



**Chris Dempsey for State Auditor  
350 Mass - Sierra Club  
Questionnaire Responses**

Submitted: July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022

## **I. GENERAL PRIORITIES**

**Please describe the most important aspects of your past activity and commitments to climate and environmental protection and to creating a more equitable and just society. In particular, we are interested in membership and leadership in environmental organizations, work on environmental campaigns, public positions you have taken, and activities you have initiated or actively supported.**

**Comment:**

Climate change is an existential threat to our way of life and I have spent much of my career focused on reducing carbon emissions and local air pollution by improving our transportation system, which is the largest source of GHGs. Much of that work has been done in partnership with 350 Mass and the Sierra Club. I am proud to have been a partner in the trenches with your organizations over many years.

I am committed to being the first State Auditor in the country to introduce Carbon Accounting into audits of key state agencies. The Commonwealth will not achieve its own mandates for emissions reductions unless state agencies and programs are monitored and our progress is tracked. Carbon accounting will cover an agency's direct operations as well as areas of industry that those agencies oversee. You can read my full policy paper detailing my commitment to combating climate change here: <https://dempseyforauditor.com/climate/>

While working as the Director for Transportation for Massachusetts, I worked to increase the sustainability of public transit, while also working to make public transit more accessible, which helps combat climate change. Additionally, we focused on addressing the impacts of transportation on Environmental Justice and public health outcomes. Land use decisions about where to locate transportation infrastructure (and the industry to support it) has direct health impacts on the nearby communities. Similarly, policies like redlining and modern policies that maintain the status quo it created lead to significantly inequitable quality of life, health, and economic outcomes today. 350 Mass and Sierra Club of MA were both close allies and partners in this work.

As Assistant Secretary of Transportation for the Commonwealth, I co-founded the MassDOT Open Data program that made available to riders smartphone apps that share real-time information about buses and trains. This has made transit riding easier for millions of transit riders.

**Please tell us in your own words how the State Auditor's office plays a significant role in protecting the environment in Massachusetts.**

We are at the point where every single office within state government must consider their impact on climate change and we must not underestimate or understate the importance of addressing climate change in the coming years. I released a policy paper on climate change nearly a full year before the election because I believe the climate crisis must be a top priority for elected leaders in every position and all levels. I have outlined my proposals briefly in this questionnaire but more information about my plans and policies regarding the climate can be found at <https://dempseyforauditor.com/climate/>

As I stated above, I will integrate carbon accounting into all audits. For example, I will incorporate emissions and local air pollution metrics into audits of the Massachusetts Highway Division to bring accountability and transparency to Highway Division decisions that have historically moved us in the opposite direction from our climate and environmental justice goals. And as state programs for mitigation of carbon emissions and resilience to climate change expand, the Auditor can and must provide strong oversight so that the dollars we are investing to combat and prepare for climate change are being spent well.

To win on climate, Massachusetts must drive emissions to net zero. But that alone isn't enough. We must also be a national leader by charting a path for other states. Our carbon accounting proposal will make the Massachusetts State Auditor's Office a national leader. We will be the first in the country to take this approach, but we will not be the last.

**Do you agree to make working for those Green New Deal policies a priority for yourself and all public agencies?**

Yes: X    No \_\_\_\_\_

**Comment:**

I strongly support the policies within the Green New Deal. Concern about climate change has been a centerpiece of my campaign. Climate was the focus of my second policy paper. Climate change is an existential threat to our way of life and I have committed to being the first State Auditor to introduce Carbon Accounting into audits of key state agencies.

I will also create an Auditor's Environmental Justice Commission, composed of representatives of communities that are hit hardest by climate change and by local environmental pollution. This Commission will inform the work of the Auditor's Office before, during, and after state audits that cover agencies that impact climate, emissions, and pollution.

**How do you plan to ensure a voice for, and protect the specific interests of, often marginalized stakeholders -- low-income families, people of color, immigrants, unorganized workers, youth -- when setting your office's agenda, shaping the types of issues you investigate and report on, and in evaluating the findings?**

**Comment:**

I plan on ensuring there is a voice for often marginalized groups by creating an Auditor's Environmental Justice Commission. Past and current decisions by state government on where to locate industry, route highways, and allow various forms of pollution have led to disparate impacts for communities of color and vulnerable populations (low income, linguistically isolated, the very old and very young, etc.). Understanding the costs of these forms of environmental injustice and redressing them requires working directly with those most impacted. Knowing their experiences is essential to building the right sets of goals and measurements in our climate and environmental programs.

**Will you make inclusion of disparate impact of climate and environmental issues a priority for your office?**

Yes: X    No:

**Comment**

Too many state programs actually increase carbon emissions and local air pollution despite espousing goals to do the opposite. The costs of climate change and environmental injustice show up in our healthcare system as visits to the hospital during an asthma attack, in our transportation capital budgets when flooding causes a subway line to shut down or road to wash out, and in our electricity bills when hotter summers force us to dial-up the air conditioning. Many of these costs are disproportionately borne by people living in environmental-justice communities along traffic-clogged highways, near polluting power plants, or in low-lying areas prone to flooding.

I will increase transparency and accountability in state government by identifying the climate and environmental justice impacts and costs of our state programs, giving citizens a benchmark for measuring the progress of our state government toward our climate goals.

And as I stated above, I will create an Auditor’s Environmental Justice Commission, composed of representatives of communities that are hit hardest by climate change and by local environmental pollution. Members will include a range of Commonwealth residents: from people who live near peaker power plants in Pittsfield, to residents of neighborhoods in Chelsea that are prone to flooding. This Commission will inform the work of the Auditor’s Office before, during, and after state audits that cover agencies that impact climate, emissions, and pollution.

**What other endorsements have you received? Who are your major financial supporters?**

**Endorsements:**

- a.** The Massachusetts Democratic Party
- b.** Auditor Suzanne Bump
- c.** The Environmental League of Massachusetts
- d.** State Representative Jeff Roy, House Chair of the Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy Committee
- e.** More than 40 other State Representatives, including TUE Committee members Joan Meschino, Richard Haggerty, and Steve Owens
- f.** Progressive Massachusetts
- g.** JP Progressives
- h.** Our Revolution Massachusetts
- i.** Progressive Democrats of Massachusetts
- j.** Belmont Democratic Town Committee
- k.** Boston Ward 4 Democratic Committee
- l.** Boston Ward 5 Democratic Committee
- m.** Boston Ward 15 Democratic Committee
- n.** Environmental League of Massachusetts Action Fund
- o.** Endorsements from 5 women State Senators and 18 women State Representatives
- p.** Endorsements from more than 100 local leaders, including the Mayors of Newton, Revere, Gloucester, and Easthampton

**Funding:**

I am running a grassroots campaign. We have raised more than \$600K from more than 2,000 individual contributors, by far the most in the race. We have outraised our opponents in total but at a lower average contribution size. We will have the resources we need to win this race.

## **II. THE ISSUES**

### **A. Climate Priorities**

**What are your top two priorities you would pursue if elected related to climate and environment?**

**Comment:** Include carbon accounting into Audits.

**Comment:** The creation of the Auditor's Environmental Justice Commission

**Are there any particular programs, agencies, or types of public and quasi-public organizations that you will make your initial focus?**

**Comment:**

I will be the first statewide elected official to commute to Beacon Hill by transit since Governor Mike Dukakis left office in 1991. Improving transit service is personal to me, and the MBTA and RTAs will be a core focus of my work as Auditor.

We must also ensure that agencies are working as environmental champions and developing policy that moves the sectors that they regulate to become more sustainable. MassDOT must be working to reduce pollution from transportation (the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the Commonwealth); the Department of Public Utilities must be working to reduce emissions from electricity generation, our grid, and gas distribution networks; and the Department of Housing and Community Development must promote transit-oriented housing and efficient building types.

We will also be auditing the various departments and programs to better understand the quantifiable benefits they provide. For example, we want to be able to look into how the Division of Ecological Restoration helps reduce the impact of flooding and increases the local water quality, and provide the public with a measurable benefit they are receiving.

**Will you include the cost and impact of inactivity on climate, environmental, and equity issues as part of your evaluation of programs' and offices' work?**

Yes: X    No:

**Comment:**

A major part of the integration of carbon accounting will be looking into the costs of not making changes to current operations. We are at the point of no return when it comes to climate change, and I will work to educate the public on just how costly inaction is.

**How do you plan to take advantage of the insights and knowledge of climate, environmental, and justice advocates when setting your office's agenda, shaping the types of issues you investigate and report on, and in evaluating the findings?**

**Comment:**

As Auditor, I will partner with advocates and institutions who have been on the front lines of working to combat climate changes and to support environmental justice, ensuring they are a part of the decisions made in the Auditor's office. As discussed above, I will create an Auditor's Commission on Environmental Justice so that those living on the frontlines of the crisis have a seat at the table on Beacon Hill.

I have been an advocate for a long time and I understand the expertise advocates bring to the table. I served as the Director of the Transportation for Massachusetts coalition, which advocates for better transportation policy statewide. We fought to make sure we have a public transit system that was sustainable and equitable for everyone.

I also co-led the grassroots campaign No Boston Olympics, which was successful despite being outspent 1,500-1 by some of the most powerful special interests in the state. I am proud of the broad coalition we built that included so many Massachusetts residents across the political spectrum and which was made up of many local, regional, and statewide leaders, including many of the leaders. We were able to win, despite being outspent, due to the passion and dedication of the advocates who made up the coalition.

**How will you maximize the role of the Auditor in oversight of federal funds with relation to climate and environmental sustainability?**

**Comment:**

My ARPA oversight and Climate Change policy papers cover my plans for these important items. It was the first plan I released, and it is by far the most detailed policy plan on oversight of federal stimulus funding that any candidate in this race has released.

We have a unique opportunity to utilize federal stimulus funds to set a higher standard for fairness and equity so that every community benefits from federal spending and the communities hardest hit by the pandemic receive the help they need. Under my leadership, audits of federal dollars spent by the state will incorporate clear equity goals and measures to accompany them, including tracking how funds flow to historically marginalized communities, Gateway Cities, and areas that have suffered from compounding harms like public disinvestment, air pollution, and lack of access to healthcare.

This will be aided by my creation of an Auditor’s Commission on Environmental Justice, composed of representatives of communities that are hit hardest by climate change and by local environmental pollution. Understanding the costs of these forms of environmental injustice and redressing them requires hearing directly from those most impacted. Knowing their experiences is essential to building the right sets of goals and measurements in our climate and environmental programs. This Commission will inform the work of the Auditor’s Office before, during, and after state audits that cover agencies that impact climate, emissions, and pollution.

**How will you maximize the role of the Auditor in oversight of implementation of the Next Gen Climate and subsequent state climate laws?**

**Comment:**

I will make the Massachusetts State Auditor’s Office the first in the country to incorporate carbon accounting into audits of relevant state agencies. The Commonwealth will not achieve its own mandates for emissions reductions unless state agencies and programs are monitored and our progress is tracked. For example, I will incorporate emissions and local air pollution metrics into audits of the Massachusetts Highway Division to bring accountability and transparency to Highway Division decisions that have historically moved us in the opposite direction from our climate and environmental justice goals.

## **B. Transportation**

**'If the Fair Share Amendment is approved by the voters, will you commit to valuing transportation investments with a bias toward minimizing our carbon footprint, and how will you make this known to the legislature?**

Yes: X    No:

### **Comment**

Our current tax code reflects a hodge-podge of historical political compromises and half-measures, not a coherent, principled, consistent approach to raising the revenue we need to build a more progressive, fair, and opportunity-filled state.

Fixing this status quo will take time, and there is no consensus -- even from progressive activists -- about what the ideal tax system would be. But reform is possible and long past due.

I served as Director of the Transportation for Massachusetts advocacy coalition, which championed the Fair Share Amendment as well as broader conversations about state revenue as a step toward providing all the services Massachusetts needs. We also opposed cynical proposals to reduce the state sales tax, a proposal that a conservative minority of Democratic legislators have, in the past, supported, with seeming disregard to the harm it would bring to public education and other important public needs.

Additionally, the money used from the Fair Share Amendment, needs to be used for low/no carbon public transit options. Current buses and rail systems produce significantly lower emissions per passenger mile than cars, and there is still plenty of work that can be done to reduce the emissions of our public transit systems. The Fair Share Amendment is an incredible opportunity to make significant improvements to our transit systems while greatly reducing our carbon impact.

**Will you commit to auditing the total cost of installing and operating the new AFC2 fare collection system for buses to determine if it would be more cost effective to simply not collect fares and therefore not have to pay for the costs of fare collection?**

Yes: X    No:

**Comment:**

Yes. I have been committed to auditing the AFC2 program for over a year. This project has had multiple major difficulties that have increased costs, delayed benefits, required the agency to maintain obsolete systems, and added confusion and dysfunction to other sorely needed MBTA projects that relied on AFC2.

The best possible outcome for the MBTA and fare collection is a system that is: low-cost for all, significantly discounted or free for those with low incomes, easy to use, supportive of higher frequency and faster service through all-door boarding, comfortable and safe for all without the risk of fare inspection escalating into a dangerous police incident, and linked across all modes (including provisions for future high-frequency Regional Rail) so as to help the MBTA create a service network that matches mobility needs rather than favoring one type of service over another.

We must do what we can to deliver these benefits given the current situation, whether the path forward is the current AFC2 plan or not, and learn the lessons about how this project got out of control. The MBTA must undertake many more large capital projects to maintain, improve, and expand the system (especially in the face of climate change). We need the MBTA to do better.

We absolutely need an equitable fare collection system that accommodates everyone, with special provision for low-income riders. Mayor Wu and others have rightly challenged a status quo that has raised the price of transit while making driving relatively cheap. MBTA fares have increased 200%-300% since 1991 (far more than inflation generally) while the gas tax has risen only 14% in the same period of time. Given the income distribution of riders and drivers, not to mention the environmental, climate, congestion, and land-use implications of this difference, this is an extremely inequitable situation and deserves immediate attention.

For the RTAs, where the costs of fare collection make up a much greater proportion of the fares collected, making service free may be an easy net win for the agency and the public. For the MBTA, fares broadly need to be lower, including free where appropriate and with lower multiples between the cost of a monthly pass and a one-way fare.

I support piloting and testing of free-fares, especially on buses, where fare payment is often a significant impediment to reliability and speed. Let's continue to gather data from these pilots and foster a robust conversation about how we want to pay for transit as a Commonwealth.

## C. Transparency and Reform

**Which, if any, of the current State Auditor's climate, environment, and energy-related investigations, inquiries, or methods would you NOT continue should you take office?**

**Comment:**

When she was first elected in 2010, Auditor Bump implemented significant reforms throughout the Office of the State Auditor, which put the office in a strong position. Increased attention to culture and internal oversight have improved the outputs of the office and professionalized its approach to reform of state government.

Instead of stopping any of the energy related investigations from her time in office, I look forward to greatly expanding them. The inclusions of carbon accounting into our audits will lead to significant reductions in carbon emissions throughout the Commonwealth.

**What, if any, additional actions, investigations, or methods would you initiate beyond what the current State Auditor is doing around climate, environment, and energy-related issues?**

**Comment:**

As written above, I plan to incorporate carbon accounting into audits, making Massachusetts the first state in the nation to do so. More detailed information can be found on my website: <https://dempseyforauditor.com/climate/>

**Are you or your campaign accepting contributions from the PACs, lobbyists, or SEC-named executives\* of fossil fuel companies — companies whose primary business is the extraction, processing, distribution, or sale of oil, gas, or coal -- or of companies involved in biomass or nuclear power production?**

(\*These include the Chief Executive Officer, each Chief Financial Officer and each of the next three most highly compensated executive officers. <for details see <https://www.lawinsider.com/dictionary/named-executive-officers>)

Yes:    No: X

**Comment:**

I have not solicited campaign contributions from fossil-fuel-linked PACs or employees of large fossil-fuel companies. Our campaign is people-powered, not fossil-fuel powered. As I've traveled the state, I've made campaign trips by transit, walking, and biking (check out #mapoliontransit on Twitter).

**Do you have any direct investments in Fossil Fuel companies and, if so, explain why you are holding those assets or when are you planning to divest from those?**

Yes: No: X

**Comment:**

I am prudent with my income and investments and overwhelmingly utilize index funds to make long-term investments. The index funds I own may hold fossil fuel companies as part of their portfolio. The best solution to reducing the involvement of these companies in the index funds is to reduce the involvement of fossil fuel companies in our day to day economy.