

TransformTO Public Consultation

November 2024 – January 2025

Summary of the Public Webinars

TransformTO Net Zero Strategy Action Plan (2026-2030)
Wednesday, November 13 and Tuesday, November 19, 2024
7:00 – 8:00 pm and 4:00 – 5:00 pm



Overview

On Wednesday, November 13, and Tuesday, November 19, 2024, the City of Toronto hosted two public webinars to share information, answer questions, and get feedback to help inform the development of the next Action Plan (2026-2030) for the TransformTO Net Zero Strategy.

Each webinar was one-hour in length, open to all, and a total of 29 people attended the sessions, with 9 people attending the first session and 20 people attending the second session. Participants included individuals, members of community organizations, staff from the City of Toronto's Environment & Climate division, and Third Party Public, the engagement team retained by the City of Toronto to support the Net Zero Strategy Action Plan public engagement process.

Staff from the City's Environment & Climate Division provided an overview of the TransformTO Net Zero Strategy and the important role of public feedback in shaping the next 5-year Action Plan (2026-2030). The presentation was followed by a round of facilitated discussion where participants both asked questions of clarification and provided feedback and advice to the City. The presentation slides and recordings of the sessions are available at www.toronto.ca/netzeroactionplan.

This summary was written by the Third Party Public team to capture the feedback, questions, and advice the participants shared during both webinars. It is not intended as a verbatim transcript.

Overview of themes in feedback shared by participants

The following themes emerged from the feedback shared by participants during both public webinar sessions.

- **Participants said that they appreciate the work the City is doing to push climate goals in Toronto.**
- **Participants said that climate change conversations have dropped off the political realm radar.** They want it on politicians' radars. It's important that a climate lens be used when considering all new initiatives and work needs to be done to quantify data and model the effects of decisions on GHG emissions.
- **Participants said that collaboration between City divisions and agencies, with Councillors, and between different levels of government is important to ensure that Toronto meets the TransformTO goals.**

Summary of feedback

Participants thanked the City team for their efforts on TransformTO and the concise presentation. Participant's questions, feedback and advice for the City are included first. Responses from the project team, where provided follow in *italicized text*. Note that the points are numbered for ease of reference only, and the numbering is not intended to reflect any type of priority.

Advice and considerations from participants on collaboration

1. **It is important that the City of Toronto's efforts on TransformTO are brought to the Provincial government's attention, as there seems to be a culture war on green goals like biking.** This includes pressuring the Ontario Government to help promote active transportation and reduce car transportation as a way to reduce emissions.

Participants shared concerns with how the removal of bike lanes by the provincial government will affect the TransformTO goals. They said that it is discouraging that a whole level of government wants to stick to a car-dominated system. Participants suggested that the City pressure the provincial government by quantifying in modelling how the removal of bike lanes will impact getting to Net Zero. *Official interactions with the Provincial government happen through the Mayor's office or the City Manager's office. City staff can provide data and information on climate change and reducing emissions, but it must go through the proper channels.*

2. **Cross-departmental collaboration is important to ensuring the TransformTO actions are actually happening and not stuck in a vacuum.** *The City agreed and explained that there are over 20 divisions, agencies and corporations involved in TransformTO, and responsibility for implementation of actions is shared. The senior leadership at the City (which includes the heads of each division) do meet regularly through the TransformTO Net Zero Climate Leadership Table (NZCLT). Examples of collaboration include working with the TTC to electrify their vehicles or working with City Planning on the Toronto Green Standard for new buildings.*
3. **Support from Councillor's offices is needed to help educate the public on TransformTO.** *The City explained that Councillors do know about the TransformTO consultation process, and councillors who are interested in this work have regular contact with City staff. All councillors host Environment Days every year, and a short summary of the TransformTO consultation process was sent to councillors for inclusion in their newsletters.*
4. **Consider how the provincial government can help with funding for any green initiative both for individuals and institutions.** *The Province can provide tax incentives for individuals willing to electrify their home or switch to an EV car. It is also important to think about the contribution that schools make to Toronto's GHG emissions, particularly older TDSB schools, and to understand what funding is required to support building retrofits. The City explained that the TDSB and TCDSB are part of a Green Will Initiative where they can learn from each other on how to reduce their carbon footprint by operating and managing their buildings better.*

Advice and considerations from participants on buildings, both new and current

1. **There were participants who said that they see a double standard when it comes to asking individuals to spend money to decarbonize their homes, but developers have different requirements because they're concerned about costs.** *New buildings should be banned from using gas hook ups, and costs to developers should not be a barrier that gets in the way. Participants said they are concerned with the boom of construction and intensification in areas like Mount Dennis, and how it will affect the climate. They want to understand how developers can be pressured to build with climate action in mind, specifically how they will take on the TransformTO goals. The City explained that taking action to reduce GHG emissions is voluntary for residents. Meeting the Toronto Green Standard is a requirement for developers, that has been phased in over the past decade. New developers will be required to electrify their new builds, and build to a 'near zero' standard, as part of the City Planning application process by 2028-2030.*
2. **It is important for the City to connect with condo boards to ensure they are working towards greening their buildings.** *It is not just about reaching out to condo boards to stay informed about TransformTO, but it is also important to encourage green actions like green roofs or reporting on emissions. The Better Buildings Partnership has a number of resources for building owners to be involved in TransformTO goals. There is no mechanism at the moment to mandate a building to make any green improvements to their buildings, although the City is in the process of investigating and consulting on Building Emissions Performance Standards (BEPS).*

Advice from participants on education

1. **Education is important for Toronto residents to understand what other cities are doing for climate change.** *Cities like Winnipeg, Vancouver and Montreal are working on reports to see what it would take to get their buildings off fossil fuels. Sharing these with the public would be helpful.*
2. **There is an opportunity to highlight the impact that consumption has, and what residents should consider every time they buy new products.** *This is especially important since Toronto consumers are responsible for the*

emissions in industrial/commercial/transportation sectors. *The Environment and Climate Division does have a circular economy team that looks at consumerism. The City anticipates the next Action Plan will have some elements on how to mitigate consumerism. The City also published it's first Consumption Based Emissions Inventory (CBEI) in 2023, which is available on the TransformTO website.*

Advice on the TransformTO goals

1. **A climate lens should be applied to all new initiatives and policy decisions.**
2. **Consider how taking a holistic approach to reducing GHG emissions can help TransformTO actions.** For example, using land use planning to improve carbon absorption.
3. **Consider providing people with simple guidelines or templates to calculate the emissions reduced** in a household basis on transportation and home energy use so that people could see their emission improvements and be encouraged to act.

Questions of clarification

1. **Where do the emissions reductions come from?** *Emission reductions came from phasing out coal through the electric grid, the use of more energy efficient vehicles and appliances, and incremental improvements to building efficiencies since the early 2000s.*
2. **What grants for home decarbonization are available in Toronto? Have the grants from the federal government been restored?** *There are some grants still available through Enbridge Gas.*
3. **How well understood is the impact of cars and natural gas heating on air quality, specifically coming from a health perspective?** *Toronto Public Health does have a unit that looks at the GHG quantification in more detail. You can find information about this online, at <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/health-wellness-care/health-programs-advice/air-quality/air-quality-health-index/>.*
4. **Will increasing local food security/resilience be part of the TransformTO Action Plan?** *The Environment and Climate team are working with the resilience team to include discussions about resilience, mitigation, and co-benefits in the Action Plan. Additionally, the new resilience team focuses on this in their work.*
5. **Has TransformTO adjusted their goals to accommodate for the new urban development growth happening throughout the City?** *Net zero modelling does account for population growth.*
6. **With the current Toronto Port Authority plans for expansion of number of flights on the Toronto Island Airport – how is that considered by TransformTO?** *The emissions from the Island Airport are included in the emissions inventory for TransformTO.*
7. **What would it take to speed up the full implementation of the Toronto Green Standards? Are there barriers/challenges preventing this from happening?** *The City is trying to advance as much as possible, and the pace of change typically reflects the ability and readiness of the industry to decarbonize through a voluntary, collaborative, and phased-in approach. The final ('near zero') tier of the Toronto Green Standard for new buildings will be implemented in 2028.*
8. **Does the City have a direct role with Metrolinx, and pressuring them to electrify their rails?** *The Environment and Climate division does not have a direct role with Metrolinx on pressuring the electrifying of the rail line.*

Next steps

The City of Toronto thanked all participants for coming to the public webinars and providing their feedback. Participants were reminded that the recordings of the sessions, summary and presentation would be available on the website at, www.toronto.ca/netzeroactionplan.