

ENERGY MATTERS

FRESH ENERGY SHAPING THE GRID OF THE FUTURE

BY HOLLY LAHD

Innovation is helping drive Minnesota toward a lower carbon future with more solar, renewable-energy-powered electric cars, energy storage, and “smart” energy efficiency. As Minnesota works to speed the transition to that future, our outdated electric grid is holding us back.

Minnesota’s current grid was designed to move electricity from coal plants to consumers hundreds of miles away. New technologically advanced energy systems are coming into the market, but many projects are stopped or stalled at the point when they need to connect to the electric grid.

Innovation is changing how Minnesota gets its electricity – now our grid needs to catch up.

Fresh Energy’s team of technical experts is playing a lead role in securing the policies and rules we need for a modern grid, using the following three key strategies:

Interconnection — Create a streamlined, more transparent system for connecting solar and other projects to the electric grid through updated “interconnection standards” at the Public Utilities Commission.

Investment — Challenge and support Xcel Energy to make a strong investment in grid improvements that will open the door to next generation renewable energy, efficiency, battery storage technologies, and private investment.

Improved Rates — Design and implement new electricity rates that encourage smart consumer choices such as charging electric vehicles overnight with abundant renewables like wind, and shifting energy use to reduce peak demand, and the costs that come with it, on the grid.

The Public Utilities Commission recently issued a report that also identified these key next steps. Stay tuned for updates as Fresh Energy works to achieve the modern electric grid we need to speed the transition to a clean energy economy in Minnesota.



When homes, commercial buildings, schools, and industries are designed and operated for maximum energy efficiency, it does more than “save energy” – it drives a cleaner economy and improves the performance of our whole energy system.

Fresh Energy leads multiple efforts to increase energy efficiency in Minnesota, balancing a commitment to being both visionary and realistic. To ensure we are most effectively steering progress in this rapidly changing landscape, Fresh Energy has refined the way we approach energy efficiency.

I am pleased to announce that Fresh Energy’s Will Nissen is now directing our new energy performance department, leading a team working to improve building performance, secure multifaceted energy efficiency policy, and address the need for improved efficiency in rental housing. He will also collaborate with our energy markets team on charting a course for how we generate and use power in the future.

Thank you for supporting Fresh Energy and please know we are working hard to be your independent energy champion.

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LEARN MORE ABOUT THESE AND OTHER STORIES AT FRESH-ENERGY.ORG

SOLAR THAT BENEFITS BIRDS AND BEES

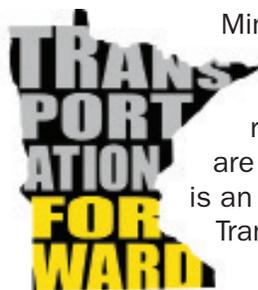
More than 4,500 acres of ground-mounted solar are forecast to be built this year in Minnesota, creating a significant opportunity to create habitat for pollinators and birds. Fresh Energy is working with Audubon and other partners to establish a legal definition for bird and pollinator-friendly solar projects, and providing education to the public, policy makers, and developers about the opportunity for biodiverse habitat on solar sites.



THE CLEAN ENERGY-HEALTH CONNECTION

Climate solutions that reduce carbon emissions can reduce health costs across Minnesota. Fresh Energy is proud to be working with health professionals who have created a team called Health Professionals for a Heathy Climate to address the issue. In a letter to legislators, 139 health organizations and professionals recently urged our state to implement the federal Clean Power Plan without delay to secure health and clean energy jobs benefits.

TACKLING TRANSPORTATION STATEWIDE



Minnesota needs a long-term funding package that supports all transportation options, from biking and walking trails to public transportation and road repair. Citizens and leaders from around the state are calling for increased investment and Fresh Energy is an active part of supporting transportation through the Transportation Forward coalition.

SOLAR PLEDGE HELPS CONSUMERS, BUSINESSES

Minnesota’s solar industry is growing rapidly, with new businesses and jobs being added every day. To help consumers navigate this rapidly growing market, Fresh Energy has established a set of best practices you can look for when choosing a community solar business.



WHAT'S SHIFTING ELECTRIC VEHICLE MARKETS?

New electric vehicle innovations are happening every day. Fresh Energy experts are working to maximize potential benefits for consumers as well as electric utilities and the entire electric grid. To make sense of it all, we took a look at which market forces are shifting the electric vehicle market into DRIVE, NEUTRAL, and REVERSE.

INDEPENDENT JOURNALISM AND THE TRANSITION TO CLEAN ENERGY

In today's media marketplace, accurate, fact-based coverage of energy issues can be hard to find. *Midwest Energy News*, an award-winning online news site housed at Fresh Energy, is designed to fill that gap, providing links to top energy stories and original reporting that shines a light on the region's progress toward a clean energy economy.

Since it began in 2010 as a partnership with the RE-AMP network, *Midwest Energy News* has elevated crucial stories around the region, prompting further coverage by regional newspapers, as well as national outlets including the Associated Press and National Public Radio. The publication is widely lauded for providing nuanced treatment of complex issues such as fights over utility subsidies of aging power plants in Ohio and Illinois and efforts by utilities and co-ops to increase rates on solar customers. In Minnesota, readers count on *Midwest Energy News* for detailed long-term coverage of topics from community solar to wind to bioenergy.

Reader surveys indicate that 73 percent of *Midwest Energy News* readers consider the site fair and unbiased. "We are a news site operated by a nonprofit policy group," said managing editor Ken Paulman. "But with transparency, a commitment to facts, and philanthropic rather than advertising support, we have a high level of trust from readers regardless of where they sit on the political spectrum."

In 2015 Fresh Energy replicated the successful *Midwest Energy News* model and launched *U.S. Energy News* and *Southeast Energy News*. Want to stay up to date on the issues? Sign up for free news network emails today – midwestenergynews.com and southeastenergynews.com.

40 UNDER 40

Young innovators are accelerating the transition to a clean energy economy. *Midwest Energy News's* 40 Under 40 recognition program showcases and connects emerging leaders in energy advocacy, business, government, academia and other sectors. Nominations open in the summer with winners announced in the fall. For details, visit midwestenergynews.com/40under40.

THANK YOU TO OUR RECENT POWER CIRCLE DONORS

Donna W. Allan and Bill Mahlum, Andersen Corporation, Randy and Bird Anderson, Anonymous, David Bryan, Paul and Shannon Burke, John and Susan Dunlop, Matthew Fitzmaurice, Cody and Laura Fleischfresser, Great River Energy, M.A. Mortenson Construction, Jennifer Martin, Richard (Dick) and Joyce McFarland, Michael and Patsy Noble, Thomas and Georgina Russo, SolarCity, Sunrise Energy Ventures LLC

Join the McFarland family in leaving a legacy gift. Visit our website or contact individual giving director Meggie LaValley at lavalley@fresh-energy.org.



A LIFETIME OF GIVING

Dick and Joyce McFarland have a reputation for being generous philanthropists and volunteers in the Twin Cities community. They embody what it means to give back and have been involved with many organizations over the years, including United Way, Minneapolis Foundation, Junior Achievement, and the McKnight Foundation.

Dick and Joyce first came to Fresh Energy through the McKnight Foundation in 2010. Dick saw one presentation about Fresh Energy and was hooked – climate change and clean energy alternatives made his top charitable giving priorities. "Since then I've stayed in close touch with Fresh Energy and continue to give because of the remarkable impacts they've made in our state and local communities," he said.

Then, a few years ago, Dick and Joyce made the decision to put Fresh Energy in their will. "During my time serving as a board president, I saw firsthand the incredible impacts that legacy giving can have at an organization. When you have a passion for an area of work, leaving a legacy makes sense, and is so easy to do." Thank you, Dick and Joyce, for your generous commitments to Fresh Energy and our work to transition to a clean energy economy.



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FEATURE EVENT |

ALWAYS READY

USING SOLAR AND STORAGE TO ENHANCE COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS



Large disasters can knock out power, stranding residents and limiting access to critical services. Communities and organizations across the country, including Minnesota's own Camp Ripley National Guard site, are creating models for how clean solar electricity can help.

YOU'RE INVITED!

Join Fresh Energy for a conversation with two leading experts about the emerging role of solar, storage, and microgrids in helping Minnesota become more prepared and secure.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 15

7:00 - 8:30 AM

TOWN AND COUNTRY CLUB
300 N. MISSISSIPPI RIVER BLVD.
ST. PAUL, MN 55104

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JENNIFER PETERSON is a policy manager in Regulatory Affairs at Minnesota Power, an investor-owned utility based in Duluth, Minnesota.



MICHAEL BURR is founder and director of Microgrid Institute and Burr Energy LLC.



Fresh Energy will be hosting its first annual fall fundraiser in October! Details coming soon.