requiring them to reduce emissions to net zero by 2050.

3. Implementing a Clean Heat Standard which requires gas utilities, heating oil companies, and propane distributors to earn an increasing number of Clean Heat Credits over time by electrifying and insulating buildings. The CHS would affect new construction and retrofits and drive emissions downward to net zero to 2050.

4. Placing gas utilities on a certain path to decommissioning the gas infrastructure by 2050 in a manner that is economically prudent, safe, and equitable.

Strategic Priority

TRANSPORTATION

General Description

The transportation sector generates the largest share of greenhouse gases (GHG) in both Massachusetts and Rhode Island, accounting for 37-40% of statewide GHG emissions. In Massachusetts, the Clean Energy & Climate Plan for 2025 and 2030 requires an 18% reduction in GHG emissions reductions in the transportation sector by 2025 and a 34% reduction by 2030. Rhode Island's 2022 Climate Update does not break down needed emissions reductions by sector. Still, both plans agree: to meet the required emissions reductions in the transportation sector, we must both reduce vehicle-miles-traveled by encouraging mode shift and rapidly electrify all vehicles at the same time. Green Energy Consumers Alliance also takes this tack though we focus our strategic initiatives on transportation electrification.

Programming

Since 2016, Green Energy Consumers has offered a consumer-facing program called Drive Green, which educates consumers about the benefits of electric vehicles and connects them with a network of local dealers to help them make the switch. Faced with the reality that there are approximately two cars for every household, Drive Green presents people with an opportunity to greatly reduce emissions and enjoy the other benefits of lower operation costs and a quieter, smoother ride.

Drive Green's unofficial motto is "your next car should be electric." We see the value of EVs for consumers who need a car. It's clear that the global auto market is transitioning to EVs. However, our ultimate goal is to speed that transition so that it occurs at a fast-enough pace to meet our greenhouse gas reduction requirements. Therefore, Drive Green is beneficial not only to its individual participants but also to the public interest.

Thousands of visitors view our interactive website every month to learn about battery range, charging, and incentives. EV topics and transportation-related blog posts are consistently some of the most read on our blog. Thanks to years of producing high-quality content, our Search Engine Optimization is high, and many new people find us simply by Googling

"electric car" or similar keywords in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. In addition, we host many popular webinars (regular EV101 and deep-dive presentations, virtual chats with EV Ambassadors, and one-off forays into particular topics) and in-person EV showcases and test drive events with both EVs and electric bikes. Members of the public interact with us at these events or by emailing our helpline, signing our pledge, joining our Drive Green community Facebook group, volunteering as an EV Ambassador, or subscribing to our newsletter.

Our shopping tool allows consumers to compare different EV models side-by-side and then sign up to connect with a local dealership to get an EV. Car dealers have continued to find value in acquiring new (and pre-educated) leads through the Drive Green platform, and consumers have benefited from connecting with EV specialists at the dealership and the extra layer of oversight provided by Drive Green.

Drive Green is well-regarded in both Massachusetts and Rhode Island. We maintain excellent relationships with state energy agencies and work closely with other state and utility stakeholders in both states. We receive excellent feedback from our consumers via email, webinars, speaking events, and EV events.

Advocacy & Education

Our advocacy work is grounded in ensuring our states meet the required GHG emissions reductions for 2030 and reach net-zero emissions by 2050. In the transportation sector, that means phasing out the sale of new gas-powered cars by 2035 and rapidly electrifying medium- and heavy-duty vehicles as well.

We support policies that:

- Create standards, timelines for electrification, and fair incentives for the electrification of all vehicle classes: light-duty passenger; medium-, and heavy-duty (including public transit and school buses); and public and private fleets.
- Build out reliable charging infrastructure so that everyone has access to charging.
- Implement smart rate structures to both incentivize EV adoption and protect the grid as electrification increases. This will include rewarding EV owners for charging during off-peak periods and participating in vehicle-to-grid (V2G) programs.
- Encourage mode shift through better access to active mobility and public transit (we need to expand regional transit authorities in Massachusetts and RIPTA in Rhode Island and regional rail systems.
- Fund the investments and new rate structures we need fairly, without placing undue burden on LMI residents.
- Realize the public health benefits of electrifying transportation.

We work in coalition with many other environmental, environmental justice, labor, and other advocacy groups to jointly push for needed policies. In both states, we also support the agendas of organizations that focus on public transit, walking, and biking.

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion in the Transportation Sector

The transportation system in the United States is overdependent on the individual ownership of petroleum-powered vehicles. GHG emissions contribute to climate change no matter where they are produced, and the localized pollution caused by combustion engines affects us all. But those local impacts of pollution disproportionately harm low-income communities and communities of color, thanks to decades of racist and socially unjust land use planning that placed transportation and petroleum infrastructure such as highways and ports in these communities. At Green Energy Consumers, we work towards a future where everyone has access to clean, reliable, healthy modes of transportation, particularly those most burdened by our existing transportation system. We strive to make it easier for overburdened communities to access EVs and other modes of clean transportation through our program design, advocacy and education.

Access to EVs

We address some of the key barriers to accessing EVs for both LMI drivers and communities of color.

Cost: EVs are generally still more expensive at the point of purchase than gas-powered cars, despite lower fuel and maintenance costs over the lifetime of the vehicle. This cost premium holds LMI car buyers back from going electric; these are the very drivers who would benefit most from those lower fuel and maintenance costs. Drive Green has always emphasized the more affordable EVs rather than the luxury options. In the past, we further reduced costs via dealer discounts (when the market could support them), but even with substantial discounts,

EVs remain unaffordable for many since there is not yet a robust market for used EVs. We expect more engagement by consumers interested in used EVs (on our website and through our presentations) as new EV sales increase and as current EV drivers trade in their old EVs for new ones. We have responded to this opportunity by building out a used EV tool that educates consumers about the different options and by advocating for policies that offer additional support to LMI drivers to purchase or lease EVs, such as incentive adders, rebates for used cars, and point-of-sale incentives.

Access to charging: Many residents need access to charging and cannot simply install a charging station because they rent rather than own their home. We support policies that help bring down the cost of installing charging in these segments as well as those that increase public charging options. We have served as intervenors in regulatory proceedings in both states in support of utility Make Ready programs, advocated for funding for charging incentives from state agencies, and frequently point to the need for a holistic EV charging plan from each of our states to coordinate efforts and funding.

Inclusion: Early adopters of EVs have largely been White, well-educated, financially secure, and home-owning. We recognize that for many communities of color and others who don't fit the early-adopter profile, an intangible "not for me" feeling is a deterrent to going electric, separate from other barriers such as cost or access to charging. Our approach to this barrier has been to make our content as accessible as possible and form partnerships with organizations that serve people of color. For example, our partnership with Quincy Asian Resources, Inc. (QARI), put us in touch with Chinese and Vietnamese speakers thanks to QARI's deep-rooted language and cultural expertise. Our partnership with the Black Economic Council of Massachusetts (BECMA) will allow us to similarly pair our expertise in EVs with another group's expertise in supporting Black-owned businesses.

Beyond Passenger Cars

Many people rely on walking, biking, or public transit rather than driving. This segment of the population is disproportionately low-income and/or Black and Brown. Though our consumer-facing EV program may not serve this population, on the advocacy front, we work in coalition with many other groups, including groups representing environmental justice communities, to advocate for policies that make public transit more accessible, reliable, and electrified.

In addition, we know that medium- and heavy-duty vehicles that run on diesel fuel disproportionately contribute to the localized air pollution that harms human health. As a result, we support policies that will rapidly electrify this class of vehicles.

Strategic Goals

1. Hold our states accountable to phasing out new gas-powered cars by 2035.

2. Continue to educate consumers about the benefits of EVs and help them make the switch.

3. Maintain and build relationships with groups serving and representing LMI consumers and communities of color.

4. Support policies to advance active mobility, public transit, and fleet electrification.

For the Drive Green program, we hope to return to a place where dealer commissions bring in substantial revenue. COVID-19 and the ensuing supply chain issues fundamentally changed the car market and have thrown us into a brave new world. Thanks to the Advanced Clean Cars II standards, plus the many programs and incentives in the Inflation Reduction Act, we estimate that over 100,000 new EVs will be sold in our two states in 2026, with that number increasing steadily each year thereafter. If market conditions allow, we could earn commissions on those sold through our system.

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