

DETROIT ANNOUNCES SEMI-FINALISTS FOR \$3 MILLION GLOBAL CHALLENGE TO INNOVATE EASTERN MARKET

- **Ten semi-finalists chosen to participate in \$3-million Sustainable Cities Challenge**
- **Over 70 high-quality entries submitted from across the globe**
- **Semi-finalists will be awarded \$50k implementation grants to further develop their innovations for Eastern Market**

Detroit, Michigan (November 14, 2024) – The Toyota Mobility Foundation has announced its ten semi-finalists for its [Sustainable Cities Challenge](#) in Detroit, Michigan. Developed in partnership with the City of Detroit, [Challenge Works](#), and [World Resources Institute](#), the Challenge sought global innovators to present solutions to decrease fossil fuel use and reduce freight operations costs in Detroit’s Eastern Market.

As part of the two-stage, three-year \$9 million global [Challenge](#), Sustainable Cities Detroit launched in May 2024, attracting 72 innovator entries from around the world.

The semi-finalists are:

- **Automotus**: Automotus helps cities reduce emissions, safety hazards, and traffic with AI cameras that automate curb management. Their solution will use AI solar cameras to automate the management of loading and unloading areas around Detroit's Eastern Market to reduce traffic and emissions.
- **BizFleets**: A full-service fleet management company that uses data to identify tangible opportunities for cost savings, emissions reductions, and operational improvements. Their solution will aggregate vehicle data from multiple sources into a single system to evaluate the use of the vehicles and how to increase efficiency and sustainability.
- **Civilized Cycles**: A Detroit-based design and engineering firm that builds light electric vehicles for commercial cargo transportation. Their electric cargo bikes could be utilized at Eastern Market and deliver produce to local businesses, reducing pollution and costs.
- **Ecosphere Organics**: A sustainability-focused company leveraging technology to transform food waste into valuable raw materials. Their solution aims to utilize organic waste conversion units at key food production locations in Eastern Market, converting

food waste into valuable materials while collecting real-time data to optimize waste logistics and reduce fossil fuel consumption.

- **ElectricFish Energy, Inc.:** ElectricFish Energy, Inc. is an all-minority founded company building energy infrastructure. Their solution is a battery-integrated fast electric vehicle charger which would charge electric vehicles, minimize peak energy costs, and provide backup energy for on-site Eastern Market facilities.
- **Emissionless:** By utilizing software and electric trucks to provide faster, more efficient, zero-emission freight operations, Emissionless aims to decarbonize ground freight transportation.
- **Interplai:** Their forward-thinking logistics platform is dedicated to revolutionizing last-mile delivery. Their route optimization software will provide an opportunity for collaborative logistics for the operators of Detroit's Eastern Market.
- **Joule Labs, Inc.:** Joule Labs, Inc. is a provider of electric vehicle charging solutions. Their system leverages cutting-edge automation, robotics, and artificial intelligence, to deliver flexible and scalable automated charging systems and services, meeting the needs of autonomous and conventional electric fleet operators.
- **Neology:** This Swiss clean-tech startup aims to advance sustainable energy with its Ammonia-to-Hydrogen Generation System (AHGS). This system enables clean, on-demand hydrogen production, ideal for powering fuel-cell solutions at construction sites, remote heavy industries, and other off-grid applications.
- **Orange Sparkle Ball:** This innovation and impact accelerator is focused on moving public and private organizations' initiatives forward. Their solution will use a data-driven micrologistics platform to organize first and last mile freight logistics in and out of Eastern Market.

The Challenge evaluated entries based on their potential to reduce fossil fuel use, introduce innovative solutions for Eastern Market freight, demonstrate business adoption potential, showcase mature technology, as well as exhibit scalability and strong delivery capacity.

"We are thrilled to announce Detroit's top ten semi-finalists for the Sustainable Cities Challenge," said Tim Slusser, chief of the City of Detroit's Office of Mobility Innovation.

"Eastern Market is essential to our food distribution network. and with these semi-finalists, we have a unique opportunity to collaborate with the Eastern Market Partnership and Michigan's Office of Future Mobility and Electrification to pioneer sustainable freight solutions that reduce fossil fuel use and lower operating costs."

Semi-finalists will each receive a \$50,000 implementation grant to help teams refine and localize their solutions for Detroit's Eastern Market. They will also participate in the Challenge's Innovator Academy, providing them with resources and guidance for their solutions. "The selection of ten semi-finalists for the Sustainable Cities Challenge Detroit marks an exciting step forward," said Ryan Klem, director of programs at the Toyota Mobility Foundation. "These teams are tackling challenges in Eastern Market, an iconic and essential part of Detroit's infrastructure, with innovative solutions that will benefit local businesses and the environment. We look forward to supporting their efforts as they develop approaches that could serve as a model for cities worldwide."

Director of Cities and Societies at Challenge Works, Kathy Nothstine, said, "With ten outstanding semi-finalists now selected, Detroit is ready to embrace fresh ideas from innovators around the world. Detroit has already made strides in creating a more efficient transportation network, and these teams offer promising solutions to further reduce fossil fuel consumption and streamline freight operations in Eastern Market, ensuring year-round reliability for the market and its vendors."

Eastern Market has been a cornerstone of Detroit for over 150 years. "It's inspiring to see ten semi-finalists now working toward solutions that will support its future," said Ben Welle, director of Integrated Transport and Innovation at WRI Ross Center for Sustainable Cities. "Innovation is essential for cities to adapt and thrive, and the solutions from this Challenge can help not only Detroit but serve as a model for sustainable city logistics everywhere."

The Sustainable Cities Challenge is funded by the Toyota Mobility Foundation and has been designed in partnership with Challenge Works and the World Resources Institute. Challenge Works is a global leader in the design and delivery of open innovation challenges that mobilize innovative thinkers to solve pressing problems and unlock change. World Resources Institute is a global research organization which works with partners to develop practical solutions that improve people's lives and ensure that nature can thrive.

To find out more, visit the [Sustainable Cities Challenge website](#).

About the Sustainable Cities Challenge

The Sustainable City Challenge is a two-stage, three-year \$9 million global opportunity for cities and innovators. The Sustainable Cities Challenge will be delivered over two stages:

- **Stage 1: Call to cities**

The Challenge sought cities who wish to host City Challenges in 2024 - 2025. In November 2023, ten shortlisted cities received a range of capacity building support to help them understand the issue they want to solve and attract innovators to provide solutions. By May 2024, three cities were selected to host City Challenges to find solutions for local mobility challenges.

- **Stage 2: Call to Innovators via 3 City Challenges**

Working with the host cities, the Sustainable Cities Challenge team supported by designing local City Challenges which launched between May and June 2024. Each City Challenge offers up to \$3 million in funding to innovators. Host Cities held open calls for entries from innovators via their City Challenge with the support of the Sustainable Cities Challenge team. Together, they selected their finalists to test their solutions in 2024-2025. In 2026, final awards will be given to winners in each host city to continue to implement and grow their solutions.

About Toyota Mobility Foundation

The Toyota Mobility Foundation (TMF) was established in August 2014 by the Toyota Motor Corporation (Toyota) to support the development of a more mobile society in which everyone can move freely. The Foundation underscores Toyota's ongoing commitment to continuous improvement and respect for people. It utilizes Toyota's expertise and technologies to support strong mobility systems while eliminating disparities in mobility. TMF works in partnership with universities, governments, non-profits, research institutions and other organizations, creating programs that are aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to address mobility issues around the world.

In the past, TMF has led a range of Challenges, including the global **Mobility Unlimited Challenge**, **CATCH** in Malaysia, **InoveMob Challenge** in Brazil and STAMP Challenge in India. You can find out more about TMF and how it is governed at toyotamobilityfoundation.org

About Challenge Works

For a decade, Challenge Works has established itself as a global leader in designing and delivering high-impact challenges to incentivize cutting-edge innovation for social good. Challenge Works is a social enterprise founded by the UK's innovation agency Nesta. In the last 10 years, they have run more than 90 prizes, distributed £200 million in funding, and engaged with more than 13,000 innovators. Challenge Works believe no challenge is unsolvable, partnering with non-profits, governments, and other organizations around the globe to unearth the entrepreneurs and their innovations that can solve the greatest challenges of our time. Visit them at <https://challengeworks.org/>

About World Resources Institute

World Resources Institute (WRI) is a global research organization with offices in Brazil, China, Colombia, India, Indonesia, Mexico and the United States, and regional offices for Africa and Europe. WRI's 1,700 staff work with partners to develop practical solutions that improve people's lives and ensure nature can thrive. Learn more: WRI.org and on Twitter [@WorldResources](https://twitter.com/WorldResources).