



## Reshaping Minnesota's gas system

Something important is happening at the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission, and it could reshape how Minnesota heats its buildings for generations to come. The Clean Heat Minnesota coalition — a diverse group of 40 organizations representing advocates, communities, public health experts, and local governments — is urging regulators to end an outdated policy that's been quietly undermining our climate goals for decades: gas utility line extension allowances.

**So what exactly are line extension allowances? Each time a new building connects to the gas system, someone has to pay for the new pipelines, service lines, and meters needed to make that connection.** For decades, Minnesota's gas utilities have used line extension allowances to shift most of these costs onto existing customers — meaning current ratepayers subsidize the expansion of the gas system. These costs add up to tens of millions of dollars every year!

Fresh Energy is proud to help lead Clean Heat Minnesota alongside our partners at COPAL and the Citizens Utility Board of Minnesota (CUB). Together, we're building toward a future where every Minnesotan can live, work, and play in buildings heated with clean, safe, and affordable energy.

We've built momentum: 15 member organizations filed detailed comments at the Commission highlighting the serious health, climate, and economic risks of continuing to invest in a declining gas system. More than 30 coalition

members, groups, and state agencies signed onto a joint letter supporting an end to line extension allowances.

Clean Heat Minnesota hosted public comment workshops across the state, with Fresh Energy helping to bring community voices into the process. **"If we're going to meet net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, we need to shrink the gas system, not expand it,"** wrote Gail, a single mom and software engineer, in her comment to the Commission.

Fresh Energy worked with 14 organizations, including CURE, Minnesota Interfaith Power & Light, and Sierra Club, to build a strong record. We also filed technical comments with our partners at the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy demonstrating that gas utilities underestimate costs while overestimating revenues — creating an unfair burden on existing customers.

**"Ending gas line extension allowances is essential to meet Minnesota's climate goals,"** said Caitlin Eichten, director of building energy transition at Fresh Energy. **"Utilities should direct financial incentives toward clean energy solutions, not fossil fuel expansion."**

As the Commission decides whether to end or continue line extension allowances, we're hopeful commissioners will choose to create a future where all Minnesotans have access to clean, safe, and affordable energy.



## Letter from leadership



This fall, I experienced my seventh Benefit Breakfast with Fresh Energy and my first as the organization's Chief Executive Officer. Every year, I walk away from this annual celebration of our community feeling recharged, reinvigorated, and ready to get our critical work done.

It's no secret that it has been a year of unprecedented challenges from all directions for clean energy and climate. We have a federal government determined to give fossil fuels a second life and erode our fundamental trust in science.

Reaching net-zero by 2050 requires unmatched investments in the grid, renewables, and technologies for hard-to-decarbonize sectors of the economy. We also must grapple with complex technological, environmental, and societal challenges.

At Fresh Energy, we know that we can take on these challenges and win. But we can't hesitate, and we must keep being bold — and to be bold we need the continued strength of our supporters.

Thank you for your support of Fresh Energy and trust in our work. We can't do this without you. Please know that if you want to talk, I'd love to hear from you. I'm just a call or email away.

Margaret Cherne-Hendrick, Ph.D.  
Chief Executive Officer  
cherne-hendrick@fresh-energy.org  
651 789 1797

## Charting a cleaner course for transportation



Transportation is Minnesota's largest source of carbon emissions, but utilities have a powerful tool to change that: Transportation Electrification Plans (TEPs). Filed every other year, these plans guide investments in electric vehicle charging and programs that benefit the grid and the climate.

Fresh Energy works closely with utilities and stakeholders as these plans take shape to ensure they prioritize equitable and effective investments, including rural and multifamily charging and other public infrastructure buildout; electric school buses; and access for all Minnesotans. With new TEPs now open for public comment, Fresh Energy is pushing for ambitious investments that cut emissions and provide clean air for everyone. Learn more about TEPs by scanning the QR or visiting [bit.ly/MN-TEPs](https://bit.ly/MN-TEPs).



## Decarbonizing our food systems



There's an exciting new program cooking at the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency focused on cutting climate pollution from Minnesota's food systems. Having secured federal funding, the agency is now focused on rolling out its Climate Smart Food Systems program, which will distribute \$200 million in grants. Of those funds, \$60 million will be dedicated to industrial innovation projects.

The program is expected to launch soon, and Fresh Energy is working hard to engage stakeholders and encourage thoughtful grant applications that are future-focused with long-term durability and impact.

## Action in the Heartland



Over 550 people gathered in Saint Paul for our 10th annual Benefit Breakfast — a morning of inspiration, connection, and celebration of Minnesota's clean energy leadership.

Guests heard from three incredible Minnesota changemakers: Karie Kirschbaum from Empower Crookston, Bob Blake of Solar Bear and Native Sun Community Power Development, and Alex Savelli from Accelera by Cummins. Each shared stories of climate progress happening right here in our state, from community-driven solutions to innovative green hydrogen.

The energy in the room was electric as supporters explored the latest electric technology at our Fair of the Future showcase. Together, we celebrated Minnesota's climate action leadership, proving that local solutions create lasting change. Check out the recap at [fresh-energy.org/benefitbreakfast25](https://fresh-energy.org/benefitbreakfast25).



**Learn more about these stories at [fresh-energy.org](https://fresh-energy.org).**



## How Fresh Energy plugs into the Midwest grid

Most clean energy organizations don't have someone dedicated full time to working with MISO, the Midwest's regional grid operator. Fresh Energy does — and that's a critical difference in how we're shaping the future of our electric grid.

**Mike Schowalter, director of regional transmission organization advocacy at Fresh Energy, spends his days deep in the complex world of grid planning and transmission — ensuring that decisions made at MISO prioritize clean energy over costly fossil fuels.** Since joining Fresh Energy in 2021 after working in environmental and renewable energy law, Mike has become our voice in the rooms where some of the Midwest's biggest energy decisions happen.

MISO oversees the electric grid across 15 states and manages the planning and operation of transmission lines — the high-voltage power lines that carry bulk electricity from where it's generated to where it's used. As we transition to more wind and solar power, transmission becomes even more critical. Renewable resources are often located far from cities, and without adequate transmission those clean electrons can't reach homes and businesses.

Mike works in partnership with other clean energy organizations as part of MISO's planning process and serves as vice chair of MISO's Distributed Energy Resources Task Force. He even engages with decisions at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), where major policies affecting the Midwest's energy system are decided — like a recent battle to build a transmission line that would unlock more clean, affordable, and reliable electricity to flow across our nation.

On October 8, Mike attended a ribbon-cutting ceremony in Becker, Minnesota, for the Northland Reliability Project. This transmission line, which runs near the largest solar farm in the Upper Midwest, will carry clean energy more than 180 miles from central Minnesota to a substation near Grand Rapids.

**“Transmission is how we access cheaper wind and solar power,” Mike said. “Building these connections means lower electricity bills and a more reliable grid that can handle extreme weather events. It's essential infrastructure for a carbon-free future.”**

Having Mike plugged into MISO's work ensures Fresh Energy stays ahead of the curve on the transmission system that a clean energy future requires.

## Donor profile



Susie Osaki Holm, MPH, and her husband, Mark Holm, MD, of St. Cloud recently installed a new heat pump in their home. But Susie knows that while personal actions can help reduce emissions, large-scale change requires more.

**“Policy is essential to effect change,” Susie explains. “It's something that I can't do myself, but Fresh Energy has staff speaking to legislators and educating them about climate action.”**

Susie's background in public health makes the connection clear: “The climate crisis is damaging the public's health,” she said, particularly impressed by Fresh Energy's successful defense of Minnesota's 100% clean electricity law this past spring. “I'm very grateful that Fresh Energy is so established and has a great staff of experts.”

**“I just want to help save the planet and all its flora and fauna, including the oceans, from the destruction it's going through from humans,” Susie says. “Fresh Energy is doing good work toward that.”**

Susie encourages others to support Fresh Energy: “If you feel like you can't make an impact on your own, I'd tell you that Fresh Energy is a group of experts making a real difference in Minnesota.”

Join Susie and Mark by making a year-end contribution to Fresh Energy. Contact **Meggie LaValley** today at [lavalley@fresh-energy.org](mailto:lavalley@fresh-energy.org).





408 St. Peter Street, Suite 350  
Saint Paul, MN 55102

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## What a morning!

Catch the best moments from our 10th annual Benefit Breakfast this fall — the energy, the stories, and the inspiration — all in one highlight reel. Visit [bit.ly/Fresh-Breakfast25](https://bit.ly/Fresh-Breakfast25).



## Wanted: Climate champions

Fresh Energy is working hard to speed Minnesota's transition to a clean energy future — but we can't do it without you. **That's where our Action Network comes in.**

The Action Network is your direct connection to making a real difference on climate and clean energy policy. We make it easy for you to advocate for a cleaner future by connecting you with timely, high-impact opportunities to speak up for clean energy at the Minnesota Legislature, the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission, and other critical venues where our energy future is decided.

As a member, you'll receive just a notification or two each month — no inbox overload, only the actions that matter most. We help you stay educated on Minnesota's most pressing climate issues and make it easy for you

to submit a public comment, contact your legislators, or weigh in on an important regulatory decision. **We'll make sure you know exactly how and when your voice can make the biggest impact.**

You don't need to be an energy expert. You just need to care about Minnesota's clean energy future. Every email you send and comment you make will help us build the momentum we need to win on climate.

**Ready to join the team and be a climate champion? Visit [fresh-energy.org/action-network](https://fresh-energy.org/action-network) or scan the QR code to join the Action Network today! Together, we can build a cleaner, healthier Minnesota.**

