# **BUILDINGENERGY BOSTON**

Driving Down Carbon in Concrete: From One Project to the Mainstream

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**Curated by Beverly Craig** 

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### Embodied Carbon Reduction Challenge

- ✓ \$50,000 Grand Prize New Construction
- ✓ \$50,000 Grand Prize Substantial Rehab
- ✓ 9 Runner-ups of \$30,000
- ✓ \$10,000 People's Choice Award
- New construction or substantial renovation of any type (multifamily, office, institutional, lab, etc.) 20,000+ sq. ft.
- Embodied carbon trainings coordinated by BE+
- 5 prizes reserved for teams that have never produced an LCA
- Applications due March 2024





### Concrete EPD Kickstarter: Environmental Product Declarations

- \$3,000 grant for each MA ready-mix plant; extra \$1,000 for small companies (1-2 plants)
- To partially offset costs for third-party verified site specific instant EPDs
- Two years of volumes reporting to MaCAPA





## What is Embodied Carbon?

|                       | Product Construction                 |                                | Use                                  | End-of-Life   |  |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| Embodied<br>Carbon    |                                      |                                |                                      | A 📼 💼   |  |
| Operational<br>Carbon | Raw Material Manufacturing<br>Supply | Construction -<br>Installation | Operations Maintenance<br>and Repair | Deconstruction / Waste Processing,<br>Demolition Disposal |  |

**Embodied Carbon** is the greenhouse gas emissions (CO<sub>2</sub>) from the manufacturing, transportation, installation, maintenance, and disposal of building materials.

Unlike with operational carbon, there is no chance to decrease embodied carbon with updates in efficiency after the building is constructed.



Image Source: Carbon Leadership Forum, 2020

## **Structural Impact in Embodied Carbon**



Embodied carbon is a significant percentage of global emissions and requires urgent action to address it.

Image Source: Architecture 2030. Data source: Global ABC Status REport, 2018, EIA

## **Opportunities to Reduce Embodied Carbon**



Image Source: 2018 SEI Sustainability Commitment

### The Basics of Concrete





## SCM's: The Front Line

### GWP (global warming potential) of Portland Cement & SCMs



### **Opportunities Throughout Concrete**

Rebar



Using higher strength rebar to reduce the amount of rebar used

Consider using plain concrete where possible - eg, flatwork

Avoid "overspecifying" the strength of the concrete

Reuse

Where possible, explore opportunities to re-use existing buildings, building structures, and sitework instead of demolition

Explore the possibility of using recycled concrete

### Carbon Neutral/Negative



Utilize concrete as a carbon sink (eg Carbon Cure)

Leveraging concrete's continued carbon absorption in curing process

Biogenic processes (eg Minus Materials & BioMason)

### **Embracing Opportunities, Working with Challenges**

| Opportunities   | Challenges  |
|---|---|
| Designing Efficient Structural Systems<br>Consider Hybrid Structures (ie Mass Timber Frame) | A/E "Growing Pains"   |
| Standardizing Specifications Low Concrete<br>Specifications                                 | Navigating regional differences<br>Responding to market supply for SCM's                                |
| Establishing aggressive but realistic reductions  | Weeding out inflated baselines  |
| Requiring EPD's   | Permutations of concrete mixes  |
| Standardizing approach to ubiquitous applications<br>(eg. sitewalks)                        | Establishing best practices for concrete mixes and applications   |
| Adopting Innovative SCM's and SCM mixes   | Industry "Growing Pains"<br>Nascent Data & Research<br>Adjusting schedule due to increased drying times |

### EPD's

(environmental product declarations)

- We need more concrete EPD's!
- We need plant-specific EPD's!
- EPD's help us set targets and see how we're meeting them. The performance of a specific concrete mixture to benchmark data can be readily verified
- EPD's provide room for flexibility in how concrete mixes are selected throughout the project.



### EPD's



### **Getting Lower Carbon Concrete in Early**



## Specifications

Move away from prescriptive requirements

• Limits options, limits ability of manufacturers to apply creative solutions through different mixes, discourages innovations

Move towards performance requirements

- Define target carbon footprints by whole building and by concrete - eg, as percentage under benchmark established in NRMCA's Cradle-to-Gate Life Cycle Assessment v 3.2
- Understand market flux and availability

Available Resources:

<u>NRMCA Guide to Improving Specifications for Ready</u> <u>Mixed Concrete</u>

### Percentile Based Approach:

Specifier can set targets that exclude the use of a selected percentage of available mixes, with 50th percentile representing typical practice.

Athena Sustainable Materials Institute has published benchmark concrete mixes based on NRMCA industry-averaged EPD's for each region.

# CASE STUDY

# Boston University Centerfor Computing and Data Sciences



- **Project Summary**
- Sustainable Goals
- Structure
- Strategies
- Lessons Learned

2 3

















## **Embodied Carbon Opportunities**



## **Reuse of Shoring**



## Low-Carbon Concrete

Total Concrete = 20,500 CY

| Structural       | Baseline      |  |
|------------------|---------------|--|
| Component        | (Boston Area) |  |
| Mat Foundation   | 40% SCM       |  |
| Foundation Walls | 20% SCM       |  |
| Core             | 20% SCM       |  |
| Columns          | 20% SCM       |  |

**\*SCM:** supplemental cementitious materials

**\*\*** Baseline; NRMCA and Boston Experience

### FOUNDATION WALLS ->



### COLUMNS

## **Performance Based Specifications**



- Update Concrete Specifications to a Performance-Based Approach Eliminates the need for design team to assign prescriptive limits
- Assign durability exposure by structural component type

Limitations on mix design determined by durability exposure (e.g. maximum SCMs, w/cm, etc)

- Specify performance requirements
- Responsibility is on ready-mix concrete supplier to meet performance requirements

## Performance Requirements

- Strength at time
   Final design strength
   Early design strength
- Modulus of Elasticity
- Slab workability / finishability
- Shrinkage
- Density of light weight concrete
- Maximum aggregate size
- Temperature limits
   Thermal control
   Hot / Cold weather placements
- Air content



## SCM EFFECTS: PROPERTIES OF CONCRETE

|                             | Fly       | Ash                      | Slag Comont              | Silico Eumo |  |
|-----------------------------|-----------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------|--|
|                             | Class F   | Class C                  | Slag Cement              | Sinca i une |  |
| Water Demand                | Lowers    | Lowers                   | Lowers                   | Increases   |  |
| Workability                 | Increases | Increases                | Increases                | Lowers      |  |
| Bleeding and<br>Segregation | Lowers    | Lowers                   | May lower or<br>increase | Lowers      |  |
| Setting Time                | Increases | May<br>lower/increase    | Increases                |             |  |
| Air content                 | Lowers    | Lowers                   |                          | Lowers      |  |
| Heat of<br>Hydration        | Lowers    | May lower or<br>increase | Lowers                   |             |  |
| Early Age<br>Strength       | Lowers    |                          | May lower or<br>increase | Increases   |  |
| Long-term<br>Strength       | Increases | Increases                | Increases                | Increases   |  |
| Freeze/Thaw                 |           |                          |                          |             |  |
| Corrosion<br>Resistance     | Increases | Increases                | Increases                | Increases   |  |



Fly Ash ASTM C618



Slag Cement ASTM C989



Silica Fume



## Data Gathering – Initial Meetings

- Draft alternate mix design table provided to bidders
- CM organized meetings been RMC bidders and SE

- Allowed us to understand what was possible; allowed them to understand what we were aiming for
- Both parties took it as a learning experience

| an a | Durability Exposure |    | and the | and some |                       | 1.8           | Nominal max        | and the     | 1000000                |                |                 |
|--|---------------------|----|---------|----------|-----------------------|---------------|--------------------|-------------|------------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Structural component                     | F                   | 5  | w       | с        | Strength,<br>f'c(psi) | Age<br>(days) | Shrinkage<br>Limit | Max<br>w/cm | aggregate<br>size (in) | % SCM<br>(min) | % SCM<br>(goal) |
| 60" and 72" mat                          | FO                  | SO | WO      | C1       | 6,000                 | 90            |                    |             | 1                      | 50%            | 70%             |
| Tower core walls                         | FO                  | SO | WO      | C0       | 8,000                 | 56            | 0.04               | -           | 3/4                    | 50%            | 70%             |
| Tower core walls                         | FO                  | SO | W0      | CO       | 10,000                | 56            | 0.04               | -           | 3/4                    | 50%            | 70%             |
| Podium core walls                        | FO                  | S0 | W0      | CO       | 5,000                 | 56            | -                  | 1           | 3/4                    | 50%            | 70%             |
| Foundation walls                         | F1                  | SO | W0      | C1       | 5,000                 | 56            | -                  | 0.55        | 1                      | 50%            | 70%             |
| Columns                                  | FO                  | SO | W0      | C0       | 8,000                 | 56            | -                  | -           | 1                      | 50%            | 70%             |

## Next Steps

- Conversations & planning
  - Focused on concrete
  - RMC bidders
    - Provided alternate mix design table
    - Reviewed available test data
    - Ran trial batches
- Follow up discussions incl. RMC vendors
  - Trial batch results
  - Reviews of mix design options
  - Plan for longer strength gain mixes



## Low-Carbon Concrete

| Structural       | Baseline      | Proposed   |
|------------------|---------------|------------|
| Component        | (Boston Area) | -          |
| Mat Foundation   | 40% SCM       | 60-70% SCM |
| Foundation Walls | 20% SCM       | 60-70% SCM |
| Core             | 20% SCM       | 70-80% SCM |
| Columns          | 20% SCM       | 60-70% SCM |

**SCM:** supplemental cementitious materials



COLUMNS

### FOUNDATION WALLS ->



## LEED + Embodied Carbon



**Embodied Carbon** 

Global Warming Potential (GWP)



Acidification Potential (AP)

B

LEED BD+C v4: New Construction

Eutrophication Potential (EP)



Smog Formation Potential (SFP)



Depletion of Non-Renewable Energy (NRE)



Ozone Depletion Potential (ODP)

MRc1 Building life-cycle impact reduction Option 4: whole-building life-cycle assessment (3 points)

**REQUIREMENTS:** 

- Conduct LCA of structure and enclosure
- Demonstrate 10% reduction in at least 3 of the 6 impact categories (including GWP)

## LEED + Embodied Carbon



### LEED v4.1 MRc1

Up to 5 points achievable via WB-LCA

- 1 point for disclosure,
- 2 points for 5% reduction,
- 3 points for 10% reduction,



- 4 points for 20% reduction & reuse,
- +1 regional priority point



Potentially 4 points under LEED v4.1

## Life Cycle Assessment



# Whole Building Life Cycle Analysis (WBLCA):

• Structure

• Enclosure



| Impact Category                    | Baseline<br>Building Value | Proposed<br>Building Value | Units       | Percent<br>Reduction<br>(%) |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|
| Global Warming Potential           | 13,846,076                 | 11,912,481                 | kgCO2 eq    | 14%                         |
| Ozone Depletion Potential          | 1.51                       | 1.51                       | kgCFC-11 eq | 0%                          |
| Acidification Potential            | 48,849                     | 44,224                     | kgSO2 eq    | 10%                         |
| Eutrophication Potential           | 2,643                      | 2,297                      | kgN eq      | 13%                         |
| Smog Formation Potential           | 741,623                    | 641,486                    | kgO₃eq      | 14%                         |
| Non-renewable Energy Demand        | 125,920,735                | 114,637,982                | MJ          | 9%                          |
| Number of Measures with at least a | 10% reduction:             | 1                          |             | -4                          |

Table 1: Summary of Required Impact Categories between Baseline and Proposed Buildings









## WBLCA (Structure + Façade)

Proposed: 14% reduction T CO<sub>2</sub>e



### **Embodied**

(Reduced)

(Reduced)

## **Environmental Product Declaration (EPD)**

### MAT SLAB

This Environmental Product Declaration (EPD) reports the impacts for 1 m<sup>3</sup> of ready mixed concrete mix, meeting the following specifications:

- ASTM C94: Ready-Mixed Concrete
- + UNSPSC Code 30111505: Ready Mix Concrete
- CSA A23.1/A23.2: Concrete Materials and Methods of Concrete Construction
- CSI Division 03-30-00: Cast-in-Place Concrete

#### COMPANY

#### Aggregate Industries

6401 Golden Triangle Drive Suite 400 Greenbelt, MD 20770

#### PLANT

Everett Plant 2018 Rover Street Everett, MA 02149

#### EPD PROGRAM OPERATOR

#### **ASTM International**

100 Barr Harbor Drive West Conshohocken, PA 19428

#### DATE OF ISSUE

10/31/2020 (valid for 5 years until 10/31/2015)

#### ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

#### **Declared Product:**

Mix ECOPACT6 • Event Plant 6000.EMERALD HS90ETH2T70.N Compressive strength: 6000 PSI at 56 days

#### Declared Unit: 1 m<sup>3</sup> of concrete

| Global Warming Potential (kg CO2-60)              | 231    |
|---|--------|
| Ozone Depletion Potential (kg CFC-11-kg)          | 8.1E-6 |
| Acidification Potential (kg SO2-eq)               | 1.19   |
| Extrophication Potential (kg N-kg)                | 0.29   |
| Photochemical Ozone Creation Potential (kg O2-kg) | 22.1   |
| Abiotic Depletion, non-Foesil (kg Sb-eq)          | 8.76-6 |
| Abiotic Depletion, found (MJ)                     | 722    |
| Total Waste Disposed (vg)                         | 1.82   |
| Consumption of Reshwater (m <sup>2</sup> )        | 3.10   |

Product Components: crushed aggregate (ASTM C30), ratural aggregate (ASTM C33), stag correct (ASTM C980), fly ash (ASTM C618), Portland connent (ASTM C190), admixture (ASTM C494), batch water (ASTM C1902)

Additional detail and impacts are reported on page three of this EPD

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- CSI Division 03-30-00: Cast-in-Place Concrete

#### COMPANY

#### Appregate Industries

6401 Golden Triangle Drive Suite 400 Greenbelt, MD 20770

#### PLANT

Everett Plant 2018 Rover Street Everett, MA 02149

#### EPD PROGRAM OPERATOR

#### ASTM International 100 Barr Harbor Drive

West Conshohocken, PA 19428

#### DATE OF ISSUE

04/15/2021 (valid for 5 years until 04/15/2026)



CORE

#### ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Declared Product: Mix AGEA10 • Everett Plant 10000.AGEA.S3DETH.PS30.S3SR Compressive strength: 10000 PS1at 56 days

#### Declared Unit: 1 m<sup>3</sup> of concrete

| Gobal Warning Potential (kg COgerg)               | 481     |
|---|---------|
| Ozone Depletion Potential (kg CFC-11-eq)          | 1.436-6 |
| Acidification Potential (kg 50p-eq)               | 1.76    |
| Extrophication Potential (kg N-oc)                | 0.58    |
| Photochemical Geone Greation Potential (kg Oy-eq) | 33.0    |
| Abiotic Depletion, non-fossil (kg Sb-eq)          | 1.046-5 |
| Abiotic Depletion, fossill (MJ)                   | 657     |
| Total Waste Disposed (kg)                         | 4.01    |
| Consumption of Preshwater (m <sup>2</sup> )       | 3.11    |

Product Components: crushed aggregate (ASTM C33), ratural aggregate (ASTM C33), Portland cement (ASTM C150), stag cement (ASTM C969), admixture (ASTM C494), batch weter (ASTM C1602)

Additional detail and impacts are reported on page three of this EPD

### WBLCA (Structure + Façade)

- Proposed: 14% reduction T CO<sub>2</sub>e
- Revised Realized: 13.3% reduction T CO<sub>2</sub>e



### **Embodied**

|                        | Structural Material Quantities                               |   |  |  |
|------------------------|--|---|--|--|
|                        | Difference between<br>Delivered v BIM Model<br>or Documented | Difference Adjusted<br>for Typically Not<br>Modeled (known) |  |  |
| Concrete               | 14.9%  | 8.3%  |  |  |
| Concrete reinforcement | 13.7%  | 8.8%  |  |  |
| Structural steel       | 12.6%  | 10.8%   |  |  |
| Steel decking          | 13.7%  | 13.7%   |  |  |

## **BU CCDS - Lessons Learned**



### • Structural Engineer

- Performance based concrete specifications
- Identify exposure class of all structural components
- Identify SCM targets for concrete structural components
- Make a connection with the local ready-mix concrete suppliers earlier in design
- General Contractor / CM
  - Identify early age strength needs for sequencing and scheduling

## **BU CCDS - Lessons Learned**



### Architect

- Identify areas where concrete finishes are exposed and/or considered critical
  - Color
  - Texture
  - Jointing
  - Test panels

## **BU CCDS - Lessons Learned**



### • Ready-mix concrete plants (supplier)

- What have they done before?
- What test data do they have available to share? Ask for EPDs
- What do they expect is achievable?
- Where is their comfort level with high SCM mixes?

### Concrete subcontractor (installer)

- What have they done before?
- What do they expect is achievable?
- Where is their comfort level with high SCM mixes?

## BU CCDS – Key Points to Successful Implementation

- 1. Start early DD or earlier
- 2. Have a "Low-carbon kick-off meeting"
- **3**. Gather the stakeholders review
  - Owner / OPM
  - General Contractor / CM
  - Architect
  - Structural Engineer
  - Sustainability Consultant
- 4. Build consensus & buy-in: follow up, research, and planning
  - What is the embodied carbon in concrete (baseline)?
  - Does the team want to reduce it? And by how much?
  - What are the possible performance / visual implications of reducing?
  - Will there be a cost or schedule impact?
- 5. Schedule the follow up(s) periodic check ins

## "Who are the individuals who will support this effort the most and help maintain the much-needed momentum throughout the entire process? Stick with them." – Owner

### **Embodied Carbon Policy - Working Groups**



### **Embodied Carbon Policy - NE**

### Local is moving faster than State

- Need for regional consistency
- All are moving the needle

### **Industry Readiness**

 Architects, structural engineers, contractors and suppliers are incorporating assessment and reductions into practice as policy progresses



### **Embodied Carbon Policy Approaches**

| Optimize <b>Project</b>   | Optimize <b>System</b>  | Optimize <b>Procurement</b>  |  |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|--|--|
| <ul> <li>Build less, reuse more</li> <li>Design to reduce EC<br/>and increase<br/>material/structural<br/>efficiency</li> </ul> | <ul> <li>Choose low-carbon<br/>systems and assemblies</li> <li>Use alternate,<br/>low-carbon materials</li> </ul> | <ul> <li>Select the lowest carbon version of the selected product</li> <li>Clean manufacturing (efficiency, fuel switching)</li> </ul> |  |  |  |
| Early Design Calculators,<br>Rules of Thumb   | Whole Building Life Cycle<br>Assessment (WBLCA)   | Environmental Product<br>Declarations (EPDs) / EC3   |  |  |  |
| Zoning & City I   | Producement (Puly Clean)  |  |  |  |  |
|   |   |  |  |  |  |
| Building Codes & Regulations  |   |  |  |  |  |
| Climate Action Plans  |   |  |  |  |  |

## **Municipal Policy - MA**

### Cambridge

• Net Zero Action Plan

### Newton

- Sustainability Ordinance
- Measurement requirements in progress

### Brookline

- Resolution for Embodied Carbon Reduction in Concrete
  - Municipal Projects & Infrastructure

### Boston

- Mass Timber Accelerator Incentive
- Article 37 and Zero Net Carbon Building Zoning Update
- Zero Waste Boston
   Deconstruction Initiative



## **Municipal Policy**

### **New York City**

- EO 23: Clean Construction
  - Capital Projects & Infrastructure

### San Francisco

Construction & Demolition Law

### **City of Vancouver**

• Whole Building Life Cycle Assessment Zoning Requirement



## Industry Influencing Policy









Precast Concrete



Image & Data Source: Kaleidoscope, 2023

### Kaleidoscope Early Design Tool: Partitions Launch!

Kaleidoscope: Embodied Carbon Design Tool



### **State Policy - MA**

### MCAN & CLF Working to Develop



 An Act Incorporating Embodied Carbon into State Climate Policy
 Private Sector



An Act Requiring State Procurement of Low-Carbon Building Materials

State Projects



- An Act Relative to the Use of Low-Embodied Carbon Concrete
  - State Projects & Infrastructure



# LECCLA

### (LOW EMBODIED CARBON CONCRETE LEADERSHIP ACT)

New York

### Passed 2021

Requires state to include climate impact in selection criteria for concrete procurement



**New Jersey** 

### Passed 2023

Provides income tax credit of up to 8% of the concrete cost for development and provision of a product whose carbon footprint is below a soon-to-be set benchmark



Image Source: CarbonCure, 2023

### **Buy Clean State Policy**



Image Source: Carbon Leadership Forum, 2020

### **Federal Policy**

Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), Aug. 2022

- Funding to develop & standardize EPDs
- Funding to identify and label low-carbon materials (Federal Projects)
- EPA administrator to identify materials

EPA Public Engagement Webinars - April 19th

 Reducing Embodied Greenhouse Gas Emissions: Carbon Labeling





There is room to reduce emissions on every design.

Ask for **concrete EPDs** as much as possible

**Comment** on the EPA's carbon RFI on how to make the biggest impact

Get involved educating legislators at the local and state level

Get involved with CLF: <a href="mailto:clf.boston@gmail.com">clf.boston@gmail.com</a>

Get Involved! clf.boston@gmail.com

### **Questions?**



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