Governor Cuomo Announces Community Solar and Storage Program for Local Governments That Will Create 1,250 Clean Energy Jobs

40 Projects Targeted for Completion by 2025 Under New Program to Build 75 Megawatts of Renewable Capacity Paired with 15 MW of Battery Storage

New York Has Strongest Community Solar Market in the Nation With Most Completed Projects

Builds off NYPA Community Solar Installations Already in Development including JFK Airport, NYC’s Single-largest Community Solar Project

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced accelerated plans to help local governments and state agencies build at least 40 distributed solar systems that will generate renewable energy while bringing reliable, affordable and sustainable energy to surrounding communities. The 40 projects will help meet a newly announced New York Power Authority 2025 community solar target that sets a goal of 75 megawatts of renewable capacity that includes 15 MW of paired battery storage, enough energy to offset the emissions of 2,572 cars. These projects are expected to stimulate more than $135 million in direct, private investments toward their development, construction, and operation, and create more than 1,250 short-term and long-term jobs.

Included in Governor Cuomo's clean energy agenda in his 2021 State of the State address on January 13, NYPA's new Community Solar and Storage Program will allow electricity customers to buy into a renewable project in their area, get credit on their monthly utility bills, and do their part to help the state increase the supply of clean, renewable energy into the electric grid.
“New York has the strongest community solar market in the nation, and we are continuing to prioritize the development of renewable sources that will transform the energy industry, protect the environment and lower energy costs for New York families and businesses,” Governor Cuomo said. “Partnering with local governments and state agencies for community projects will further solar and storage deployment, while creating new jobs all across the state. By working together, we will advance New York’s nation-leading commitment to fight climate change and generate more clean, affordable energy to our electric grid.”

The initiative is open to municipal communities including counties, towns, cities and villages, as well as state agencies to serve as project hosts for community solar projects. Interested participants should contact the NYPA Community Solar and Storage Program by emailing solar@nypa.gov. NYPA, which acts as an energy advisor and already has several community solar projects in the pipeline, is stepping up its commitment by creating this statewide community solar and storage program for state agencies and local governments that aligns with the state’s Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act agenda. The Act calls for installing 6,000 megawatts of solar by 2025 and 3,000 megawatts of energy storage by 2030.

Community solar benefits communities by offering households, schools, and businesses the opportunity to benefit from a solar project in their area often without any upfront costs or participation fees. These projects increase access to solar for renters, homeowners, low-income residents, schools, and businesses who may not have the ability or ideal conditions to install solar panels at their buildings. Solar energy is fed into the electric grid and local subscribers get credit on their electric bills.

Gil C. Quiniones, NYPA President and CEO said, “New York State is already one of the nation’s foremost markets for developing community solar distributed generation. Bolstering the Power Authority’s expertise in working with local and state governments across our state on energy projects will scale our solar and storage commitment up another notch. By setting a stretch target to address the need for more solar and storage systematically, NYPA will help governments overcome potential hurdles in onboarding solar projects and more effectively serve as ‘anchor subscribers’ which can then help engage the surrounding community.”

Doreen M. Harris, Acting President and CEO, New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), said, “Today's announcement is another step forward in the State's comprehensive efforts for building on its proven record of success with growing solar energy statewide and increasing access for all New Yorkers using every tool available, including community solar, so that everyone can reduce their energy bills and lower their carbon footprint as part of the State's transition to a green economy. Through initiatives like this and related efforts such as Governor Cuomo's NY-Sun program, and NYSERDA's Large-Scale Renewables program, our rapid scale-up of solar has positioned New York as one of the fastest growing and strongest solar markets in the nation.”

Anchor Subscribers Help Make Energy More Affordable for All

Participation in distributed solar projects can be a challenge for local governments as the long development timelines and uncertain future revenues can mesh poorly with localities' budgetary and approval processes. However, due to recent New York State's Public Service Commission rules, large customers can now more effectively serve as "anchor subscribers" for distributed solar projects. This helps reduce costs by allowing projects to reach economies of scale, provide assurance to developers and financiers, and benefit residents and small businesses by making access to solar credits easier.

Under this new program, NYPA will work with municipal and state government entities to assist in the development of community solar projects for their buildings and land that mitigate the challenges government entities have faced in adopting distributed renewable energy while also providing for the ability to support clean energy generation in low-income communities. NYPA Community Solar and Storage Program staff assist throughout the full project development process — from scoping, design, purchasing to execution, project management and close-out — to host community distributed generation (CDG) projects.

As project hosts, local governments can build a distributed solar system on their property with no upfront capital cost while also earning a long-term revenue stream and guaranteeing long-term utility bill savings. By 2025, NYPA projects this program will support at least 40 community solar projects, totaling 75 megawatts of renewable capacity, including 15 MW of paired storage. These projects will spur more than $135 million in direct, private investments toward their development, construction and operation and create more than 1,250 short-term and long-term jobs. Through community solar, municipal and state government entities can receive payments both by hosting the community solar project and by being a subscriber.

Leverages NYPA’s Experience in Advancing Community Solar Program Demonstration Projects

Several projects underway demonstrate not just the feasibility, but the desirability of community solar projects built around large-customer anchors. NYPA is currently working to advance two key projects at Quarryville in Ulster County and at John F. Kennedy International Airport to supply a total of 11 MW of reliable, affordable, and sustainable energy to the surrounding communities. The City of White Plains in the Mid-Hudson region is also developing a program to produce community solar at several sites. NYPA also is coordinating a solicitation to allow Westchester County municipalities to participate in a combined energy portfolio that will streamline the development, procurement and implementation process and have aggregated benefits.

New York’s National Leadership in Community Solar

New York’s community solar market is now positioned as the strongest community solar market in the nation. Under NY Sun, more than 1,050 community solar projects have been built or are currently under development and will provide electric bill savings for more than 267,000 New Yorkers. New York’s Community Solar initiative has
more than 533 megawatts installed and 2,100 megawatts in the pipeline. New York has been ranked by Wood Mackenzie as first in the nation for completed community solar projects for the first three quarters of 2020 and since 2011, solar in New York State has grown nearly 1,800 percent, leveraged $5 billion in private investments and decreased the cost of solar by 68 percent. There are more than 12,000 people engaged in solar jobs across New York.

Rick Cotton, Executive Director, Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, said, "JFK Airport will host New York State's largest solar power canopy system, which will help move forward both Governor Cuomo's and the Port Authority's aggressive commitments to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and accelerate the use of renewable energy in New York. The system will include the largest planned community solar project at an airport in the United States and greatly benefit small businesses and low- and moderate-income residents in the surrounding communities. We look forward to continuing our work with NYPA to bring clean energy projects that help combat climate change to the region."

Tom Roach, Mayor, City of White Plains, said, "White Plains is moving ahead with an eight-project, 6.6 MW community solar portfolio - the largest municipal renewable energy project in Westchester County. With NYPA's consultation, we expect to triple the amount of solar energy produced in the entire county and complete a city-owned portfolio that will benefit our residents, the City, and the environment by the end of the year. We welcome the opportunity to serve as an example for other communities also wanting to step up and help New York State achieve its ambitious nation-leading clean energy goals."

New York State Association of Counties Executive Director Stephen J. Acquario said, "Global change starts at the local level, and New York's counties are leading the local effort transition our communities to clean and renewable energy sources. For too many New Yorkers, renewable energy options like solar have been out of reach due to the high upfront cost or the physical limitations of their home. Counties commend Governor Cuomo for launching this initiative to break down the barriers that limit adoption of solar energy and empower local governments to bring renewable energy options to their residents, schools and businesses."

New York Conference of Mayors Executive Director Peter A. Baynes said, "Fostering the transition from older energy sources to clean energy systems is an essential component of any strategy aimed to reduce emissions and address climate change. NYPA's new Community Solar and Storage Program will help cities and villages partake in furthering the State's energy targets and actualize their own energy goals."

Association of Towns Executive Director Gerry Geist said, "The Community Solar and Storage Program is an innovative program where the state and local governments are able to work together to achieve important clean energy goals while directly helping communities where projects are located. As supporters of clean energy, towns applaud this collaborative effort."

New York Solar Energy Industries Association Executive Director Shyam Mehta said, "New York Solar Energy Industries Association is grateful to New York Power Authority and Governor Cuomo for their consistent support of solar growth in New York State. The NYPA community solar initiative will reach low-to-moderate income communities that have typically been less able to take advantage of solar energy to lower their monthly bills. NYSEIA member companies stand ready to provide the expertise and solar workforce needed to get these projects built."

Senator Kevin Parker said, "As the Chair of the Senate Energy and Telecommunications Committee, I have always believed in, and advocated for, significant investment in green collar jobs. The high quality jobs that are produced as we move to a clean energy economy will have a transformational effect especially in Black and Brown communities traditionally plagued by unemployment and underemployment. I applaud Governor Cuomo for creating community and solar storage programs that will create high quality jobs, as we work to increase our state's reliance on renewable energy."

Assembly Member Michael J. Cusick said, "Today's announcement of a community solar and storage program for local governments is just the latest in the state's exciting pursuit of transitioning to a cleaner energy grid and working towards achieving our climate goals. The 40 new community solar projects will not only play a role in our transition to sustainable energy but they will also create jobs in our communities and provide opportunities for our local governments, which is welcomed news as we embark on our recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic."

For more information on the NYPA Community Solar and Storage Program, email solar@nypa.gov.

New York State's Nation-Leading Climate Plan
Governor Cuomo's nation-leading climate agenda is the most aggressive climate and clean energy initiative in the nation, calling for an orderly and just transition to clean energy that creates jobs and continues fostering a green economy as New York State recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic. Enshrined into law through the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, New York is on a path to achieving its mandated goal of a zero-emissions electricity sector by 2040, including 70 percent renewable energy generation by 2030, and to reach economy wide carbon neutrality. It builds on New York's unprecedented ramp-up of clean energy including over $4 billion invested in 91 large-scale renewable projects across the state, the creation of more than 150,000 jobs in New York's clean energy sector, a commitment to develop 9,000 megawatts of offshore wind by 2035, and 1,800 percent growth in the distributed solar sector since 2011. Under Governor Cuomo's leadership, New York will build on this progress and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 85 percent from 1990 levels by 2050, while meeting a goal to deliver 40 percent of the benefits of clean energy investments to disadvantaged communities and advancing progress towards the state's 2025 energy efficiency target of reducing on-site energy consumption by 185 trillion BTUs of end-use energy savings.
Contact the Governor's Press Office

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