

Colorado Town Considers "How Much Renewable Energy is Feasible" - 80% by 2025?

Mon, April 18, 2011 - [John Farrell \(/users/john-farrell\)](#)

A great story of a city looking to - literally - take ownership of its energy future:

The Colorado Renewable Energy Standard, as amended last year by the state Legislature, requires Xcel Energy to get 30 percent of its electricity from renewable sources by 2020.

...Boulder leaders -- who let the city's 20-year franchise agreement with Xcel Energy lapse at the end of 2010 -- are now considering whether they can get an energy mix for their residents with a larger percentage of renewable energy than what Xcel is offering.

...At the "Clean Energy Slam" event in February, which gave participants two minutes to pitch a vision for Boulder's energy future, a representative of Southwest Generation told the crowd that he believed his company could provide Boulder with an energy mix of 50 percent renewables and 50 percent natural gas by 2014. And by 2025, the company could provide up to 80 percent renewable energy to the city, the representative, David Rhodes, said.

...Jonathan Koehn, the city's regional sustainability coordinator, said adding more renewables is only part of the equation.

"We've heard a lot of concern that, perhaps, more clean energy is driving this analysis," he said. "But this is about long-term economic stability. When we talk about what our portfolio might look like in the future, we don't have a predetermined notion of a certain percentage of renewables. What we want is to be able to analyze how we can have long-term stable rates."



It's not just about clean energy and stable rates, however. The decision to eschew a utility franchise was also about localization, [described on a city website \(http://www.bouldercolorado.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=14221&Itemid=4639\)](http://www.bouldercolorado.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=14221&Itemid=4639) as "taking more control in determining:

- Where the energy supply comes from - Locally produced
- What types of energy are provided - Renewables over fossil fuels
- How much we pay for it - Rate control

Local generation of renewable energy will add more to Boulder's economy than importing clean electrons, and if those projects can also be locally owned (perhaps via a [community solar \(http://www.newrules.org/energy/publications/community-solar-power-obstacles-and-opportunities\)](http://www.newrules.org/energy/publications/community-solar-power-obstacles-and-opportunities) project like the [Clean Energy Collective \(http://cleanenergycollective.com/\)](http://cleanenergycollective.com/) is doing in Carbondale, CO) then [the economic benefits multiply significantly \(http://energyselfreliantstates.org/content/jobs-and-economic-impact-community-wind\)](http://energyselfreliantstates.org/content/jobs-and-economic-impact-community-wind).

Photo credit: Flickr user [respres \(http://www.flickr.com/photos/respres/\)](http://www.flickr.com/photos/respres/) (photo is of Denver, not Boulder, but I wanted a sunrise...)

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