Leaders from across the state gathered in Denver to learn more about turning human waste into natural gas, which is how Grand Junction currently fuels 40 city vehicles. (City of Grand Junction)

"Renewable natural gas provides an opportunity to convert everyday waste into transportation fuel or renewable electricity," he said. "This can be part of Colorado’s solution to smog and air pollution, to combat climate change, to stabilize fuel prices."

Cox said the same energy extracted by drilling deep into the earth can be harvested from landfills and sewage because, regardless of where organic matter decomposes, methane - the primary component of natural gas - is released. Since methane is more than 80 times more powerful at trapping heat than is carbon dioxide, he said, redirecting emissions into a pipeline could help reduce climate pollution.

Cox pointed to the city of Grand Junction as one example of how renewable natural gas can provide cleaner energy for transportation. He said the city’s Persigo Wastewater Treatment Plant already transforms more than 8 million gallons of sewage into fuel for some 40 vehicles.

"They’re capturing their waste gas at their wastewater treatment plant," he said. "They’re fueling their city’s vehicles - refuse trucks, street sweepers, dump trucks and sedans."

Because the conversion process ends up paying for itself, Cox said, Colorado has an opportunity to replicate Grand Junction’s efforts across the state. With shale production declining, he said, tapping Colorado’s energy infrastructure for renewables could be something that anti-fracking activists and the gas industry can agree on. The conference was co-sponsored by Energy Vision and the Denver Metro Clean Cities Coalition.

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