EACs for Metals Supply Chain and Manufacturing

The Next Phase of Green Steel – May 2026

Three key takeaways:

- **Energy Attribute Certificates (EACs)** — a book-and-claim mechanism modeled on Renewable Energy Credits — are emerging as the most scalable way to deliver low-carbon steel attributes to customers without physically segregating product through the supply chain.
- **The standards are moving faster than expected.** SBTi is releasing revised standards this year, GHG Protocol public consultation is targeted for the second half of 2027, and platforms like RMI's AIM are building the registry and verification infrastructure now.
- **Buying decarbonized steel directly is ultimately best** — but EACs may be the right starting point to consolidate demand, just as RMI's buyer platform has found.

What Is Happening

At the May 2026 AISI Sustainability Committee meeting, the conversation around EACs and contractual instruments was one of the clearest signals that the green steel market is entering its next phase. Presenters from the Center for Green Market Activation, WSP, and Smart EPD all pointed in the same direction: the industry needs a credible book-and-claim system to scale low-carbon steel beyond the handful of segregated transactions happening today.

EACs originated in electricity markets — a wind farm in Texas can sell its physical electrons into the grid while selling its "renewable attribute" to a corporate buyer in California. That decoupling is what scaled corporate renewable purchasing into a multi-billion-dollar market. The same logic is now extending to industrial materials. Aviation is furthest along, with SAF book-and-claim systems aggregating roughly $400 million in committed demand. Cement, chemicals, maritime, and trucking are following. Steel is in the conversation, with RMI's AIM platform, the Center for Green Market Activation, and the GHG Protocol all working to define how this works.

Why It Needs to Be on the Radar

Consider what Microsoft and Meta actually did: they did not become direct buyers of physical green steel. They sit too far from the steelmaking and processing supply chain for that to be practical. What

they wanted was to decarbonize their Scope 3 Category 2 capital goods value chain — the embodied carbon in the data centers, buildings, and infrastructure they procure. So they bought EACs from Stegra and Electra. The physical steel flowed through normal commercial channels; the carbon attribute flowed to the hyperscaler with the Scope 3 commitment. That is the model.

End-use customers — automotive, construction, appliance, packaging, hyperscaler buildouts — increasingly have Scope 3 commitments tied to 2030 dates. And in the U.S., much of the market isn't direct-supplied by a steel producer to begin with. Service centers and processors handle up to half of all market transactions, sitting between the mill and a substantial portion of end users. For those customers, physically segregated low-carbon steel isn't a realistic option — they need a way to claim reductions across volumes flowing through normal supply chain channels. That is what EACs do. The producer monetizes the green premium, the customer reports the reduction, and the service center or processor in between can deliver product without inventorying two parallel grades — or, increasingly, can hold and manage EACs directly to serve their own customers' carbon target needs.

Evolution of the Green Steel Supply Chain

- **Phase 1 — Carbon offsets (2020–2022).** Early commercial efforts used carbon offsets to neutralize residual Scope 1 and 2 emissions. Nucor's Econiq, launched in 2021 with GM as the first customer, paired 100% renewable electricity with high-quality offsets to achieve a net-zero claim. The approach never really took off. In an already tight steel market, the green premium needed to support an offset-backed product was hard to justify against conventional pricing. Demand existed; the supply mechanism wasn't yet right.
- **Phase 2 — Direct offtake agreements (2023–2025).** Real signed agreements emerged between low-carbon producers and end users with SBTi-aligned targets. Stegra (formerly H2 Green Steel) signed offtake deals with corporate buyers, and SSAB Zero announced similar agreements with automotive and construction customers. The model worked for buyers close enough to the steel supply chain to take physical delivery. EPDs matured as the product-level disclosure standard, and Buy Clean policies began specifying procurement floors.
- **Phase 3 — Book-and-claim through EACs (2026 forward).** When RMI launched its buyer's platform to extend low-carbon procurement to a broader set of corporates, they found the direct offtake model grew more complicated the deeper into the supply chain they went. The further the buyer sat from the mill, the harder it was to physically connect them to specific low-carbon production. That has driven exploration of book-and-claim, with recent EAC purchases by Meta and Microsoft as early proof points. EACs connect a small number of low-carbon producers to a broad market of customers with carbon commitments — without rebuilding the physical supply chain.

What 2030 Could Look Like

- A subset of producers operates verifiably low-carbon assets (hydrogen-DRI, electrochemical iron, scrap-heavy EAFs on renewable power, CCUS-equipped facilities).
- Production is registered on standardized registries with third-party verification.
- EACs trade on those registries — bilaterally at first, then with growing liquidity and standardized contracting.
- Service centers, processors, and manufacturers act as transaction partners helping end-use customers attach EACs to the steel they're already buying.
- End-use customers report Scope 3 reductions against 2030 targets through a combination of physical procurement and EAC-backed claims.

Why Greenway Is Watching This

Buying decarbonized steel directly is ultimately the best outcome — it ties the carbon claim to the molecules and signals investment to producers doing the hard work. But as RMI has found in building its buyer platform, getting there at scale requires consolidating demand first. EACs are the most credible mechanism to do that.

With up to 50% of U.S. steel transactions moving through service centers and processors, that channel is uniquely positioned to manage the carbon-attribute relationship with end-use customers — attaching EACs to product they're already selling and directly serving customers' Scope 3 target needs. That is a much bigger role than simply passing physical product through. The next 24 months will define the standards, registries, and verification frameworks this market runs on. Participants who pay attention now will be positioned. Those who wait until customers ask will be reacting.