



# TREEDC 2024 ANNUAL REPORT



(TREEDC members provide emergency disaster fanny packs to Ata. Maria Elementary School in Pampanga Philippines)

This picture is from a visit in 2023 when a group from TREEDC visited the Philippines and provided emergency disaster kits to 6<sup>th</sup> graders at Sta. Maria Elementary School in Pampanga Philippines. As you can see, the kits were well received.

## **TREEDC Promotes Community Resiliency with Protect Tennessee**



TREEDC and Protect Tennessee Visit State Legislature

TREEDC is excited to update you on developments that will enhance sustainability and disaster resilience in Tennessee. HB 1684 is a bill filed by Leader William Lamberth in the Tennessee House of Representatives to allow the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency to operate the Resilient Tennessee Revolving Loan Fund. The Tennessee legislature seeded the fund with \$5 million which will then be matched with up to \$50 million by the federal government as provided by the STORM Act. This Act is a federal law that establishes the Safeguarding Tomorrow Revolving Loan Fund program to seed state-run revolving loan funds which will assist communities in funding their local share of federal grants. This program will function similarly to the Clean Water and Drinking Water revolving funds administered by TDEC.

Building resilience to natural disasters remains a priority for TREEDC and the elected officials who grapple with these issues on the ground in their communities. Flooding stands as the most frequent and costliest disaster in Tennessee, and local elected officials desperately need tools to effectively prepare for extreme flooding. Resiliency is a priority shared by mayors across the state, all of whom are looking for ways to save lives, homes, and businesses in their communities.



TREEDC President Dwain Land Visits State Representative Johnny Shaw

## TREEDC Member Town of Morrison Announces EV Manufacturing Plant



Morrison Mayor Sue Anderson and City and County Officials and Unitech Announce New EV Plant

Unitech North America, LLC recently announced a \$30 million investment in Morrison, TN, where it will locate its first U.S. operations. This facility will specialize in the production of thermal adhesives and battery compression pads for EV battery manufacturers across the Southeast, as well as industrial adhesives and sealers for its automotive customers. In phase one of the project Unitech will create 75 new jobs in Warren County, with plans to grow through future expansions.

Unitech North America, LLC is a subsidiary of Unitech Co., Ltd., which is headquartered in Ansan, South Korea, and is a leading manufacturer of adhesives and sealants. The expansion to Tennessee represents Unitech's first location in the U.S. and will join the company's other operations in Europe and Asia. For more information click here: [Governor Lee, Commissioner McWhorter Announce Unitech North America, LLC to Establish First US Manufacturing Operations in Warren County - News - Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development \(tnecd.com\)](#)



## TREEDC Founding Member University of Tennessee Municipal Technical Advisory Service (MTAS) Celebrated 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary



TREEDC 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration on April 15, 2024 in Jackson, Tennessee

The Municipal Technical Advisory Service (MTAS) celebrated its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary throughout the year across Tennessee. MTAS hosted three celebrations across the state. The first event was held on April 15, 2024, at the Southwest Tennessee Development District in Jackson. Elected and appointed officials across West Tennessee recognized MTAS for its role in helping cities, the second event was held in Nashville in June and the third event was held in Knoxville in October.

MTAS is an agency of the Institute for Public Service (IPS) of the University of Tennessee. IPS is a statewide, system-wide organization that fulfills the University's public service mandate by applying university expertise to community and workplace needs. Through MTAS the towns and cities of Tennessee are supported by and have available experts dedicated solely to research, consulting and training on Tennessee municipal issues. MTAS and Former University of Tennessee President Dr. Joe Johnson founded TREEDC in 2008.

MTAS was established on April 15, 1949, in cooperation with the Tennessee Municipal League, provides for studies and research in municipal government, publications, educational conferences and attendance at such conferences and furnishes technical, consultative and field services to municipalities in problems relating to fiscal administration, accounting, tax assessment and collection, law enforcement, improvements and public works and in any and all matters relating to municipal government.

MTAS collaborates with agencies within IPS, the university system, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission and with all entities that work with municipal governments. Congratulations, MTAS!

## Clean Energy is Boosting Economic Growth



According to IEA Director of Sustainability, Technology and Outlooks, Laura Cozzi, clean energy is moving towards center stage in the global energy system and as its importance rises, a new clean energy economy is emerging.

Clean electricity accounted for around 80% of new capacity additions to the world's electricity system in 2023, and electric vehicles for around one out of five cars sold globally. At the same time, global investment in clean energy manufacturing is booming, driven by industrial policies and market demand. For more information click here: [Clean energy is boosting economic growth – Analysis - IEA.](#)

## EPA Community Change Grant Program



EPA announced \$2 billion in funding from the Inflation Reduction Act for the Community Change Grants Program. Funding is available for projects that deploy clean energy, reduce pollution, increase community climate resilience, and build community capacity to address environmental and climate justice challenges. These place-based investments will be focused on community-driven initiatives to be responsive to community and stakeholder input.

There are two separate tracks available:

- Track I: Community-Driven Investments for Change, which is expected to award approximately \$1.96 billion for 150 projects at \$10-20 million each;

- Track II: Meaningful Engagement for Equitable Governance, which is expected to award approximately \$40 million for 20 projects at \$1-3 million each.

Eligible applicants include partnerships between two community-based non-profit organizations and partnerships between a community-based non-profit organization and a local government, institution of higher education, or federally recognized tribe. Applications were due **November 21, 2024**.

### **EPA Renew America's Schools Funding**

U.S. DOE recently announced \$180 million in funding available through the 2024 Renew America's Schools Prize for schools engaging in strategic partnerships to build capacity and implement energy upgrades at K-12 schools, lowering energy use and costs and improving indoor air quality. Competitive proposals will implement energy assessments and building improvement projects across a portfolio of 10 or more school facilities, which may be composed of school facilities from one or more districts.

Awards will focus on schools that serve disadvantaged communities, including those with a high percentage of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch, and/or which qualify as rural. Eligible improvements include alternative fuel vehicles and infrastructure (including EVs).

### **Opportunity for Rural Tennesseans to Test EVs**



Rural Reimagined, a U.S. DOE-funded large-scale EV community project, aims to make Tennessee roads greener by loaning EVs to rural Tennesseans interested in making the switch. The program aims to become the backbone of the EV ecosystem in rural communities. Those in eligible areas interested in testing an EV can borrow one at no cost for two to six weeks. Learn more on the Rural Reimagined page, and visit the Tennessee page to register and view participating counties.

## Drive Electric Tennessee Held Second Annual Summit on May 9, 2024



Drive Electric Tennessee (DET) held its second annual [DriveElectricTN Momentum Summit](#) on **May 9** at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro. The Momentum Summit focused on transportation electrification efforts, including workplace charging, economic and environmental benefits, and workforce/manufacturing efforts tied to the electric vehicle (EV) industry. The event also included an EV demonstration and ride and drive.

Sessions included an introduction to the DriveElectricTN Roadmap Refresh, an economic perspective panel on the EV industry in Tennessee, a discussion on workforce development, and a panel on propelling the EV transition, which discussed EV tax credits and incentives. Breakout sessions addressed the acceleration of rural EV infrastructure deployment, charging at workplaces and multi-family dwellings, the intersection between EVs and the grid, and the environmental benefits of EVs.

## Valley Pathways Study: Preliminary Findings Report Released



TVA and the University of Tennessee's Baker School of Public Policy and Public Affairs have released the [Preliminary Findings Report](#) for the [Valley Pathways Study](#). The Valley Pathways Study was launched in February 2023 to evaluate the existing environmental landscape and explore opportunities to reduce carbon emissions and create a competitive, sustainable economy. The study found that the transportation sector is the largest source of emissions in the region, which is consistent with the national emissions landscape, and that electricity generation produces approximately 27 percent of emissions. Additional information can be found in a [one-page summary](#) of the findings and an [informational video](#).

## **TVA Connected Communities Awards Second Round of Pilot Projects**

Connected Communities are towns, main streets, neighborhoods, and cities in the TVA service region using technology and data-related solutions to address community challenges and prepare for a modern energy system. TVA Connected Communities Pilot Projects aim to improve the quality of life and equity for communities in its service area through innovative community-driven solutions. Pilot project funding is intended to help communities gain expertise and test approaches that will jump-start their progress toward improving access to digital services, creating a healthy natural and built environment, scaling economic opportunities, and better preparing for natural disasters.

TVA announced six new Pilot Projects under the second round of funding, four of which are located in Tennessee. One project, “Driving Tennessee Forward - EV Technologies,” led by Southwest Tennessee Community College, will receive \$950,000 to create a program that provides the community with equitable access to EV charging stations and develops a curriculum for students to learn the necessary skills for jobs related to EV charging.

## **New “Energizing Tennessee” Podcast Episodes from TAEBC**

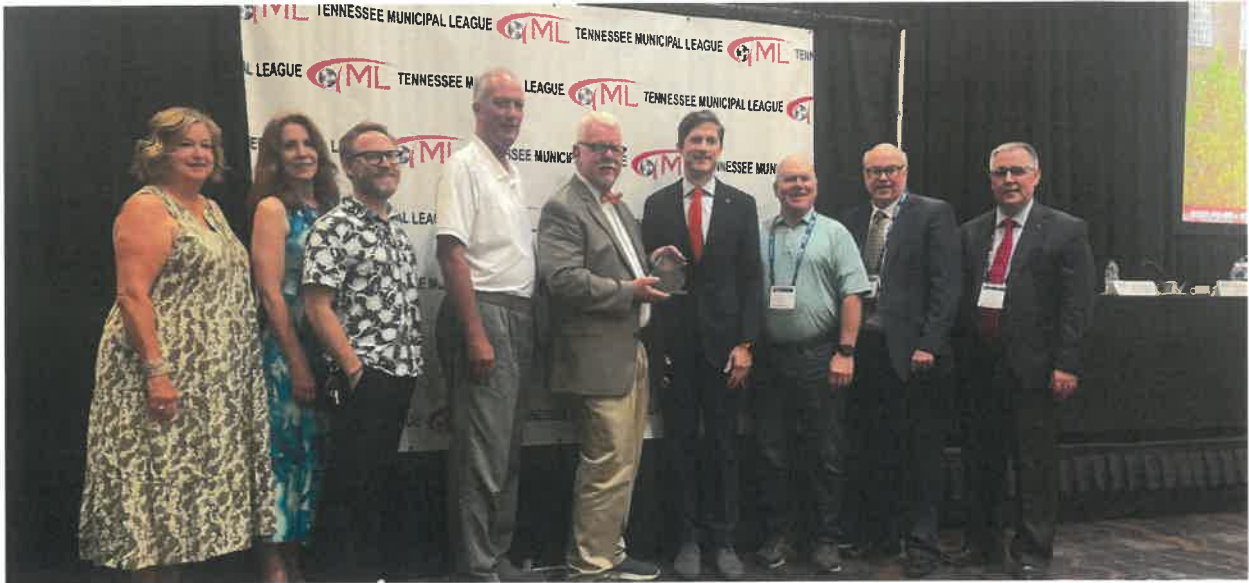
Energizing Tennessee, a podcast from the Tennessee Advanced Energy Business Council (TAEBC) and FirstBank, explores the latest news and insights about the advanced energy sector with experts sharing their thoughts on transportation electrification, workforce development, and the growing sector of advanced energy in Tennessee’s economy.

In episode seventeen, host Cortney Piper interviews Jennifer Safavian, President and CEO of Autos Drive America. Piper and Safavian discuss the international automotive presence in Tennessee, how the Inflation Reduction Act and other recent federal policies impact the sector, and Autos Drive America’s 2023 Economic Impact Report. The report found that in Tennessee in 2022, international automakers built 413,746 vehicles, employing 109,352 persons.

All episodes are available on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and wherever you get your podcasts. [Click here to listen.](#)



## TREEDC Member Columbia Tennessee Wins Statewide Green Leadership Award



Columbia Mayor Chaz Molder, City Manager Tony Massey, Assistant City Manager Thad Jablonski and city officials accept TML award

Congratulations to TREEDC Member City of Columbia for winning a state-wide award in Green Leadership by the Tennessee Municipal League on July 23, 2024, at the 84th Annual Conference of the Tennessee Municipal League (TML) held at the Knoxville Convention Center.

The city was recognized for upgrading its existing wastewater treatment plant, originally built in the 1970s. A new HVAC system has already been added to the administration building, providing energy and cost savings. External and internal lighting in the plant has all been upgraded to LED. Plans for a new facility now under construction include energy saving advances and LED lighting.

The city hired TREEDC member PATH Company to manage the conversion of 6,000 streetlights to LED bulbs. Prior to the conversion, Columbia Power and Water System (CPWS) owned the lights with the city responsible for paying power consumption expenses, maintenance, and installation. The conversion has reduced those costs and saved the State Street Aid Fund \$450,000 per year. Maintenance of the lights has been transferred back to CPWS as per the agreement.

Finally, the city has incorporated locations for new EV charging stations into its most recent strategic plan. City leaders are working with CPWS and TVA to install charging locations downtown.

## TREEDC Member Ripley Tennessee Awarded Excellency in Energy and Disaster Resilience



Ripley Mayor Craig Fitzhugh receives award from TML President Ron Williams

With preparation for and recovery from extreme weather events becoming a priority for communities of all sizes, the City of Ripley has become an example of how Tennessee's small cities can find innovative solutions for energy and resiliency needs.

In recognition of the focused efforts the City of Ripley has undertaken to proactively plan for disaster resiliency and recovery, the Tennessee Municipal League presented Ripley with an Innovation Award for Energy and Disaster Resiliency. The award was presented Tuesday, July 23, 2024, at the 84th Annual Conference of the Tennessee Municipal League (TML) held at the Knoxville Convention Center.

The City of Ripley, led by the Ripley Board of Mayor and Aldermen, secured a pilot-scale, state-of-the-art microgrid for the community as part of a highly competitive, collaborative Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) Connected Communities Program. In addition to TVA, the city brought in partners including the Ripley Power and Light Company and National Institute for Hometown Security.

The partnership allowed for the planning, construction, and demonstration of a portable, solar microgrid that will lower energy costs for city facilities and ensure a source of backup power during emergencies. TVA provided \$600,000 for the project with a \$250,000 cost share from partners. In addition to helping city facilities better withstand power disruptions during emergencies, the microgrid has become a showcase project for other communities to emulate.

The city has also engaged in renewable energy outreach through the participation of Mayor Craig Fitzhugh in renewable energy and community preparedness panels as well as the upgrading of development regulations to allow for innovative resiliency and disaster preparedness solutions.

The city also completed an LED streetlight conversion project with the help of PATH Company, again modeling how other small cities in Tennessee can provide cost and energy saving solutions.

### **TREEDC Member Spring City Wins Statewide Tourism Award**



From left to right: Spring City Commissioner Jody Bauer, City Manager Stephania Motes, TML President Ron Williams and Mayor Woody Evans

In 2021, the town formed the Spring City Tourism and Events Commission, comprised of eleven community volunteers. Since then, the group has successfully planned, organized, and implemented four community-wide events over the past 15 months. These events include two Spring City Blooms Festivals and two Lighting the Way to Christmas events.

In addition, the town is partnering with the Tennessee Aquarium to raise awareness of an endangered fish, the Laurel Dace, which is only found in the rivers upstream from Watts Bar Lake. A *Save the Laurel Dace* festival, including kayaking and hiking opportunities, a 5k race, and a downtown festival, is being planned for 2025.

As part of the city-wide Master Plan, Spring City is connecting Watts Bar Lake to the Cumberland Trail, which sits just to the west of the city. In doing this, all city parks will be connected through a greenway trail system. A new 40-acre park will also be developed to include a city-operated RV park to add overnight accommodations for visitors. The town is currently in the second phase of the project.

## Tennessee Cities Awarded Over \$47 Million from U.S. DOT Neighborhood Access and Equity Grant Program



U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) recently announced awards under the Neighborhood Access and Equity Grant Program, part of the Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program. Three Tennessee TREEDC member entities were selected for funding, to total over \$47 million. Additional information on all awarded projects is available here.

Knoxville's Community Development Corporation was awarded over \$42.6 million in funding for the project Reconnecting Knoxville. Reconnecting Knoxville is a civic infrastructure plan to restore connections to emerging economic growth centers among formerly displaced populations. Once implemented, residents will gain nearly 10 miles of urban greenspace and transportation pathways, having the freedom to move safely within the community to reach jobs, schools, businesses, and parks.

The City of Memphis and Shelby County Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) was awarded over \$2.6 million for the project Over and Under I-40. The project proposes a community-driven planning effort to mitigate the barrier and impacts of Interstate 40 for seven historically disadvantaged neighborhoods in North Memphis. The goal of the planning project is to engage the affected communities in a design process with the assistance of a team of professionals to develop innovative strategies to reconnect these neighborhoods through the enhancement of twelve crossing points.

The City of Chattanooga was awarded \$2 million for its Community-Led Reconnection of the Westside Neighborhood project. The project will complete feasibility and design studies to implement the transportation recommendations in the recently adopted Westside Neighborhood.



## **University of Tennessee Southern Awarded \$4 Million For Campus Safety, Security**



From left to right: UTS Vice Chancellor of Advancement Evan Beech, UTS Interim Chancellor Linda Martin and UT System President Randy Boyd.

UT Southern is set to receive over \$4 million from the state for campus safety and security enhancements. This funding will address a range of needs identified in a comprehensive campus safety assessment conducted in November 2023.

Key areas of focus include installing efficient lighting to enhance natural surveillance and increase safety. The report identified specific areas to be addressed, including adjusting light timers, improved maintenance of trees and shrubbery and collaborating with the City of Pulaski for streetlight improvements. Plans are underway for adding ground and floodlights to various buildings, ensuring operability of existing lights and installing new fixtures in key areas like walkways, entrances, parking lots and residential areas.

This significant investment also will address the need for more clearly defined borders at the East Campus with appropriate lighting and access.

## Tennessee Valley Solar Conference held on November 20 - 21, 2024



TREEDC is a proud partner of the TenneSEIA Tennessee Valley Solar and Energy Storage Conference. Tennesseeia will be organizing the Tennessee Valley Solar + Storage Conference. This event is the largest Solar and Storage Conference for the TVA market. Attendees participate in forward-looking discussions on TVA policy, programs, and opportunities. Highlights for this year will include regional Solar for All funding, results of the TVA IRP and updates on the LPC Generation Flexibility Program.

## Electric Vehicle Preparedness Online Training



The National Fire Protection Association has created online EV preparedness trainings that offer critical safety and emergency response strategies and procedures for EV incidents. Recommended by the National Transportation Safety Board, these courses feature scenario-based learning, expert commentary and instruction, videos, images, and animations. Training includes community preparedness training for diverse audiences such as the general public, EV fleet owners, and vehicle technicians, as well as EV safety trainings that address topics such as towing and salvaging and crash reconstruction.

## Public Electric Vehicle Charging Playbook Released



The Joint Office of Energy and Transportation, in partnership with the U.S. DOE's Clean Energy to Communities (C2C) program, recently released the Public EV Charging Infrastructure Playbook, a web-based resource built by experts at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory and World Resources Institute, that offers interactive modules to help communities plan and build infrastructure to support a zero-emission transportation system.

The playbook offers interactive resources for communities, planning organizations, local and state governments, applicants and awardees of the Charging and Fueling Infrastructure Discretionary Grant Program, and other decision-makers to help navigate important considerations when planning and deploying EV charging infrastructure. Modules can be followed in order or used as standalone resources to meet the community's unique needs.

### EPA Community Change Grant Program

As mentioned earlier, EPA announced \$2 billion in funding from the Inflation Reduction Act for the Community Change Grants Program. Funding is available for projects that deploy clean energy, reduce pollution, increase community climate resilience, and build community capacity to address environmental and climate justice challenges. These place-based investments will be focused on community-driven initiatives to be responsive to community and stakeholder input.

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Eligible applicants include partnerships between two community-based non-profit organizations and partnerships between a community-based non-profit organization and a local government, institution of higher education, or federally recognized tribe. View the Notice of Funding Opportunity and the Grants.gov page for additional information. Applications were due **November 21, 2024**.

## **In Memoriam: Dr. Steve Levy, Founding Director of the Tennessee Solar Energy Association**



Dr. Stephen Levy, Tennessee Solar Energy Association

The July 2024 TREEDC Newsletter was dedicated to the memory of Dr. Stephen Levy who passed away on May 11, 2024. Back in 2008, Dr. Levy helped TREEDC take off by actively speaking across the state about the benefits of solar energy. His role as co-founding Director of the Tennessee Solar Energy Association (TSEA) helped catapult the advancement of solar energy and other forms of renewable energy across Tennessee. Dr. Levy and fellow TSEA Co-Founder Jim Hackworth helped craft legislation promoting solar projects and was called on to advise state officials regarding solar energy. Dr. Levy was an adjunct professor at the University of Tennessee where he shared his passion for solar energy. For more information about the career of Dr. Levy click here: [Retired Engineer Pushes to Heat Up Solar Energy Usage \(knoxvilledailysun.com\)](https://www.knoxvilledailysun.com)



## TREEDC Conducts Training at the University of Tennessee MTAS Rural Community Development Institute



*Students and instructors at the University of Tennessee Municipal Technical Advisory Service (MTAS) RCDI*

On October 8, 2024, the Tennessee Renewable Energy & Economic Development (TREEDC) members Tennessee Department of Office of Energy Programs, Wilmot Inc., and Path Company presented informative updates at the University of Tennessee Municipal Technical Advisory Service (MTAS) Rural Community Development Institute (RCDI). A total of 26 municipal officials representing 8 cities learned more about how community resiliency and renewable energy interact with sound rural economic development projects. Congratulations to Dr. Chris Shults for organizing a very successful training institute for MTAS.



*Front row: from left to right: Harriman Vice-Mayor Tim Johnson, City Manager Scott Mason, Parks Director Charlie Jones, MTAS Grants and Training Specialist Dr. Chris Shults, Back row: from left to right: Councilmember Johnny Brackett, MTAS Consultant Warren Nevad*

## TVA Releases Draft Integrated Resource Plan

TVA [released](#) the draft [2025 Integrated Resource Plan](#) (IRP), a comprehensive plan that will shape TVA's energy system through 2050. TVA is also preparing an accompanying draft [Environmental Impact Statement](#) (EIS). The drafts result from months of planning, analysis, and active engagement with stakeholders and the public to evaluate how TVA can continue to provide affordable, reliable, resilient, and increasingly cleaner energy for decades to come. The IRP considers resource needs as well as physical and operational constraints, risks, and proposed resource choices. The accompanying EIS analyzes potential environmental impacts to the Tennessee Valley that could result from the proposed actions in the IRP. TVA will [host virtual public webinars and in-person open house meetings](#) across the valley region, including multiple meetings in Tennessee.

TVA is developing the IRP due to the region's sustained growth in population and power demand, as well as changes in the utility marketplace. Those changes include evolving policies and regulations, industrial electrification, emerging clean energy technologies, and an increased focus on energy efficiency and [carbon reduction](#) efforts.

Though the 2025 IRP is not final, this draft contains preliminary observations:

- **New capacity** is needed in all scenarios to replace retiring and expiring capacity, support economic growth, and enable further electrification of the economy.
- **Firm, dispatchable generation technologies** are needed to ensure system reliability throughout the year.
- **Solar expansion** plays an increasingly substantial role, providing economic, carbon-free energy.
- **Energy Efficiency deployment** reduces energy needs, particularly between now and 2035. **Demand Response programs** grow with the system and the use of smart technologies.
- **Storage expansion** accelerates, driven by evolving battery technologies and the potential for additional pumped storage.
- **Wind additions** have the potential to add more diversity and carbon-free energy to the resource mix.



## **TVA Wins Federal Grant**

The U.S. Department of Energy awarded a \$250 million grant to the Tennessee Valley Authority and 10 of its local power companies that will fund 84 projects aimed at strengthening the electric grid and building renewable energy.

The grant, announced Oct. 18 through the department's Grid Resilience and Innovation Partnerships Program, brings TVA's federal grant wins in recent years to more than half a billion dollars. It will help the utility add up to 2,400 megawatts of capacity to its grid, moving enough additional electricity to power 1.4 million homes, and speed development of solar and wind projects. For more information click here: [TVA wins \\$250M DOE grant with 10 local utilities for energy projects.](#)

## **TREEDC Member Nashville Electric System Receives Clean Energy Grant**



TREEDC member Nashville Electric System (NES) announced a partnership between NES, Metro Nashville, Middle-West Tennessee Clean Fuels and the Urban League of Middle Tennessee to create enhancements in clean energy. The upcoming enhancements will allow NES to upgrade technology to provide clean power to its customers. This project will be funded by the U.S. Department of Energy's Clean Energy to Communities program. The DOE is allocating \$500,000 to the partners of this project and up to \$3.5 million in technical assistance over 2-3 years.

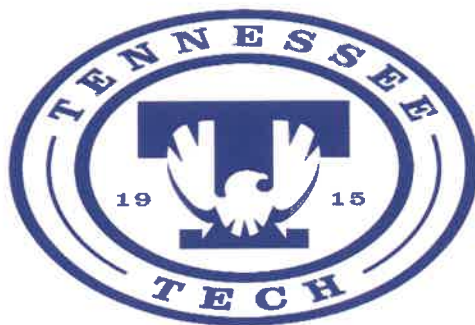
## **2024 U.S. Energy and Employment Report**

U.S. DOE recently released the 2024 U.S. Energy and Employment Report (USEER). USEER is a comprehensive study to track and understand employment within key energy sectors. The analysis shows that employment increased from 2023 across all five USEER energy technology categories, which include electric power generation, energy efficiency, fuels, motor vehicles, and transmission, distribution, and storage. In Tennessee, energy jobs increased 3.4% for a total of 7,144 jobs. The largest energy technology for Tennessee continued to be in motor vehicles, which employed 107,567 workers and increased by 1.5% over the past year. Additional information is available on the Tennessee pages of the USEER 2024 State Reports.



From left to right: Warren Nevad, MTAS, Dwain Land, TREEDC President and Margaret Norris MTAS Executive Director receiving Johnson Award at 2023 Conference

TREEDC partnered with Tennessee Tech University to hold its annual conference on November 14, 2024, at the Cookeville-Putnam County Chamber of Commerce and awards reception at 37 Cedar Restaurant in Cookeville. Attendees heard presentations from municipal sustainability professionals, energy services providers, PACE clean energy initiatives and updates from TDEC Office of Energy Programs and USDA Rural Development funding opportunities. See more details below.





## TREEDC Hosts Annual Conference/Awards Reception



From left to right: MTAS Municipal Management Consultant Warren Nevad, TREEDC President Dwain Land, University of Tennessee Vice President Dr. Keith Carver (Dr. Joe Johnson Award) and Tennessee Advanced Energy Business Council (TAEBC) Cortney Piper (TREEDC Environmental Legacy Award).

On November 14, 2024, the Tennessee Renewable Energy & Economic Development Council (TREEDC) partnered with Tennessee Tech University (TTU) and the University of Tennessee Municipal Technical Advisory Service (MTAS) to host its annual conference and awards reception in Cookeville, Tennessee. Dr. Michael Aikens, Tennessee Tech University (TTU) Assistant Vice President for Economic Development and Dr. Dennis Tennant, TTU Director of Professional Studies planned and organized the event which featured an update on clean energy funding opportunities from Chris Brazell, of Appalachian Regional Commission. Attendees introduced themselves and shared progress regarding their projects. Knoxville Mayor Glenn Jacobs provided the keynote presentation. The awards reception was sponsored by PATH Company.

Presentations were given regarding local government opportunities in clean energy from Mark Finlay of Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation (TDEC) Office of Energy Programs, Tommy Lee, Upper Cumberland Development District and Justin Wilkerson, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development. The afternoon session consisted of presentations regarding opportunities in community resiliency from Dr. Satish Mahajan, TTU Director for Energy Systems, Georgia Carruthers, Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) Initiative Lead and Scott Stephens, Vice President of PATH Company. Area 51 Solar Founder Harvey Abouelata gave an overview of current and future trends in solar development.

During the conference, TREEDC President Dwain Land presented the following annual awards:

- 1) Dr. Joe Johnson Legacy Award: Dr. Keith Carver, The University of Tennessee Senior Vice Chancellor/Vice President.
- 2) TREEDC Environmental Legacy Award: Cortney Piper, Tennessee Advanced Energy Business Council Executive Director.
- 3) TREEDC Champion Award: William Franklin PATH Company Vice President.
- 4) TREEDC Champion Award: Scott Stephens: PATH Company Vice President.
- 5) TREEDC Excellence in Rural Economic Development: Dr. Chris Shults, The University of Tennessee MTAS.
- 6) TREEDC Excellence in Community Resiliency: Tiffany Wilmot, Wilmot, Inc. President.



From left to right: Ricky Shelton, TREEDC Mayor Emeritus, Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs and TREEDC President Dwain Land



From left to right: Dr. Chris Shults, UT-MTAS received TREEDC Excellence in Rural Economic Development from President Land and Nevad.

## **University of Tennessee Senior Vice Chancellor and Senior Vice President Dr. Keith Carver Honored with Dr. Joe Johnson Memorial Award at TREEDC Annual Conference**

Keith Carver, senior vice chancellor and senior vice president of the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, was awarded the prestigious Dr. Joe Johnson Award on November 14, 2024, at the annual Tennessee Renewable Energy & Economic Development Council (TREEDC) Conference. This recognition celebrates Carver's remarkable contributions to TREEDC's initiative and his longstanding collaboration with the late Dr. Joe Johnson.

Carver's dedication to advancing the mission of TREEDC has been instrumental in fostering innovation and collaboration. His work alongside Johnson laid the foundation for many of the program's successes, embodying the vision and values that continue to guide TREEDC today.

"Dr. Carver's leadership and commitment to renewable energy and economic development exemplify the spirit of this award," said TREEDC President Dwain Land. "His partnership with our mayors as Honorary TREEDC Chairman since 2018 has left a lasting impact, and we are honored to recognize his contributions."

The award was established last year in memory of TREEDC Founder and former UT President Joe Johnson who started TREEDC 16 years ago in 2008. Last year's award winner was UT-MTAS Executive Director Margaret Norris. This award is given to a person who best embodies Dr. Johnson's spirit of relationship building through outreach public service and being the boots on the ground for Tennesseans.

TREEDC ([www.treedc.us](http://www.treedc.us)) is a 501 c-3 organization of 108 Tennessee Mayors working together to create a path to fast-track renewable energy in Tennessee and the Philippines, TREEDC was founded in 2008 by University of Tennessee (UT) President Emeritus Dr. Joe Johnson, UT Municipal Technical Advisory Service and 4 mayors representing the cities of Crossville, Gainesboro, Graysville and Pikeville, Tennessee.

## **Cortney Piper Honored with TREEDC Environmental Legacy Award at TREEDC Annual Conference**

Cortney Piper, Executive Director of the Tennessee Advanced Energy Business Council (TAEBC) ([Tennessee Advanced Energy Business Council — Championing Tennessee's advanced energy economy](#)) was awarded the prestigious Tennessee Renewable Energy & Economic Development Council (TREEDC) Environmental Legacy Award on November 14,

2024 at the TREEDC Conference in Cookeville. This honor recognizes Piper’s remarkable achievements in advancing clean energy and sustainable practices across Tennessee.

Under Piper’s leadership, TAEBC has become a driving force in positioning Tennessee as a leader in the advanced energy sector. Her efforts have fostered collaboration between public and private entities, supported economic development, and promoted innovation in energy technologies.

“Cortney Piper is Tennessee’s top ambassador for clean energy. I have admired her many accomplishments over the years which includes developing startups, organizing opportunities in clean energy forums, supporting workforce development and building strong industry partnerships” said UT MTAS Consultant/TREEDC Director Warren Nevad. “She has significantly expanded the footprint of many companies like Silicon Ranch, Strata-G, Bridgestone and Clearloop.”

## **TAEBC Hosted Annual Opportunities Event on November 19, 2024**



The Tennessee Advanced Energy Business Council hosted the [Opportunities in Energy](#) event on **November 19** in Knoxville. The event brought together members and stakeholders to discuss all new and upcoming “opportunities” in the advanced energy sector, including trends, businesses, technologies, and other exciting developments. During the event, a state or local leader will be presented with the annual Thomas B. Ballard Advanced Energy Leadership Award. The award honors exemplary leadership and success in championing, connecting, and strengthening Tennessee’s advanced energy economy.

### **Connected Communities Webinars**

TVA’s [Connected Communities](#) program hosts regular webinars on a variety of topics. Past webinars have addressed workforce development, resiliency, and creating a community benefits plan. [View all upcoming and past webinars here.](#)

Webinars took place from 1:00-2:00 PM Eastern and included:

- [Solar for All – Leveraging Federal Funds to Advance Your Community’s Priorities:](#)  
**November 12**
- [Regional Grid Transformation – Building a Resilience, Flexible and Integrated Energy system:](#) **December 10**



## **Technical Assistance for Local Governments to Apply for Federal Funding**

The [State Funding Readiness Project](#) (SFRP) provides no-cost technical assistance to jurisdictions, including local governments, for preparing and applying for funding from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act. SFRP can help jurisdictions identify specific investment opportunities, conduct a stakeholder mapping exercise, inform budget planning, meet Justice40 requirements, develop competitive grant applications, and strengthen linkages with administering agencies. SFRP has an open, rolling intake process and considers jurisdiction requests at any time. Learn more on the [SFRP website](#).

### **TREEDC Founding Member University of Tennessee Municipal Technical Advisory Service (MTAS) Celebrates 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in Knoxville**

The Municipal Technical Advisory Service (MTAS) recently celebrated its 75th anniversary across Tennessee. MTAS has hosted three celebrations across the state. The third and final event was held on October 3, 2024 in Knoxville. MTAS Director Margaret Norris welcomed over 60 attendees with an overview of MTAS' accomplishments over the years.

MTAS was established on April 15, 1949, in cooperation with the Tennessee Municipal League, to provide for studies and research in municipal government, publications, educational conferences and attendance at such conferences and in furnishing technical, consultative and field services to municipalities in problems relating to fiscal administration, accounting, tax assessment and collection, law enforcement, improvements and public works and in any and all matters relating to municipal government. MTAS collaborates with agencies within IPS, the university system, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission and with all entities that work with municipal governments. Congratulations, MTAS!



*Former MTAS Director Mike Tallent, MTAS Consultant Nevad and Former MTAS Director Bob Schwartz*

## Tennessee Awarded \$7 Million to Adapt Infrastructure for Extreme Weather Events

Tennessee has been [awarded \\$7 million](#) from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to support communities in reducing vulnerability to natural hazards and increasing resilience. The funding is under the [Safeguarding Tomorrow Revolving Loan Fund Program](#), which aims to equip the State with the ability to administer revolving low-interest loan funds to local governments to adapt infrastructure and better prepare communities. Examples of eligible projects that can be funded through the program are available from the [Tennessee Emergency Management Agency here](#).

## TREEDC Launches 2025 Membership Campaign



TREEDC Assistant Madeline Shelly and TREEDC Chairman Dr. Keith Carver

TREEDC Chairman/University of Tennessee at Martin Chancellor Dr. Keith Carver and TREEDC President Dwain Land have officially launched the TREEDC 2025 membership campaign. The TREEDC board has kept the 2025 membership dues levels unchanged from prior years. Memberships help pay for expenses related to TREEDC's outreach, educational and project facilitation for its member local governments. Being a TREEDC member, affords networking, business matchmaking and developmental opportunities, sponsorships of various events and participation in our international exchange program.

During 2024, TREEDC hosted an annual conference and awards program with Tennessee Tech University. We also worked with various local governments on determining the feasibility of streetlight conversions to LED. TREEDC also partnered with the University of

Tennessee MTAS with its Rural Community Development Initiative Program to strengthen rural economies through outreach and resiliency. TREEDC worked with Cooley Public Strategies to inform the Tennessee General Assembly about the economic and environmental benefits of green stormwater infrastructure for the Protect Tennessee program. We also partnered with Tennessee Environmental Council (TEC) with its tree planting program. TREEDC West Tennessee Coordinator Bolivar Mayor Julian McTizic worked closely with development of the Ford Motor Company Electric Truck Manufacturing plant development in West Tennessee. We also assisted the Tennessee Municipal League (TML) and MTAS with informational workshops for its members.

TREEDC is a 501 C 3 charitable organization. For more information regarding 2025 membership opportunities click <http://treedc.us/membership/index.html>

## **Clean Energy Business Network Releases 2024 Report**



The Clean Energy Business Network (CEBN) is the small business voice of the clean energy economy, working to enhance opportunities for clean energy providers and community leaders through policy support, market and technology information, and business development. CEBN works in all 50 U.S. states, nearly every Congressional district, and across every aspect of the clean energy economy, including renewable energy, energy efficiency, natural gas, and other advanced energy and transportation technologies.

Started in 2009 by TREEDC Member, The Pew Charitable Trusts, the CEBN transitioned in May 2017 to become an independent initiative of the [Business Council for Sustainable Energy](#), a coalition of companies and trade associations from the energy efficiency, natural gas and renewable energy sectors. CEBN celebrates its 5th year as an organization in 2022.

To view the annual report, click: [FINAL CEBN Annual Report 2024](#).

## **Tennessee Solar for All Program**

Tennessee's Solar for All Program will accelerate the deployment of solar infrastructure to benefit low-income households and disadvantaged communities while supporting Tennessee's varied urban, suburban, and rural communities. The Tennessee Department of

Environment and Conservation Office of Energy Programs (TDEC-OEP) will receive \$156.12 million from the EPA for a new program aimed at deploying solar infrastructure to low-income households and disadvantaged communities. The Tennessee Solar for All Program will be administered by the TDEC-OEP. Of the funding awarded, \$400,000 will be awarded as in-kind services provided by the EPA in partnership with the U.S. DOE under the forthcoming National Solar for All Technical Assistance Program. The proposed program's geography covers the entire state, and the scope of work is to provide financial assistance for residential rooftop and residential-serving community solar infrastructure, storage, and associated enabling upgrades in conjunction with preexisting, complementary programs (e.g., the Tennessee Valley Authority's Flexibility 2.0 Program, Dispersed Power Production program, and community solar programs such as Nashville Electric Service's Music City Solar program).

- TDEC-OEP elected to include a one-year program planning period to provide time to refine program plans after receiving an award from EPA and before beginning to deploy financial and technical assistance.
- TDEC OEP's one-year planning period began on **September 1, 2024**, and will end on **August 31, 2025**.
- During the planning period, OEP will:
  - Continue engaging with Stakeholders via our monthly update call;
  - Complete revisions to the budget and workplan;
  - Define both “**Local Project Implementation Teams**” and the “**Statewide Program**” with regard to identification, process, expectations, and roles/responsibilities for each, etc.;
  - Release a Notice of Intent for Local Project Implementation Teams;
  - Develop and issue a Request for Proposals for Statewide Program Implementer to address additional communities; and
  - Engage in contracting process with Local Project Implementation Teams and Statewide Program Implementer.
  - For more information about this program click: [Solar for All](#).



## University of Tennessee Knoxville Wins Funding for Green Jobs Initiative



The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, has been awarded a \$750,000 grant for East Tennessee Works, a regional green jobs initiative led by the university and focused on Knoxville's inner-city and rural Southern Appalachian communities.

An interdisciplinary team from UT is one of six groups nationwide receiving funding in the [Jobs for the Future Quality Green Jobs Regional Challenge](#). The university is working with community partners, industry, labor organizations and other educational institutions to train and support job seekers in advanced manufacturing and green construction.

Over the next three years, East Tennessee Works intends to place 5,000 East Tennesseans on the path to good jobs in the green economy, with a flexible, scalable approach.

For more information click : [UT Wins Funding for Green Jobs Initiative - News](#)

## TAEBC Annual Meeting Held on March 5, 2025



The [Tennessee Advanced Energy Business Council](#) held its Annual Meeting in Nashville, Tennessee. This event allows TAEBBC members, stakeholders and potential members to gather from across the state to celebrate our growing advanced energy economy.

## 2024 Energy Efficiency Impact Report



Over the decades, energy efficiency has transformed the way we use energy and has helped build a cleaner economy that is more secure, more affordable, and more productive. After several years of slowed progress, recent federal funding provides the opportunity for states, local governments, businesses, and households to further investments in energy efficiency. Given the accelerating urgency of climate change and the race to improve U.S. productivity and competitiveness in a quickly evolving international market, we need to fully capitalize on the expansive, diverse, affordable, and innovative energy efficiency toolkit.

Using 59 indicators, the Energy Efficiency Impact Report tracks progress in a variety of sectors, including utilities, buildings, industry, and transportation and examines how policy and other tools are used to incentivize energy efficiency.

### TDEC Seeks Nominations for 2025 Governor's Environmental Awards



The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation recently announced the 2025 Governor's Environmental Stewardship Awards Program. This process honors outstanding accomplishments that support the protection and enhancement of Tennessee's natural resources. Nominating an individual, group, or organization for their achievements is a meaningful way to promote conservation and recognize effective environmental leadership in Tennessee.

Nominations are currently being accepted for the 2025 Governor's Environmental Stewardship Awards, and we are asking you to draw on your knowledge and experience to help us identify organizations and individuals who are improving the quality of Tennessee's land, air, and water.

The Governor's Environmental Stewardship Awards include ten categories:

1. Agriculture and Forestry
2. Building Green
3. Clean Air
4. Energy and Renewable Resources
5. Environmental Education and Outreach
6. Materials Management
7. Natural Resource
8. Water Quality
9. Sustainable Performance
10. Lifetime Achievement

For more information, click here: [website](#).

## **Energy Improvements in Rural or Remote Areas Announcement**

The U.S. Department of Energy [recently announced](#) \$400 million in funding for the [Energy Improvements in Rural or Remote Areas \(ERA\) Program](#). The ERA Program aims to fund community-driven projects that demonstrate clean energy systems, deliver measurable and sustained benefits to people who live in areas with fewer than 10,000 people, and build clean energy knowledge, capacity, and self-reliance throughout rural America. Projects must support at least one of the following eligible activities:

- Improving overall cost-effectiveness of energy generation, transmission, or distribution systems;
- Siting or upgrading transmission and distribution lines;
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions from energy generation in rural or remote areas;
- Providing or modernizing electric generation facilities;
- Developing microgrids; and
- Increasing energy efficiency.

U.S. DOE anticipates funding between 20-50 projects with a 5–50% minimum non-federal cost share per project. Eligible applicants include state and local governmental entities, non-profit and for-profit entities, rural electric cooperatives, farming associations and cooperatives, labor unions, institutions of higher education, and both incorporated and

unincorporated consortia. Additional information is available in the [Funding Opportunity Announcement](#). [Concept papers](#) were due by February 28, 2025 and full applications are due August 28, 2025.