

Maine Public Utilities Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Maine Public Utilities Commission

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PUC and MDOT Launch Traffic Signal Replacement Program

Program to help municipalities improve energy efficiency, cut electricity and maintenance costs

AUGUSTA, ME - Governor John E. Baldacci announced today that the Maine Public Utilities Commission (PUC) and Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) are joining forces to improve the energy efficiency of traffic signals across the state. The PUC is awarding \$200,000 to fund MDOT's Municipal Traffic Signal Replacement Program, which provides grants to Maine cities and towns to update their traffic signal lighting technology. Program benefits include increased signal energy efficiency, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, and reduced municipal signal maintenance costs.

The Traffic Signal Replacement Program helps municipalities retrofit their traffic signals from incandescent lighting to energy-saving LED-based signals. In addition to saving energy, the highly efficient light emitting diode (LED) units have an average life of ten years compared to one year for incandescent lights, which also reduces municipal signal maintenance costs.

This program responds to recent directives from the Legislature for state agencies to coordinate their energy policies, and supports a recent agreement by the New England Governor's and Eastern Canadian Premiers to work jointly to reduce carbon emissions within the region. This strategy is one of the strategies specifically recommended for carbon reductions by the governors and premiers.

According to Peter Coughlan, Director of MDOT's Community Services Division, "This program not only significantly reduces municipal signal energy use, saving Maine communities significant money in electric bills and signal maintenance costs, but also improves Maine's environment."

The PUC and MDOT determined that financial assistance to municipalities is necessary because the high initial cost of the LED kits has kept many cities and towns from investing in them. The investment in this program, however, is quickly recovered through reduced energy use and costs. Over the life of the LED bulb, reduced energy use creates almost \$3 in savings for every \$1 spent.

The maintenance savings, which are also significant, are an additional benefit passed on to taxpayers in communities that take advantage of the program. More than 80 municipalities are now eligible.

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In April, the Legislature passed a law directing the PUC to design and implement programs to promote efficient electricity use throughout Maine. The Traffic Signal Replacement Program is the latest in a series of programs being implemented in response to the new efficiency law.

“The Traffic Signal Replacement Program is an important addition to the portfolio of efficiency programs we are providing consumers,” said Bill Nugent, PUC Commissioner, “and will help Maine municipalities control their electric costs.” Nugent added, “This program, like all our efficiency programs, will help Maine consumers and taxpayers make permanent changes in their energy use.”

For more information on the Signal Replacement Program, municipalities should contact Peter Coughlan at MDOT’s Community Services Division at 624-3266 or peter.coughlan@maine.gov.

For more information on the Maine PUC’s other electric energy efficiency programs, or to get involved in the development of on-going efficiency programs, contact the PUC at 287-3831 or toll-free at 1-800-452-4699, or visit the PUC website at <http://www.maine.gov/mpuc/>.

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For more information: http://www.state.me.us/mpuc/electric_conservation/electricconservation.htm

All PUC New Releases maybe found on our website at:
<http://www.maine.gov/mpuc/newsreleases2003.htm>

To arrange an interview with Chairman Welch or Commissioners Nugent or Diamond, please contact Phillip Lindley at 207.287.1598 or by e-mail at phil.lindley@maine.gov. The Commission’s website may be accessed through the Maine School and Library Network at all public libraries in Maine.