

From the Draft 2018 Regional Policy Plan, Energy related excerpts:

### Utilities

The Cape’s population and economic and social activities depend on reliable and affordable access to electricity, natural gas, and telecommunications.

Eversource is the local distribution company and is responsible for distributing electricity to the region. The Cape Light Compact JPE is the largest single energy supplier for residents and businesses on the Cape; however, electric customers may choose their competitive supplier. Electricity is primarily distributed through overhead wires. Generally, electric rates in the region are approximately 10% higher than the rest of Massachusetts. Approximately 100,000 customers get natural gas from National Grid—the sole natural gas service provider on Cape Cod.

Education, government, healthcare, and innovation sectors among other services of the economy rely on effective and reliable access to broadband and telecommunications. Residential internet service is available virtually throughout the region and is primarily served by a single provider (Comcast). Depending on where a business is located, it may have a choice of internet service providers with OpenCape’s continual expansion of its fiber optic internet services infrastructure. As more people choose to work from their homes, and more services such as doctor visits are conducted virtually, fast and reliable internet service will become even more important. Most of the region is served by multiple wireless communications providers, but there remain some places without service. Maintaining and enhancing the wireless communications infrastructure is increasingly critical to the region’s need for emergency and non-emergency communications.

### Regional and Comprehensive Planning

#### Renewable Energy Planning and Development

Massachusetts became one of the first states in the nation to move forward with a comprehensive regulatory program to address climate change upon passage of the Global Warming Solutions Act.

The GWSA required the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, in consultation with other state agencies and the public, to set greenhouse gas emission reduction goals for the Commonwealth to achieve reductions of between 10-25% below statewide 1990 GHG emission levels by 2020, and 80% below statewide GHG emission levels by 2050.

To help meet these greenhouse gas emission reduction goals, the Massachusetts Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard (“RPS”) was one of the first programs in the nation that required a certain percentage of the state’s electricity to come from renewable energy. The Massachusetts Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard requires retail electricity suppliers (both regulated distribution utilities providing basic service supply, and competitive suppliers) obtain a percentage of the electricity they serve to their customers from qualifying renewable energy facilities. Suppliers meet their annual RPS obligations by acquiring a sufficient quantity of RPS-qualified renewable energy certificates (“RECs”) that are created, traded, and

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tracked at the New England Power Pool Generation Information System. In order for retail electricity suppliers to meet their annual compliance obligations established by the RPS, they must purchase a number of [RECs](#) equal to the percentage of their retail sales for that particular compliance year. (<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/program-summaries>)

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The Massachusetts Renewable Energy [Portfolio](#) Standard created a market for the development of renewable energy generation facilities, including solar photovoltaic, wind energy, or other technologies to sell qualified [RECs](#) to retail electricity suppliers. The Commission has reviewed several renewable energy generation projects as Developments of Regional Impact since the creation of the Massachusetts Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard. However, most solar photovoltaic projects have been on greenfield sites with potential natural resources or water resource impacts. Siting of land-based wind energy conversion facilities on Cape Cod has also been challenging due to potential community character, noise and other environmental issues.

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The best way to offset line losses associated with electricity supplied from the utility grid is to encourage more on-site renewable energy generation. To assist in the planning, siting, and design of on-site renewable energy facilities, the Commission will develop a technical bulletin for Developments of Regional Impact and/or use by municipal officials in local review including:

- \* siting and building design consideration to accommodate future solar installations;
- \* identification of potential grayfield sites such as parking lots that would be suitable for installation of solar photovoltaic panels;
- \* siting and design considerations for public electric vehicle charging stations and energy storage.

The Commission will also consider requiring an energy audit for both redevelopment and new construction reviewed as Developments of Regional Impact review.

#### Green Communities

The Green Communities Act was a comprehensive reform of the Massachusetts energy marketplace that will greatly improve the state's ability to meet the GWSA targets. The GCA promotes a dramatic expansion in energy efficiency, supports the development of renewable energy resources, creates a new greener state building code, removes barriers to renewable energy installations, stimulates technology innovation, and helps consumers reduce electric bills. It also created the Green Communities Program, providing Massachusetts cities and towns with energy efficiency and renewable energy funding opportunities. (<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/global-warming-solutions-act-background>)

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As of 2018, four Cape communities have become Green communities under the Green Communities Act, [and three towns are in the designation process](#). The Commission encourages Cape towns to become Green Communities and can assist in providing education for the development community about the state building code requirements