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MAYOR LIGHTFOOT ANNOUNCES 15 PERCENT REDUCTION IN TOTAL CARBON EMISSIONS

City makes additional progress toward achieving its 2025 environmental commitments with purchase nearly 100,000 Renewable Energy Credits

CHICAGO--Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot today announced Chicago has reduced emissions by 15% from 2005 to 2017 according to the newly published 2017 Greenhouse Gas Inventory Report. The reductions from 2005 to 2017 are equivalent to taking over 1.2 million passenger vehicles off the road for one year or eliminating the energy used to power over 653,500 homes for a year. The results show that Chicago is already over halfway to meeting its emissions reduction target for 2025, even during a period where economic output has continued to grow.

The new report shows Chicago is well on its way to achieving important emissions reductions while it pursues another significant environmental goal: transitioning all municipal buildings to renewable energy sources by 2025. To further these efforts, the City has purchased 95,000 renewable energy credits to help reduce the city's reliance on electricity and natural gas.

"Chicago is extremely proud to be leading the way in adopting bold and innovative environmental practices that support the health of our residents and the wellbeing of our entire region," said Mayor Lightfoot. "Nonetheless, we all still have a long way to go towards fully addressing the global climate crisis, and are fully committed to working with businesses, advocacy organizations, along with state and federal leaders, towards finding the urgent solutions needed for a sustainable and environmentally-sound future."

According to the report, total carbon emissions have continued to decline rapidly during each inventory period, with an 0.9% reduction per year from 2005 to 2010 to a 2.5% reduction per year from 2015 to 2017. Additionally, emissions reductions from 2005 to 2017 have primarily occurred in the building energy sector with substantial reductions occurring in electricity and natural gas emissions in the commercial sector.

Chicago's greenhouse gas goal is to achieve a 26-28% reduction in emissions levels over the span of 20 years from 2005 to 2025, which is in line with the original commitment made by the Obama Administration as part of the Paris Climate Agreement. In 2017, the City was already 59% of the way toward reaching its target, up 17% from in just two years from 2015.



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“It is fitting that Chicago has found a way to turn America’s most gorgeous skyline into one of the most productive frontlines in the fight against climate change. The City’s greenhouse inventory confirms the impact of smart energy efficiency policies to drive down emissions associated with the building sector,” said Stefan Schaffer, City Strategist for the American Cities Climate Challenge at the Natural Resources Defense Council. “Some of Chicago’s most iconic buildings are leading the way towards a cleaner—and cheaper—energy future by reducing the amount of energy needed year after year. The American Cities Climate Challenge is helping the City leverage even more savings in municipal buildings while also focusing heavily on one of the other major sources of carbon pollution—transportation.”

As part of additional efforts to reach the City’s 2025 commitments, the Department of Assets and Information Services (AIS, formerly 2FM) has purchased 95,000 Green-e certified Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) from Midwestern wind farms, a critical step in helping Chicago transition all municipal buildings to renewable energy sources within the next five years.

The initial REC purchase secures a renewable energy supply for several of Chicago’s most iconic municipal buildings including City Hall, the Chicago Cultural Center and Harold Washington Library for all of 2019 electricity use. The purchase covers nearly 180 facilities citywide including a large number of neighborhood buildings including libraries and fire stations. At the end of March, when final 2019 electricity consumption data is available, the City will verify the amount of RECs purchased covers the total electricity used in each facility.

“We are pleased to have a role in helping the City of Chicago take the next steps in meeting its environmental goals,” said David Reynolds, Commissioner for the Department of Assets and Information Services. “We look forward to continue working alongside Mayor Lightfoot and a group of environmental experts on developing and executing additional practices for Chicago to adopt to become more environmentally friendly and sustainable.”

Procuring these certificates supports the larger renewable energy market by increasing demand for the output of solar, wind and other renewable resources, with a long-term objective of market transformation that moves away from energy generation that causes pollution. RECs are one of the swiftest early steps toward transitioning to 100 percent renewable power. This purchase helps establish the City’s precedent for engaging with renewable energy suppliers while providing visibility into the different market options for accessing renewable electricity.

Chicago is one of 25 cities selected to participate in the American Cities Climate Challenge, an effort to resource cities to take strong action to reduce pollution that contributes to climate change and impacts public health. As part of the challenge, Chicago has pledged to take bold action to reduce emissions from its building and transportation sectors. The Lightfoot administration is underway with collaborative efforts to develop and enact strategies that will develop an equity-based climate action plan and move Chicago to reach its climate commitments over the next decade.



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To learn more about what the City is doing to reach its environmental goals and to read the full Greenhouse Gas Inventory Report please visit www.chicago.gov/environment.

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