

Partners for Climate Protection

Greenhouse Gas Reduction Initiative of the Month

Sudbury's hybrid fleet program



Municipal Profile

Population: 157,857

PCP Member since 1997

The City of Greater Sudbury, Ontario, has a long history of environmental action, most notably its EarthCare Sudbury program, which first began a decade ago. EarthCare Sudbury, a partnership between the city, individuals and more than 100 community organizations and businesses, delivers the city's action plan to enhance the local environment, create a healthier community and strength the local economy.

Background

Eric Bertrand, the City of Greater Sudbury's manager of fleet services, explains that the city's municipal fleet of cars used to consist mainly of retired police cars. "After three years of service with the police, the cars would be turned over for our use," he says. "They were big cars (Crown Victorias) and some citizens complained that city officials were driving large, inefficient cars."

In the fall of 2007, city council approved a pilot project to test seven hybrid vehicles as part of its municipal fleet.

Implementation and Approach

As a member of American Public Works, the NAFA Fleet Management Association and the Canadian Association of Fleet Managers, Mr. Bertrand networked with his colleagues and researched a variety of hybrid vehicles. "We also talked to the cities of Hamilton and Toronto about their hybrid programs," says Mr. Bertrand. "From there we developed specifications and issued an RFP."

In December 2007, as part of a scheduled fleet replacement, the city purchased seven Toyota Priuses (*pictured at right, courtesy of the City of Greater Sudbury*): three for bylaw officers, three for building services and one for the citizen service centre and libraries. Depending on outside conditions and speed, the cars operate in one of three modes: gasoline only, electric only or a combination of the two. Kinetic energy from the wheels when braking and surplus engine power continually charge the electric battery.



The city has since purchased 24 more vehicles, for a total fleet of 34. It now has 22 Priuses, nine Ford Escapes and three Toyota Highlanders (used by emergency management services).

Results

Each of the original seven hybrid vehicles costs \$27,000 with estimated annual savings of about \$3,000 per vehicle; the larger Ford Escapes (*pictured below, courtesy of the City of Greater Sudbury*) cost more (\$31,000 each), but both types of vehicles were eligible for federal government rebates. The hybrids emit 50% fewer greenhouse gas emissions than the vehicles they replaced.



“Other than oil changes, there has been no maintenance on any of the cars,” says Mr. Bertrand. “These vehicles can get as much as 170,000 kilometres before needing a brake job, so there will be additional maintenance savings in future.”

The city has received positive feedback on the city’s move to hybrids. “We’ve received calls from people asking for more information about the cars and local car dealers have said that they’ve seen more interest. We now see lots of Priuses and hybrid Escapes around town, so being a leader in this area is really showing promise.”

Lessons Learned

The only complaint received during the pilot was about poor tire traction in winter. Since fleet services found a low-rolling resistant winter tire, there have been no further issues.

Mr. Bertrand recommends that other municipalities considering a similar program set a reasonable time frame to purchase, pilot the vehicles and then speak with other municipalities about their experiences, both good and bad. “You have to have a plan developed and in place as to where you want to end up,” says Mr. Bertrand. “You also have to ‘sell’ council because you need their support.”

Future Direction

Subject to council approval, fleet services plans to add approximately 20 new vehicles per year until the entire fleet of cars is replaced (about 100 vehicles).

Other city fleet initiatives include educating municipal staff about energy-efficient driving, installing auxiliary heaters in some vehicles to cut down on the need to idle engines in cold weather and requiring new vehicles to have LED lighting, which allows lights to be run from the car’s battery instead of the engine.

Further Information

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The Partners for Climate Protection (PCP) program is a network of Canadian municipal governments that have committed to reducing greenhouse gases and acting on climate change. PCP is the Canadian component of ICLEI's Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) network, which involves more than 900 communities worldwide. PCP is a partnership between the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability. PCP receives financial support from FCM's Green Municipal Fund.