

Californians on way to state's new energy goals

January 7 2015, by Ellen Knickmeyer

Clean-energy programs initiated by Gov. Jerry Brown and governors before him have California already well on its way to meeting his new goals for reducing the use of climate-changing fossil fuels, industry experts and state officials said Tuesday.

Pushing programs such as high-speed rail, for which Brown broke ground on Tuesday in Fresno; increasing the standard for gas-powered cars to 35 miles per gallon; and ramping up use of [electric cars](#) and other vehicles powered by [alternative fuels](#) would all help get California to Brown's goals on time, state clean-air officials and industry representatives said.

Brown set promotion of conservation programs and alternatives to oil, gas and coal as a priority for his fourth and final term in his inaugural speech on Monday.

Within 15 years, Brown said, Californians should be getting half of their energy from solar, wind and other [renewable sources](#), using half as much gasoline on the road, and living and working in buildings that are twice as energy-efficient as now.

California utilities already derive about 25 percent of their energy from renewable sources, and projects already in the pipeline are slated to bring that figure to 40 percent by 2024, said Todd Foley, [senior vice president](#) of policy for the American Council On Renewable Energy industry group.

Additionally, California already has been moving toward 80-percent reductions in greenhouse-gas emissions by 2050, under an executive order set by then-Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger in 2005, and cited by Brown in a 2012 order.

Brown's 2012 order called for 1.5 million zero-emission vehicles on state roads by 2025, and for Californians to be driving virtually nothing but zero-emission vehicles by 2050.

California currently has at least 100,000 electric vehicles humming along state roads, the most of any state, thanks in part to Brown's hands-on support for technology-pushing initiatives, and to steady support for energy-efficiency under a series of governors, industry figures said.

"Something like 80 to 90 percent of all EV infrastructure investment is happening in California, and a lot of it is driven by these policies," Terry O'Day, a [vice president](#) of NRG eVgo, a company providing charging stations for electric vehicles.

Brown's announcement of environmental goals "sets a clear target for the mid-term on our way to the 2050 target ... we have policies in place to drive us toward that," said Stanley Young, a spokesman for the state Air Resources Board, which is involved in many state programs for cutting emissions of [fossil fuels](#).

Measures to get there could include the high-speed rail project. State planners hope the rail will cut the number of cars making the long, gas-burning north-south trip from San Francisco to Los Angeles.

Other measures could include increasing standards for fuel efficiency of cars and doubling—at least—Californians' use of alternative fuels including electricity, hydrogen, biofuels and renewable natural gas, the Air Resources Board said in a statement.

An alternative-fuel industry group on Tuesday criticized the state's progress on promoting use of biofuels, which include fuels made from corn or other plants. A state freezing of target biofuel goals at 2013 levels led some companies to delay production or idle production, said Environmental Entrepreneurs, a Washington, D.C.-based group.

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