

Fort Collins should reduce carbon footprint

Originally appeared in the Fort Collins Coloradoan on October 15, 2014

The Fort Collins Sustainability Group (FCSG) is a community group whose mission is to “develop and advocate a vision and strategy for becoming a sustainable community in partnership with key stakeholders.”

We believe that there are two items in the 2015-2016 budget, which give City Council the opportunity to ensure that Fort Collins lowers its carbon footprint and leads by example. The two items FCSG supports, LED Streetlight Replacement Program and Community Engagement in a Vision for a Fossil-Free Future, are consistent with the city’s adopted climate action plan.

The LED replacement program would fund the first year of a five-year capital improvement street light replacement program. This would improve energy efficiency, reduce electrical demand, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and increase life-cycle performance. The city currently operates and maintains approximately 11,000 streetlights with an approximate annual electrical consumption of 8,000,000 kWhrs and an approximate carbon footprint of 6,400 metric tons of CO₂e.

The program will replace most lights in the city within five years, targeting those lights closest to their expected maintenance cycle. This allows the use of in-house crews for replacement and will keep overall costs level with the operations and maintenance expenses currently supporting existing lights. According to Fort Collins Utilities, the expected breakeven point for this project is between 10 and 12 years. LED lights use significantly less electricity and thus, will help reduce electric demand and greenhouse gas emissions. For reference, each kW-hour saved is roughly equal to 1.6 pounds of carbon not released into the atmosphere.

This project is directly supported by four goals in the current Fort Collins Strategic Plan, adopted March 25, 2014. Those goals are: Econ 3.6: Maintain utility systems and services, infrastructure integrity, competitive rates; HPG 7.5: Optimize the use of technology to drive efficiency and productivity, and to improve services. Most important to FCSG, is the goal ENV 4.5: Demonstrate progress toward achieving net-zero energy within the community and the city organization using a systems approach. Working toward net-zero energy, will of course, reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The second item that FCSG supports, a Community Engagement in a Vision for a Fossil-Free Future, provides funding to ensure a concrete and strategic public campaign that will move the adopted climate action plan forward. In April 2014, Council provided clear and visionary direction to staff to set

our community on the path toward a fossil-free future. This budget item directly supports staff by putting the “action” in the climate action plan.

The community engagement project funds design and implementation to move the climate action plan forward. It will enhance public education on issues associated with climate change, and move that education into concrete, positive actions. Our community will benefit on multiple levels and our citywide carbon footprint will be reduced.

Please contact City Council and urge them to include these two items in the 2015-2016 budget.

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