CJP Community Forum: Fossil Fuel Goal
Thursday, December 11, 2025
Meeting Notes

**Attendees - in person**

- John Wasiutynski - Project Staff, Mult Co Office of Sustainability
- Tim Lynch - Project Staff, Mult Co Office of Sustainability
- Vinh Mason - City of Portland BPS
- Maleek McKenzie - Oregon Sierra Club
- Samantha Hernandez - OPSR

**Attendees - Online**

- Monique Smiley - Project Staff, Mult Co Office of Sustainability
- Silvia Tanner - Mult Co Office of Sustainability
- Nsilo Berry - Mult Co REACH
- Dan Kirschner - NW Gas Association
- Kelly Fukai - NW Gas Association
- Harvey Gail - Hearth, Patio, Barbecue Association
- Jennifer Yocom - NW Natural
- Kellye Dundon - NW Natural
- Amy Rathfelder - NW Natural
- Chris Kroeker - NW Natural
- Randall Freisen - Columbia Pacific Building Trades
- Kate Murphy - Columbia Riverkeeper
- Carra Sahler - Green Energy Institute
- Pat Kaczmarek - Extinction Rebellion
- Leslie Kochan - Extinction Rebellion
- Michaela McCormick - Extinction Rebellion
- Lynn Handlin - Extinction Rebellion
- Dr. Theodora Tsongas - OPSR
- Melanie Plaut - OPSR
- Ann Turner - OPSR
- Tanya Hartnett - Working Waterfront Coalition
- Santi Sanchez - Coalition of Communities of Color
- Xitali Torres - Verde
- Elayna Trucker - Oregon Sierra Club
- Danny Noonan - BREACH Collective
- Nick Caleb - BREACH Collective

**Intros**

**Metrics**

- Theodora - % of households living in proximity, measures risk but not progress. Definition of proximity needs a clear definition. Want to see more specifics about progress being made on the CEI hub, amount of fuels on site, if/how community concerns are being addressed
- Dan Kirchner - rep industries that serve 650,000 households. What is the measure of progress, is it reducing the number of people near, is it removing fossil fuel infrastructure, or moving people away, lot's of questions about how this would be defined. For people who do live in proximity, implies that people shouldn't be living in proximity, but there is a lot of infrastructure that cannot be moved, more important to emphasize the safety of that infrastructure.
- Ann - Agree about the need for more specifics about what we are measuring and how we are defining progress. If we measure the number of gas meters with seismic shut offs, is that the default of new meters installed?
- Jennifer Yokum - Confused by that metric, are we talking about excess flow valves, have invested in flexible poly pipe, more resilient to ground movement. Any customer can purchase and have installed an earthquake shut off valve, customer responsibility to have the gas turned back on. Also working on meter modernization plan. Challenge of working with this plan is being directed at the state level, via the PUC. Report due in the coming year about meter modernization, includes metrics, will see a significant portion of the meters that will auto shut off. Also work at the pipeline level. Systems of redundancy. Want to center this conversation in emergency preparedness and statewide level
- Helena - If we are taking the goal of safety and zero by 2050, have to look at removing fossil fuel infrastructure. Might be an interim goal, looking at how many people are exposed. Wants the County to be explicit that RNG/H2 are not safety approaches, pose health and pollution risks, and can be easily switched back to fossil fuels in the future.
- John - important that we are clarifying what we mean by infrastructure.
- Melanie - Topic of how to measure CEI hub, which is both a statewide fuel issue but a Multnomah specific issue in terms of impacts. Idea - What percentage of fuel at the CEI hub is stored at a seismically sound level.
- Michaela - Dynamic between having/collecting data and the urgency of the situation we face with fossil fuels. Need to prioritize transition based on existing data about the risks of fossil fuel.May need more data about frontline exposures, but the situation demands that acting as quickly as possible is needed, rather than data collection.
- Diane - There are plenty of tanks at CEI hub that do not currently have seismic shutoffs. Increase in safety in liquid fuels, and safety through phased transition to electrification
- Lynn - Metrics - Would like to see a way for the County to track the amount of fuel switching away from methane, all kinds, including "so called" renewable. Also, in any new construction, how much of housing has methane hookups. Shouldn't gas company be paying to have safety valves installed?
- Jennifer - Wants to see a way for electrification and gas systems can have a constructive conversation about the reality of physics and systems. Redundancy of safety, excess flow values, in process of transferring meters across the system including seismic shutoff. Meantime, if this is of particular concern to someone, can invest in a seismic valve installed. Safety is engineered in the system through precision and rigor.
- Amy - Wonder how fossil fuel infrastructure is defined, high level.
- John - When we were talking about this in the Steering Committee, energy infrastructure was more inclusive, includes electric infrastructure.

- Jennifer - Then will there be a metric about the safety of the electric system to account for that.
- John - Interested in following up about electric metric potential.
- Danny Noonan - Related to Oregon Energy Strategy, state policy trajectory toward strategic electrification, in the most cost beneficial way possible. There are going to be areas in the County, neighborhoods/geographies, prioritizing electrification because there is less gas heating or there are more feasible availability capacity in the electric systems. Opportunity to do some mapping to help prioritize those areas, and prioritize gas system decommissioning. Europe is already looking at this. Opportunity for the utilities to cooperate to ID TEN / groundsource heat pump network.
- Danny - To what extent are incidents related to gas required to be reported to PUC or state regulators. If we are talking about reducing the safety risks, might be a metric to reduce the number of incidents.
- Dan - According to the PUC, no fatalities from the gas system in the last five years, but have been electrical related facilities. Energy infrastructure, gas and electric associations, talk regularly, it is really important that people know we are a winter peaking energy system, on the coldest days of the year the gas system delivers 70% of the energy of the home/business. A huge number to think about converting to electricity, will be “unimaginably expensive”. Plus a tranche of fuel for electricity generation. Systems are interdependent, rely on each other, grid has been leaning more and more on the gas system to meet peak, both summer and winter. Both systems are at their limits on either side of the grids. All public, private, community utilities have been working to mitigate the risks of intermittent black outs, public health issue, if people can’t get heat or cooling it is a public health issues. When talking about infrastructure, start with what it already delivers, need to respect the need to be affordable and reliable. Working to prevent outages. Looking forward both gas and electric are looking at how to plan together in a more coordinated fashion. Not a fan of strategic electrification as Danny described it, but rather planning how to move these systems forward together. These are two very different systems. How to optimize to provide energy to people when they need it and afford it.
- Pat - Two comments - Metrics on transition from gas water/heating to geothermal, expensive now, but something to look at. What role can the County play in public education through its systems, Libraries, SUN schools, could be a lot more education about the harms of fossil fuels and the future that youth are facing.
- Maleek - Background in electrical engineering, thesis on smart grid. Concerns raised on meeting demand through the electric system. Good news and opportunities. We can and should be moving the transmission system to high voltage DC (2.5-3x capacity). Can be replacing transformers to converters, dramatically reducing the loss on transmission systems. Each unit of fossil fuels will go farther with the existing transmissions system. Will allow electric system to serve much more than 30%. Microgrid laws, deployment want zero out a communities need, can significantly reduce peak loads, and avoid the inefficiencies of peak load. Hope the utilities will help advocates get the community resilience bill through the legislature. Hear the concerns about meeting demand, but there are low hanging fruit that could be implemented in shorter timelines. Converters allow avoiding frequency regulation, inefficiencies. Technology is not new. PGE has a pilot in Salem (500), hope that will inform microgrid projects in the state.
- John - Maybe number of microgrids deployed as a metric

- Diane - Important - overall picture, while there are maybe not as many direct deaths for fossil fuels, globally fossil fuel infrastructure system directly (mining etc.) and climate change. Gas in homes also has real risks for people in their homes. Big picture is important. Agree with Dan that we have to work together, but have to start working backwards from where we need to get. No greenwashing. Need utilities on board doing that, but over the past decade, the utilities haven't done the right things.
- Helena - Talking about a transition out to 2050 and possible beyond, should not assume current state is the future state. There are cost effect ways to expand electric system availability. Electricity can be dangerous, wildfires for example. But we are not going to give up electricity, which can serve all of the needs of home, including highly efficient heat pump and HWHP. If comparing the safety of systems, electricity benefits should also be looked at. A lot being said about the status quo continuing into the future, metrics have to have an eye to the future.
- Vinh - Referencing Dan's comments, about winter peaking, his understanding is that the summer load that is constraining the goal. If that's the case, then we should be able to work on electrification at winter heating. Grid is design to work at ts limits, there is capacity in winter. Important to hear from electric companies directly about this. Have to understand what the causes are. Metrics recommend: track the black outs and what they are caused by. Number of new housing with gas hookups, something we can find in permitting data. Also a huge data gap in knowledge about what gas is going for, how it is being used.
- John - Need to be able to engage honestly while valuing each other.
- Monique - Need for more dialogue, more understanding. These are emotional issues.
- Kate - Appreciates the expertise and the collaborative conversation. People feel deeply about these issues. Background in public health, want to be careful about the framing about fossil fuels as a means of protecting people from weather, when they are also driving severe weather. Need to be careful to think about long term, especially about what is reliable today vs what can be in the future.
- Chris - Decarb director at NWN - Need to clarify fossil fuel infrastructure, what we are going to. If it is geared towards pipes, risk to miss out on hydrogen, RNG, backup to geothermal or other resources. At some point everything going through the pipes will be renewable, will that still be considered fossil fuel infrastructure.
- Kelly - NWN enviro policy manager - talking about electric adequacy in the region, E3 report, gas utilities were not involved. PNUC also doing a lot of convening on this. Energy symposium recently in Portland, very clear about issues that the electric sector is facing. Also need to have the electrics in the room to speak directly about what the opportunities are for them. See resources shared in the chat.

**Strategies**

- John - Acknowledge that we need to do more to be specific about what the County can do.
- Michaela - Legislation this past session SB 11… incentivizing gas transition to geothermal systems. Urge the County to actively advocate for that, likely to be introduced in the next session.
- Chris - Question on the hydrogen strategy - What problem is that trying to solve. Already have regulation for H2 in home, state and it is being used federally. Why would we disincentivize?.

- John - CJP was drafted before the state regulation was in place. Folks were also concerns about higher N0x or embrittling of pipes.
- Chris. Embrittlement is not an issue due to low pressures used. NOx, system has a cooling effective and can actually reduce NOx. NWN also working on expanded geothermal strategies, could be an opportunity for the County to support.
- John - Is there anything specifically the County could do?
- Chris - County could connect to geothermal systems and help expedite, connect to surrounding residential areas.
- Leslie - Zoning, financial disincentives, other strategies to reduce new fossil fuel infrastructure. The county has done a lot of innovative building technologies, clean air construction, and other strategies. Neighborhood specific strategies. Also limiting logistics centers, major transportation projects. Diesel and other community impacts, carbon intensive materials.
- Lynn - Interested in the thermal energy networks (TEN), glad to see methane companies supportive, want to see County supportive. Building decarbonization more generally. RNG, not a good solution due to sourcing, and the companies haven't met even the limited standards that are there. Understand that some methane companies didn't like the tone, but also want to hear more acknowledgement from everyone about the climate crisis. Feels that there are a lot of problems with hydrogen and methane.
- Helena - Also glad to see utility interest in TEN's. Likely done first in new construction sites. Echoing Lynn's comments, 90% of hydrogen is from fossil fuels, mostly methane, uses more energy than just direct use of methane. Expensive, bad for the climate, bad for people in surrounding sites. Even water electrolysis is inefficient, taking limited electricity supply. RNG a lot comes from factory farms, impacts on water and surrounding areas. Even with capture, factory farms are still major sources of methane. Missing strategy - keep the MAX running, useful public transportation
- Danny - echoed comments and concerns about different forms of hydrogen. Main NWN projects was turquoise H2, methane to make H2, projects may not be viable even as a pilot or at scale. Any blend of H2 is only going to have a fractional emissions reduction because H2 has lower energy density. Push back a little on N0x with H2, some studies show an increase, some have decreases, different variables lead to different outcomes in terms of NOx. NWN has pushed back about H2 being a source of N0x, not accurate. TEN is a great opportunity, including for trades / pipefitters, a really great just-transition opportunity. Retrofits can be complex, however.
- Randall - Columbia Pacific - trade by pipefitters - Observation, a lot of feedback, a lot of focus on what is bad, want to address climate change. If everything  is negative, what are we going to build? Where do we go? Where is the excitement to get behind new investments, new direction.
- John - Have heard excitement TEN. Heating and cooling are key to public health. Looking towards transitions over time, not abrupt. And that we are facing some real challenges, need for a lot of constraints on the electric system, and need to build a lot of things.
- Randall - Emphasize the strength of diverse resources, no single solution, need an all above approach to solution, cannot exclude too many things. Need to grow, need to demonstrate a responsible community.
- Samantha - Reg oversight of hydrogen - Folks in SE Portland were concerned that it was being used without any notice. Bill adopted, 2.5% blending threshold to start. Worry is

embrittlement of pipes, under 6% are generally safe but higher percentage can lead to a number of impacts, cited University of Riverside study. It is important that we are investing in solutions that are not going to leave folks with stranded investments, and need investments in proven solutions.

- Kate - Echoed Samantha's concerns. The danger of expectation of bridge fuels to get us out of challenge, has not worked since the 70's. Cautious to dedicate too much energy. Strategy - Cold weather and heat, a lot of shut offs based on costs.
- Michaela - Years long effort to draw down the operation of the CEI hub, we need, and the County needs, to advocate with the local and state governments, move towards a complete draw down of that resource. Science tells us we have to do that. Also urge the County to advocate to institute a hazardous material storage fee, and hold industry about future impacts.
- Kellye - All of the above strategy, context is really key. All needed to innovate, but also need to produce. NWN residential /commercial customers only represent 6% of total state GHG emissions. Some of the strategies are managed at state level, DEQ/OPUC, they are not gaps that need to be filled. All options needed to decarb what flows through pipes.
- Jennifer - Need to work with DEQ on the seismic obligations to incorporate.
- John - Heard that our planning needs to be integrated with state colleagues, clarify what is supportive and not redundant.
- Diana - Importance of supporting climate and health standards for existing buildings, exemption on affordable housing, may be a role to address for the County to support somehow the City's work on the exempted areas, recognizing budget limitations. Considering revolving microloan for electrification, work with Electrify Now. Phased draw down from liquid fuels, must have other kinds of alternatives in place, charging, transit, etc. all have to happen simultaneously. Reflective state goals, not just County, need to be coordinated. County can play an important advocacy role
- Maleek - Enhance policies - Hazardous storage fee, scale it to the amount being stored, incentive users to move more quickly on drawing down, higher up front, kickstart move to distributed resources. The County is bigger than PCEF, and East County needs similar support. With respect to gas stations, need conversion to electric battery swap, other new technology, to address range anxiety. Build on people's familiarity. Overall, need to see a draw down of fossil fuels beyond CEI hub. How can we get more out of what we have.
- Ann - Financial assurances for the CEI hub, County has considered addressing, where is that process? Will be a bill introduced, may not be as strong as want to see, County should advocate for when disaster strikes, that government has a mechanism to access funds to disburse funds to seriously effected.
- John - County Commissioner in District 1 is working on the issue.
- Lynn - Echoed Ann, disappointed that County didn't move forward, wants the County to work to make sure the state bill is as strong as can be.
- Randall - Battery storage - Are their concerns about the safety of battery storage, risk. Can we use the cost per ton of C02 reduction from PCEF related projects, investment. A lot of concerns about batteries, don't want to change one danger for another.

**Google Chat Comments**

- Lynn - Water shut off not as critical in terms of safety as methane
    - Can someone address the tracking of methane hookups in new construction?
    - Methane has and is fueling the climate crisis more than other fuels which is why I was hoping the county could track new methane hookups, since we need to transition away from it.
- Michaela - Methane, as a greenhouse gas, is 80% more potent than CO2.
- Lynn - There have been deaths due to climate crisis, fueled by methane
- Danny - My understanding from recent comments by a Pacific Power rep is that they're actually shifting to a summer peaking utility
- Jennifer - That's because the gas system handles the winter peaking.
- Lynn - The high cost to transition away from methane is all more reason to do it now, before it becomes more difficult
- Kellye - Summer load is growing with AC, but the entire energy system is still winter peaking
- Danny - I'm sorry that doesn't make sense. Are they winter peaking (as Dan suggested) or summer peaking?
- Theodora - ALL the electricity is not coming from natural gas
- Jennifer - Joint system planning is essential.
- Kellye - the energy system (gas and electric combined) in multnomah county are winter peaking
- Lynn - More weatherization can do a lot to reduce the dependence on climate fueling methane
    - Jennifer - I see a message from Lynn H. in the chat and wanted to provide some context and links:
    - Multnomah County is one of the community action agency partners that provides weatherization services to low-income NW Natural customers in the area. Each year they complete around 80 homes and use around $1M in OLIEE funds. They provide energy education, which includes workshops, in-home visits, and marketing material for program awareness. They are also providing free furnace tune-ups and filters to NW Natural customers who have previously received weatherization services.
    - https://www.nwnatural.com/ways-to-save/savings-programs
- Danny - Well gas can't be summer peaking for reasons that should be obvious. But appreciate your clarification Kellye.
- Leslie - What about metrics related to education, right to know type efforts, funding and regulatory efforts and how they support shifts away from natural gas (e.g. impacts as requirements under CHSEB requirements kick in; impacts from PCEF funded projects). How to measure efforts by county and local govs.
- Kellye - Here is the link to the E3 study that John mentioned: https://www.utc.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2025-10/Revised%20V3%20E3%20Presentation%20RA%20Study%20September%2022%20WA%20RA%20Meeting.pdf
- Danny - Just sharing some additional information about the European approach to municipal heat planning that I mentioned: https://eutech.org/municipal-heat-planning-strategies-for-climate-neutral-heating-systems/
- Kellye - electric utilities should be engaged on defining what is "low hanging fruit" to improve efficiencies on the electric system

- Kris - Unfortunately heat pumps are not a peaking solution in heating. They rely on electric resistance heat strips when the temperature drops. Natural gas backups can provide the peaking resource through hybrid heat pumps.
- Harvey Gail - Power outages in the winter will have a far greater impact on low income and climate justice communities, especially if the goal is to only allow electricity. We have seen many instances of people in danger from lack of heat. How do these goals address that?
- Lynn - Someone brought up the demand by data centers. We need to address the real need for the rapid expansion of data centers which are using 33 percent of OR's energy and wanting more. We have to prioritize using our energy resources in ways that truly benefit the broader community.
- Kellye - https://www.oregon.gov/energy/energy-oregon/pages/electricity-mix-in-oregon.aspx
- Nick - My understanding is that NW Natural conducted a thermal network study that hasn't yet been released to the public.
- Kellye - Additional resources on the PNUCC website: https://www.pnucc.org/wp-content/uploads/Guidehouse-analysis-of-regional-energy-reports-2025.pdf
- Chris - NW Natural has secured contracts for 4% RNG for 2026 and anticipates getting to 5% in 2027. This is more RNG than any other utility in the country (that we're aware of). As a comparison, we're at about 4% solar for the state.
- Lynn - Solar, heatpumps, thermal energy networks, reducing need via weatherization,
- Danny - I am very interested (and excited about) municipal spatial heat planning for district heating and other thermal energy networks, which I understand could be done with union pipefitter labor (for both greenfield projects and retrofits, with the latter being considerably more expensive). County, State and Utilities should be actively thinking about opportunities for funding this. Europe is leagues ahead. (Rank-and-file CWA 7901 member myself.)
    - Chris - Hi Danny, just some feedback to your comments. The Modern Hydrogen pilot was a project to evaluate the technology and the company, which was successful. The company appears to be having some challenges right now and we're anxious to see how the make their way forward. There are about 30 other methane pyrolysis companies in the world, so plenty of opportunity there. For your NOx comment, that was a response to the host mentioning there was a concern by stakeholders with NOx, and if there is a concern there, I commented that NOx measurements are generally lower with hydrogen blends. This is confirmed by GTI Energy and the Canadian Standards Association.
        - Danny - Thank you for your response and the further information Chris. I believe this is the meta-analysis I was referring to: https://online.ucpress.edu/elementa/article/10/1/00114/183173/Emissions-of-NOx-from-blending-of-hydrogen-and
        - Randall - Agreed. I think it would be great to add that to a growing list of opportunities for real, impactful and responsible change and transition.
- Xitlali - I don't know how this could influence this goal or Multco generally, but I just want to highlight this topic that is always lingering in my mind when we talk about fossil fuels and safety. https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/8a5c89cc99454881868adfec7519d147
    - https://www.wecaninternational.org/divestment-report

- Jennifer - Can we use the cost per metric ton of carbon reduction in PCEF projects as a metric? (Obviously, excluding workforce or capacity building grants)
- Lynn - If we use cost per metric ton of carbon reduction in PCEF projects I think we would need to include savings (health, economic, etc) per metric ton reduction
- Danny - While there are different externalities associated with different energy sources, the literature generally indicates that fossil fuel alternatives have fewer externalities than fossil fuels https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2214629620304606
- Danny - good example of integrated planning around this: https://climateandcommunity.org/research/jobs-for-more-mobility-and-less-mining/