



— Climate justice and equity at the core of Seattle's transport electrification



Government: City of Seattle

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Summary

The City of Seattle is committed to achieving racial equity and climate justice, the government has aligned the development and implementation of the city's electric mobility policies with this goal.

Seattle's new [Clean Transportation Electrification Blueprint](#) is a cross-departmental effort outlining policy goals for the city to transition to an electrified economy and decarbonise the transportation system through actions that promote an equitable and just recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. It builds on past successes and lessons learned to set ambitious 2030 goals around shared mobility, personal trips, delivery goods, the city's fleets, streets and electrical infrastructure.

This plan sets a clear path to address systemic inequalities that environmental justice communities are facing and achieve a clean and equitable transportation system: reducing climate emissions and air pollution, increasing electric mobility options and active modes of travelling, reducing fuel and maintenance costs and increasing the number of green jobs and diversity in the workforce.

The [Blueprint](#) was co-developed by the Office of Sustainability and Environment, Seattle City Light, Seattle Department of Transportation, and the Office of Economic Development and in consultation with the communities the city is trying to serve.

Background

The commitment to climate justice is not new in Seattle. In 2019, the City Council passed an [Electric Vehicle Readiness Ordinance](#), a legislation requiring that new developments in the city are 'EV-ready', with the objective of providing equal access to EV charging. The development and implementation of this policy was done using a [Racial Equity Toolkit](#) developed by the Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI) to [increase opportunity and/or minimise harm](#) for people of colour.

Transportation is the main source of greenhouse gas emissions in Seattle and the environmental justice communities - including communities of colour, immigrants, refugees, people with low incomes and limited English-proficient individuals - are not only more exposed to the environmental hazards and air pollution resulting from the combustion of fossil fuels, but also they have less access to reliable public transport and consequently other services and opportunities such as healthcare, education and jobs.

The [Transport Electrification Blueprint](#) builds on past successes and lessons learned and sets six ambitious goals for Seattle in 2030:

- 100% of shared mobility is zero emissions (including taxis, bikes, Uber, carshare services)
- 90% of all personal trips are zero emissions (encouraging walking, cycling and EVs)
- 30% of goods delivery is zero emissions (encouraging electrification of private fleets)
- 100% of the City fleet is fossil-fuel free ([Executive Order 2018-02](#))
- One or more zero emissions "Green and Healthy Streets" ([C40 Fossil Fuel Free Streets Declaration](#))
- Electrical infrastructure required to stay ahead of transportation electrification adoption is installed and operational

To achieve these goals, there are four main challenges that were identified and need to be tackled: the current policy and regulation framework, the need for upgrades and investments on the power grid, the requirement of a systems approach to electrification, and the lack of diversity in the EV-related workforce.

Each of these challenges was broken down into various specific gaps that need to be addressed and the [plan](#) successfully lays out a set of various actions to be followed in the next two years in response.

Enabling conditions

Seattle has a history of collaboration between agencies, environmental organisations and other stakeholders. The City has partnered with the Environmental Coalition of South Seattle on various projects to gather community input since 2018, and collaborated with the Environmental Justice Committee (EJC), EV manufacturers, charging companies and various other city stakeholders for the abovementioned EV-ready ordinance legislation in 2019.

Similarly, the [Transport Electrification Blueprint](#) was co-developed by the Office of Sustainability and Environment, Seattle City Light, Seattle Department of Transportation, the Office of Economic Development, Department of Finance & Administrative Services and the Office of Waterfront and Civic Projects, therefore incorporating well-rounded input from experts in various fields from policy, transit, mobility, innovation, economic development and others. There was a consultation process with the Environmental Justice Committee (EJC), community leaders and community-based organisations that supported with the organisation of workshop sessions and surveys to make this a community-led endeavour centred around the specific needs and priorities of the communities that Seattle is looking to serve.

This engagement process and the review of lessons learned and feedback provided by the community resulted in the identification of challenges and respective actions that will have support from the public as they address their major concerns.

Benefits & next steps

The structure of the [plan](#) ensures that there are clear next steps to address each challenge:

- To address the incentives for fossil fuel use in current regulation, the City has identified an action to develop a paper proposing policies that stop it and explore local tax incentives that can benefit climate justice communities.
- To address lack of granular data, the City will conduct a benchmarking of data for 2030 goals and map out GHG emissions inventories to inform which interventions and investments have the biggest impact on emissions.
- To address the lack of incentives and regulations to electrify micro-mobility, goods delivery and ride share, the City has identified various actions such as the development of a roadmap for shared and micro mobility and the need to create partnerships with local goods delivery companies.
- To address the lack of training and training components that would meet the demand for highly-specialised workers in the field, the City will, amongst other actions, seek funding for training initiatives and partner with labour unions and employers to track outcome-based indicators of workforce diversity in recruitment, training, and retained employees

For each of the challenges identified, the [plan](#) also identifies “what success looks like”, providing various indicators and outcomes that can be tracked and form an effective process for monitoring progress towards the overall 2030 goals for an electrified and healthier city.