

**Testimony of Stephen K. Benjamin  
Mayor  
City of Columbia, South Carolina**

**Learning from Across the Nation:  
State & Local action to Combat Climate Change**

**House Committee on Energy & Commerce  
Subcommittee on Environment & Climate Change**

**April 2, 2019**

Chairman Tonko, Ranking Member Shimkus, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Climate change is perhaps the biggest challenge we face and I am pleased that the Subcommittee is holding this hearing on state and local climate change action. As I will outline in this testimony, Mayors and cities are leading on climate change efforts, including preparing our communities and our infrastructure for its impacts. However, we cannot tackle this challenge alone. We need a strong federal partner and I hope this hearing will be the first step in the development of a climate action program that recognizes and bolsters the efforts Mayors and cities are taking to address this existential challenge.

My name is Steve Benjamin and I serve as the Mayor of Columbia, South Carolina. Columbia is the capital of South Carolina and a thriving and diverse city that is home to 134,309 people and the hub of a metropolitan area of 817,488 people. In addition to state government, Columbia hosts the nearly 50,000 students attending the University of South Carolina, Columbia College, and two historically black colleges, Allen University and Benedict College. Columbia is also the proud home of Fort Jackson, the Army's largest basic training center, which trains approximately 45,000 soldiers per year.

For the past year, I have had the honor of representing my fellow mayors from throughout the country as the President of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the official non-partisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more. At the national level, I also serve as the Chairman of Municipal Bonds for America, a coalition dedicated to the preservation of the tax exemption for municipal bonds, Co-Chair of the Sierra Club's Mayors for 100% Clean Energy Initiative, and as Past President of the African American Mayors Association.

I have been fortunate to serve in these national leadership positions at a moment when mayors and local government have attained renewed prominence and have been widely recognized as being in the forefront of public policy innovation. I am especially proud that mayors and local governments have been recognized for our leadership in addressing climate change.

As with so much of what mayors and cities do, our leadership on climate change has been pragmatic. Mayors and cities have been pragmatic because we have no choice. Climate change is already impacting our communities and testing our infrastructure. We have acted because our constituents expect us to tackle challenges and fix problems (while delivering a balanced budget on time each year).

In Columbia, we unfortunately witnessed firsthand how climate change is already impacting cities and testing our infrastructure. Over three days in October 2015, the remnants of Hurricane Joaquin stalled over central South Carolina, inundating Columbia with nearly 30 inches of rain. Hurricane Joaquin's impact on Columbia was dire, taking the lives of many precious South Carolinians.

The storm nearly wiped out the Columbia Canal, which serves our main drinking water treatment plant, ruptured dozens of water and sewer mains, closed over 100 streets, flooded one fire station and our primary fire training facility, breached multiple dams, and damaged nearly 400 homes and 60 businesses. Since then, we have had other several major rain events; though Joaquin was a "500-year" event, heavy rain events are apparently becoming the new normal. In the aftermath of Joaquin, it became clear to us that recovery, resilience, and mitigation against future storms will be costly and will require detailed local knowledge of conditions on the ground and the City's infrastructure.

The 2015 floods were a call to action. However, like cities throughout the nation, the City of Columbia has been addressing climate change on several fronts for over a decade. Hurricane Joaquin led us to redouble our efforts.

In 2009, with assistance from the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant, we conducted an energy audit and implemented several of the audit's recommendations, including upgrading lighting systems, HVAC upgrades on City buildings, and installing solar panels on fire stations. These projects reduced our greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption and saved Columbia taxpayers approximately \$337,000 per year.

In addition, one of my first priorities when I took office was to upgrade and rationalize our regional transit system to increase ridership, including successfully asking our voters to approve a penny tax dedicated to transportation, including transit. I have also built on and accelerated the efforts of my predecessor to improve pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure in Columbia, completing several streetscapes and extending and opening several trails. Combined with thousands of new units of housing in Downtown Columbia and other central Columbia neighborhoods, these efforts have set the stage for truly giving Columbia residents a meaningful option to the car, with the added bonus of a vibrant, lively and beautiful Downtown. Two years ago, Columbia took the next step, setting a target of powering our community with 100 percent clean, renewable energy by 2035.

In addition to our climate change prevention efforts, we have been actively addressing mitigation. In the wake of Hurricane Joaquin, it became clear that we had to accelerate our efforts to improve the climate resilience of our stormwater infrastructure. We bit the bullet and increased stormwater fees to fund a wide array of projects to improve our stormwater system using both gray and green infrastructure. We also issued our first-ever green bond that allowed

the City to finance upgrades and improvements to our stormwater system while protecting our environment.

We have worked hard in Columbia, as have cities throughout the nation. But I am here today to tell you that Mayors and cities cannot tackle this challenge alone. We need a strong federal partner. Local governments collect approximately 15 percent of our nation's tax revenue. With that 15 percent, we are expected to deliver an array of core governmental services that many of us take for granted but are the foundation of modern, civilized society: education, streets, sidewalks, alleys, water, sewer, transit, parks, recreation, and much more. We cannot tackle the tasks of slowing climate change and adapting to climate change on our own.

I would point out that our call for federal action on climate change and for a strong federal partnership with state and local governments as we work to address climate change is not a new one. Indeed, I have attached to my testimony a 2007 open letter to presidential candidates signed by over 100 South Carolina mayors, including my predecessor, calling for federal leadership on climate change. That letter was signed by mayors of South Carolina's largest cities, by mayors of small towns, by mayors from the Upstate, mayors from the Midlands, mayors from the Coast, Republican mayors, and Democratic mayors.

Let me share the key paragraphs of that letter:

*South Carolina voters will play a central role in determining the next President of the United States. While we recognize that there are many important issues before us, one requires immediate attention: the growing threat of global warming. As South Carolina mayors, it is our duty to add our voice to the growing chorus of scientific, business, and community leaders who say the time to act on global climate change is now.*

*From the wooded foothills of the Upstate, to the fertile soil of the Midlands, to the pristine marshes of the Coast, South Carolina enjoys one of the richest and most diverse natural habitats in the United States. Indeed, the quality of life we enjoy helps explain why South*

*Carolina's population is projected to increase 27 percent by 2025. To meet the challenges of this rapid growth, our communities are quickly learning the value of efficiency and conservation as a means to save both taxpayer dollars and the environment. We are investing at the local level in more efficient municipal buildings, promoting "green fleets" in our public transportation, and educating our constituents in the value of conservation to reduce energy costs and harmful environmental impacts.*

We were taking action and asking for a strong federal partner 12 years ago. Since then, the need for action has become all the more urgent. I am therefore pleased that Chairman Tonko has issued a blueprint for action, [A Framework for Climate Action in the U.S. Congress](#). I am especially pleased that the framework puts local government front and center, specifically calling for a program that **empowers state and local governments** and **strengthens community resilience**. I am also pleased that the framework specifically recognizes efforts that state and local governments have already taken and calls for **avoiding harm to first movers**. In addition, I share the other priorities outlined in the framework, including creating a strong, fair, and competitive clean economy, protecting low-income households, and delivering a just and equitable transition to a clean economy.

In January, the Conference of Mayors released its own [Mayors Call for Climate Action](#) that is included as an attachment. I would respectfully suggest some of our specific proposals provide Congress a way to flesh out and implement Chairman Tonko's framework in a manner that would help Mayors and cities meet the climate challenge. Many of these proposals could be implemented and produce results quickly while Congress debates a larger package or comprehensive climate strategy:

- Reauthorize and fully fund the **Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant** in FY 2020 and beyond;
- Establish and implement **national greenhouse gas emission reductions by 2030**;

- Adopt an ***aggressive national renewable portfolio standard*** and provide incentives for electric utilities, including municipal electric utilities, to ***invest in clean and renewable energy***;
- Direct EPA to maintain and Improve the Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards;
- Provide incentives to the energy sector to ramp up ***research and investments in renewable energy*** to expand electric generation, and research to capture and reduce carbon emissions from clean energy;
- Modernize the nation's ***electric utility grids***;
- Prioritize transportation funding to help metropolitan areas and local areas invest in low-carbon, ***mode-neutral transportation options via increased funding for the Surface Transportation Block Grant***, including building a ***national charging infrastructure***;
- Increase ***funding for transit***;
- Invest in improved ***intercity passenger rail***;
- Provide additional funding for the ***Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)***, with the additional funding ***targeted to investments in climate resilient infrastructure*** in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods;
- Build on last year's reforms of federal disaster assistance programs to increase ***funding for disaster mitigation***;
- Reinstated ***advanced refunding for municipal bonds***; and
- Provide resources to help local governments ***increase the supply of affordable and workforce housing located in proximity to jobs, education, services, and transit***.

In the paragraphs below, I expand on some of these proposals where you can help us make progress. Local governments are making progress around the country but we need your assistance.

### **Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG)**

EECBG is probably one of the easiest and quickest ways that Congress can jump start greenhouse gas emission reduction programs. I greatly appreciate Chairman Pallone's and Speaker Pelosi's support for the creation of this program in 2007 and the funding of this program in FY 2009. Funding EECBG in FY 2020 and beyond would provide every congressional district in the nation with the resources to implement local strategies to increase energy efficiency, to further develop renewable energy sources, and to fortify local energy infrastructure, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, saving taxpayer dollars, and protecting our communities.

We often hear the cliché that there is no Republican or Democratic way to fill a pothole. I would posit that the same holds true to improving local government energy efficiency. The Energy Independence & Security Act of 2007, which authorized EECBG, enjoyed broad bipartisan support. It was enacted by a Democratic Congress and signed by a Republican President. I would hope that there continues to be broad bipartisan support for a program that helps cities reduce local government energy costs and save local taxpayers money.

Going back to that 2007 open letter that over 100 Carolina mayors sent to the presidential candidates, my predecessor, Mayor Bob Coble, made a strong argument for funding a program like EECBG:

*"Efficiency and renewable energy are our 'first fuel,'" Columbia Mayor Bob Coble said. "Our state is one of the least energy-efficient in the country, and consequently our citizens have some of the highest electricity bills. But by investing in efficiency and our home-grown energy sources, we can embrace a clean, efficient, energy independent future."*

As noted above, in the one year that EECBG was funded, Columbia used our grant to conduct an energy audit and implement several of the audit's recommendations, including upgrading lighting systems, HVAC upgrades on City buildings, and installing solar panels on fire stations. These projects reduced our greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption and saving



Columbia taxpayers approximately \$337,000 per year. Mayors across the nation have implemented similar initiatives. However, with tight city budgets, it sometimes is difficult to implement what needs to be done along with all other local priorities.

One of the great features of EECBG is its flexibility. It allows cities to target funds to a wide array of projects and programs. For example, Schenectady's needs and solutions in this area might be different from those of Columbia. In addition, EECBG allowed cities and counties to serve as the Department of Energy's final, real world test laboratory for the implementation of energy efficiency technologies and programs. I am proud that the Department of Energy's Oak Ridge National Laboratory evaluated EECBG as a significant success. With the Subcommittee's permission, I would like to submit for the record the Executive Summary of that report. I would also like to submit for the record a report prepared by the U.S. Conference of Mayors, Successful City Initiatives with EECBG Funding, that illustrates how effectively cities throughout the nation implemented this program in the one year Congress funded it.

### **National Renewable Portfolio Standards (RPS)**

Many cities, including Columbia, have adopted the 100% renewable energy pledge and want to meet that goal, especially given recent reports from the National Climate Assessment and the IPCC on the earth's rapid rate of warming, a 12-20 year window for action is upon us. The U.S. Conference of Mayors has affirmed this 100% renewable energy pledge. We have also affirmed our support of the Paris Climate Agreement.

But we cannot achieve this on our own, and neither can small and medium size businesses within our communities. We need a utility sector that delivers clean energy to our overall economy and does so in an expedited manner. According to EPA's public review draft, Inventory of U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks 1990-2017 (EPA 430-P-19-001):

*“In 2017, total gross U.S. greenhouse gas emissions were 6,472.3 MMT, or million metric tons, carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) Eq. Total U.S. emissions have increased by 1.6 percent from 1990 to 2017, and emissions decreased from 2016 to 2017 by 0.3 percent (21.1 MMT CO<sub>2</sub> Eq.).”*

While the trend is moving ever so slightly in the right direction, reduction in GHG emissions is simply not happening quickly enough or with sufficient magnitude to address and mitigate the devastating effects of Climate Change. This is especially important given the fact that a national climate strategy must include the electrification of our national transportation system, especially now that transportation is our leading source of greenhouse gas emissions.

While we have made some progress in our local efforts to shift to renewable energy and to develop renewable energy projects, it is clear we cannot do this alone or in sufficient time. A national approach is needed in the form of a renewable portfolio standard, or its equivalent.

### **Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) Standards**

According to analysis done by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the transportation sector generates the largest share of greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S., nearly 28.5 percent in 2016. Cities are taking action to reduce vehicle emissions through investments in transportation alternatives such as public transit, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, and electric vehicles. These efforts, however, are not enough to meet local emission reduction targets. Therefore, cities rely heavily on vehicle emission standards to help meet our emission reduction goals. The Administration’s current proposal to freeze CAFE standards to 2020 levels for car models being released from 2021 to 2025 will not assist us with our efforts. Attached to my testimony is a letter jointly written by the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the National League of Cities outlining our opposition to the Administration’s proposal to scale freeze CAFE standards. I encourage Congress to weigh in with the Administration regarding this freeze and ask them to reverse that position.

**Surface Transportation Block Grant - Mode-Neutral Transportation Options**

Over the past two years (FY 2018 and FY 2019), Congress appropriated an additional \$4 billion for the Federal-Aid Highway Program, with the funds allocated via the Surface Transportation Block Grant. Allocating these additional funds via the Block Grant meant that a portion of these funds were sub-allocated to metropolitan areas, with local elected officials empowered to allocate them to regionally-identified priority mobility projects. In addition to directing a portion of the funds to metropolitan areas, which are home to the overwhelming majority of the nation's population and economy, the Surface Transportation Block Grant provides considerable flexibility, allowing local elected officials to make mobility investment in a mode-neutral manner, including projects that help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Directing more surface transportation resources to local official and local areas is particularly important to our climate efforts because local officials are more likely to invest in projects that provide alternatives to solo driving and highway expansion. In Columbia, we have leveraged these federal funds with a voter approved penny sales tax dedicated to transportation, including transit.

The additional increment of \$2.79 billion that Congress appropriated for the Surface Transportation Block Grant in FY 2019 meant an additional \$2.9 million that our region allocated to regional mobility priorities. In Chairman Tonko's District, the Albany-Schenectady Metropolitan Area received an additional \$1.9 million for locally identified priorities.

I urge Congress to continue to allocate any highway funds appropriated in addition to base program funds made available by the FAST Act via the Surface Transportation Block Grant. Looking ahead to reauthorization of the FAST Act, I urge Congress to increase funding for the Surface Transportation Block Grant and to increase the metropolitan area share of the program from 55 percent to 75 percent.

## **Transit**

Transportation now accounts for the majority of our nation's greenhouse gas emissions. If we are going to truly tackle greenhouse gas emissions, we must grow the federal transit program. As outlined above, one of my first priorities when I was elected was to leverage federal transit funds to modernize, rationalize, and grow our regional transit system, including successfully asking our voters to approve a penny sales tax dedicated to transportation, including transit. Many other communities have made similar efforts. A more robust federal transit program would bolster these efforts, especially as we strive to replace our fleet, including alternative fuel buses.

## **Intercity Passenger Rail**

We have heard and read a lot about high-speed rail, both a decade ago in the context of the Recovery Act and in recent weeks in the context of the Green New Deal. I fully support efforts to bring high-speed rail to our nation. However, I fear that these conversations take attention from other efforts to improve intercity passenger rail service that are not high-speed rail but nevertheless result in much improved passenger rail service that is competitive with automobile and airplane travel.

For example, while the media has given outsize attention to Governor Newsom's decision to scale back the California High-Speed Rail Project and to Florida and Wisconsin's decisions to return their Recovery Act high-speed rail grants, the Recovery Act funded projects that significantly improved intercity passenger rail on several corridors, most notably Detroit-Chicago and Chicago-Saint Louis, where targeted infrastructure investments combined with increased state support allowed for higher speeds and increased service frequencies.

Given the size of our nation, intercity passenger rail travel will probably never fully replace airplane and automobile travel. However, there are many corridors and city pairs where intercity passenger rail can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions while also improving mobility,

increasing traveler choice, decreasing airport and highway congestion, and spurring economic development.

In South Carolina, I strongly believe that several corridors are ripe for the establishment of intercity passenger rail service, most notably Charleston-Columbia-Greenville and Charleston-Columbia-Charlotte. Relatively modest investments in existing infrastructure along these corridors would result in intercity passenger rail service that is competitive with automobile and airplane travel. This investment would also pay the added dividend of increasing mobility and supporting economic development around intermediate stops in the economically struggling towns along these corridors.

I have led efforts to bring service to these corridors, but a federal commitment in this area would help us achieve this goal.

#### **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)**

Providing an additional increment of funding for CDBG targeted to resilient infrastructure in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods is another fast way that Congress can help cities tackle climate change and improve climate resilience. CDBG is an effective and efficient way for Congress to allocate funds. The program has a well-established administrative and oversight structure at the federal, state, and local levels and provides grantees with the flexibility to target a wide array of local needs. It is no coincidence that Congress most often uses CDBG to allocate disaster assistance funds.

#### **Disaster Mitigation**

Congress has spent and will likely continue to spend billions of dollars to help communities recover from natural disaster that many would argue has been exacerbated by climate change. Our nation has faced devastating hurricanes, wildfires, and floods. All evidence indicates that this

pattern will continue; 95% of cities responding to a U.S. Conference of Mayors survey responded that they have experienced a change related to at least one climate impact in the past five years, with most experiencing more. Our ongoing struggles with FEMA for assistance with repairs to the Columbia Canal, which serves our primary drinking water treatment plant, in the wake of Hurricane Joaquin illustrates the disconnect between the need to bolster our infrastructure to mitigate against future disasters and the way that the federal disaster assistance program operates.

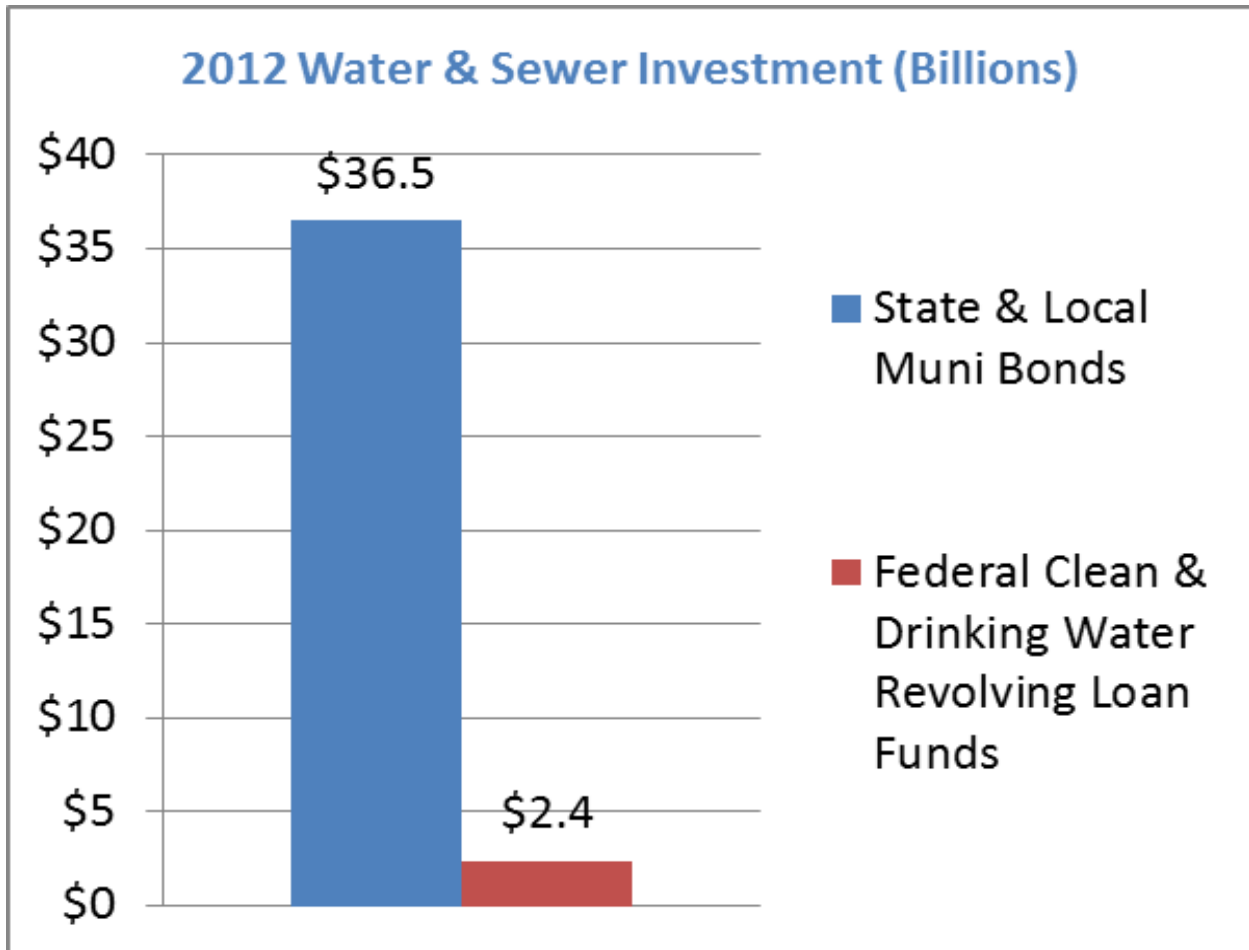
Over three years after the storm and with yet another hurricane season looming, the Columbia Canal is operating with temporary repairs and at diminished capacity with vulnerabilities that did not exist prior to the 2015 Disaster. The City estimates that repairing storm damage to the canal, including bringing it up to current standards and ensuring its resilience, will cost \$169 million. FEMA counters that most of the damage to the Canal is not storm-related, arguing that it is due to regular wear and tear, and further counters that FEMA can only fund repairs for visible damage and estimates repairs for storm damage to the canal at \$11 million. We feel our position is solid and backed up by extensive technical review. Regardless, something is clearly broken when the federal disaster assistance program cannot assist with repairs to the primary drinking water source for 375,000 people, 5 hospitals, 6 universities and colleges, and the Army's primary and largest training base.

I strongly encourage Congress to invest additional funds in disaster mitigation. Spending money on mitigation and resiliency is a necessary investment that would help protect our nation

### **Advanced Refunding of Municipal Bonds**

I was relieved that the Tax Cut & Jobs Act of 2018 maintained the tax exemption for municipal bonds. State and local governments make over 75 percent of our nation's infrastructure investments and the tax exemption helps keep our borrowing costs low. The tax exemption for

municipal bonds allows the federal government to support state and local infrastructure investment in a manner that maximizes community decision making. Perhaps the best way to illustrate the scope of state and local investment in infrastructure compared to federal investment is this chart:



There are similar disparities in other areas of infrastructure investment. While I appreciate the federal funds Columbia receives, in this era of fiscal austerity and dwindling federal grants, it is not hyperbole to state that a repeal of the tax exemption for municipal bonds would have essentially been a federal abandonment of infrastructure.

Nevertheless, I was disappointed – and puzzled – that the Tax Cut & Jobs Act eliminated advanced refunding of tax exempt municipal bonds. Advanced refunding allows state and local governments to take advantage of lower interest rates, saving taxpayer money and stretching our infrastructure dollars. Simply put, Congress may have given itself a \$16 billion “pay for” to accommodate byzantine congressional budget rules, but in doing so you increased state and local government costs for infrastructure, including infrastructure to help us prevent and adapt to climate change.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I hope my testimony provides the Subcommittee with a strong understanding of local government efforts to address climate change as well as some ideas that Congress can quickly implement to bolster these local government efforts.



**Representing** over 1 million South Carolinians, the 108 S.C. mayors below call on presidential candidates of both parties to address climate change as they campaign across our state this primary season.

**These mayors** represent cities large and small. They come from every region of our state and both political parties. But they understand that addressing climate change will require presidential leadership. So as these mayors work in their communities to create a clean energy future, they expect leaders in Washington to act, too.

# Mayors across South Carolina Demand Action on Climate Change

William Barnet  
MAYOR, CITY OF SPARTANBURG

Joseph Riley  
MAYOR, CITY OF CHARLESTON

Larry Abernathy  
MAYOR, CITY OF CLEMSON

Carl Beckmann  
MAYOR, CITY OF FOLLY BEACH

Mary Clark  
MAYOR, CITY OF CAMDEN

Bob Coble  
MAYOR, CITY OF COLUMBIA

John Douglas  
MAYOR, TOWN OF CHESTERFIELD

A. Douglas Echols  
MAYOR, CITY OF ROCK HILL

Randy Halfacre  
MAYOR, TOWN OF LEXINGTON

Henry Johnston  
MAYOR, TOWN OF BLUFFTON

Henry Jolly  
MAYOR, CITY OF GAFFNEY

J. Edward Lee  
MAYOR, CITY OF YORK

Joseph McElveen  
MAYOR, CITY OF SUMTER

E. Bruce Morgan  
MAYOR, CITY OF UNION

Samuel Murray  
MAYOR, TOWN OF PORT ROYAL

Floyd Nicholson  
MAYOR, CITY OF GREENWOOD

William Peagler  
MAYOR, TOWN OF MONCK'S CORNER

Thomas Peeples  
MAYOR, TOWN OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND

Carl Smith  
MAYOR, TOWN OF SULLIVAN'S ISLAND

Avery Wilkerson  
MAYOR, CITY OF CAYCE

Rutledge Leland  
MAYOR, TOWN OF MCCLELLANVILLE

Andrew Ingram  
MAYOR, TOWN OF CHERAW

Kevin Johnson  
MAYOR, CITY OF MANNING

Thompson Isaac  
MAYOR, TOWN OF LYNCHBURG

Burley Lyons  
MAYOR, TOWN OF EDISTO BEACH

Johnnie Ganus  
MAYOR, TOWN OF GOVAN

Richard Thomas  
MAYOR, TOWN OF ARCADIA LAKES

Roy Pipkin  
MAYOR, TOWN OF JAMESTOWN

Roy Smith Jr.  
MAYOR, TOWN OF MCCORMICK

F. E. James  
MAYOR, TOWN OF ELGIN

Mitchell B. Foster  
MAYOR, CITY OF CHESTER

Roger Gaddy  
MAYOR, TOWN OF WINNSBORO

Betty Sims  
MAYOR, TOWN OF OLANTA

Henry Starnes  
MAYOR, TOWN OF GREAT FALLS

F. Michael Sottile  
MAYOR, CITY OF ISLE OF PALMS

W. Kenneth McDonald  
MAYOR, CITY OF MULLINS

Phillip Clardy  
MAYOR, TOWN OF WILLIAMSTON

Dean Bentley  
MAYOR, TOWN OF LOCKHART

Michael Holt  
MAYOR, CITY OF HARTSVILLE

Wendell Perdue  
MAYOR, TOWN OF PATRICK

T. Edward Kyzer  
MAYOR, CITY OF NEWBERRY

Janice Havird  
MAYOR, TOWN OF SILVERSTREET

Bobby Horton  
MAYOR, CITY OF WEST COLUMBIA

Lynn Wood Wilson  
MAYOR, CITY OF GEORGETOWN

Charlene Herring  
MAYOR, TOWN OF RIDGEWAY

Carrie Simmons  
MAYOR, CITY OF DENMARK

Knox White  
MAYOR, CITY OF GREENVILLE

Sharon Brownlee  
MAYOR, CITY OF LAURENS

David Stoudenmire  
MAYOR, CITY OF LORIS

E. A. Stevenson  
MAYOR, TOWN OF ALLENDALE

M.E. Christopherson  
MAYOR, CITY OF EASLEY

Tony Funderburk  
MAYOR, TOWN OF JEFFERSON

Ray Copeland  
MAYOR, TOWN OF CAMPOBELLO

Curtis Dorsey  
MAYOR, TOWN OF ANDREWS

Charles Ackerman  
MAYOR, TOWN OF HARLEYVILLE

Libby Holst  
MAYOR, TOWN OF ROCKVILLE

David Gordon  
MAYOR, TOWN OF MOUNT CROGHAN

Charles Ferguson  
MAYOR, TOWN OF FORT LAWN

John Carter  
MAYOR, TOWN OF GRAY COURT

Terry Wright  
MAYOR, TOWN OF BRUNSON

John Rhoden  
MAYOR, TOWN OF HAMPTON

Bobby Gordon  
MAYOR, TOWN OF LIVINGSTON

Frederick Cavanaugh  
MAYOR, CITY OF AIKEN

Joe Shaw  
MAYOR, CITY OF LANCASTER

Tim Cooner  
MAYOR, TOWN OF BRANCHVILLE

R. C. Jones  
MAYOR, CITY OF MAULDIN

Richard Danner  
MAYOR, CITY OF GREER

Comer Randall  
MAYOR, CITY OF CLINTON

Harold McNeill  
MAYOR, CITY OF ABBEVILLE

Ralph Patterson  
MAYOR, TOWN OF DUE WEST

Frank Addy  
MAYOR, TOWN OF SALUDA

Paul Wimberly  
MAYOR, TOWN OF REEVESVILLE

Dexe Bostick  
MAYOR, CITY OF BENNETTSVILLE

William Otis  
MAYOR, TOWN OF PAWLEYS ISLAND

O. Johnson  
MAYOR, TOWN OF LITTLE MOUNTAIN

Keith Summey  
MAYOR, CITY OF NORTH CHARLESTON

Michael Heitzler  
MAYOR, CITY OF GOOSE CREEK

Robert Rimes  
MAYOR, TOWN OF KLINE

Roy Reynolds  
MAYOR, CITY OF TRAVELERS REST

Vickie Cook  
MAYOR, TOWN OF CENTRAL PACOLET

Edith Abell Cantrell  
MAYOR, TOWN OF LOWRYS

Sallie Peake  
MAYOR, CITY OF WELLFORD

John Rhodes  
MAYOR, CITY OF MYRTLE BEACH

Irene Armstrong  
MAYOR, TOWN OF ATLANTIC BEACH

John Hamby  
MAYOR, TOWN OF DUNCAN

W. Earl Jeffcoat  
MAYOR, TOWN OF NORTH

Robert B. Briggs  
MAYOR, TOWN OF LANDRUM

John McClary  
MAYOR, TOWN OF HILDA

Minnie N. Blackwell  
MAYOR, CITY OF HANAHAN

Reba Vinson  
MAYOR, TOWN OF JONESVILLE

Marilyn Hatley  
MAYOR, CITY OF NORTH MYRTLE BEACH

Eddie Kirkley  
MAYOR, TOWN OF MCBEE

John McMillan  
MAYOR, TOWN OF PARKSVILLE

Gregory Martin  
MAYOR, CITY OF CONWAY

Berlin Myers  
MAYOR, TOWN OF SUMMERVILLE

Frank McNulty  
MAYOR, TOWN OF SEABROOK ISLAND

Bill Rauch  
MAYOR, CITY OF BEAUFORT

Paul Miller  
MAYOR, CITY OF ORANGEBURG

Tim Griffin  
MAYOR, TOWN OF NINETY SIX

David Owens  
MAYOR, CITY OF PICKENS

Kenneth Davis  
MAYOR, TOWN OF PELZER

Helen Summer  
MAYOR, TOWN OF TRENTON

Gary Long  
MAYOR, CITY OF FOUNTAIN INN

Gary Quick  
MAYOR, TOWN OF MCCOLL

Christopher Faulkner  
MAYOR, TOWN OF SMYRNA

Robert Runde  
MAYOR, CITY OF TEGA CAY

Reba Vinson  
MAYOR, TOWN OF JONESVILLE

James Williams  
MAYOR, TOWN OF RIDGEVILLE

Willie Campbell  
MAYOR, TOWN OF JOHNSTON

## An Open Letter to Presidential Candidates Visiting South Carolina

South Carolina voters will play a central role in determining the next President of the United States. While we recognize that there are many important issues before us, one requires immediate attention: the growing threat of global warming. As South Carolina mayors, it is our duty to add our voice to the growing chorus of scientific, business, and community leaders who say the time to act on global climate change is now.

From the wooded foothills of the Upstate, to the fertile soil of the Midlands, to the pristine marshes of the Coast, South Carolina enjoys one of the richest and most diverse natural habitats in the United States. Indeed, the quality of life we enjoy helps explain why South Carolina's population is projected to increase 27 percent by 2025. To meet the challenges of this rapid growth, our communities are quickly learning the value of efficiency and conservation as a means to save both taxpayer dollars and the environment. We are investing at the local level in more efficient municipal buildings, promoting "green fleets" in our public transportation, and educating our constituents in the value of conservation to reduce energy costs and harmful environmental impacts.

These measures will go part of the way toward ushering our state into a new energy future. But the only way to lower carbon emissions and usher in a new era of energy production is through strong national leadership.

So as you visit the towns and cities where we make our homes, and talk to the constituents we serve, we urge you to make solving climate change a top priority in your conversations with South Carolina voters. We also hope you will share your ideas about the unique opportunities available in developing clean energy technologies, reducing our dependence on foreign oil, stimulating billions of dollars in new investments, and creating millions of new jobs.

Since solving global climate change will establish a healthier, more efficient, and more secure nation, we expect candidates from all parties to outline clear plans for addressing this issue.

We look forward to your visiting the Palmetto State and discussing the critical challenges before us.

Sincerely,

**Endorsed by** the Carolina Climate Network, the Upstate Forever, Coastal Conservation League, Conservation Voters of South Carolina, South Carolina Wildlife Federation, and Southern Alliance for Clean Energy



## Mayors Call for Climate Action

Recent reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the National Climate Assessment indicate that the world is heating up faster than originally anticipated.

The IPCC report indicates that nations must limit global warming by 1.5 degrees by 2030 in order to avoid catastrophic impacts on the world. This means we must transition our economies to a low or non-carbon foundation as quickly as possible.

The good news is that existing technology is available to address this challenge. What is needed is the political will from all levels of government as well as the business community to adopt more aggressive programs for greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reductions and to work together to solve this problem quickly and in a cost-efficient manner.

In truth, many players, including the nation's mayors, governors, and business community have launched aggressive GHG reduction programs and systems. But the new scientific reality is that the nation must move even more aggressively to meet a 2030 deadline resulting in dramatic reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

Unfortunately, it is unclear how fast the Federal government will come to the table, but it is critical that they do. We must return the United States to a global leadership position in limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees.

Given this urgency, The U.S. Conference of Mayors calls on Congress to act urgently to pass a national climate protection bill that includes funding for the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG), policy changes and incentives to require the utility sector to increase low-carbon energy production, and more stringent goals and incentives for the business community to dramatically reduce its greenhouse gas emissions.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors calls on all of our mayoral colleagues, all levels of government, the business community, and individuals, to establish or re-evaluate their Climate Protection goals, revise them accordingly, and implement them immediately. We recognize that every metro region is different, with different GHG emitting profile, however, the following action items will help us achieve our goals to dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. These Actions include:

- Buildings: Establish Policies and Incentives for New and Existing Buildings to be Carbon-Neutral by 2030;
- Transportation: Prioritize Investments and Policies to Increase Low-carbon Transportation Options; and
- Energy: Incentivize and Prioritize the Development and Purchase of Low Carbon Energy;
- Solid Waste: Reduce the Amount of Waste that is Generated and Sent to Landfills.

**Local, State, and Federal Actions:**

Establish Policies and Incentives for New and Existing Buildings to be Carbon-Neutral by 2030;

Work with utilities and state regulatory bodies to dramatically expand renewable portfolio standards and the development of clean and renewable energy projects;

Use the purchasing power of cities, states, and the federal government to buy green energy and invest in low carbon transportation solutions; and

Develop comprehensive solid waste plans based on EPA's hierarchy to reduce, reuse, recycle, and generate energy and include robust efforts to buy recycled products.

**Congressional Actions:**

Fully Fund the Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Grant;

Establish and Implement national GHG emission reductions by 2030;

Adopt an aggressive national renewable portfolio standard and provide incentives for clean and renewable energy;

Prioritize DOT funding to invest in low-carbon transportation options including building a national charging infrastructure;

Provide Incentives to the Energy sector to ramp up research and investments in renewable energy to expand electric generation, and research to capture and reduce carbon emissions from clean energy; and

Modernize the nation's electric utility grids.

**Business Community Actions:**

Develop comprehensive plans to be carbon-neutral by 2030 including buildings and manufacturing processes, promoting low-carbon transportation options for employees, and purchasing low carbon energy;

Partner with local governments and metro regions to help expedite low-carbon transitions; and

Develop comprehensive solid waste plans based on EPA's hierarchy of reduce, reuse, recycle, and energy generation and include robust efforts to buy recycled products.

**Individuals:**

Reduce Carbon Footprint through energy conservation in daily home and work life through reducing home energy consumption, choosing lower carbon transportation options, purchasing green energy, reducing waste generated and sent to landfills, and buy reusable as well as recycled-content products.



Mayors Climate Protection Center

# Successful City Initiatives with Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) Funding

A 204-City Survey

February 2014



THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS



**THE UNITED STATES  
CONFERENCE OF MAYORS**

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President

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**Tom Cochran**

CEO and Executive Director

The U.S. Conference of Mayors is the official nonpartisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more. There are 1,398 such cities in the country today, each represented in the Conference by its chief elected official, the Mayor.

**DO YOUR PART! PLEASE RECYCLE!**

# Foreword



**Tom Cochran**  
CEO and Executive Director  
The United States  
Conference of Mayors

It was just about five years ago that The U.S. Conference of Mayors and the nation's mayors persuaded Congressional and Administration leaders to authorize and then fund the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) Program. In late 2007, Congress authorized a five-year, \$10 billion commitment to cities, counties and states, providing for new federal investment in local energy and climate initiatives as part of the *Energy Independence and Security Act* (P.L. 110-140). About a year later in early 2009, President Barack Obama and Congressional leaders made the EECBG Program a top funding priority in the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* (P.L. 111-5).

Appropriating \$2.7 billion in formula grant funds (to be distributed directly to cities, counties, states and tribal governments) and another \$400 million in discretionary grants (to be awarded competitively by the U.S. Department of Energy), a new and expanded federal/local partnership to further locally-directed energy efficiency and renewable energy initiatives was launched. It has been a journey since that time – working to recover from such a deep economic recession and having to respond to significant federal budgetary constraints affecting all domestic activities, including energy.

These survey findings provide just a glimpse of the important changes now underway in our cities, driven by local energy innovations championed by mayors in every part of this great nation. These mayoral “best practices” we so often share at the Conference of Mayors and our work on surveys to compile a broader picture of city-based initiatives only scratch the surface of what has been achieved locally by this significant, although one-time, infusion of EECBG resources directly into cities.

The very positive results reported in this survey challenge the Conference of Mayors and its members to continue to tell the story of why sustained mayoral leadership is so important to the nation's efforts to find cleaner and safer energy solutions for the future. Recent national data also indicate that our many actions, including mayoral energy initiatives, are making a difference. America today produces a larger share of its energy than it has in many decades, an achievement made possible in part by the improving efficiency of local energy use and the deployment of more home-grown renewable energy in our cities. America is getting more economic output from each unit of energy, and carbon emissions are declining faster than experts predicted just a few years ago. And, we see changes every day in our cities, whether it is less energy to light, heat and cool our buildings, new renewable technologies powering our energy needs, or the fewer miles driven or less gas consumed to make our many daily trips.

We have started the journey toward a cleaner energy future where mayors and their cities are key drivers in getting us there faster. We welcome any and all partners to join mayors in this effort, and respectfully request the Federal government to take another look at renewing commitments to city- and local-based energy action, by providing additional EECBG funding and taking other actions to support mayors and other local leaders.





# Survey Results

More than two-thirds of all mayors participating in The U.S. Conference of Mayors' 2014 energy efficiency and technologies survey provided information on their city's use of formula grant funding under the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) Program.

The Conference of Mayors "conceived" the EECBG Program to engage the Federal government in supporting the nation's mayors in accelerating local energy and climate initiatives, especially the more than 1000 mayors who have joined as signatories to the Conference's Mayors Climate Protection Agreement. Of the \$2.7 billion to the program for formula grants, nearly half of these EECBG funds (\$1.3 billion) were allocated directly to cities; the average EECBG formula grant to cities was about \$1 million.

In 2009, as part of the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act*, this U.S. Department of Energy-administered program distributed \$2.7 billion in formula grants (largely based on population) directly to:

- Cities with a population of 35,000 or more (including some cities below this population threshold depending on the state);
- Counties with a population of 200,000 or more (including some counties below this population threshold depending on the state);
- States to allocate funds to cities and counties not receiving direct formula funding; and
- Tribal governments.

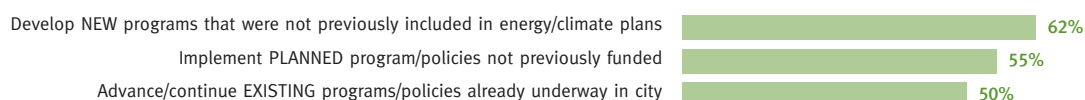
Specifically, 204 of 288 mayors – representing cities of all population sizes and from all regions of the country – responded to a series of questions designed to document how this direct funding helped further city initiatives to reduce energy use through greater energy efficiency and conservation, deploy new energy technologies especially renewable energy systems and curb harmful energy emissions, among other local outcomes.

This report and its findings provide an overview of the EECBG Program, highlighting generally how cities invested their formula grant funds to further their local energy and climate protection efforts.

**A sizable majority of mayors used all or some portion of their EECBG funds to develop NEW programs rather than allocating funds to already PLANNED and/or EXISTING city programs and policies.** More than six in ten cities (62%) invested EECBG resources in developing new programs that were not previously included in city energy and climate plans, followed by smaller majorities choosing to implement planned programs and policies not previously funded (55%) or advance/continue existing programs and policies already underway in the city (50%).

## Use of EECBG Funds for NEW, PLANNED and/or EXISTING Programs

(percentage of cities)



# Survey Results

In addition, one in five cities (21% of all respondents) used their EECBG grants exclusively for new programs not previously included in their energy and climate plans. For the half which invested in existing programs and policies, almost six in ten of them (58%) committed some share of their EECBG funds to new programs. Only about one in seven cities (14%) directed all of their funds to existing programs and policies.

This emphasis on new programs is notable because the prevailing view at the time was that many cities would simply substitute EECBG dollars for allocated local funding to existing city energy initiatives.

## Most mayors directed a majority of their EECBG funds to investments in municipal projects and operations.

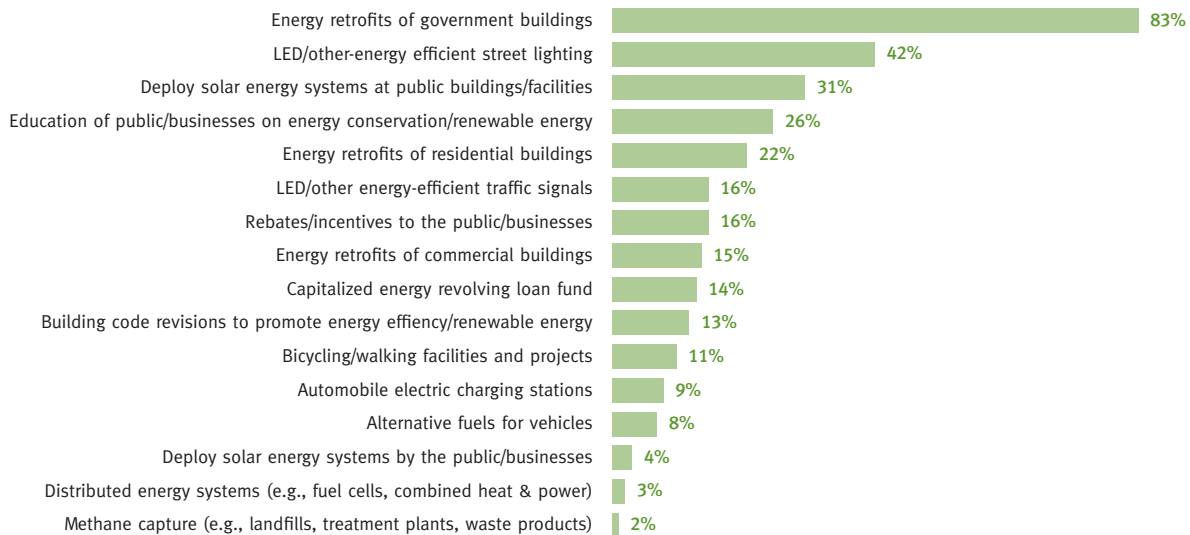
Nearly seven in eight mayors (87%) expended a majority of their EECBG grant dollars on municipal projects and operations, such as improving city-owned buildings, upgrading streetlights, or deploying renewable energy; the remaining 13 percent of cities invested a majority of their funds in non-municipal programs, such as loans, rebates or programs benefiting homeowners and businesses.

When asked how EECBG dollars were invested in their cities, mayors were given 16 project/programmatic choices, categories that largely followed those set forth in the federal law (*Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007*) that authorized the EECBG program. While the category of government building retrofits was the top choice, the chart below illustrates the range of activities that mayors pursued in their efforts to promote greater energy conservation, improve energy efficiency and/or advance renewable energy supplies in their cities. In addition to retrofitting government buildings, more than four in ten cities (42%) invested EECBG dollars in LED/other energy-efficient street lighting, and about one in six cities (16%) invested in LED/other energy-efficient traffic signals. Nearly one-third of the cities (31%) used these flexible funds to deploy solar energy systems at public buildings and public facilities.

While some projects are generally considered municipal in scope, they are often designed to serve residents and businesses directly. Examples of these investments, as shown in the chart below, are electric charging stations for automobiles, bicycling projects, or city education campaigns designed to help inform the public and businesses about energy conservation measures or ways to deploy renewable energy systems.

## How Did Cities Use EECBG Funds

(percentage of cities)



## Survey Results

In addition to selecting from these pre-set categories, survey respondents could offer written descriptions of local projects/programs funded by EECBG dollars. Cities described a range of activities, from relighting parks and garages with LEDs to some unique energy initiatives.

EECBG funds in one city underwrote a neighborhood-based project, whereby energy technicians targeted underserved neighborhoods and retrofitted homes with energy conservation measures.

With its funds, one city undertook a lighting retrofit of its convention center, including installation of a green roof. Another city developed a program to provide for comprehensive audits for private commercial buildings in the downtown core that were predominately vacant; others used ENERGY STAR's Portfolio Manager to benchmark city-owned buildings and to support benchmarking efforts by commercial building owners. One city used some of its funds to modernize its development practices and rules to make it easier for businesses and homeowners to install renewable energy systems.

Among other renewable energy projects, a city installed a 135 kw windmill at an existing sports complex, and another installed a 100 kw wind turbine on top of a city building. A few cities cited acquired solar-powered garbage/recycling containers, while another installed solar water heaters on its city buildings. A city traffic signal optimization program, with solar-powered street crossing beacons, was also funded with these resources.

One city funded the construction of a central energy plant that now serves a high school, middle school and a civic center. Among several IT projects, conserving energy in one city will be easier now with installation of software that automatically shuts down city PCs at night as well as during weekends and holidays.

Workforce training initiatives also received some EECBG funding, with one city training private sector officials on energy efficiency and building rating. Another city developed a program for trades interns to train them on the installation of energy efficient technologies. One city paid for consulting services to be available to owners of industrial/manufacturing properties, helping them identify ways to cut energy waste and other production inputs.

Although some cities reported challenges in securing federal approvals, one city noted its geothermal project, funded with EECBG resources, which is now producing energy for the city.

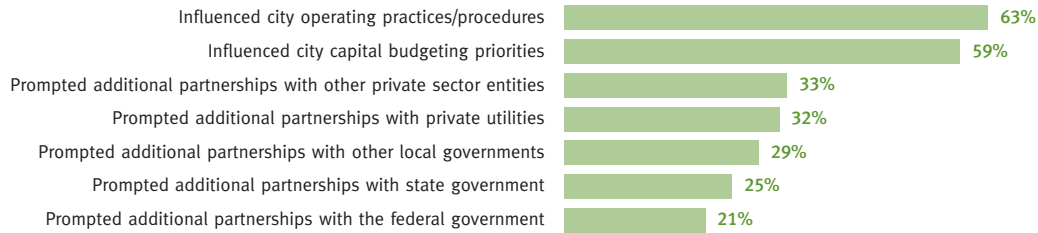
Although not a primary use of these funds, many cities directed resources to updating comprehensive plans and other specialized plans to reduce energy use, promote sustainability and/or advance climate action. Some invested in new city energy management systems, while others undertook greenhouse gas inventories, including developing emission reduction strategies. Finally, some unique projects included a feasibility study to convert grease to fuel and an evaluation of potential energy projects to be funded through a newly-established energy improvement district.

While not an area of inquiry in this survey, a 2010 Conference survey, *Mayoral Survey on Implementation of the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) Program*, did query cities on the entities delivering EECBG-funded projects, whether they were municipal or non-municipal in nature. Cities reported then that more than three-quarters (77%) of all grant funds would be passed through to private firms.

**The availability of EECBG funds to cities has influenced city budgetary priorities, and also prompted new partnerships with a range of private sector and governmental entities.** More than six in ten mayors (63%) said EECBG resources influenced city operating practices and procedures, with almost the same share (59%) indicating that this direct federal funding influenced city capital budgeting priorities. About one in three cities said EECBG funds prompted additional partnerships with private utilities (32%), with other private sector entities (33%) and with other local governments (29%).

## How EECBG Funds Influenced Budgets and Prompted New Partnerships

(percentage of cities)

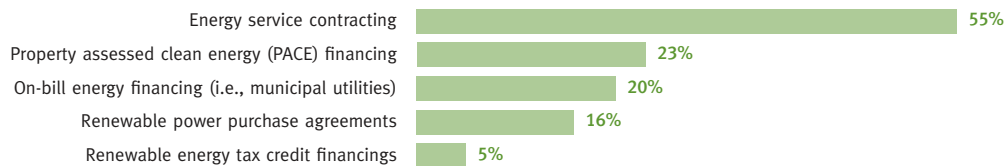


The “leverage” that comes from this relatively modest infusion of federal resources directly into the nation’s larger cities and counties can’t be overstated, considering the enormity of local operating and capital budgets. According to the U.S. Census and its 2011 *State and Local Government Finances* report, all local governments – cities, counties, towns and special districts – expended \$1.3 trillion for current operations, with another \$220 billion in capital outlays, with the direct EECBG formula recipients accounting for a substantial share of these expenditures.

**A majority of mayors cited energy service contracting as the innovative energy financing strategy that EECBG funds helped most often.** For cities responding to this question, energy service contracting was the top choice (55%) among energy financing strategies that benefited most from the availability of EECBG grant dollars. The next two choices – property assessed clean energy (PACE) financing and on-bill energy financings – were chosen by about one in five cities.

## How EECBG Funds Advanced Innovative Energy Financing Strategies

(percentage of cities)



The dominance of energy service contracting among financing strategies is another example of how the conventional wisdom can miss the mark. During the ARRA debate, some private sector firms and their organizations claimed that funding the EECBG Program would discourage cities from utilizing this financing option, commonly called ESCO financing; as the findings of this report show, the availability of EECBG resources had the opposite effect.

# Survey Results

Similarly, the Conference's 2010 EECBG survey found that for the more than two-thirds of the respondents (151 of 221 cities) that had not previously used ESCO-type financings, more than half said that EECBG funds had prompted their city to consider or include such financing in their EECBG strategies.

Of the 204 cities participating in this new EECBG survey, slightly more than half (108 cities) provided information on how these funds helped advance innovative energy financing strategies. In addition to the five choices shown above, cities could also provide written information on other locally-initiated financing structures.

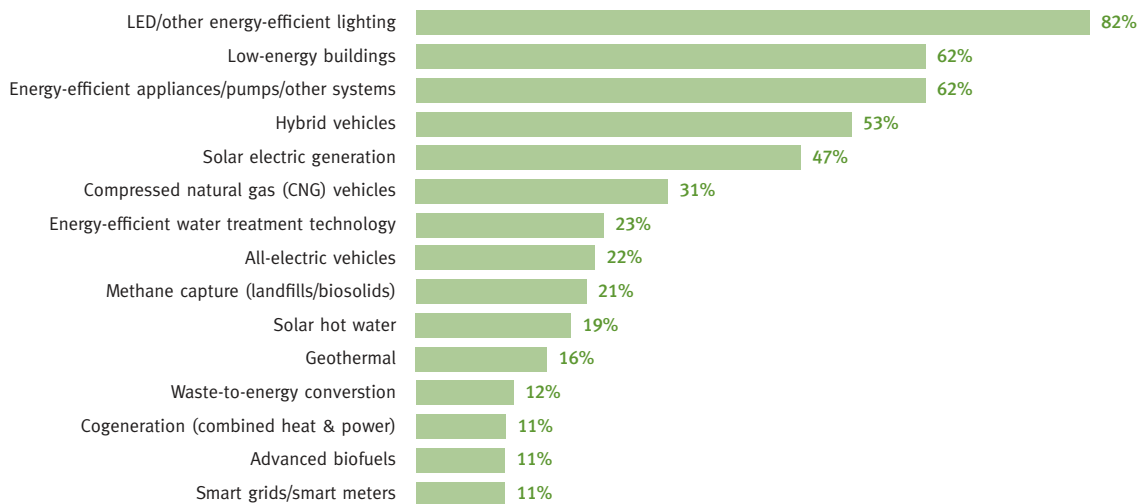
Among these responses, one city noted its loan-loss reserve program in partnership with a local credit union, allowing for no money down, no home equity-based energy loans to homeowners. Another city described its interest-free loans to help residents buy Energy Star appliances, high SEER ACs, and other energy efficient devices, reporting no loan defaults. Another one cited its multiple-city partnership in concert with its Council of Government to facilitate a regional PACE lending program.

**LED/other energy-efficient lighting ranked first among energy technologies that have already been deployed by cities, with local and federal resources, most notably EECBG grants, providing the primary sources of funding for these deployments.** The first table below shows the energy technologies that cities have already deployed, with more than four in five cities (82%) making LED/other energy-efficient lighting their top choice; the second table below shows the dominance of local funds and federal funds, including EECBG grants, in supporting city deployments of these energy technologies.

After lighting, more than six in ten cities have already deployed low-energy buildings (62%) and energy-efficient appliances, pumps and other systems (62%). More than half of the cities have used hybrid vehicles (53%), and almost half have installed solar technologies to generate electricity (47%). Notably, city use of all-electric vehicles increased to nearly one in four cities (23%), up considerably from the 2011 level of 13 percent.

## Technologies Already Deployed by Cities

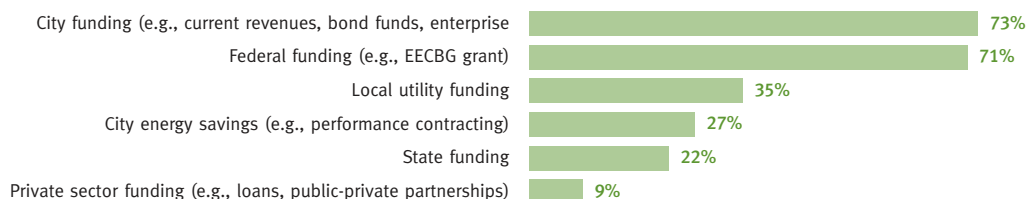
(percentage of cities)



As shown in the chart below, more than seven in ten cities used city funding or federal funding as their top sources for deploying energy technologies. City funding (73%) and federal funding (71%) were used most often, with about one in three cities using local utility funding (35%) and more than one in four utilizing city energy savings (27%) to fund their energy technology deployments.

## How Cities Funded Previously-Deployed Energy Technologies

(percentage of cities)



Importantly, it is generally accepted that EECBG funds did help speed the deployment of new energy technologies, especially the use of LED technologies, in cities. The findings of this report and its January 2014 companion report adds further to the anecdotal and other information that the availability of EECBG grants helped accelerate demand for LED lighting. Certainly, such an outcome remains one of the legacies of the EECBG funding commitment to cities, reminding federal policy-makers of the potency of federal investments in city-based energy efficiency and technology initiatives.

The role of the Federal government as a funding partner for cities declined sharply over the last few years. In a January 2014 report by the Conference of Mayors, *Energy Efficiency and Technologies in America's Cities*, mayors ranked utilities (71%) as their top partner in advancing new technologies, followed by state governments (49%), the private sector (41%) and the Federal government (30%). In fact, the Federal government, previously the top choice in the Conference's June 2011 energy survey, *Clean Energy Solutions for America's Cities*, fell to the fourth position among potential partners for cities. This unprecedented decline – 71 percent in 2011 to 30 percent in 2014 – is certain to have been the result of the changed federal/local partnership; the Federal government did not renew its funding commitment to the EECBG Program.

**When mayors were asked to give examples of successes with the use of EECBG funds, they often cited “energy firsts” for their cities, energy savings, greater energy efficiencies, and deployment of renewable energy systems, among scores of examples.** This discussion provides a sample of successes by mayors in utilizing EECBG resources in their cities.

There were many examples of successes in retrofitting public and private buildings in making the city's building stock more efficient. “Electricity use at City Hall was cut by 47 percent, an outcome helped by the availability of EECBG funds,” one city wrote. “There will be a 20 percent reduction in energy use in the largest government facilities,” said another. Citing other achievements, one city reported that it had retrofitted 1,267 homes and over 130 businesses with its formula grant; another said it weatherized more than 200 income-qualified homes.

## Survey Results

Some cities described how broader goals were being achieved. “Funds helped advance a non-controversial ‘quick win’ toward sustainable operations,” said one city. “These funds helped change the mindset about energy reduction,” said another. In touting its investment in renewable energy, one city wrote, “These funds helped establish the credibility of renewable energy as a reliable and affordable alternative.”

Given its prominence in the survey findings, energy gains from more efficient lighting were touted often. A nearly 50 percent reduction in annual electricity costs due to LEDs was reported. Another installed over 2,000 LED streetlights with smart controls, while one said its retrofit of 2,000 city streetlights will save \$50,000 annually.

Successes with other technologies were described, with solar energy systems mentioned often. One city said EECBG funds made its first municipal solar installation possible. Another said it leveraged \$300,000 in EECBG grant funds into a \$2.5 million solar array project. Two cities indicated that 2 or more MW of solar capacity had been installed in their communities. Another city noted its solar-powered hybrid charging station in the heart of its downtown.

Other city transportation projects were traffic light signalization projects, more traditional EV charging stations, and CNG fueling stations. Cities described geothermal installations, smart grid technology, and a wind demonstration program, with one city reporting that it had used its EECBG fund to achieve a total energy savings of 37,654 MMBTU. One city reported that it had leveraged its grant into an \$8.7 million Energy Performance Contract.

The survey findings in this area follow what EECBG Program champions at The Conference of Mayors and among cities have expressed in advocating for this program. Simply, the flexibility of the block grant structure allows cities and other local governments to tailor solutions to their own communities’ needs, which is especially important in the energy and climate arenas.

Finally, cities were asked to provide examples of impediments, federal and otherwise, to the most effective use of EECBG program resources. This information will be provided, upon request, to parties working to make improvements or legislative adjustments to the EECBG program in the future.



# Participating Cities

Fairbanks, AK  
Fort Smith, AR  
Little Rock, AR  
Avondale, AZ  
Mesa, AZ  
Oro Valley, AZ  
Phoenix, AZ  
Surprise, AZ  
Tempe, AZ  
Tucson, AZ  
Alameda, CA  
Alhambra, CA  
Anaheim, CA  
Cathedral City, CA  
Chula Vista, CA  
Costa Mesa, CA  
Dublin, CA  
Fontana, CA  
Fresno, CA  
Gardena, CA  
Hemet, CA  
Huntington Beach, CA  
Irvine, CA  
La Habra, CA  
Long Beach, CA  
Los Angeles, CA  
Monrovia, CA  
Newark, CA  
Newport Beach, CA  
Novato, CA  
Ontario, CA  
Palm Desert, CA  
Palmdale, CA  
Pasadena, CA  
Pleasanton, CA  
Redding, CA  
Redondo Beach, CA  
Rialto, CA  
Sacramento, CA  
San Clemente, CA  
San Diego, CA  
San Jose, CA  
San Leandro, CA  
Santa Ana, CA  
Santa Barbara, CA  
Santa Monica, CA  
Santee, CA  
South San Francisco, CA  
Tulare, CA  
Vallejo, CA  
Ventura, CA  
Westminster, CA  
Woodland, CA  
Aurora, CO  
Denver, CO  
Westminster, CO  
Bridgeport, CT  
Danbury, CT  
Fairfield, CT  
Milford, CT  
Norwich, CT  
Stamford, CT  
Torrington, CT  
Waterbury, CT  
Washington, DC  
Wilmington, DE  
Boynton Beach, FL  
Cape Coral, FL  
Coral Springs, FL  
Davie, FL  
Deerfield Beach, FL  
Hallandale Beach, FL  
Jacksonville, FL  
Lakeland, FL  
Largo, FL  
Lauderhill, FL  
Miramar, FL  
North Lauderdale, FL  
North Miami, FL  
Orlando, FL  
Palm Bay, FL  
Panama City, FL  
Pembroke Pines, FL  
Pompano Beach, FL  
Port St. Lucie, FL  
Tallahassee, FL  
West Palm Beach, FL  
Athens-Clarke County, GA  
Atlanta, GA  
Columbus, GA  
Savannah, GA  
Maui, HI  
Davenport, IA  
Des Moines, IA  
Dubuque, IA  
Urbandale, IA  
Boise, ID  
Idaho Falls, ID  
Evanston, IL  
Hanover Park, IL  
Hoffman Estates, IL  
Normal, IL



## Participating Cities

Schaumburg, IL	Lincoln, NE	Charleston, SC
Carmel, IN	Nashua, NH	Summerville, SC
Indianapolis, IN	Brick Township, NJ	Sioux Falls, SD
Noblesville, IN	Elizabeth, NJ	Chattanooga, TN
Richmond, IN	Albuquerque, NM	Hendersonville, TN
Olathe, KS	Clovis, NM	Johnson City, TN
Shawnee, KS	Santa Fe, NM	Knoxville, TN
Lexington, KY	Carson City, NV	Memphis, TN
New Orleans, LA	Henderson, NV	Abilene, TX
Boston, MA	Las Vegas, NV	Corpus Christi, TX
Springfield, MA	North Las Vegas, NV	Dallas, TX
Baltimore, MD	Reno, NV	Denton, TX
Portland, ME	Albany, NY	Garland, TX
Dearborn, MI	Syracuse, NY	Mesquite, TX
Farmington Hills, MI	Cleveland, OH	Pharr, TX
Grand Rapids, MI	Columbus, OH	Plano, TX
Rochester Hills, MI	Cuyahoga Falls, OH	San Antonio, TX
Southfield, MI	Dayton, OH	Lehi City, UT
Troy, MI	Lancaster, OH	Salt Lake City, UT
Westland, MI	Lima, OH	Sandy, UT
Burnsville, MN	Tulsa, OK	South Jordan, UT
Eagan, MN	Beaverton, OR	Alexandria, VA
Minneapolis, MN	Bend, OR	Norfolk, VA
Minnetonka, MN	Gresham, OR	Burlington, VT
Columbia, MO	Hillsboro, OR	Everett, WA
Kansas City, MO	Lake Oswego, OR	Redmond, WA
St. Louis, MO	Portland, OR	Seattle, WA
University City, MO	Tigard, OR	Tacoma, WA
Burlington, NC	Lancaster, PA	Vancouver, WA
Charlotte, NC	Philadelphia, PA	Brookfield, WI
Fayetteville, NC	Pittsburgh, PA	Green Bay, WI
Greenville, NC	York, PA	Madison, WI
Winston-Salem, NC	Caguas, PR	Milwaukee, WI
Grand Forks, ND	Providence, RI	Gillette, WY

# About the Survey

This report was prepared by The U.S. Conference of Mayors and was based on data collected in a mayoral survey sponsored by Philips. From November 25, 2013 through January 14, 2014, cities could complete the survey electronically. By email, the Conference contacted nearly 1,400 mayors, most representing cities with a population of 30,000 or more, requesting mayors to complete the survey. Survey responses from 204 cities were received and analyzed for this report. We would like to thank all those who participated in the survey for their efforts and timely responses.





**THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS**

*Tom Cochran*

Tom Cochran, CEO and Executive Director

1620 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20006  
Tel: 202.293.7330  
Fax: 202.293.2352  
[usmayors.org](http://usmayors.org)

## USCM/NLC Letter Regarding CAFE Standards

October 26, 2018

Mr. Andrew Wheeler  
Acting Administrator  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20460

### RE: EPA-HQ-OAR-2018-0283

Dear Acting Administrator Wheeler,

On behalf of The U.S. Conference of Mayors and the National League of Cities, we appreciate the opportunity to submit comments on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) and the U.S. Department of Transportation National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) Proposed Rule, "*The Safer Affordable Fuel Efficient (SAFE) Vehicles Proposed Rule for Model Years 2021-2026*" (Docket EPA-HQ-OAR-2018-0283). This joint rulemaking amends existing Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) and greenhouse gas emissions standards for passenger cars and light-duty trucks and establishes new standards, covering model years 2021 through 2026. We oppose EPA's and NHTSA's efforts.

Cities across the United States are seeing the effects of climate change and are taking action to mitigate impacts on their residents, businesses, infrastructure and economy. Recent extreme weather events, such as heat waves, droughts, heavy downpours, floods, hurricanes and changes in other storms have brought renewed attention to the need to anticipate, prepare for and adapt to these events—across all levels of government. Local elected officials serve as first responders on the front lines when it comes to preparing in advance of these types of emergencies, natural disasters and extreme weather events. They offer immediate assistance to those impacted, and identify strategies, solutions, and partnerships to address situations quickly and efficiently. Weakening the vehicle greenhouse gas emission standards through this proposed rule would hinder local governments' ability to meet their goals under local climate action plans, a key component of which often involves greenhouse gas reduction.

According to EPA's own [analysis](#), the transportation sector generated the largest share of greenhouse gas emissions, nearly 28.5 percent, in the U.S in 2016. Cities are taking action to reduce vehicle emissions through investments in transportation alternatives such as public transit, bike/pedestrian infrastructure, and electric vehicles. These efforts, however, are not enough to meet local emission reduction targets. Therefore, cities heavily rely on vehicle emission standards to help meet overall goals.

Moreover, vehicle emissions impact air quality and a community's ability to meet required ozone levels. Falling outside of required ozone levels can have negative impacts on cities, potentially disqualifying them from federal funding opportunities for highway and transit infrastructure. Robust vehicle emission standards are key to ensuring cities are able to meet ozone requirements.

Finally, we oppose the withdrawal of the Clean Air Act California waiver that allows the state to set its own standards for greenhouse gas emissions and zero emissions vehicles, which 12 other states plus the District of Columbia have adopted. States and local governments are charged with protecting the health, safety, and welfare of its residents. Preempting this authority would overturn nearly a decade of precedent and prevent state and local governments from tailoring laws to the specific needs of their communities.

Attached to this letter is a "Local Leaders' Clean Car Declaration" signed by over 60 local and state leaders earlier this year to voice opposition to EPA's Final Determination to weaken the clean car standards, declaring, "We strongly support the current federal standards for a modern vehicle fleet agreed to in 2012 by the automotive industry, the federal government and the State of California."

In closing, thank you for considering the perspective of local elected officials as you move forward. We urge you to withdraw the proposed rule and to commit to partnering with mayors and cities in taking urgent action to reduce carbon emissions and mitigate the effects of climate change. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our staff: Judy Sheahan, The U.S. Conference of Mayors ([jsheahan@usmayors.org](mailto:jsheahan@usmayors.org) or 202-861-6775) and Carolyn Berndt, National League of Cities ([berndt@nlc.org](mailto:berndt@nlc.org) or 202-626-3101).

Sincerely,

Tom Cochran  
CEO and Executive Director  
The U.S. Conference of Mayors

Clarence E. Anthony  
CEO and Executive Director  
National League of Cities