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The Energy Innovation Corridor Wins MEEA Inspiring Efficiency Innovation Award

CHICAGO –The Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance (MEEA) today announced the winner of the 2012 Inspiring Efficiency Innovation Award as the Energy Innovation Corridor in the Twin Cities area of Minnesota.

The Energy Innovation Corridor is a clean energy and transportation showcase that offers a wide range of energy efficiency, renewable energy, clean transportation and smart technology tools and programs to local businesses and residents. It lies along an 11-mile stretch between Minneapolis and St. Paul.

It started in 2009, when a group of 21 businesses, nonprofits and government agencies created a unique proving ground for integrated sustainable energy and transportation planning along a future light rail route. The group has collaborated to provide a variety of energy and transportation programs, rebates, financing and services to residents and businesses in the corridor.

Among the most successful programs is the Home Energy Squad, which provides home energy assessments with immediate on-site implementation of low-cost, energy-saving measures such as installing CFL bulbs, programmable thermostats and low-flow showerheads.

Other projects include bike and car sharing initiatives, the installation of electric vehicle charging stations and a program that allows residents to borrow PowerCheck meters from local libraries to learn how much energy is used by various appliances in their homes.

Businesses can take advantage of programs too – including energy efficiency rebates and financing for buying high-efficiency equipment as well as renewable energy rebates including Solar*Rewards. Another initiative, called the BOMA (Building Owners and Managers Association) Kilowatt Crackdown, pits buildings against each other to see who can achieve the most energy savings over the course of a year.

During its first 18 months, the Energy Innovation Corridor turned out results that include the avoidance of more than 450 million pounds of carbon dioxide and had an estimated economic impact of nearly \$10 million.

“The benefits of the Energy Innovation Corridor have extended not only to area residents, but to the collaborative as well,” said Laura McCarten, vice president, NSP-Minnesota, an Xcel Energy company. “Some of the programs we’ve developed, like our smart grid technology pilot SmartVAR, have proven so successful that we have implemented them in other areas throughout the upper Midwest and plan to implement throughout our entire system.”

“This project represents energy efficiency at its best – saving consumers money, helping to reduce carbon emissions and preserving the environment while driving economic development,” said MEEA Executive Director Jay Wrobel. “I encourage more regions to explore the type of collaborative, sustainable planning showcased in the Energy Innovation Corridor.”

Bestowed annually at the Midwest Energy Solutions Conference (www.meeaconference.org), MEEA’s Innovation Award is presented to an organization or individual that developed and implemented a new innovative program, idea or policy in the Midwest.

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About Midwest Energy Solutions Conference

The Midwest Energy Solutions Conference is the largest event of its kind in the region. Each year it brings together a broad range of private- and public-sector thought leaders from around the nation who share a vested interest in energy efficiency.

The conference is presented by the **Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance (MEEA)**, the region’s source on energy efficiency. Formed in 2000, MEEA is committed to advancing sound energy efficiency programs, policies and priorities in the Midwest. MEEA’s membership represents a broad consortium of energy stakeholders from across a 13-state area.

Now in its 10th year, the conference continues to grow as energy efficiency investment increases in states across the Midwest. Responding to attendees, the conference has expanded to include a formal expo to provide more opportunities to highlight and promote energy efficiency programs, products and companies.