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San Diego hit its 2020 climate plan benchmark before document was approved



Mayor Faulconer announces progress on reducing greenhouse gas emissions citywide.



By **Joshua Emerson Smith**

NOVEMBER 10, 2016, 1:15 PM

The city of San Diego released its first Climate Action Plan monitoring report Thursday, finding that its short-term goal for reducing greenhouse-gas emissions was essentially satisfied before the plan was even approved last December.

The report outlined progress on emissions cuts during the past five years and found that by 2015, climate pollution had been reduced by 17 percent below the baseline year of 2010 — surpassing the plan’s targeted 15 percent reduction goal by 2020.

The emissions cuts resulted largely from state and federal mandates to green up electrical grids and improve fuel-efficiency standards.

The city said it couldn't have foreseen that the benchmark would already be achieved.

"... nobody knew our (greenhouse gas) levels in 2015, which is the whole point of doing the annual monitoring," Craig Gustafson, press secretary for Mayor Kevin Faulconer, said in an email. "No (greenhouse gas) analysis had been done since 2010."

The city's [climate blueprint](#) calls for cutting emissions in half by 2035, a target that's been nationally celebrated as a model for fighting global warming. While San Diego officials need to do very little to hit the reduction goals during the next four years because of federal and state mandates that are already built in, the blueprint's long-term milestone will require them to eventually take significant actions.

For example, the city has called for using 100 percent renewable energy and getting half of all commuters living within a half-mile of a major transit stop to abandon their cars in favor of bicycling, walking or taking mass transit to and from work.

The city projects that about 19 percent of all emissions reduction will come from local actions by 2020, increasing to 32 percent by 2035. State and federal programs will make up the rest.

The report also outlined strategies the city is working on to further reduce emissions, such as developing master plans for parks and transportation, as well as installing energy-efficient streetlights.

"The two biggest categories for greenhouse-gas reductions are clean energy and urban mobility — so biking, walking, transit and land use," Cody Hooven, the city's chief sustainability officer, said Thursday at a news conference on Shelter Island. "They involve a lot of behavior change, technology change, new methodologies for how to quantify things and just a lot of action and political will at the city level and in the region."

Diane Takvorian, executive director of the San Diego-based Environmental Health Coalition and a member of the California Air Resources Board, questioned the city's short-term goal in response to the new report.

"Yes (today's) cars are cleaner, but we're very far off from 50 percent of commuters on alternative transportation," she said.

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