

VECAN

VERMONT ENERGY & CLIMATE
ACTION NETWORK

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January 2021 E-News

Dear Local Energy Leaders,

Hallelujah, 2020 is over! But, whew! 2021 has gotten off to a rough start, not the least of which is the mark of an indefensible violent, and hostile attempt to overthrow a fair and free election at our nation's Capitol. Despite the serious intensity of this moment, we remain optimistic for good things ahead. We see 2021 as an opportunity to make long-overdue progress on so many important things; pivoting out of this pandemic as safely and swiftly as possible, (re)building our economy and creating more equity and resiliency; tackling – today and for the long term – deeply embedded racial, cultural and economic inequality; prioritizing people over profit; and protecting the planet that sustains and inspires us. To do this work, we will need all of you and so many others so thank you again for all you do – and all you will continue to do in 2021 and beyond.

In the spirit of continuing to do much-needed work, we wanted to share some news and put several timely opportunities on your radar. Find out far more below about:

- **Updating Vermont's Comprehensive Energy Plan (CEP)** - The CEP sets a necessarily ambitious 90 by 2050 total renewable energy goal. Find out far more about this year-long update and public process and weigh in by February 15th in the first public comment opportunity. Find more information, including how you can get involved, below.
- **The 2021 Vermont Legislative Session Kicks Off** - With new leadership in the House, Senate and Lt. Governor's office, a slate of many new legislators and virtual legislating, the 2021 session began last week. For a brief update on what you might expect this session on clean energy and climate action, [watch the first weekly Climate Dispatch here](#) and read below for ways to stay informed and connected this session.
- **Much-Needed, Good News for Solar!** - The new Coronavirus Relief Package included a two-year extension of the solar Investment Tax Credit (ITC). Find out what this means for the solar industry and Vermonters who want to save money and power their lives from the sun below.
- **The Transportation & Climate Initiative Moves Forward, Without Vermont for Now** - Three states and Washington DC announced their commitment to this regional program to reduce pollution and raise revenues to transform the transportation sector. Read more about TCI, [check out the final MOU here](#) and find out which states have signed on to this multi-state cap-and-invest program below.

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We are always looking for great stories of local action for our blog, social media and as helpful resources for our network. Please consider sending along anything you or others have accomplished or are working on by responding to this email or emailing rkuster@vnrc.org

About Us

VECAN is a network of statewide Vermont organizations helping communities across the Green Mountain State to reduce energy costs and climate impacts through conservation, increased energy efficiency and conversion to renewable energy sources.

VECAN's mission is to start, support and strengthen town energy committees.

Committee Changes?

Help us keep our network up to date! Email changes in committee

leadership or contact info to
rkuster@vnrc.org

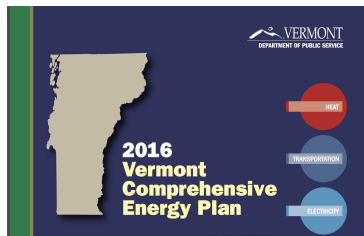
- **VNRC Launches People, Places, and Transportation Blog** - The new incarnation of the blog formerly hosted at Sustainable Transportation Vermont (STVT) is now located on the VNRC website under the leadership of Kate McCarthy, VNRC's Sustainable Communities Program Director. Check out the most recent blog posts here and learn more about the blog below.
- **Thinking About Buying an EV or Hybrid Car?** - Join Sustainable Woodstock on January 21st, 5:30 PM – 6:30 PM, to learn about the advantages of hybrids and EVs and how you can save money in the long run by driving one. [Register for the event here!](#)
- **Recent Rewiring America Report Shows Total Decarbonization Could Save Vermonters \$973 Million and Create 22,792 Jobs** - This analysis shows how households can swap their fossil fuel-burning machines for electric ones, using existing technology, and cut their energy bills in the process. [Click here for the full report](#) and read key findings below.
- **Local Vermont Author Releases Climate Change-Themed Novel** - Looking for a book to start the new year? Check out Jim Stiles' climate change-themed, coming-of-age adventure novel, *Rough Road*, and find out where you can purchase it below.

As always, thanks for all that you do.

Best,

Bekah Kuster, Community Energy Coordinator, AmeriCorps Member, VECAN
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Help Shape the Comprehensive Energy Plan



This year, the Vermont Department of Public Service (PSD) will begin the review and update of the Comprehensive Energy Plan (CEP) with a new plan due January 2022, only a month after the Climate Action Plan will be delivered by the Vermont Climate Council. In the last two CEP updates, town energy committees and key stakeholders were deeply involved. It will be important to have

the voices of Vermonters inform the process this time as well, as the state lays out a blueprint for how we can power our lives – and economy – more cleanly, efficiently and equitably.

The Department of Public Service has already issued a [Request for Public Comment](#) with responses due by February 15, 2021. This is an opportunity for the public to participate in identifying and clarifying policy and technology pathways to reach Vermont's energy goals. If you would like to submit comments or sign up to receive updates on the CEP process, email PSD.ComprehensiveEnergyPlan@vermont.gov. Visit the [PSD's website here](#) to continue to track and participate in the process.

Stay Informed and Connected This Legislative Session

The 2021-2022 biennium began last Wednesday with new leaders at the helm in the House, Senate and Lt. Governor's offices, as well as a significant new slate of Representatives and Senators, who will join veteran lawmakers in virtual legislating this year. While policymakers will remain keenly focused on Covid-19 and economic recovery, there are also prospects for



ongoing, needed progress on climate change and clean energy. Be sure to stay connected to your legislators and follow the process.

To stay tuned into what's happening at the State House and how you can make your voice heard, here are some ways you can stay informed and connected:

- Check out the weekly "Climate Dispatch" – a short, timely update every Friday on key climate action opportunities. [Watch the latest Climate Dispatch here](#). Sign up to receive the Climate Dispatch in your inbox and find full episodes [here](#)!
- Sign up for weekly email legislative updates at our partner organization, [Vermont Conservation Voters](#). Click "Join Us" to be added to their email list.
- Follow the work of the Vermont Climate Solutions Caucus on their website, vtclimate-caucus.org. View the live streamed meetings of the Climate Solutions Caucus Thursdays at noon during the legislative session on their [YouTube channel](#). **The first meeting of the Caucus for the 2021 legislative session is tomorrow, January 14th at 12:00 pm.**
- Tune in online to all aspects of the legislative session, including committee meetings which are live-streamed on YouTube. [Click here for streaming links](#). Find the full schedule of committee meetings at legislature.vermont.gov/committee/meetings/2022.

Solar Investment Tax Credit Renewed!



Last month, the U.S. Congress passed a \$1.4 trillion federal spending and tax extension package, which included a two-year extension of the solar investment tax credit (ITC) as well as additional funding for energy research and development.

Under the legislation, the solar ITC, which was originally set to drop to 22% in 2021, will remain at 26% for projects that begin construction in 2021 and 2022. It will then fall to 22% in 2023 and then drop down to 10% in

2024 for commercial projects, at which point residential credit will end completely.

Abigail Ross Hopper, President and CEO of Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA), has described the ITC as the "single most successful policy on the books to deploy clean energy." With the December extension, solar installations are projected to grow in the coming years. In a statement following the passage of the bill Ross Hopper said, "Over the next few years, we have an opportunity to build a stronger, more reliable and more equitable American energy economy, and the action Congress is taking today is a helpful down payment." [Read the full Press Release from SEIA on the ITC extension here](#).

[Click here](#) to learn more about the solar ITC.

The Transportation Climate Initiatives Moves Forward, Without Vermont for Now



Last month, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island and the District of Columbia [announced their commitment to officially join the Transportation & Climate Initiative \(TCI\)](#), a cap-and-invest program designed to

reduce pollution from the carbon-intensive transportation sector and use revenues raised to invest in equitable solutions that serve the unique transportation needs of different states.

This was the earliest point at which states could sign on, and more are expected to do so in the coming weeks and months. Eight states in the Northeast and mid-Atlantic area, including Vermont, signed an accompanying statement pledging to stay involved in the planning process but opting not to join the TCI at this time.

The crafting of this [Memorandum of Understanding \(MOU\)](#) is the culmination of a decade's worth of work and a product of state executive branches, including Governor Phil Scott, over the last four years. The release of this final MOU is the first opportunity for legislators and other stakeholders to dig into the details of the program.

Over the next decade, the program is projected to generate a total of more than \$3 billion for participating states which will be invested in more equitable, lower-carbon transportation options to reduce the impacts of climate change and to help stimulate economic recovery.

Read more about TCI, including a recent statement from some Vermont organizations, [here](#) and find far more information at www.transportationandclimate.org.

VNRC Launches New Blog: People, Places, and Transportation



Last month, VNRC launched [People, Places, and Transportation](#), the new incarnation of the blog formerly hosted at Sustainable Transportation Vermont (STVT). After a long hiatus during the pandemic, Julie Campoli, who had been the editor of the Sustainable Transportation Vermont (STVT) blog since 2018, stepped down to transfer the blog to VNRC. [Read her full farewell entry here.](#)

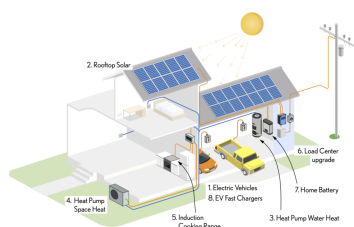
The blog, now under the leadership of Kate McCarthy, VNRC's Sustainable Communities Program Director, will retain its big-picture approach, and continue to focus on how to shape a cleaner, greener, more accessible, and more sustainable transportation future in Vermont.

[Learn more about the blog here in this introduction post](#), and check out the newest entries:

- [TCI: A Way to Pay and a Future to Imagine](#) gives an overview of the Transportation and Climate Initiative (TCI) and what Vermont stands to gain if we were to sign on.
- [More People in Cleaner, Fewer Vehicles](#) explores a pilot project to purchase and deploy small electric buses to serve 1-2 of Vermont's rural school systems and their surrounding communities.

Want to receive new entries from People, Places, and Transportation in your inbox? [Sign up here.](#) (If you were already receiving updates from STVT, there's no need to sign up again.)

No Place Like Home: Fighting Climate Change (and Saving Money) by Electrifying America's Households



A recent [Rewiring America](#) report by Doctors Saul Griffith and Sam Calisch shows that the average American household can fight climate change and save money at the same time without sacrificing any comforts of home. According to the report, the average Vermont household spends roughly \$5,759 per year on energy. In the paper, the authors model two scenarios for decarbonizing the

American household using existing technologies.

The report found that transitioning away from fossil fuels and electrifying the Vermont economy would provide significant savings to every Vermonter. Their findings showed that electrification would result in energy bill savings of up to \$3,603 per year for every Vermont household. And Vermonters as a whole would save a total of \$973 million annually.

The report also revealed that electrifying the state would create 22,792 new jobs spanning every zip code in Vermont. The composition of those jobs includes those created in installation (construction), manufacturing, finance, and jobs created due to spending the money households save.

While these economic benefits alone are significant, they do not include the additional benefits of electrification, including improved human health, reduced impacts of climate change, lowered maintenance costs, and more consistent performance.

[Read the full report here](#) to learn more about the economic benefits of electrifying the country and how we can get there.

Learn About EV and Hybrids Cost-Savings on Thursday, January 21



Have you been considering an electric or hybrid vehicle, but feel that it's out of your price range? [Join Sustainable Woodstock on January 21 from 5:30 PM – 6:30 PM EST](#) to learn the advantages of hybrids and EVs and how you can save money in the long run by driving one. Find out more about the numerous incentives Vermont offers for every budget!

The MileageSmart Incentive provides 25% of the vehicle cost of a used EV or hybrid car, up to \$5,000. You'll hear more about the program from Samantha Hurt, Program Manager at Capstone Community Action, Inc.

Drive Electric Vermont is Vermont's statewide EV resource and helps you compare models of electric vehicles to find the best fit. Did you know charging an EV is like paying \$1.50 a gallon? Plus, there are state, federal, and utility purchase incentives. Learn more from David Roberts, Drive Electric Vermont Coordinator.

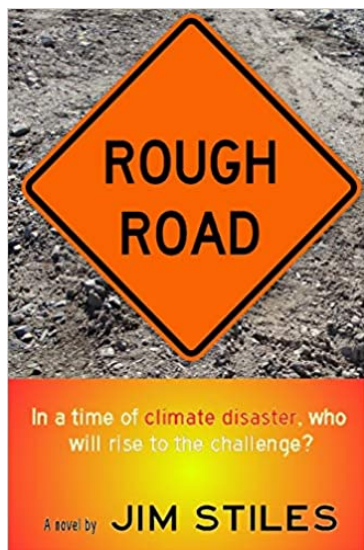
[Register for the free event here!](#)

Local Author Jim Stiles Publishes Climate Change-Themed Novel

St. Albans resident Jim Stiles published his first novel, *Rough Road*, last year. *Rough Road* is a climate change-themed, coming-of-age adventure story, largely set in Vermont. The story is about Tom Grady, who we meet at the start of his senior year in high school, and his girlfriend. As their relationship develops, they experience a number of climate change-related problems first hand. After graduating from high school, they wind up in East Thetford, Vermont, working on a bold project to create a climate haven, which leads to a new set of adventures. Eventually, their efforts to cope with climate change take them to northern Quebec.

Throughout the book, their resilience, both as individuals and as a couple, grows as they work to create a better, more resilient way of living to cope with climate challenges. Although *Rough Road* is mostly written for adults, it should be suitable for high school juniors and seniors as well.

Rough Road is available at independent booksellers through IngramSpark and [online](#) in both electronic and hard copy.



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