



Green Group Calls on NYC to Consider RNG for Garbage Truck Fleet

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Environmental nonprofit Energy Vision (EV) is calling on the New York City Department of Sanitation (DSNY) to explore the use of renewable natural gas (RNG) in its trucks.

Joanna Underwood, the organization's founder, last week said diesel exhaust contains more pollutants than cleaner alternatives, and "RNG is the lowest-carbon fuel and can even be net carbon-negative over its lifecycle."

DSNY runs the city's largest heavy-duty fleet with 2,100 trucks.

The move comes on the heels of a joint letter sent late last month by New York City council members urging Mayor Bill de Blasio to "show environmental leadership" by exploring the use of RNG.

Twelve members of the council's Progressive Caucus signed the letter, which said that RNG "could be used both by NYC's surface transit and in our city fleets, further aligning the city's procurement practices with our climate and clean air goals."

The city has pledged to achieve the best air quality of any major U.S. city by 2050 and to cut greenhouse gases 80% from its municipal fleet vehicles by 2035, but EV issued a report recently that said continued reliance on diesel for municipal heavy vehicles would prevent the city from reaching those goals. It added that RNG offered the best fuel alternative for those vehicles.

The city generates 1.2 million tons of food waste annually, EV said, enough to produce RNG to fuel all heavy vehicles in its fleets.

DSNY is exploring electric trucks and renewable diesel, according to EV, but local RNG supporters argue that while renewable diesel significantly cuts greenhouse gas emissions, it doesn't address problems with particulate matter emissions.

The organization conducted research focused on the city that compared economics, as well as emissions, between different fuel types. It concluded that at relative prices of \$4.25/gal for renewable diesel and \$2.25/gal for RNG, fuel savings would offset vehicle cost in five years.

Any truck that can use conventional natural gas can use RNG, with no modification to fuel or vehicle required, according to Phil Vos, program director for EV.

There is a "relatively small number" of compressed natural gas (CNG) trucks in the DSNY fleet, he told OPIS this week, and trucks using CNG "cost \$30,000 to \$40,000 more each than diesel models."

"It's this cost difference that would be offset by fuel savings over about five years," he added.

There is an adequate amount of RNG available to service the fleet, according to Vos. "We've been assured by RNG providers that for a major customer like DSNY, sufficient supply could indeed be made available," he said.

The changeover would not happen overnight, Vos noted.

"RNG can be used in any CNG-capable vehicle, so the relatively small number of CNG trucks already in the DSNY collection fleet could switch over seamlessly," he explained. "The diesel models that make up the majority of the fleet could be replaced with CNG models according to DSNY's normal vehicle replacement cycle, which generally sees collection trucks retired after seven or eight years of service."

EV calls RNG "the most-promising technology available today" because it requires no drilling and is made by capturing and refining the biomethane emitted from decomposing organic wastes such as food wastes, animal manure and wastewater.

RNG is chemically similar to conventional natural gas, the organization said, but has all the characteristics required for a fully sustainable fuel.

EV says its goal is to promote a swift transition to zero-emission renewable energy and fuel options.

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