

Climate Jubilee in the Face of Back Bay Boston's Natural Gas Leaks
Presented By Church of the Covenant's Climate Jubilee Team for
Central Reform Center's Shomrei Adamah during Sukkot, Oct. 17, 2024



- Our goals today: building Awareness & a call to Action
- In the face of chaos & injustice, our Faith calls us into awareness and action
- Isaiah 58:6-12 picked up by Jesus in Luke 4 → Jubilee to help restore the *actual* streets to live in
- Climate Jubilee is: *the sacred movement of liberation for racial and eco-justice – in our streets, communities, and world.*
- Our streets are not restored. They are in need of repair.
- The work of faith is the work of liberation and repair.
- Just as it was for the prophets, for (the) Isaiah(s) and Jesus, liberation can be complicated.
- Natural Gas (aka Methane) leaks are bad – they cause significant health effects! Emmanuel Center & COTC both house many groups that serve the most marginalized in our city. What quality of air does our faith demand that they have?
- From Mothers Out Front: *“Dangerous and potentially explosive gas is actively leaking near 258 schools and playgrounds in Boston and Chelsea. It is unconscionable to see this many gas leaks near places where our children spend so much time. By allowing gas to continue leaking this close to where our children learn and play, National Grid is creating unnecessary risks to our community’s health, safety and well-being. We all need and deserve cleaner energy in our communities.”*
- We ultimately would be a lot safer if we were completely off such hazardous fossil fuels!
- However, there is a LOT of money to be had by utilities to replace all the leaks in our Commonwealth, and so incentive to keep this all going for years to come. And National Grid would visit this upon ratepayers ~ \$1Billion/ year!
- **REPAIR and RETIRE not replace.** The goal is ultimately no more natural gas in MA (and world!).
- Senator Barrett talking about the Senate version of the climate bill. His hope is to change the language in the bill from REPLACING gas pipes to add REPAIR and RETIRE. He believes this will cut the proposed (\$42B) in half - and help ratepayers.

MAPS OF LEAKS IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD HERE IN BACK BAY www.heet.org/the-gas-leaks-map

At the end of every year, Massachusetts gas distribution utilities are required to file annual service quality reports to the Department of Public Utilities (DPU). HEET extracts and maps the reported leak locations from these reports. Leaks are graded by the utilities to indicate how potentially hazardous they are, from Grade 1 to Grade 3 SEI:

- **Grade 1** leaks are hazardous and must be repaired immediately. This includes leaks in or near a contained space, such as a building or manhole, where the gas could build up enough to potentially explode.
- **Grade 2 leaks** are nonhazardous, but could become hazardous in the near future. Must be repaired w/in a year.
- **Grade 3 leaks** are nonhazardous and are expected to remain nonhazardous. Grade 3 leaks initially designated on or after 1/1/2018 are required to be repaired or eliminated within 8 years.
- **Grade 3 SEI** are grade 3 leaks larger than 2,000 square feet in rectangular extent – these are leaks of significant environmental impact, or SEIs. They are approximately the largest 7% yet contribute approximately 50% of all leak emissions. They are required to be repaired in 1-3 years. HEET is working to improve utility adoption of the leak extent method to better identify SEIs in the field.

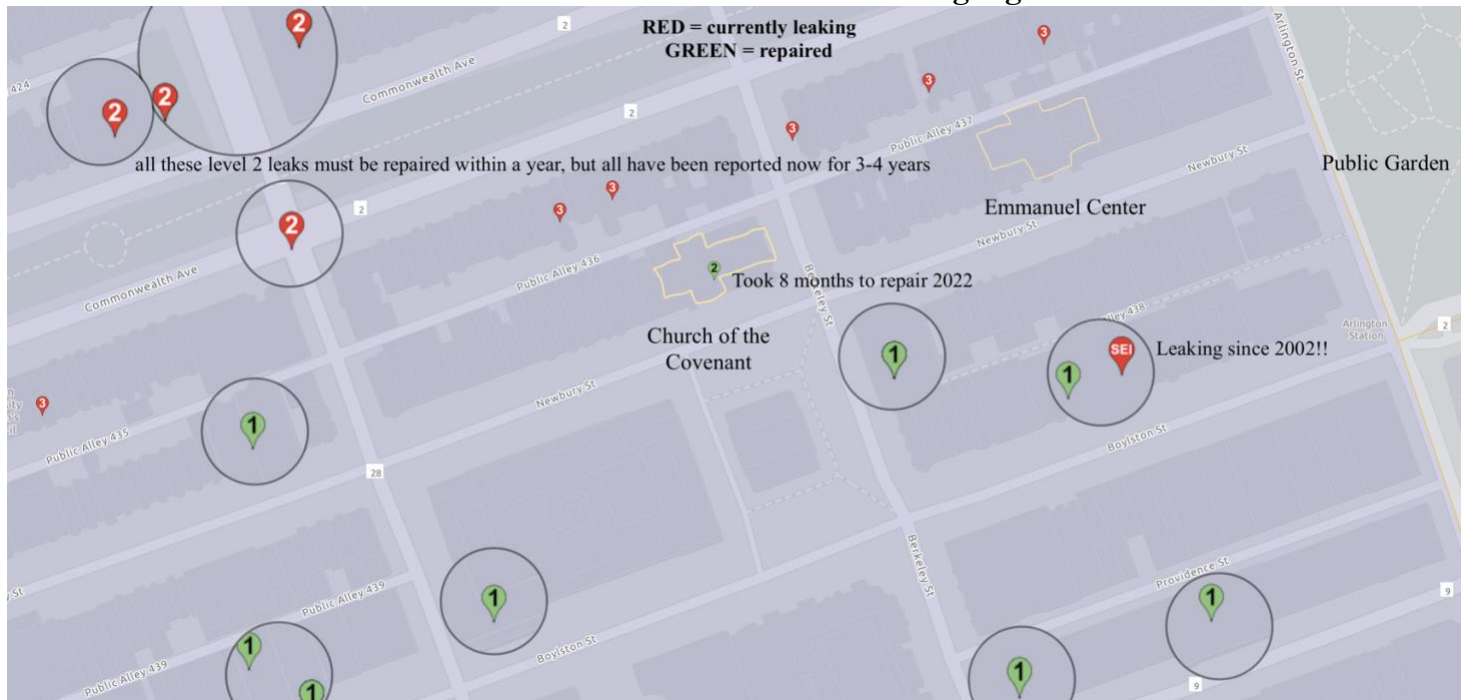
Professor Nathan Phillips, Boston University (Climate Activist):

There are plenty active (red) ones in your vicinity and some repaired (green) ones. There is also a “special” one labeled “SEI” - that is a leak of “Significant Environmental Impact” - what is colloquially called a “super-emitter.” The thing that makes this especially useful is that as good a job as HEET does of recording the utility data, the utility data is sometimes out of date and off the mark - like a repair may still be leaking, or a leak may be in a different location than the pinpoint.



Current gas leaks Boston

Our local streets with Emmanuel Center & Church of the Covenant highlighted:



CALL TO ACTION: ONE PHONE CALL: Progress on a Climate Bill - But We Need to Keep Pushing!

The Climate Conference Committee considering the Senate and House Climate bills has started meeting again. We hear that discussions are going well. This is good news indeed, and we and our allies have helped bring this about! However, we still have work to do! We know that even if the Climate Conference Committee comes to an agreement on a climate bill with some provisions to transition off gas, House Speaker Mariano might choose not to bring that bill to a vote. He might instead advance Governor Healey's supplemental budget bill, to which she attached the siting and permitting reforms that she, the Senate, and the House agreed on. That is why we are asking you to contact your representatives, to urge them to speak to Speaker Mariano in support of a climate bill that has significant provisions to transition off gas. We know that Speaker Mariano pays attention when representatives tell him their constituents want something. We are hoping that our message concentrating on the unfair cost to ratepayers of paying both to build out the electric infrastructure AND to pay nearly \$1 billion dollars a year to install soon-to-be-obsolete new gas pipes will help move representatives to support the gas provisions.

1. Find your legislator and his/her phone number:

Go to <https://malegislature.gov/Search/FindMyLegislator> and enter your address. Then click on your representative's name and you will see his/her phone number.

2. Phone call script:

"Hello. My name is _____ and I am your constituent from (town name or city neighborhood name, e.g. Allston, the West End). I am concerned about climate change and hope the Legislature can pass a strong climate bill this year. I want to urge you to speak to Speaker Mariano about including provisions in the climate bill that begin to transition us away from reliance on gas. Without the gas provisions, Massachusetts ratepayers will be paying not only to build out needed electric infrastructure, but also paying nearly \$1 billion dollars a year to install soon-to-be-obsolete new gas pipes. This is unacceptable. We want to REPAIR the most significant leaks in our neighborhoods, and then RETIRE all gas pipelines in favor of renewal energy. Thanks so much for hearing my concerns." (If you are leaving a phone message for your representative, add "I can be reached at [your phone number].")

3. Note for callers: If you are asked for the source of the information on the nearly \$1 billion dollar a year cost to ratepayers, you can refer to this GSEP Cost Summary by Dorie Seavey (<https://www.mass.gov/doc/seavey-gsep-cost-presentation/download>), a widely respected applied research economist who specializes in this field. The summary is based on Dr. Seavey's report, *Leaked and Combusted: Strategies for reducing the hidden costs of methane emissions and transitioning off gas.*