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Thermostat Program Lets Consumers Choose Renewable Energy

Paige Leuschner — May 17, 2016

Environmentally conscious consumers have a new friend in Canadian thermostat and energy management solutions provider [Energate](#) and partner [WattTime](#), which is [piloting a new program](#) in the Chicago area.

Participants in the program receive one of Energate's HöHöm smart thermostats with a new Clean Power Mode feature, which prioritizes the use of clean energy sources over traditional fossil fuel resources. The technology works by identifying the availability of clean energy sources through public and private data sources and synchronizing the HVAC system's air conditioning and heating cycles to correspond to this availability. It follows the common set-and-forget trend with smart thermostats, where the activation of Clean Power Mode will automatically prioritize clean energy resources without intervention by consumers. Energate also claims that this technology will never raise a consumer's monthly energy bill or make them sacrifice comfort. The pilot program is funded by a [\\$600,000 grant](#) from The Great Lakes Protection Fund and is set to begin this month.



The underlying technology in these smart thermostats was developed by WattTime, a non-profit company built on research from the University of California Berkeley, Yale, and Carnegie Mellon that provides environmental demand response software. WattTime's research has been funded by companies such as Fast Forward, Great Lakes Protection Fund, Google.org, and the Berkeley Energy & Climate Institute. The goal of the company's technology is to give consumers the choice of whether or not they want their energy use to support fossil fuel power plants or clean electricity. Though WattTime's work with Energate is only in the pilot phase, the company hopes to implement the program on a larger scale and partner with utilities to offer incentives for using this technology.

Various Partnerships

While Energate only recently became partners with WattTime, the non-profit has already been working with other companies to deploy its technology. [Building Clouds](#), a building energy management systems (BEMS) solutions provider, [partnered with WattTime](#) to deploy equipment on an existing HVAC unit on the University of California Berkeley campus that allows WattTime's software to activate the HVAC system at times when clean energy is available. The company has also partnered with electric vehicle (EV) charging station provider [eMotorWerks](#) to launch a smart EV charging station called [JuiceBox Green 40](#), which uses timing algorithms to identify which power plants will provide electricity for EV charging and shifts the time of charging to minimize carbon emissions. This allows consumers to minimize the pollution footprint of their EV at current reduction rates of up to 60%. As seen in the graphic below, these partnerships address buildings, homes, and EVs, each of which are not only heavy electricity users, but also significant contributors to carbon emissions.

WattTime Enabled

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(Source: WattTime)

Though these are relatively small projects, they demonstrate a simple (and potentially scalable) way to integrate renewables further into the energy mix, supplement existing demand with renewables, and reduce carbon emissions. WattTime's software can make renewables more reliable, an issue that has consistently presented major challenges to the mass adoption and investment in clean energies given their intermittent power generation. It can also help reduce the portion of renewables that go unused, as high electricity output from renewables does not always correspond to peak demand, which has driven the need for **large and expensive energy storage projects** to store excess energy for times when the sun is not shining and the wind is now blowing. Additionally, this technology represents a larger trend in the industry of organizations moving to more customer-centric business models and **giving consumers more choice** when it comes to their energy consumption.

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