



SPOTLIGHT

Conversation on Climate Action

Summary Report



Hennepin County



This report was developed by:

**Hennepin County
Environmental Services**

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Executive summary

The Hennepin County Board, in cooperation with ICLEI: Local Governments for Sustainability and the Hennepin-University Partnership, hosted a National Spotlight Conversation on Climate Action on April 22, 2009 – Earth Day – to gather feedback about what the county can do to fight climate change.

The county was selected by ICLEI through a national, competitive process to host one of 10 Spotlight Conversations. Hennepin County joined dozens of local governments as part of the National Conversation on Climate Action, bringing together thousands of people in communities across the country to drive local-level solutions to global climate change.

Hennepin County invited 80 experts representing various stakeholders to contribute their knowledge and ideas. The county sought input on actions to take on a variety of topics that are relevant to county programs and the potential impacts of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Discussion topics included energy conservation, renewable energy, district energy, green jobs, transportation, plug-in electric hybrids, natural resources, waste management, and education and citizen engagement.

Hennepin County would like to thank the event participants. Their insights provided for an enriching, meaningful conversation. The group recommended that the county be a leader in reducing greenhouse gases, set specific targets and goals, establish partnerships and provide education. More specific goals are outlined in this summary report. The presentations and topic reports from this event can be viewed online at www.hennepin.us/coolcounty.

This event is a part of the Hennepin County Cool County Initiative. Hennepin County is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent by the year 2050. Learn more at www.hennepin.us/coolcounty.

Learn more about the National Conversation on Climate Action at www.climateconversation.org.

Energy conservation for business

Topic facilitator

Carl Nelson, Center for Energy and Environment

Topic participants

Rich Strong, University of Minnesota Center for Sustainable Building Research

Karen Rhodes, Xcel Energy

Travis Bunch, Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce

Julie Samuelson, Cushman & Wakefield

Doug Pierce, Perkins & Will

Leah Hiniker, Hennepin County Property Services

Key actions the county can take

Increase energy efficiency in county buildings through training and education

- Train building management staff in energy-efficient maintenance and operation of buildings. Look into developing a certification for building management staff that have been trained in energy conservation.
- Educate decision makers about the impacts of energy conservation programs.
- Educate employees and encourage behavior change. An energy campaign focused on behavior change should include incentives and positive reinforcement that empower employees to make changes.
- Educate the public about energy conservation projects. Libraries are a good location to offer educational opportunities.

Establish sustainability guidelines

- Adapt the MN Sustainable Building Guidelines for 2030 that exceed the current B3 guidelines.
- Design of future buildings should follow the energy efficiency guidelines.

Real time metering of building utilities

- Gaining a better understanding of how a building operates will help guide energy efficiency projects.

Financial reform

- Consider both the capital improvement project (CIP) budget and operating budget when developing conservation projects. Energy conservation CIP projects will reduce operating budgets.

Who should be involved?

- Training resources are available from Building Operators and Managers Association, Sustainable Buildings 2030 and Midwest Energy Efficiency Association. Collaborate with other agencies and Xcel Energy to develop a pilot program for training employees.
- Work with Xcel Energy or the University of Minnesota to develop a campaign for employees.
- Utilize existing programs from utilities such as Xcel Energy to design future buildings that follow energy efficiency guidelines and to meter buildings.

Renewable Energy

Topic facilitator

Lowell Rasmussen, University of Minnesota - Morris

Topic participants

Mike Easler, University of Minnesota Greenlight

Jason Willett, Metropolitan Council Environmental Services

Linda Taylor, Fresh Energy

Rick Carter, LHB

Jim Turnure, Xcel Energy

Gayle Prest, City of Minneapolis

Tony Hainault, Hennepin County Environmental Services

Marthand Nookala, Hennepin County Public Works

Key actions the county can take

Expand the county's leadership in renewable energy and energy efficiency initiatives

- Initiate efforts to lead-by-example, collaborate and mentor.
- Participating in coalitions that share similar goals will help the county create mechanisms to lead-by-example.
- Utilize existing exemplary programs and organizations such as the Sustainable Buildings 2030 initiative and ICLEI.

Apply an integrated approach in promoting renewable and conventional energy resources

- Set energy efficiency and conservation as priorities even as the county pursues opportunities to secure energy from renewable sources.
- Benchmark the county's 2050 reduction goal with intermediary goals of no greater than five-year increments to stay on track with the goal.
- As with the sustainable building guidelines developed by the county in the 1990s, the county could tailor a new initiative to meet county needs.

Make information and technology available to government agencies, businesses, builders and the public.

- Develop a carbon management protocol to learn how to best integrate renewable technology into current energy systems.
- Fully utilize research conducted by universities, government and others for renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies.
- Develop transparency in greenhouse gas emission reduction measurement standards. Provide leadership and support to businesses and residents in the community similarly seeking to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

District energy and the North Loop

Topic facilitator

Doug Maust, HGA Architects and Engineers

Topic participants

Jerome Malmquist, University of Minnesota - Energy Management

Elizabeth Turner, University of Minnesota - Greenlight

Kimberly Hollien, City of Minneapolis

Mary deLaittre, Groundwork

Durwin Fitch, Covanta Energy Corporation

Tom Thorstenson, Metro Transit

Dave Nuckols, Hennepin County

Key actions the county can take

Develop district energy for the North Loop

- Take advantage of Hennepin Energy Recovery Center's (HERC) location in the North Loop and its desire to expand as part of a coordinated, integrated planning process. This would maximize the carbon benefit of HERC and expand its capacity. This would also maximize the use of energy that is locally produced and locally consumed.
- Create a master plan as part of a larger coordinated effort that includes a financial model, engineering and infrastructure, marketing and education, and commercial development/small area plan. This would require communication and collaboration between multiple public and private organizations.
- Brand the area as an "Energy District" to promote sustainable business practices and attract green businesses.
- Educate the public who are use the transportation hub and ballpark. Make energy use visible to activate its potential as an educational tool.

Who should be involved?

- Both public and private organizations: Hennepin County, City of Minneapolis, North Loop Neighborhood Organization, 2010 Partnership, Covanta Energy and other local stakeholders.

Green jobs

Topic facilitator

Trudy Richter, Richardson, Richter & Associates

Topic participants

Alfie Marcus, University of Minnesota Carlson School of Management

Georgie Hilker, Minnesota Department of Commerce - Office of Energy Supply

Bob Isaacson, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development

Yeamah Brewer, Blue Green Alliance

Kari Boe-Schmidt, Hennepin County Human Resources

Carl Michaud, Hennepin County Environmental Services

Key actions the county can take

Be a leader in incorporating green jobs

- The county already has many positions that could be considered green jobs.
- Consider including a “green competency” requirement for all positions.
- All employees should practice green actions while on the job.

Create opportunities for job training and experience in green jobs

- Increase opportunities for mentorships, internships and Student Collegiate Opportunities for Professional Employment (SCOPE).
- Collaborate with schools and dislocated worker and retraining programs to identify jobs and skills needed.

Consider branding green jobs as “cool jobs” under the Cool County Initiative

Who should be involved?

- Hennepin County Human Resources, Hennepin-University Partnership and other public and private employment, training and labor organizations.

Transportation

Topic facilitator

Laurie McGinnis, University of Minnesota Center for Transportation Studies

Topic participants

Carissa Schively Slotterback, University of Minnesota Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs

Steven Hankey, University of Minnesota Civil Engineering

John Levin, Metro Transit

Barb Thoman, Transit for Livable Communities

Barb Senness, City of Plymouth

Richard Johnson, Hennepin County Administration

Karen Nikolai, Hennepin County Active Living

Key actions the county can take

Serve as a model for Travel Demand Management strategies that increase transportation system efficiency

Educate staff, the public and businesses about the impact that transportation has on the environment

- Mentor municipal governments on transit-oriented development.

Expand criteria and guidance for development and redevelopment framework for transportation projects

- Increase bike trail connectivity.
- Incorporate active living and non-motorized transportation initiatives into transit-oriented development framework.

Who should be involved?

- MetroTransit, private sector partners, city and county staff.

Plug-in electric hybrids

Topic facilitator

Paul Adelman, Xcel Energy

Topic participants

Maurice Gieske, Hennepin County Financial Management & Accounting

Sara Mullen, University of Minnesota Electrical and Computer Engineering

Thor Bjork, Xcel Energy

Dan Huff, City of Minneapolis

Fran Crotty, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

Chris Duffrin, NEC/HourCar

Merritt Clapp-Smith, City of St. Paul

Key actions the county can take

Develop transportation electrification infrastructure

- The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 provides \$398 million in funding to accelerate the development and production of various electric drive vehicle systems and to accelerate market introduction and penetration of advanced electric drive vehicles through the Transportation Electrification announcement. Hennepin County could work in partnership with other government entities, organizations and businesses to apply for a grant.
- Establish high visibility locations near transit hubs that include solar, signage and two charging stations. Possible locations include Target Field, Public Works Facility in Medina, Hennepin County Government Center, University of Minnesota

Education and public outreach

- Solicit commercial and foundation support for infrastructure. Possible partners include Lunds, Target, Best Buy, Cargill or Aveda.

Who should be involved?

- A partnership of Xcel Energy, City of Minneapolis, State of MN, City of St. Paul, Hennepin County, American Lung, NEC (HourCar), and a U.S. auto manufacturer plan to pursue the above grant.

Natural resources and carbon sequestration

Topic facilitator

Ed Nater, University of Minnesota

Topic participants

Cinzia Fissore, University of Minnesota

Dale Woodbeck, Three Rivers Park District

Margie Walz, Three Rivers Park District

Mark Lindquist, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Jenna Fletcher, Trust for Public Land

Peter Cibroski, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

Rosemary Lavin, Hennepin County Environmental Services

Key actions the county can take

Compare the existing Natural Resources Inventory to the potential sequestration practices and opportunities

- Determine what approaches and practices can be incorporated into existing and future management plans.
- Determine Best Management Practices.
- Incorporate carbon sequestration as a management objective in the future.
- Consider existing areas that need protection. Consider right-of-ways and greenways.
- Educate policy makers and land managers.

Increase forestry in urban areas and throughout the county

- Coordinate with cities to provide guidance on Best Management Practices and other resources. Consider how to influence protection of the land the county does not control. Play a role in education on the issues and facilitation of these practices.
- The county could be a leader and act as the intermediary between municipalities, urban foresters, state government staff, etc.
- Educate the public and consider how to offer incentives to homeowners.
- Consider the other benefits such as erosion control, water quality, wildlife habitat and biodiversity, reduction of urban heat island effect, aesthetics, property value, etc.

Set county-wide carbon sequestration goals and work with jurisdictions to achieve these goals

- Include both direct carbon sequestration and indirect reductions.
- Work with other jurisdictions to accomplish goal.

Who should be involved?

- Land managers, municipalities, planners, state government staff and homeowners.

Waste Management

Topic facilitator

David Benke, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

Topic Participants

Dana Donatucci, University of Minnesota Facilities Management

Julie Ketchum, Waste Management

Susan Hubbard, Eureka Recycling

Dan Ruiz, City of Brooklyn Park

Richard Graves, Perkins & Will

Wayne Hanson, Great River Energy

David Hough, Hennepin County Administration

David McNary, Hennepin County Environmental Services

Key actions the county can take

Be a leader in waste reduction and recycling

- Continue to focus on the waste hierarchy which prioritizes source reduction, recycling and waste-to-energy because these have a greater opportunity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from waste management.
- Continue to gather data on waste composition.
- Optimize the collection and processing of reusable materials, recycling and organics. Continue to develop partnerships with University of Minnesota to further research and market development for recycling and organics.
- Expand the reduction and recycling of construction waste.

Promote product stewardship

- The county should provide leadership in product stewardship by creating a council to look at issues related to product stewardship.
- Discuss how to promote product stewardship with business sector.
- Focus on specific items for product stewardship.

Educate the public on waste management issues

Who should be involved?

- Hennepin County acting as leader
- Private sector
- Universities
- Municipalities

Education and citizen engagement

Topic facilitator

Neely Crane-Smith, Center for Energy and Environment

Topic participants

Kent Cavender-Bares, University of Minnesota Institute on the Environment

Eve Daniels, University of Minnesota Institute on the Environment

Beth Mercer-Taylor, University of Minnesota Institute on the Environment

Ami Voeltz, Do It Green Minnesota

Tara Carson, Sierra Club

Diana McKeown, Metro Clean Energy Resource Team (Metro CERTs)

Teresa Schafer, Hennepin County Public Affairs

Key actions the county can take

Engage residents

- Empower local communities to engage residents and support each other through partnerships. Consider a grants program, such as the Minneapolis Climate Change Grants.
- Provide peer pressure or incentives for residents to make changes. Consider starting a competition between communities like the MN Energy Challenge.
- Look for ways to make residents feel a part of the county goals.
- Use simple messages on what you can do and show how to do it. Promote energy conservation, not just renewable energy. Focus on comfort and money savings for residents. Address the economic crisis and how actions residents take at home can make their lives better and be better for the environment – focus on quality of life.
- Offer education/training to home-focused employees, such as real estate agents, home auditors, etc.
- Consider Facebook/Twitter outreach options with appropriate messages. Although not ever as effective as face to face contact. Could consider profiling “human stories” of residents.
- Create a milestone/kickoff event.

Use the library system and service centers as a point of contact for educating the public

- Set up kiosks or displays in well-used spaces like service centers about what the county is doing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Include resources for residents that are available from the county. Attach a story with it.
- Could establish learning circles, offer workshops, etc.
- Consider reaching children to reach the parents. Have kids make a drawing at a kiosk that would end up at a senior facility.
- Connect intergenerational groups that bring students together with seniors, such as the MN Schools Cutting Carbon.

Who should be involved?

- Hennepin County staff should be available for community presentations.
- City staff.
- Neighborhood organizations.
- Work with home auditors to create training that incorporate less technical and more guidance to residents. Help change the trainings to the instructors (Metro CERTS, Center for Energy and the Environment can help with tips).

Ideas from the public

The county also sought input from the public on priority actions the county could take to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These ideas were submitted through the county's web site and the Hennepin County Cool County Initiative's Facebook page.

- Strive to be a good example for business by continuing to work on making our public buildings more energy efficient and promoting the results.
- Invest in green energy.
- Encourage cities to collect and process compostables. For example freezer boxes, milk cartons, corn-based plastics, meat and vegetable garbage.
- Offer free recycling for small businesses.
- Offer more recycling for plastics.
- Buy recycled products.
- Ban plastic bags and go to reusable bags.
- Work to control worldwide overpopulation.