

# ENERGY MATTERS



Ben Passer leads Fresh Energy's new Energy Access and Equity program area.

## OUR COMMITMENT TO ENERGY, ACCESS, AND EQUITY

Strong energy policy is creating new options for Minnesotans to reap the benefits of solar power, smart efficiency, electric transportation, and more. As our state shifts to a cleaner energy economy, it is vital to ensure that no one is left behind.

Over the last four years, Fresh Energy has been expanding its work to look at not just how much wind, solar, and efficiency we have in our state but also who benefits. Using our expertise at the Public Utilities Commission and a data-driven approach to progress, we have worked to expand investment in efficiency for apartments and other multifamily housing, ensure access to community solar for low- and moderate-income households, and make the case for cleaner transportation options throughout our neighborhoods.

Fresh Energy is doubling down on this work through our new Energy Access and Equity program area. Led by senior policy associate Ben Passer, the program will house our work to create and expand clean energy opportunities for under-resourced households and renters and ensure that equity is at the heart of our efforts. Fresh Energy will continue to focus on providing policy and technical expertise, actively partnering with community and equity-focused organizations to identify and secure inclusive solutions.

Our Energy Access and Equity program work is focusing on five key areas this year:

- Co-leading the Minnesota Multifamily Affordable Housing Energy Network as a critical forum for bringing together housing and energy leaders, in collaboration with renters' organizations, toward increased investment in multifamily building efficiency.
- Shaping and protecting the state's Conservation Improvement Program, maximizing mechanisms for low-income/multifamily energy efficiency to reduce the energy burden among low-income families.
- Elevating renter voices and engaging both renters and landlords through the Saint Paul Tenant-Landlord Energy Project, in partnership with Community Stabilization Project, to improve the efficiency of rental housing in the city and increase transparency in energy costs.
- Expanding access to solar programs for Minnesotans of all income levels.
- Improving air quality and reducing carbon emissions in urban communities by transitioning to clean electric buses and increasing access to affordable, dependable electric cars.



Sandhya Murali, Susan Hammel, and Michael Noble at the Energizing Impact Power Pairing event.

Fresh Energy prides itself on speeding the transition to clean energy by harnessing the power of the marketplace. And this strategy is working. It now costs utilities less to build a new wind farm than run an existing coal plant and companies are recognizing that it makes strong business sense to move away from fossil fuels.

More renewables and efficiency benefits our entire society. But it can be difficult for low-income households to participate in key opportunities, including community solar and utility-funded efficiency programs.

As described in our cover story, Fresh Energy is using its policy expertise to spur programs that reduce barriers to clean energy. We are also instigating community conversations about how private capital can make the difference between a renewable energy project that pencils out, and one that has societal benefits that go above and beyond reducing emissions.

Thank you for working together with Fresh Energy toward a clean energy economy that truly benefits all.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Noble".

EMAIL: [noble@fresh-energy.org](mailto:noble@fresh-energy.org)

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## CLEAN ENERGY FOR NORTHERN MN



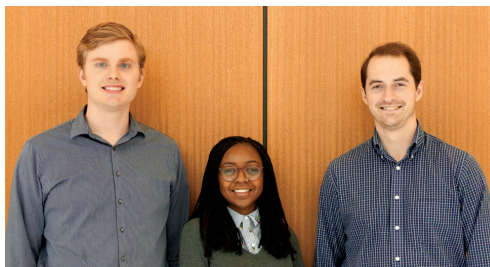
Duluth will soon be the first city in the state to offer full-time electric bus service. The six-bus pilot is one of several steps Duluth is taking to electrify their transportation system—they are also installing solar power charging stations in Canal Park and exploring options to electrify their city fleet. That progress, along with recent successes for clean energy in Minnesota Power's rate case, are combining to give northern Minnesotans more access to clean energy.

## GRID IMPROVEMENT



A modern, flexible electric grid is critical to a large-scale transition to clean energy. In 2016, Fresh Energy succeeded in a motion at the Public Utilities Commission to reopen the state's outdated Interconnection Standards—which have stalled clean energy progress by making it time consuming and expensive to connect solar projects to the grid. Phase I of the process is now complete, resulting in less red tape and other benefits for the solar market, and setting the stage for interconnection of energy storage. Fresh Energy is proud of this exciting progress and will be actively engaged in Phase II of the process, which is now underway.

## NEW PATHWAY ON PUBLIC AFFAIRS



Fresh Energy is excited to welcome our new Capitol Pathways fellow, Inonge Mubita (center), a student from Macalester College. The Capitol Pathways program works to open access to the Minnesota Capitol for the next generation of leaders of color. Inonge joins recently promoted director of public affairs Matt Privratsky (right) and policy and public affairs associate Dylan Sievers (left) on a new, robust public affairs team.

## COMMUNITY SOLAR TURNS 3

Minnesota is home to the largest community solar program in the country and all eyes have been on our state as the program completed its third year of operation. Fresh Energy showcased Minnesota's leadership on community solar through a high-profile story in *Greentech Media*, noting that the program seems to have found its rhythm and more solar gardens are blooming. Looking ahead to year four, we anticipate a big spring of construction for the final co-located gardens before rules are fine-tuned next year, but with a smaller volume of new applications under the updated program pricing.



## MAKING AN IMPACT WITH SUSTAINABLE STRATEGIES

Melissa (“Lissie”) Rappaport Schifman and her husband Jim are passionate about sustainability and have been Fresh Energy donors for over 12 years. According to Lissie, “Global climate change is the single biggest issue and threat to our children’s future. But we can be inspired by this challenge to change, innovate, and improve. Fresh Energy is leading the way by influencing public policy and educating people on our transformation to a clean energy economy.”

In addition to supporting Fresh Energy, Lissie is advancing the clean energy transition both personally and professionally.

With a Masters in Public Policy and an MBA in Finance, Lissie has made a career of working with businesses to develop sustainable strategies that reduce energy, water, and waste—while saving money. Her commitment to sustainability is also front and center in Lissie’s personal decisions. In 2011, she got her own home LEED Gold certified and became the Twin Cities’ fifth LEED Homes Accredited Professional. Recognizing the dearth of resources for advice and help on this process, she has written a book, slated to be published this August.

Thank you, Lissie, for your support of Fresh Energy and for all you do to move us toward a clean energy future!



## FRESH ENERGY LAUNCHES THE CENTER FOR POLLINATORS IN ENERGY

Minnesota is a national leader in developing ground-mounted solar with native grasses that provide much needed habitat for birds and bees, improve water quality, and increase the crop yields of local farms.

Now, Fresh Energy is expanding that leadership by creating the Center for Pollinators in Energy, a national clearinghouse and catalyzer of pollinator-friendly solar information, standards, best practices, and state-based initiatives.

While it is a proven strategy in Europe, pollinator-friendly solar is still new in the United States. To accelerate the adoption of best practices throughout the solar industry, Fresh Energy and its partners helped establish a fair, flexible, and science-based definition of pollinator-friendly solar in Minnesota, Maryland, Vermont, Wisconsin, and a growing number of other states. We are also working with scientists at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory to build the body of data on pollinator-friendly solar benefits.

*Martha Stewart*, *Modern Farmer*, and *National Geographic* have covered our work in the past year and Fresh Energy’s Rob Davis has been called to present on this groundbreaking solution in venues from the U.S. Department of Energy to the TEDx stage in Minneapolis.

As Minnesota stands poised to install pollinator-friendly solar at a scale equivalent to an additional one million backyard pollinator gardens—and states from Nebraska to North Carolina move ahead with projects—communities and solar developers are looking to Fresh Energy’s new Center for Pollinators in Energy for support. Visit Fresh Energy’s website for the latest information on this exciting new resource.

Join Lissie and her family in making a Power Circle donation by visiting our website or contacting individual giving director Meggie LaValley at: [lavalley@fresh-energy.org](mailto:lavalley@fresh-energy.org).



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FEATURE EVENT | POWER PAIRINGS

## GOOD ENERGY:

HOW SOLAR CAN BE A WIN FOR WATER, SOIL, FARMS, AND POLLINATORS

## YOU'RE INVITED!

Join Fresh Energy for a conversation about how we can make pollinator-friendly solar 'business as usual' in Minnesota and accelerate the practice elsewhere.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 17, 2018

7:00 - 8:30 AM

TOWN AND COUNTRY CLUB

300 N Mississippi River Boulevard  
Saint Paul, MN 55104

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Jordan Macknick is the lead energy-water-land analyst at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory.



Clare Lindahl is the CEO of the Soil and Water Conservation Society.