Reducing Carbon Emissions Through Local Climate Policy: Recent Progress and Persistent Challenges

Amy Morsch

CMS Policy Speaker Series
Agenda

- C2ES Introduction
- Why Cities?
- Implementation
- Tracking Progress
About The Center for Climate and Energy Solutions

• Independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization

• Mission: To advance strong policy and action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, promote clean energy, and strengthen resilience to climate impacts.

• Brings city, state, and national policymakers together with businesses and other stakeholders.

• Ranks regularly among the top environmental think tanks in the world.
• By April 6, 2017, there were 5 weather and climate disaster events with losses exceeding $1 billion each across the U.S.

• 1 flooding event, 1 freeze event, and 3 severe storm events led to 37 deaths and significant economic effects on the areas impacted.

• Billion dollar weather disasters:
  • The 1980–2016 annual average: 5.5 events
  • The 2012–2016 annual average: 10.6 events

https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/billions/
Why Cities Matter

• Globally, cities occupy only 2% of planet’s landmass but consume 2/3 of world’s energy and account for 70% of global emissions.

• Metropolitan areas drive the U.S. economy. They were home to 86% of the nation’s population and generated 91% of GDP in 2015.

• Urban households have lower carbon footprints than suburban neighbors.

http://www.c40.org/why_cities
Why Cities Matter

http://www.nrel.gov/docs/fy17osti/67101.pdf
Implementation:
Local Decision-Making

- Long-term visions
- Capital Improvement Plans
- Municipal budgets
- Ordinances & regs.
- Dept. decisions

- Grassroots, community pressure
- Available funding
- Federal and state policy environment
- Compelling, actionable data
- Private sector innovations
- City networks
- Leadership agendas

July 13, 2017
Implementation:
The Direction of Local Climate Action

- **Best practices**
  - Climate change commitment
  - “Green” municipal activities: efficiency, solar panels, green vehicles, anti-idling
  - Pilot projects
  - GHG inventory

- **Persistent challenges**
  - Scaling up solutions
  - Local buy-in (NASA data visualization products can be helpful here)
  - Consistent tracking/ making use of available data
  - Staff capacity

- **Emerging trends**
  - Increasingly ambitious climate and energy goals
  - “Smart” city projects
  - Electrification and renewable energy
  - Resilience

- **Emerging approaches**
  - Leveraging public-private partnerships & city-city networks
    - Aggregated buying power
    - Better information
  - Performance tracking
    - energy and water use, square footage covered, number of transit riders
  - Community-centric policies

- **NEW Challenge:** Loss of federal resources
Implementation:
Alliance for a Sustainable Future

Inform and engage city and business leaders to identify and explore strategic opportunities

Empower local leaders to contribute to state climate plans and other supporting federal, state, and local initiatives

Build new public-private partnerships

Raise the profile of city and business contributions in accelerating sustainable development, resilience, and climate action to help implement international commitments
How can more collaboration accelerate progress in:

• **Energy efficient buildings**
  - cities have experience improving efficiency of municipal buildings – and are now turning attention to commercial and residential performance

• **Low-emission vehicles/transportation:**
  - nearly all cities surveyed are acting to support EV deployment, but the fleet vehicles only represent a small amount and most cities are doing little to promote private adoption

• **Low-carbon electricity:**
  - cities have ambitious goals for renewable energy, but currently only use marginal amounts for their own demand
• **NAZCA: Non-State Actor Zone for Climate Action**
  - global platform that brings together the commitments to action by companies, cities, subnational regions, investors and civil society organizations to address climate change

climateaction.unfccc.int/
To commit to the Compact, a city must:

**COMMITMENT**
A mayor may register on either of the Compact’s standard reporting platforms—carbonn Climate Registry or CDP—or email a letter of intent to info@compactofmayors.org. Following its submission, a city will be contacted by the Compact support team.

**REGISTER COMMITMENT.**

**INVENTORY**
Within one year, a mayor must assess the current impacts of climate change in his/her city. To do so, the city must:
1. Build and complete a community-wide GHG inventory with a breakdown of emissions for buildings and transport sectors, using the GPC standard;
2. Identify climate hazards; and
3. Report on both via the CDP or carbonn Climate Registry questionnaires.

**TARGET**
Create reduction targets and establish a system of measurement. Within two years, the registered city must update its GHG inventory to also include a breakdown of emissions from waste sectors, set a target to reduce its GHG emissions, conduct a climate change vulnerability assessment consistent with Compact guidance, and report in its chosen platform.

**PLAN**
Establish an action plan. Within three years, a city’s strategic action plan must show how it will deliver on its commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change.

http://www.globalcovenantofmayors.org/

http://www.ghgprotocol.org/
Tracking Progress: Local Emissions Inventories

- Staggering variety in approaches, but this may improve with GPC
- Local government operations & community-wide
- Inventories published usually reflect emissions data from several years prior
- Monitoring, reporting and verification
- Activity-based; quantitative measure of activities that result in emissions
  - For Ex: Best available data about the amount and type of energy used, VMT, land-use
  - Can help guide action in certain areas
- Reports

Tracking Progress: Case example – Minneapolis, MN

[Bar chart showing Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Citywide Activities for the years 2006 to 2015. The chart indicates a 15% reduction target by 2015.]

Tracking Progress: Local Emissions Inventories

Number of GHG inventories by year

Case example - Austin, TX

Austin Community Climate Plan, 2015.
• Resource constraints often mean a city cannot do an inventory or update them

• Best available data leaves significant gaps:
  – upstream emissions from producing fossil fuels
  – impacts of goods created outside the city
  – air travel
  – clear data of building energy use
  – impacts of carbon sinks
  – emissions “hot spots”

• MRV is challenging

• Changing requirements

• Local decision-making for climate action might outpace the data to inform
Amy Morsch is a Senior Solutions Fellow and the Director of Sustainability and Engagement at the Center for Climate and Energy Solutions (C2ES). In this role, Ms. Morsch identifies and researches emerging approaches and solutions to climate and energy challenges and creates opportunities to increase information sharing between cities, states, and companies. Ms. Morsch joined C2ES from the Nicholas Institute for Environmental Policy Solutions, where her research focused on collecting and disseminating local climate and sustainability policies in the Southeast. She worked with local government staff throughout the region and provided guidance for state-level climate vulnerability assessment projects. She has also served as Secretary on the Board of Directors of Clean Energy Durham, and worked with the City of Atlanta’s Division of Sustainability as well as the Sustainability Office for the city and county of Durham, North Carolina. Ms. Morsch has a master’s degree in environmental management from Duke University’s Nicholas School of the Environment and a bachelor’s degree in zoology from Miami University.

morscha@c2es.org