



TREEDC Newsletter

July 2024



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 statewide 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 Excellence 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 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 Alderman, 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 recently 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. Congratulations, Ripley!

TREEDC Member Spring City Wins Statewide Tourism Award



From left to right: Spring City Commissioner Jody Bauer, City Manager Stephanie 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. Congrats to Spring City!

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) were 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.

Mark Your Calendars for TREEDC Conference on November 14, 2024

TREEDC will once again partner with Tennessee Tech University to hold its annual conference and awards reception on November 14 at the Cookeville-Putnam County Chamber of Commerce and awards reception at 37 Cedar Restaurant in Cookeville. The conference will start at 10 am. Attendees will hear presentations from Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs, sustainability professionals, energy services providers, PACE clean energy initiatives and updates from TDEC Office of Energy Programs and USDA Rural Development funding opportunities. The awards reception will begin at 5 pm. More information and registration details will be provided in early September.





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

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.

TREEDC Founding Member University of Tennessee Municipal Technical Advisory Service (MTAS) Celebrates 75th Anniversary



The Municipal Technical Advisory Service (MTAS) is celebrating its 75th anniversary throughout the year across Tennessee. MTAS is hosting three celebrations across the state. The second event was held on June 27th in Nashville. For more information, click here: [MTAS Anniversary Celebration | MTAS \(tennessee.edu\)](#)

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, 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!

Mark Your Calendars for Tennessee Valley Solar Conference on November 20-21, 2024

TREEDC is a proud partner of the upcoming TenneSEIA Tennessee Valley Solar and Energy Storage Conference. Tennessee Valley Solar and Energy Storage Conference 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. For more information – click here; <https://tenneseiasolar.com/conference/>.



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. Trainings include 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

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. View the Notice of Funding Opportunity and the Grants.gov page for additional information. Applications are due **November 21**.

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



*Dr. Stephen Levy, Tennessee Solar
Energy Association*

This TREEDC Newsletter is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Stephen Levy who passed away on May 11th. Back in 2008, Dr Levy helped TREEDC takeoff 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. 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/story/news/2023/05/11/dr-stephen-levy-tennessee-solar-energy-association/7000000001/)