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Making solar installations more accessible and affordable for businesses and homeowners across Minnesota has long been a priority for Fresh Energy. We’ve worked with utilities and policy makers to modernize interconnection standards, keep monthly fixed charges low, and design smart rates that encourage energy efficiency and access to renewable electricity. We’re excited to connect the dots on how our policy work has given Minnesotans across the state more clean energy options.

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As you may recall, my wife Patsy and I recently bought a plug-in hybrid and as the weather gets warmer, we’re looking forward to driving up north. I’m not worried about the distances we’ll be traveling because our plug-in hybrid switches over to gas at about the 26-mile mark, and if we had a fully electric vehicle there are fast charging stations along most major highways.

However, I am concerned that other Minnesotans don’t yet have the electric car choices or information they need to take their own carbon-free road trips this summer.

Fresh Energy is working to change that, and you can play a role. We have been intimately involved in supporting Governor Walz and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency’s proposed Clean Cars Minnesota rulemaking, which will both reduce greenhouse gas pollution from transportation and help drive a different approach. Fresh Energy and other coalition members will be establishing groundbreaking new models, sharing and creating equitable best practices, and shaping new policy and regulatory strategies to decarbonize buildings through a network of activities across the Midwest. Stay tuned for updates on this exciting new project.

**ADVANCING ENERGY AND EQUITY AT THE MINNESOTA LEGISLATURE**

Fresh Energy is tracking more than 20 clean energy-related bills and staff have testified on important issues like Clean Car Standards, seasonal use of coal plants, and climate change. Woven throughout all of this is our deep commitment to making sure that Minnesota’s clean energy policies have equity at their core—now more than ever.

**TUNE IN TO OUR NEW CLEAN ENERGY PODCAST**

Fresh Energy’s team of field and thought-leaders includes scientists, economists, and policy analysts who work all day every day to develop and advance Minnesota-focused solutions that secure a clean energy future.

We know it’s hard to stay up to speed on all of Fresh Energy’s work, let alone the clean energy news in Minnesota. To that end, we’re pleased to provide one more way for you to get engaged. Subscribe to “Decarbonize: The Clean Energy Podcast” and hear Fresh Energy staff, and occasional guests, regularly discuss top energy issues in the state, and occasionally guests, regularly discuss top energy issues in the state.

**RESEARCH AND PRESSURE LEAD TO CHANGES IN COAL PLANT PRACTICES**

Fresh Energy is continuing to chip away at fossil fuels in the power sector. In December 2019, countless hours of work came to fruition when Xcel Energy announced that it will change how it operates two of its coal plants. The change will lead to a projected 60 percent carbon reduction from these plants. It’s rare that such a major dent can be made in Minnesota’s greenhouse gas reduction goals and we’re proud of the leadership and hard work that Fresh Energy contributed to this effort.

The details.

Fresh Energy spent hundreds of hours over nearly two years working with utilities and other stakeholders to provide in-depth analysis and advocacy at the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) on how coal plants operate in Minnesota. We learned that coal plants in our state are running at a loss 30 to 60 percent of the time.

The outcome.

Due in part to our research, Xcel has announced plans to idle its Allen S. King and Sherco 2 coal plants for six months out of the year and run them only during high electricity use times. Not only that, Xcel is considering changing the way it operates its 11 other coal plants across the country.

The impact.

Xcel forecasts that its carbon emissions will drop between 46 to 81 percent annually—the equivalent of the yearly emissions from over a million cars. The move will also save $87 million to $130 million that Xcel customers will notice when they look at their bills. With this proposal, Xcel is positioning itself as an industry leader in the Midwest and across the country as the electricity sector transitions away from coal.

What’s next.

This March, other public Minnesota utilities filed details on their coal plant operations with the PUC. Fresh Energy is committed to continuing to lead on data analysis and regulatory advocacy with the goal of reducing coal plant operations throughout the state.

We are energized to be steadily reducing Minnesota carbon emissions. The clean energy market is moving fast and undergoing lots of change. We plan to be there every step of the way.
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The draft rule will be released soon and it’s important that all Minnesotans weigh in as well—our clean energy policies have equity at their core—now more than ever.

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LEARN MORE ABOUT THESE AND OTHER STORIES AT FRESH-ENERGY.ORG

INTRODUCING THE MIDWEST BUILDING DECARBONIZATION COALITION

Energy use in buildings is the fastest-growing source of carbon pollution in Minnesota—nearly 14 percent of total emissions economy-wide. Fresh Energy, with the support of many partners, is launching a coalition that will work to curb and reverse this growth throughout our region.

While the East and West Coasts are effectively moving away from natural gas and other carbon-intensive fuels for heating and cooling, the Midwest’s cold winters, hot summers, and purple state politics require a different approach. Fresh Energy and other coalition members will be establishing groundbreaking new models, sharing and creating equitable best practices, and shaping new policy and regulatory strategies to decarbonize buildings through a network of activities across the Midwest.

Stay tuned for updates on this exciting new project.

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Visit our new Take Action page for ways to plug in at fresh-energy.org/take-action.
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Check out the full story from Kerkhoven Banner reporter Jordan Almen at fresh-energy.org/banner and learn more about Ted and Kari Jo’s path to making this project a reality, as well as the advice they would give to others thinking about installing rooftop solar.