

# VECAN

VERMONT ENERGY & CLIMATE  
ACTION NETWORK

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## February 2021 E-News

Dear Local Energy Leaders,

With the recent inauguration of President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris, and the consequent composition of federal agencies and a focused climate “cabinet,” it is a hopeful moment for long-overdue action on the climate crisis. Within days, we’ve seen several climate-related executive orders, including rejoining the Paris Climate Accord, revoking the permit for the Keystone XL pipeline, and reversing the rollbacks to vehicle emissions standards. This is just the start – and the partnership of the federal government in this important job and equity-creating work is pivotal. At the same time, progress at the local, regional and state level in Vermont is also essential.

Below, please find a long list of timely news, funding opportunities, new resources and public engagement opportunities we thought might be of interest, including:

- **Updating Vermont’s Comprehensive Energy Plan (CEP)** - The Vermont Public Service Department (PSD) is asking for public input to help update the Vermont CEP, which sets an ambitious 90 by 2050 total renewable energy goal. [The Department is accepting comments until February 15, 2021.](#)
- **The Latest on the Vermont Climate Council** - The Council has begun to discuss its next steps, including forming a steering committee and standing up the four subcommittees required under the GWSA. Visit the [Climate Council’s website](#) to stay up to date on the Council’s work, and [fill out this form](#) by Feb. 3rd at 2:00 pm to share your suggestions for individuals to serve on the various subcommittees.
- **New Funding Opportunities Available to Support Climate Action!** - Exciting new funding opportunities for local climate action are now available. Find more information below about initiatives such as the Burlington Green Stimulus program’s extension, the Small Grant Program for Vermont students through the Vermont Energy Education Program, the Small-Scale Bicycle and Pedestrian Grant through the Vermont Agency of Transportation, and more.
- **Join VECAN For Our Next “Lunch and Learn” Focused on Transportation Transformation Opportunities** - Continuing our monthly “Lunch and Learn” series, we’ll be discussing transportation transformation opportunities on Feb. 23rd at noon. Learn about the prospects for transportation investments at both the state and federal level, and discuss ideas for how anticipated stimulus dollars could be best deployed at the local level with fellow energy committee members. [Click here to register to attend.](#)

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## Get involved

[Events](#)  
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## Share

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](mailto: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

- **Vermont Winter Bike-Walk Challenge Kicked Off This Week!** - Get your bike, boots, or shoes ready! Ride a bike or walk for your commute (or just for fun) at least twice between February 1 and 12 using the Go! Vermont app and become eligible for prizes from Local Motion, Vital Communities, and partners! Learn more about how you can participate in this challenge below.
- **Vermont Electric Co-op (VEC) Seeking Candidates for Board of Directors** - Do you live in VEC's service territory? VEC is seeking petitions from candidates for three seats on the board of directors that are up for election in May. If you are interested, find more information below.
- **Transit Equity Day Hosted by Vermont Sierra Club** - Join the Vermont Sierra Club, February 4th for their first-ever Transit Equity Awards, and a Transit Equity Day Virtual Conversation cosponsored by the Vermont Natural Resources Council. [Learn more about the event here](#) and below.
- **New Guide to Residential Clean Heating and Cooling** - This new, free [guide](#) written on behalf of the Vermont Public Service Department helps residents make informed decisions about heating and cooling their homes with clean and renewable energy. Find more about the guide below.

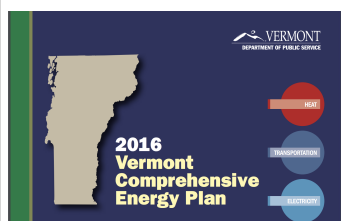
As always, thanks for all that you do.

Best,

Bekah Kuster, Community Energy Coordinator, AmeriCorps Member, VECAN  
802-223-2328 ext. 116 - [rkuster@vnrc.org](mailto:rkuster@vnrc.org)

## Submit Comments to Help Shape the Comprehensive Energy Plan

The Vermont Department of Public Service (PSD) has begun its year-long review and update of the Comprehensive Energy Plan (CEP) with a new plan due January 2022. The plan sets a 90 by 2050 total renewable energy goal. Town energy committees and key stakeholders were deeply involved in the crafting of the two most recent CEPs, and we want to ensure that your voices are part of the process this time as well.



**The first deadline for public comments on the Comprehensive Energy Plan is coming right up, on February 15th.** This is an opportunity for the public to participate in identifying and clarifying policy and technology pathways to reach Vermont's energy goals. Share your recommendations and thoughts via email at: [PSD.ComprehensiveEnergyPlan@vermont.gov](mailto:PSD.ComprehensiveEnergyPlan@vermont.gov). Following a review of

comments, the PSD plans to engage in discussions with small and diverse groups of stakeholders to discuss the issues raised.

Visit the [PSD's website here](#) to continue to track and participate in the process.

## The Climate Council Starts Process to Stand Up Subcommittees

The Vermont Climate Council continues its work to develop a Climate Action Plan for the state to meet its greenhouse gas reduction mandates. The January 25th meeting provided direction for the Council's work going forward, including creating a steering committee that consists of four council members in addition to members of the Scott Administration. The



Steering Committee will be responsible for helping to develop agendas and lay the framework for efficient Council and subcommittee coordination. Additionally, Jane Lazorchak was hired to serve as a project manager for the Climate Council's work and coordinate between the council and the subcommittees.

The Council has turned its attention to comprising the subcommittees, seeking additional members of the public with relevant expertise to serve as subcommittee members and help to bring a wider range of experience and perspectives to the conversation. Subcommittees will be responsible for drafting recommendations for consideration by the full Council to be included in the final Climate Action Plan. The subcommittees are 1) Rural Resilience and Adaptation, 2) Cross-Sector Mitigation, 3) Just Transitions, and 4) Agriculture and Ecosystems.

Climate Council members have until the end of the day tomorrow to suggest names of individuals to consider to be appointed to these subcommittees.

**If you know of anyone who you feel should be considered to serve on one of these subcommittees or are interested in serving yourself, [please fill out this Google Form](#).** The form will close at 2:00 pm, Wednesday, Feb. 3rd. We will compile the form submissions and share them with appointed Climate Council Member Johanna Miller, who will incorporate this input into her nominations for subcommittee members.

The next Climate Council Meeting will take place on Feb. 8th, where the Council will work to further form the subcommittees. You can find notes and agendas from previous meetings, as well as information to join future meetings, at the [Vermont Climate Council Website](#).

Also, if you, or someone you know, have expertise and experience providing facilitation services and would be interested in supporting the Climate Council's work and the development of a climate action plan, the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources has released a [Request for Proposals \(RFP\)](#) to support the work of the Vermont Climate Council in developing the Climate Action Plan as required by the Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA). [Learn more](#), share or throw your hat in the ring today.

## New Funding Opportunities Available!



### Successful Green Stimulus Program Will Be Extended into 2021

On Tuesday, January 26th, [Mayor Miro Weinberger and Burlington Electric Department \(BED\)](#) announced that the Burlington Green Stimulus program will be extended into 2021. The program, first launched in June 2020, offers incentives for technologies including heat pumps, heat pump

water heaters, electric vehicles (EVs), E-bikes and more. Since its launch, the program has led to a fivefold increase in the installation of residential heat pumps and provided an opportunity for low-and moderate-income Burlingtonians to strategically electrify. The stimulus extension will continue to support economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and help Burlington reach its Net Zero Energy Goal.

[Learn more about the Green Stimulus incentives here.](#)

### Small Grant Program for Students Through VEEP/NHEEP

The Vermont Energy Education Program and the New Hampshire Energy Education Project welcomes proposals for grants of \$100–\$1,000 for projects that address climate change and improve environmental literacy among students in Vermont and New Hampshire schools.

Proposals are rolling with a final due date to VEEP/NHEEP of March 15, 2021, and will also be available starting August 2021 with a final deadline of March 15, 2022 (or until funds run out).

[Find more information about the grant, including eligible projects and how to apply here.](#)

### **Bicycle and Pedestrian Program Application Open Through February 19, 2021**

VTrans is now accepting applications for small-scale Bicycle & Pedestrian projects! This grant program is intended to improve access and safety for people walking and/or bicycling with the construction of simple physical improvements.

Small-scale projects may consist of bicycle lanes, shoulders, sidewalks, pedestrian crossing improvements, pedestrian signals, shared-use paths, and improvements that address requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Grants are to reimburse construction costs only and will be awarded in the range of \$5,000 to \$75,000. Applications must be submitted by 1:00 PM on Friday, February 19, 2021.

Access the [VTrans 2021 Small-scale Bicycle and Pedestrian Grant Guide here](#) and find all application materials at the [VTrans Bike/Ped Program website](#).

### **New Funding Opportunity Through U.S Department of Energy**

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is offering up to \$65 million through the Connected Communities funding opportunity to expand DOE's network of grid-interactive efficient building communities nationwide. The funding program is a collaborative effort across three EERE offices—the Solar Energy Technologies Office, Vehicle Technologies Office, and Building Technologies Office—and the Office of Electricity.

The Connected Communities program will select projects that will demonstrate how groups of buildings, combined with other types of distributed energy resources (DERs), such as electric vehicle (EV) charging and photovoltaic (PV) generation, can reliably and cost-effectively serve as grid assets by strategically deploying efficiency and demand flexibility.

The deadline to submit a concept paper is February 17, 2021, and a full application is due March 3, 2021. [More information about this funding program, and others, is available here.](#)

### **The Vermont Winter Bike-Walk Challenge is On!**



Crush your cabin fever! Grab your bike, boots, or shoes and join Local Motion, Vital Communities, and GoVT! for the 2021 Vermont Winter Bike/Walk Challenge! The Challenge starts on February 1st and runs through February 12th, concluding on National Winter Bike to Work Day. Participants who record a bike ride, a walk, or a run on the GoVT! Smartphone app or GoVT! website at least twice during the

challenge timeframe will be entered to win prizes from Vermont businesses. [Download the app here.](#)

Check out these winter riding tips for safe and fun biking from [Local Motion](#) and [Vital Communities](#).

### **Become a Member of Vermont Electric Co-op's Board of Directors**

The Vermont Electric Co-op (VEC) is seeking petitions from eligible candidates for three seats on the board of directors that are up for election in May.

This is a great opportunity for those of you who live in VEC's service territory and who have an interest or expertise in the electricity sector. Reach out to VEC if you are interested, even if



you are not sure you want to commit to running.

Directors receive a stipend and mileage reimbursement for attending meetings and have training opportunities to learn more about energy issues and the cooperative model.

Applications are due by 4:30 p.m. on Monday, March 15. To learn more or request application materials, please call Laura Kinney at 802-730-1172 or email her at [lkkinney@vermont-electric.coop](mailto:lkkinney@vermont-electric.coop).

[Click here to learn more about the position](#), including a list of the three seats that are up for election and the towns they

represent.

## Transit Equity Day Hosted by Vermont Sierra Club - Feb. 4th



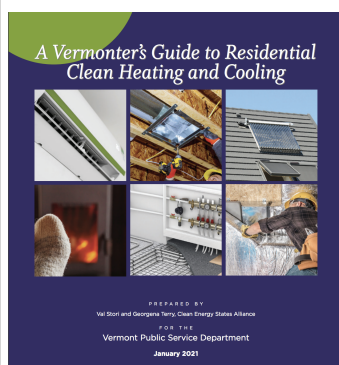
Transit Equity Day is a nationwide collaboration of several organizations and unions to promote public transit, walking, biking, carpooling and electric vehicles as a strategy to combat climate change.

The Vermont Sierra Club is joining this day of action by hosting their first-ever Transit Equity Awards, and a Transit Equity Day Virtual Conversation cosponsored by the Vermont Natural Resources Council. The awards will be

presented to community volunteers, public servants, businesses, nonprofits, and municipalities that demonstrated leadership in promoting clean and equitable transportation in Vermont.

[Find more information about how to participate in this event here.](#)

## A Vermonter's Guide to Residential Clean Heating and Cooling



A new guide prepared by the Clean Energy States Alliance for Vermont Public Service Department helps homeowners navigate the process of heating and cooling their homes with clean energy. It informs consumers about the benefits of clean heating and cooling (CH&C) technologies and provides information to help Vermonters decide whether it makes sense to invest in these technologies.

The 60-page guide, broken into ten sections, provides detailed descriptions of how the technologies work, how much they cost, the kind of maintenance needed, and where to

look for incentives and financing.

[The full online guide is available here](#) to view or download as a pdf for **free**.

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