



Legislation Text

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City Council Meeting Date: March 2, 2021

To: Mayor and City Council
City Administrator

From: Beth Kallestad, Program Coordinator

Consider resolution of support for the Clean Cars Minnesota rulemaking.

Action Requested:

The Northfield City Council is asked to adopt a resolution of support for the Clean Cars Minnesota rulemaking which staff will submit as comments in the rulemaking process.

Summary Report:

In 2007 Tim Pawlenty signed into legislation the Next Generation Energy Act. This legislation directed our state to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 15% by 2015, 30% by 2025, and 80% by 2050 (from 2005 levels). Minnesota did not hit the 2015 target and is not on pace to meet future goals.

Minnesota has made progress towards our Next Generation Energy Act goals, namely in the electricity sector. Energy production has dropped its emissions by almost 30% through a mix of targeted state policy and independent market actions. That leaves transportation as Minnesota's number one source of greenhouse gases and Minnesota's greatest opportunity for emission reduction.

In late 2019, Governor Walz announced that Minnesota would be joining 14 other states and the District of Columbia in adopting "clean car standards," which are regulations and incentives for the auto industry aimed at reducing pollution and giving customers more choices. The MPCA has been given the authority by the state through statute 116.70 subd 2(a) to act on reducing emissions in order to protect Minnesota air, water and health. This new initiative "Clean Cars Minnesota" directed the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) to lead the rulemaking process. If approved, Minnesota's clean car standards would apply to new vehicles beginning with model year 2025 (January 2024).

Clean Car standards are regulations and incentives for the auto industry aimed at reducing pollution and giving customers more choices. They apply to automakers only and aim to reduce greenhouse gases (GHG) and other polluting emissions from passenger vehicles in two ways:

1. Reducing Tailpipe emissions - "Low Emission Vehicle" standard,(LEV)
 - a) LEV standard regulates the amount of greenhouse gases and other harmful air pollution that new vehicles can emit.
 - b) LEV GHG reductions primarily take place through better fuel economy.
 - c) The LEV standard only applies to new light- and medium-duty vehicles like cars, SUVs, and pickup trucks.
 - d) Consumers can enjoy fuel savings while the broader public benefits from cleaner air.

- e) The GHG rule is flexible - there are different requirements for different vehicle sizes.
- f) These standards would be the same as the federal vehicle emissions standards established during the Obama Administration until the announced rollback of these standards in March 2020

2. Increasing electric vehicles availability - “Zero Emission Vehicle” standard (ZEV)

- a) ZEV standard requires auto manufacturers to deliver more battery electric vehicles and plug-in hybrid models for sale in Minnesota, increasing each year.
- b) There are more makes and models of EVs available in states that have adopted the ZEV standard than can be acquired in Minnesotans
- c) Presently, there are more than 40 models of electric vehicles sold in the U.S., but less than half are available at Minnesota auto dealers.
- d) A 2019 Consumer Report survey found 66% of prospective Minnesotan car buyers want more electric options.

On December 21, 2020, the MPCA published a Notice of Intent to Adopt Rule with a Hearing for the Clean Cars Minnesota rule in the State Register and are accepting public comments through March 15, 2021.

The Clean Cars Minnesota proposal is an opportunity to make real progress towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transportation. All types of new passenger vehicles sold in the state would be more efficient and produce less pollution. Also, there will be more options for ultra-low or zero-emission vehicles (like electric and plug-in hybrid models) for people who want to buy them.

The Environmental Quality Commission (EQC) received a presentation on this topic on February 17, 2021. They approved a motion asking City Council to adopt a resolution of support for the rulemaking effort.

By showing its support for these new Clean Car rules the City of Northfield would help show its commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions as well its support for improving overall air quality both in Northfield and throughout the state.

Alternative Options:

No resolution is adopted.

Financial Impacts:

Not applicable.

Tentative Timelines:

Public comments are due to the Administrative Law Judge by March 15, 2021