

## **Comments from Green Mountain Solar re: Comprehensive Energy Plan**

Green Mountain Solar recognizes and appreciates the efforts in creating this comprehensive energy plan and the acknowledgment of the justice and equity needed to bring all Vermonters together in the transition toward a renewable future. In Vermont, heating and transportation contribute to our high rate of emissions, and this draft offers thorough guidelines in transforming those sectors to meet the state's climate goals.

Although this plan has strengths, we find that it lacks the guidance for mobilizing Vermonters in their energy resiliency and independence as we do not see substantial reference to utilizing in-state renewables to meet Vermont's current or future energy needs. We are also quite disappointed in the deficient support for any in-state solar resources, especially when Vermonters are encouraged to electrify their energy uses like transportation (EV's, E-bikes, etc.) and weatherization (heat pumps, etc.). With such a tight timeline to address the climate crisis and make energy affordable and efficient for Vermonters, a counter-intuitive plan for renewables is ironically inefficient.

Local renewables support the Vermont economy, keeping our dollars, high-quality jobs, and job creation in state. In general, Vermonters spend approximately \$2 billion a year on fossil fuels—75% of that sent directly out of state. Consumers would save nearly \$800 million per year if that money simply remained in our communities according to the Energy Action Network 2021 progress [report](#) for Vermont.

Local renewables and energy storage improve our state's resiliency and energy independence. When people reach out to go solar with us, they will often cite the desire to increase their independence from the utility grid. Vermont was ranked #2 in the entire country for power outages in 2018, and while our infrastructure has certainly improved, the disastrous effects of climate change have also increased. In fact, this year alone we are seeing a massive uptick in battery backup interest. And it makes sense. The ability to produce, store, and use energy made on-site is a massive advantage for Vermont homeowners and businesses. And on that note, there is also less energy lost when it is produced locally compared to when it's sent far distances because of decreased distribution losses.

In the past, the Public Utility Commission and Department of Public Service has cited low-moderate income individuals as a reason to not expand net metering programs. Quite notable to the contrary, solar adopter income trends over time minimize this reasoning. According to a recent Berkeley Labs Report reflecting 2020 data, solar adoption has been migrating towards lower incomes in almost every state including Vermont. This is also not happening exclusively in existing markets, but it is expanding into previously under-served, lower-income areas as well.

With the solar incentives like the 26% Investment Tax Credit, Vermont Net Metering, and the innovative technology that exists, going solar in Vermont offers a great investment to our citizens homes and businesses and it is important that this trend continues as it benefits everyone. Unfortunately, right now many of those incentives are threatened by diminishing support or global supply price inflation.

Essentially, we are a local, owner-operated company with 30 dedicated employees, and we are only growing. We would not be in the solar industry if one, the demand didn't exist, two, if it did not save money for our community, from the homeowner to the utility and three, offer quality jobs that truly support people in a high cost of living state. Please consider our voices in the decisions you make for Vermont's energy future. For this clean energy transition to take place in a serious and impactful way, we need more support for local renewables.

Sincerely,

Green Mountain Solar

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