

Montana's LED street lighting

October 2018 | Project Update



NorthWestern Energy is in the early stages of a four-year program to replace existing street lights with energy-efficient LED (light-emitting diode) lights. The project will see about 43,000 NorthWestern owned streetlights replaced between 2019 and 2022 in communities across our Montana service territory.

Why LEDs? – LED streetlights use about 50 percent less electricity than traditional High-Pressure Sodium (HPS) lights, and last two to three times longer.

Why Now? – NorthWestern has been evaluating LED streetlights for several years. Recent price decreases have made them more cost effective. Also, manufacturers of current HPS products have indicated those products may not be readily available at some point in the future with the increasing popularity of LEDs.

Will All Streetlights Be Replaced? – No. The NorthWestern Energy LED project will not affect “customer-owned” streetlights. For example, streetlights owned by cities or other local government entities, those owned by the Montana Department of Transportation and homeowners associations will not be upgraded by NorthWestern. Similarly, NorthWestern Energy owned yard and area lighting will not be part of this LED project, but will likely be upgraded once the initial project is completed.



Cost of Project – The cost of the overall Montana project is expected to be about \$24 million. The project involves replacing existing street lighting heads and lamps on a one-to-one basis with equivalent LED products. Generally, poles will not be replaced nor styles of lighting fixtures changed.

Project Timeframe – NorthWestern will install sample LED lights in selected locations in Billings and Helena in the fall of 2018. Those two cities are scheduled to undergo a broader conversion in 2019. Other Montana communities may have demonstration sites set up in 2019 and they will see the switch between 2020 and 2022. We are still working to develop the roll-out schedule for additional communities.