

Day Six | December 9, 2022 | Düsseldorf



Region Nine Presents at the Ministry of Environment and Transportation of NRW

The Region Nine delegation started their last day in Düsseldorf at the Ministry of Environment and Transportation.

Hartmut Schug, Senior Consultant for VDI Technologiezentrum GmbH, explained how the green policies of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) is directly connected to the green economy and how both are being supported. This support comes through continued support of green policies and providing exchange opportunities both throughout Germany and internationally.

Frank Kohlasch, Climate Director for the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency gave a presentation on the state's Climate Action Network. He showed the subtle, and not-so-subtle, trends and future projections that show the importance of the Climate Action Framework.

Then Ken Smith, CEO of Ever-Green Energy, spoke on how we can move from a linear to a circular economy that will improve efficiency and decrease

energy use. Smith also emphasized that these will not be easy changes. "I don't use the word transition. I use transformation. Transition makes it sound easy. This is not easy," said Smith.

Finally, Virginia Mooty Rutter, Director of Engagement and Strategic Initiatives for Clean Energy Economy MN, discussed Minnesota's clean energy transition and the benefits to the economy. She touched on the growth in clean energy jobs and the policies that support them.

To end the session, RNDC Executive Director Nicole Griensewic presented the Ministry with a plaque commemorating the Region Nine delegation's learning exchange to North Rhine-Westphalia.



Stadtwerke Düsseldorf's Plan for the Future of NRW's Utility Infrastructure

Stadtwerke Düsseldorf supplies over 600,000 private and industrial customers with a majority of their utilities. This includes electricity, gas, water, and waste/recycling.

They look for ways to provide these utilities with a focus on lowering their effect on the environment. To achieve this, Stadtwerke has invested in plants based on natural gas, which can eventually be switched to hydrogen and biomass co-generation plants. They are also continuing to expand wind and solar plants.

They also spoke on the need to change how the citizens of Düsseldorf commute. Stadtwerke is working on structural changes to address the best way to address the large, and growing, population of commuters that use their own vehicles to move about the crowded city.

Stadtwerke knows that any changes must be customer-focused while still working towards their goal of climate neutrality by 2035. They hope to achieve this by investing in electric vehicle infrastructure and improving the connectivity of mass transit.

This presentation was beneficial to the delegation as many cities in Region Nine look for ways to combat some of same issues of updating utilities and transportation.



Representatives from two of these towns gave some background on their cities and shared some of the concerns that towns in Southern Minnesota face.

New Ulm City Manager, Chris Dalton, explained how the city is proud of its German heritage on how that might be leveraged to help spark change in the community. Dalton said, "look at what they are doing in Germany. We can follow their example."

To close out the session, Mayor of Comfrey, Gary Richter laid out why small towns are slow to implement structural changes. "Small towns are overlooked. Even when we want to make improvements, we don't have the tax base. We need help," said Richter.

Lunch with Petra Schepsmeier: The Importance of Connections and Communications

The delegation attended a lunch hosted by NRW. Energy4Climate Project Manager/Climate Networker, Petra Schepsmeier. Schepsmeier is not only an expert in networking and telling the story of the organization's campaigns, she is a scientist with expertise in local climate initiatives.

She spoke on the importance of communicating the work NRW.Energy4Climate as well as creating connections that will progress their projects throughout NRW. One of these projects is the Ostwestfalen Lippe (OWL) campaign that provides professional communication resources for their partners in NRW.

This meeting also gave RNDC Communications Specialist, Nathan George, an opportunity to discuss what is working for R9's German counterparts. George has been working on telling the story of Region Nine counties and the work that RNDC is doing in regards to economic development, clean energy and welcoming communities.