



Energy Blog

OC Streetcar: What about it? (Page 1 of 3)

This week’s blog is written by Roberto Guzman, an intern in CAP OC’s Planning department. Robert is a recent graduate of California State University, Fullerton (CSUF), where he earned his bachelor’s degree in geography. He is an aspiring planner with a passion for transportation and mobility. In the future he hopes that he will be able to use his excitement for all things transit to help make alternative mobility options more viable and increase access to public transit to make the community healthier and safer for all.

Many of you readers may have heard something about the OC Streetcar project that is set to be completed in either 2024 or 2025. Because of this, I wanted to show my support for the project and share the benefits the streetcar will bring to the cities of Santa Ana and Garden Grove. This project will serve as a “last mile connection” (OCTA, 2024) that will help connect Orange County residents to other bus and rail lines located at the Santa Ana Regional Transportation Center (SARTC).

This approximate 4-mile route will connect the SARTC to Santa Ana’s downtown, its Central Business District, and another transit hub located at Harbor Boulevard and Westminster Avenue within the city of Garden Grove. Some of you may be wondering, what is a streetcar? The OCTA (Orange County Transportation Authority) defines a streetcar as “a short train-like vehicle with metal wheels powered by electricity that operates alongside cars via rails embedded in the street” (OCTA). In short, it’s sort of like a combination between a train and car--it has wheels like a car,

Fri, April 5, 2024

OC Streetcar: What about it? continued (Page 2 of 3)

but it moves along a fixed track like a train. In 2008, the cities of Garden Grove and Santa Ana partnered with OCTA to help develop the project, and in 2015, development officially began for the design, construction, operations and maintenance of the OC Streetcar.

As an advocate for alternative forms of transportation, I support this project as it will help connect residents to other train and bus lines that commuters rely on for travel and to get them to work and school. I believe the biggest benefits are for those who do not have access to a car; both riders who do or do not have a car will benefit from the increased number of connections to other rail and bus lines and some environmental benefits.

People who do not have access to a personal automobile will benefit from the addition of the streetcar in their community; the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) estimated that certain areas near the streetcar line within Garden Grove and Santa Ana are “transit dependent.” Their median incomes are only slightly above the Federal Poverty Level and an estimated 17.8 percent of residents do not own a car; transit could assist these residents as numerous studies suggest that access to transit can help reduce economic inequalities.

Fortunately, everyone can benefit from more connections to bus and rail lines whether you have a car or not; OCTA estimates this 4-mile line will connect riders with over 14 different bus routes, about 69 weekday train connections and 38 weekend train connections. The streetcar will help better connect riders to the other bus and rail lines that they rely on to travel to school and work and will help to better connect people to the vibrant and culturally rich area that is Downtown Santa Ana. The implementation of the streetcar would have some environmental benefits as well.

The FTA estimates that 2.3 million trips could be generated every year from the use of the streetcar, which means that people would be using their cars less and lessening the amount of emissions that are put into the air, which could potentially

OC Streetcar: What about it? continued (Page 3 of 3)

lead to healthier and cleaner air that we all share.

I believe the OC Streetcar project is an amazing opportunity for the county; people who do not have access to a car could benefit greatly, and those who use transit will be better connected to other bus and rail lines that they depend on for travel and commuting to school and work. The increased trip generation from the streetcar could reduce the amount of vehicle emissions that are put into our atmosphere and I am excited to take a ride on the new streetcar when it becomes available.

Sources:

- (1) [The Stranded Poor: Recognize the Importance of Public Transportation for Low-Income Households](#)
- (2) [OC Streetcar Santa Ana/Garden Grove, Orange County, California](#)
- (3) [OC Streetcar: Connecting our communities with tomorrow](#)
- (4) [OC Streetcar Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- (5) [OC Streetcar Santa Ana - Garden Grove.](#)



Energy Blog



Renewable Energy: What is It? (Page 1 of 2)

This week's blog is written by Susan Nguyen, one of CAP OC's Planning interns. She is Vietnamese-American, born and raised in Orange County. Because of her roots in Orange County, she would like to give back to her community. In this blog, she will cover various topics related to renewable energy, such as the different types of renewable energy.

Renewable energy is the natural source used to produce energy around the community. Solar, wind and hydropower are some renewable energy sources used today and will continue to in the future. Other sources used for energy are gas, fossil fuels, oil, etc., but these are being burned to produce energy; however, this affects the air because it will become polluted with the production of carbon dioxide from those non-renewable energy sources. Our community is trying to reduce the use of non-renewable energy because it can harm us; therefore, we are implementing renewable energy that would now be more cost-efficient.

Solar energy is collected from the sunlight to produce energy such as heating, cooling, electricity, etc., which is converted from either panels or mirrors. The cost of solar panels has decreased significantly, making this electricity more affordable. Not only would the U.S. be able to afford solar panels now, but other countries would also implement their lifestyles with solar panels.

Large turbines produce wind energy, which can be placed on land (onshore) or

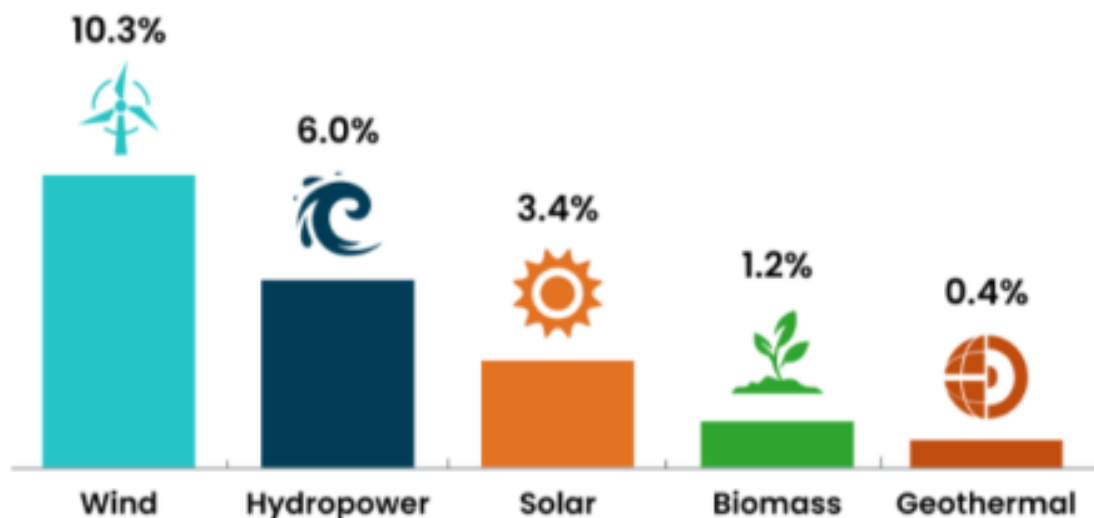
Fri, April 12, 2024

Renewable Energy: What is it? continued (Page 2 of 2)

freshwater (offshore). Wind energy may vary depending on the area where it is placed and the wind's speed to produce enough power. Over the years of advancement for newer and improved wind energy, offshore turbines have had more significant potential to produce energy. This is because it is in a remote area where the wind speed can produce more energy through these wind turbines.

Hydropower energy uses high and low elevations of reservoirs and rivers to produce energy. Hydropower can provide clean drinking water, control floods and droughts, irrigation water, and supply energy with this renewable energy source. It is the largest renewable energy source. However, it can only be stable if rainfalls are consistent, or if climate changes drastically, it may affect how much energy is produced through hydropower. Hydropower energy is also an environmentally friendly source and is more suitable for remote communities.

The graph below shows that the most used renewable energy sources in the U.S. in 2022 are wind, hydropower, and solar. Learn more information about Renewable Energy sources [here](#).



In 2025, it is estimated that the generation of solar energy will increase by 75% and 11% for wind. With the amount of resources that the U.S. has, we can generate these renewable energy sources more than 100 times the amount that Americans use electricity each year.



Energy Blog

Thoughtful Thinking: What does it mean to live an eco-friendly lifestyle? (Page 1 of 5)

This week's blog is written by Briana Ancona, CAP OC's Climate Corps Fellow. They are a recent UC Berkeley graduate with interests in sustainable agriculture, local food systems and environmental health and justice. In this blog, they will ask readers to think critically about their habits and what it means to be an environmentalist.

As we prepare for Earth Day on Monday, we've been thinking about the phrase "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle." Have you ever stopped and wondered what those three words truly mean? We are living in a time where greenwashing (see third paragraph for definition) is extremely prolific (especially on social media) and meant to persuade you into purchasing new products that are seemingly "earth-friendly" and beneficial. But doesn't that defeat the purpose of the environmentalist mantra "reduce, reuse, recycle?" Is it better to purchase new products that are sustainably made and toss out our old plastic items, or should we continue using the items to ensure they last and reduce our consumption? This article will help you reflect on what it means to live an environmentally-friendly lifestyle and what it means to reduce, reuse and recycle.

Let's get started by getting a better understanding of what greenwashing is. You probably have heard this term thrown around on the news or on social media, but what does it mean?

Fri, April 19, 2024

Thoughtful Thinking: What does it mean to live an eco-friendly lifestyle? (Page 2 of 5)

Greenwashing is a term coined by Jay Westerveld, a prominent environmentalist in the 1980s, in an essay on hotels promoting a towel reuse policy as a way to “save the environment.” In reality, it was just a cost-saving strategy disguised as a solution to reducing one’s environmental impact. Today, greenwashing refers to the deceptive advertising tactics that companies use to insinuate they are doing more than they are to protect the environment. You will often see this when a company uses intentionally misleading labels like “green” or “eco-friendly,” two phrases that are not actively defined in any commerce governing body on their products. Other examples include vagueness of specific ingredients used in their products, emphasizing one environmental benefit without addressing the other impacts their product can have or claiming to have a plan to be “net-zero” without disclosing that plan to the public.

Greenwashing often undermines the larger impacts of climate change, promoting quick fixes and band-aid solutions rather than addressing the real issues at hand. While it is important to hold large corporations accountable for the amount of pollution they produce, it is also important to realize that your habits do have an impact on the planet. So, what can you do? Is there really a way we can navigate our lives while reducing our impact on the environment?

Reduce

Of course there is! As mentioned earlier, companies are intentionally guilt-tripping you and misleading you into believing that your choices are what is causing the climate crisis. As a consumer, it is important to learn and understand these common greenwashing tactics and use your purchasing power to invest in products that are sustainably sourced and made. Spending wisely will have a larger impact on the planet and on your wallet as you are less likely to constantly be spending on items that may or may not last you.

Reuse

And what about the items you already own? Do you really need to be swapping out

Thoughtful Thinking: What does it mean to live an eco-friendly lifestyle? (Page 3 of 5)

all your purchases with sustainable options? The answer is complicated and depends on several factors, but generally, you should try to use items until the end of their lifespan. For example, a silicone spatula you purchased at a home goods store last month can last you upwards of years with proper cleaning and care. The same can be said for clothing. This will not only save you money in the long run, but also give you time to reflect on items you would like to purchase in the future. You can investigate how materials are sourced, where items are produced, if they are produced sustainably and equitably, etc., to make an informed decision as a consumer.

As we've entered the new decade, we have seen an influx of mass-produced clothing made very cheaply with synthetic fabrics. Fast fashion has flooded the market and become the new norm, accelerating fashion trends and the amount of clothing the average person purchases. The number of clothes the average person buys has increased by over 60% from the years 2000 to 2014. This increase has reduced the number of times people keep and reuse clothing and escalated the amount of old and new clothing entering landfills from people donating or tossing their old and unwanted clothing. Rather than buying new clothing every season, see how you can create new outfits with your current clothes. Invest in repairing old favorites, if possible, either by mending the items yourself or with a professional or consider upcycling. Let your creativity flow, you'll be surprised how much more you can use and enjoy your clothing with a new unique flair, like a patch covering a rip in your jeans or unique colors and patterns used in mending techniques.

Recycle

When you think about recycling, you probably have an image of a blue bin with white arrows forming a triangular cycle. Recycling is defined as the process of collecting old materials that would have otherwise been thrown out and turned into new items. This can be seen with aluminum recycling, where old aluminum products are broken down and turned into new aluminum products. This is obviously not possible for the average person to do but there are ways to recycle products you

Thoughtful Thinking: What does it mean to live an eco-friendly lifestyle? (Page 4 of 5)

have may have sitting in your trashcan.

For example, an old two-liter soda bottle can be turned into a self-watering planter with some scissors and a little bit of time. Those plastic takeout containers can be reused and upcycled into storage organizers for your office desk or into small planters for house plants.

Plastic is not the only thing you can recycle. Composting has become a very large part of everyday life, in part due to the passage of SB 1383, a bill aimed to reduce food waste in California, and overall understanding that food waste in landfills produces large amounts of methane, a very destructive greenhouse gas. Recycling your food waste by composting can help reduce your overall impact on the environment and creates opportunities for communities to rebuild their soil quality by introducing organic matter to urban soils (which are often compacted and poor in nutrient quality). You can either throw your food scraps and food soiled paper materials in the green bin and set it out for pick up or you can learn to compost on your own. For more information on composting, check out the Master Gardeners of Orange County's website [here](#). They have a video series on composting that is informative and easy to follow. For more information on what residential organics recycling is and what Orange County is doing to divert food waste from landfills, click [here](#).

For those items you have no idea how to recycle, check out this [neat guide](#) that has information on how to recycle anything from batteries to soiled pizza boxes.

In conclusion, creating a sustainable, environmentally-friendly lifestyle does not mean you need to change every aspect of your life and purchase new, eco-friendly items. Simply reflecting on your day-to-day actions and thinking critically about the products you use in your everyday life are steps to living a more sustainable lifestyle. Forming new habits does not occur overnight and requires thoughtful

Thoughtful Thinking: What does it mean to live an eco-friendly lifestyle? (Page 5 of 5)

intention. Start small. Things like switching from liquid soap to a soap bar or holding clothing swaps with your friends to get rid of old clothing and give your friends' clothes a second chance can make a big impact. Little by little, you will see a change in your habits and the growth you've had since starting your environmentalist journey. Keep at it, you will be able to see a change.

Sources:

- (1) [Recycling Basics and Benefits](#)
- (2) [Overconsumption in the fashion industry](#)
- (3) [Greenwashing - thee deceptive tactics behind environmental claims](#)
- (4) [The troubling evolutions of corporate greenwashing](#)
- (5) [The History of Greenwashing and its Modern Evolution](#)
- (6) [Visible Mending Has Never Looked So Good](#)
- (7) [You Probably Didn't Know You Could Recycle These Common Household Goods—But Here's How to Do It](#)
- (8) [Residential Organics Recycling](#)
- (9) [Composting Video Series](#)



Energy Blog

Understanding Policies: The Inflation Reduction Act (Page 1 of 3)

This week's blog is written by Audrey Aaltonen, one of CAP OC's Planning Interns. Audrey is a first-year Economics major at the University of California, Los Angeles who is passionate about public policy and social justice.

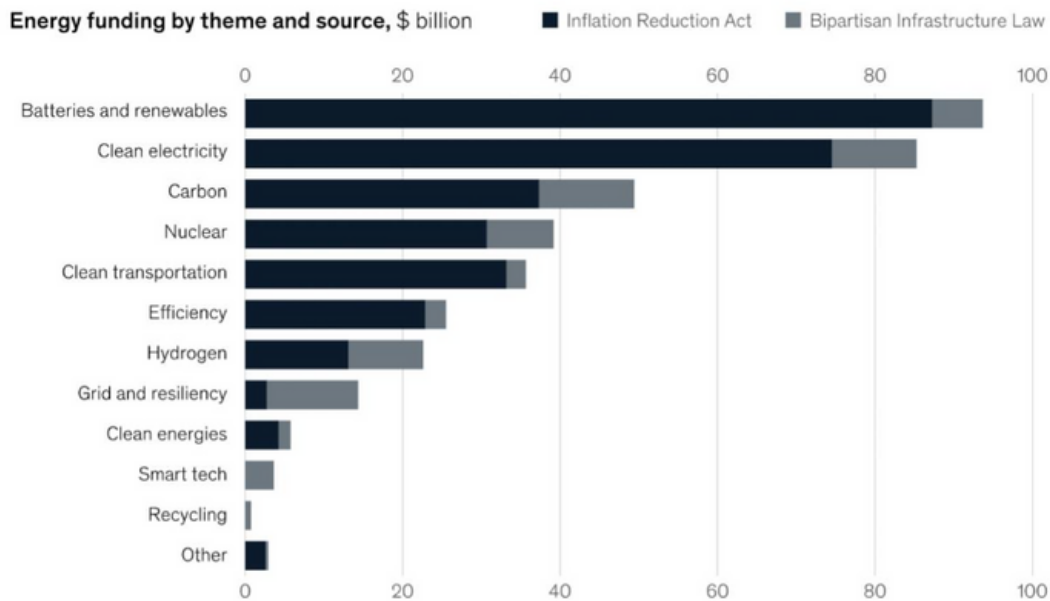
The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) represents a groundbreaking investment from the federal government to address climate change, promote clean energy and reduce consumer costs. It was signed into law on August 16, 2022 and is the most significant climate investment in U.S. history, providing around \$369 billion to drive the transition to renewable energy sources and enhance energy security over the next decade. It aims to invest in domestic energy production and manufacturing as well as reduce carbon emissions by 40% by 2030.

At the core of the Inflation Reduction Act lies a substantial investment in clean energy technologies and incentives for their adoption. The legislation allocates funding toward energy security and climate change initiatives, making it one of the largest federal investments in this domain. This funding will support the development and deployment of renewable energy sources, such as solar, wind and geothermal power, and the advancement of energy storage solutions and clean transportation options.

One of the key components of the act is the extension and expansion of tax credits for clean energy projects, including residential and commercial solar installations,

Fri, April 26, 2024

Understanding Policies: The Inflation Reduction Act continued (Page 2 of 3)



The Inflation Reduction Act: Here's what's in it

energy-efficient home upgrades, and the purchase of electric vehicles. These tax incentives aim to make clean energy solutions more affordable and accessible to individuals and businesses, accelerating the transition to a greener economy.

Additionally, the Inflation Reduction Act addresses energy efficiency in buildings, providing rebates and tax credits for homeowners and businesses to upgrade their properties with energy-efficient appliances, insulation, and other energy-saving measures. By reducing energy consumption and associated costs, these initiatives contribute to both environmental sustainability and cost savings for Americans.

Furthermore, the act promotes domestic manufacturing of clean energy technologies, such as solar panels, wind turbines, and batteries. This effort is expected to create new job opportunities, stimulate economic growth, and strengthen America's position as a leader in the clean energy sector.

While the Inflation Reduction Act represents a significant stride towards a more sustainable energy future, its implementation and long-term impact will depend on continued efforts from policymakers, businesses and individuals. Nonetheless, this

Understanding Policies: The Inflation Reduction Act continued (Page 3 of 3)

Nonetheless, this legislation demonstrates a commitment to addressing climate change and promoting energy security through a comprehensive approach that encompasses technological advancements, financial incentives and a transition towards a cleaner, more efficient energy landscape.

Sources:

- (1) [This Guide Can Help You Save Money and Fight Climate Change](#)
- (2) [The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022](#)
- (3) [Inflation Reduction Act Guidebook](#)
- (4) [Summary of Inflation Reduction Act provisions related to renewable energy](#)