

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## Introduction

*“Erie County can take action to ensure its part in protecting the well-being and future of our planet by promulgating a plan to implement the United States target contribution plan to the Paris Agreement, as it pertains to Erie County, and to take such further action as it may by law to enforce the target contribution goals set by the United States within the bounds of the County of Erie, State of New York.”*

This statement in Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz’s Executive Order #17, *Enforcement of the Paris Climate Agreement*, captures the essence of why Erie County is compelled to take action on this global priority despite a lack of leadership at the federal level. Along with other state and local officials across the United States, County Executive Poloncarz seeks to protect our County, as well as our state, nation and world, from the impacts of climate change by committing to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

The *Erie County Commits to Paris* working group was formed and included multiple county departments, as well as the Erie County Environmental Management Council. The working group produced a report in which strategies for the County to meet the target goals set out by the international climate agreement were identified.

The report makes clear that there is no silver bullet. Instead, the report outlines a wide variety of projects and recommendations for the County to meet the goal of reducing GHG emissions to 26-28% below 2005 levels by 2025.

## Report Organization

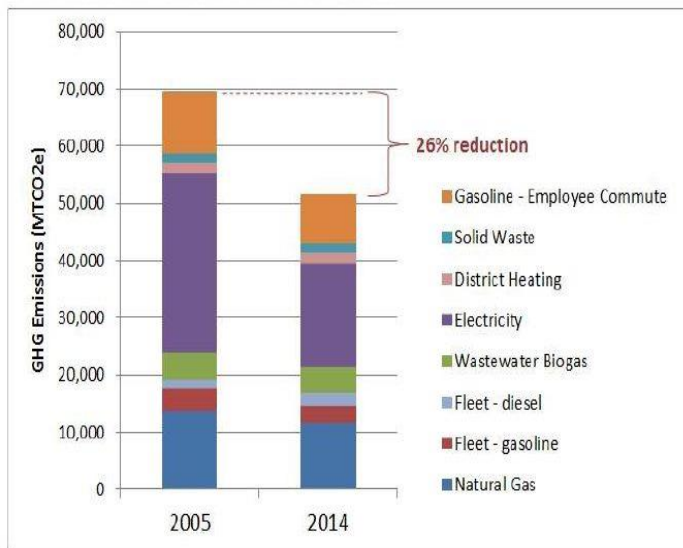
The report is divided into two main parts: Internal Operations and Community-Wide. Both parts contain a brief background including a GHG inventory baseline, comparing 2005 to 2014, as well as recommended initiatives to reduce GHG. This Executive Summary highlights the background and key initiatives in each area.

## Erie County Internal Operations

Erie County government has extensive internal operations, including more than 220 buildings, 1,195 County-owned vehicles, 1,100 miles of sewers, 1,187 miles of County roads, 5,500 employees, and 300,000 residents served annually through its Social Services programs. In fact, there are three states that manage fewer miles of highways than Erie County.

The results of the GHG inventory for internal operations showed that **Erie County has already met the Paris Climate Agreement goals** of a 26% reduction from its 2005 levels (Figure 1). While the County did implement several energy conservation initiatives during this timeframe, the primary source of GHG emissions reductions was a change in the electricity purchased by the County to less GHG-intense generation sources. Despite already attaining the Paris Climate Agreement goal for its operations, the County will continue to aggressively work to lower its emissions, especially as this will augment the broader, more challenging community-wide GHG reduction effort.

**Figure 1 - 2005 versus 2014 Internal GHG Emissions**



**The following are key recommended initiatives to reduce GHG emissions from internal operations:**

#### **Erie County Utilities:**

*Erie County will explore decreasing its GHG emissions through procurement of renewable electricity.* This will be achieved with assistance from the energy contractor, which manages the County's utility fund. One option is for the County, utilizing its position as a participant in the wholesale market, to contract directly with a renewable energy generator. Another option is to purchase Renewable Energy Credits (RECs). Finally, the County could pursue more net metering projects. The County has gained experience with this through the Power Purchase Agreement at the Correctional Facility and the work that is being done with the University at Buffalo on a grant called the REV Campus Challenge.

#### **Erie County Fleet Policies and Standards:**

*For deep GHG emissions reductions in the County fleet, the most important strategies will be the purchase of low and zero emissions vehicles and the use of alternative fuels.* Advances in technology are increasingly bringing to market cost-effective, low and zero emissions vehicles. The report recommends two targets: 1) 20% of the County fleet will be electric and/or hybrid vehicles by 2025, and 2) reduce fleet GHG emissions by 30% below 2005 levels by 2025. Erie County will work to develop a robust vehicle procurement policy.

#### **Paris Fund:**

*By creating a "Paris Fund" within its own budget, Erie County will reinvest savings from energy conservation projects to fund further initiatives geared towards sustainability and energy conservation.* To do so, the

County would create a methodology to track combined state incentives, utility rebates, and savings realized due to specific energy conservation efforts. First, the savings would fund the following year's debt service costs for related energy capital projects. Next, a portion of the net savings would be reserved and available to conduct additional projects to further reduce GHG emissions. Lastly, the remaining funds would be returned to the general fund.

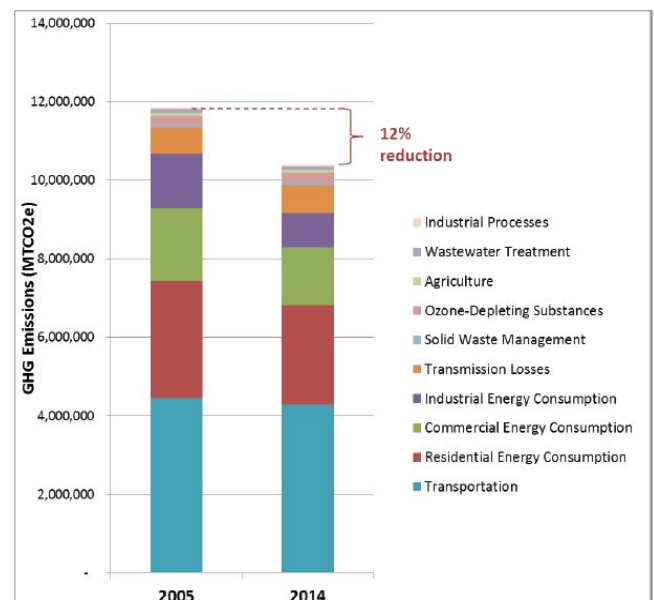
## **Community-Wide**

Erie County government is just one government among 3 cities, 25 towns, 16 villages, and more than 920,000 residents within the County. County government GHG emissions account for only 0.5% of the community's overall emissions. Thus, meaningfully impacting the community's GHG emissions will require substantially more than Erie County can attain in its own operations.

Community-wide GHG emissions declined 12% between 2005 and 2014, as shown in Figure 2. Most of the emissions reductions are from a decrease in emissions resulting from a transition to cleaner generation sources for electricity.

New York State is a home rule state, which means that the County does not have the legal authority for many types of actions (for example: regulations concerning zoning and buildings codes). Therefore, the report highlights initiatives where the County can have an impactful role by promoting community initiatives, providing leadership, convening partners, adopting New York State enabling legislation, and working across the State to create additional programs and support.

**Figure 2 - 2005 versus 2014 Community GHG Emissions**



The following are key recommended initiatives to reduce community-wide GHG emissions:

**ECLIPSE: Erie County Low Income Program for Sustainable Energy:**

*Erie County will create a community-scale energy program to spur local energy-related economic development and address energy affordability for low and moderate income residents.* Lack of energy affordability is an incredible drain on the local economy and is a driver of chronic economic vulnerability among households as they struggle to meet their basic needs. Reducing trade-offs associated with energy insecurity will promote healthier, more prosperous communities across Erie County. Erie County will use ECLIPSE in several ways. First, it will explore extending Erie County's bulk purchasing program to residential, small commercial and non-profit customers. Second, ECLIPSE will drive collaboration among departments that provide energy and environmental services – breaking down silos within government – to reduce disparities across populations facing high energy burdens. Third, ECLIPSE will utilize data driven program design and evaluation to gain valuable insights about individuals and populations participating in the program to determine its impact, optimize outcomes, and better align services to help reduce costs.

**Property Assessed Clean Energy Financing (PACE):**

*Erie County will work with the Erie County Legislature to pass enabling legislation allowing PACE financing for renewable energy projects and energy efficiency upgrades on commercial buildings.* PACE is a New York State initiative that provides financing for renewable energy projects and energy efficiency upgrades on commercial buildings. Bringing PACE financing to Erie County will catalyze investments in commercial buildings, including improvements to multi-family housing. PACE financing is longer term than typically available to property owners, and is paid as an annual assessment on the owner's property tax bill, allowing the loans to be transferable on sale of the property. The program allows for projects that would not otherwise be feasible, spurring investment in the region's building stock. PACE requires the local taxing authority to pass enabling legislation and administer some aspects of the program. If adopted, PACE would be available to the areas where Erie County has taxing authority (the entire county except the Cities of Buffalo, Lackawanna, and Tonawanda). These cities would need to pass their own enabling legislation in order for PACE to be accessed in their communities. Recently PACE was adopted by Wyoming County and the City of Lockport.

**Regional Transportation:**

*Transportation is a major source of GHG emissions in Erie County. The County will identify and assess transportation policy options within its authority that could significantly reduce community-wide GHG emissions.* Additionally, the County will actively collaborate with partners, such as the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA), Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council (GBNRTC), Niagara River Greenway Commission, Citizens for Regional Transit, and GObike Buffalo to expand public transportation, multi-use trail networks, and alternative commuting options to reduce GHG emissions. Because the County's current involvement with GBNRTC is rather limited from a planning perspective, the Erie County Department of Environment and Planning will take a more active role in GBNRTC's transportation planning process for the region.

































































































**Conclusion**

Erie County is galvanized to mitigate the threats posed to our community by climate change, and it is aggressively moving forward to implement the many strategies identified by the *Erie County Commits to Paris* working group. The full list of strategies is on the back page of this document.

Fortunately, many of these recommended projects will result in fiscal savings and create jobs. However, it will take political and community will to implement those initiatives that do not demonstrate as much cost savings, at least in the short-run. In order to create that resolve, Erie County will make a concerted effort to create partnerships around this issue.

# SUMMARY TABLE OF INITIATIVES

Initiative	Status *	Buildings - Electricity 	Buildings - Heating 	Renewable Energy 	Transportation 	Methane & Biogas 	Funding Mechanism 	Policy 
Rath Building	C							
134 West Eagle	C							
Big Sister Creek Water Resources Recovery Facility	C							
Gravity Sewer Projects	C							
Electric Vehicle Purchase	C							
Solar Installation at the Correctional Facility	C							
Energy Performance Contract	U							
Strategy for Future Re-Lamping Projects	U							
REV Campus Challenge	U							
Composting Project at Jail	U							
Erie County Fleet Policies and Standards	R							
Other Procurement Policies	R							
Tax Incentives for Public Transportation for Employees	R							
Support Alternative Transportation through Infrastructure and Policy	R							
Erie County Utilities	R							
Assess Solar on Roofs of County Buildings	R							
Create renewable thermal targets within Erie County operations	R							
Paris Fund	R							
Tree Management and Habitat	R							
WNY Sustainable Business Roundtable	C							
Solarize Campaign	C							
ECLIPSE: Erie County Low Income Program for Sustainable Energy	U							
Climate Smart Communities - Certification & Community Climate Change Task Force	U							
PACE - Property Assessed Clean Energy Financing	R							
Property Tax Exemptions	R							
Revolving Loan Fund	R							
Community Solar	R							
Renewable Heating and Cooling	R							
Purchasing Renewables through Utilities Aggregation	R							
Parking Lot Policy: Public Electric Vehicle, Green Infrastructure & Solar Installations	R							
Carbon Pricing	R							
Energy Performance Ratings	R							
Inter-County	R							
Intra-County	R							
Regional Transportation	R							
Utility Infrastructure	R							
Outreach & Training Partnerships	R							

 Internal Operations  Community Wide  Partnership Opportunities

\* Status: C = Current, U = Upcoming, and R = Recommended

To request a copy of the full report, contact the Erie County Department of Environment & Planning, 95 Franklin Street, 10th Floor, Buffalo, NY 14202; (716) 858-8390 or visit [www.erie.gov/paris](http://www.erie.gov/paris)