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Advancing the Clean Energy Future

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New report finds that improved community engagement for clean infrastructure projects is critical to New England's energy transition.

BOSTON - [A new report](#) released today by Acadia Center and Clean Air Task Force (CATF) reveals that enhanced community engagement for clean energy infrastructure projects is critical to achieving New England's 2050 decarbonization goals. The report highlights the opportunity to accelerate the region's clean energy progress by addressing local concerns and better equipping communities to meaningfully participate in siting and approval processes. Drawing from prominent case studies around the region, the report also identifies promising options for developers, communities, and policymakers to improve project planning and engagement, helping reduce the risk of failures, legal challenges, and delays. Without comprehensive reforms to improve community engagement processes and modernize siting and permitting policies, the region's clean energy transition risks significant delays and setbacks.

"Our research shows that when community concerns are not taken seriously, community opposition and distrust can grow, leading to extended project timelines, higher costs, and resistance to future clean energy projects," said **Nicole Pavia, Director of Clean Energy Infrastructure Deployment at CATF**. "Whether it's rural, urban, or suburban communities, community engagement isn't just a box to check — it's an essential part of New England's clean energy future. When communities are meaningfully engaged, we see stronger projects that deliver clean energy benefits while fostering trust, local economic growth, and long-term support for future projects."

The report includes a comprehensive review of five key studies outlining cost-effective, electrification-focused pathways to decarbonizing New England's grid and energy systems. The scenarios analyzed reveal that in the 2030s, peak demand for electricity in the region will shift from summer to winter. By 2050, peak demand for electricity is expected to double from 27 gigawatts (GW) to 55 GW, driven largely by the electrification of vehicles and proliferation of heat pumps. To meet the demands of the energy transition, generation capacity in the region will need to more than triple from 43 GW to 145 GW of installed capacity on average, led by increases in solar and offshore wind and aided by transmission system enhancements. Additionally, the report analyzes the diverse portfolio of energy technologies and approaches needed for the future grid – from transmission and generation to energy storage and demand-side resources such as energy efficiency and load flexibility – to maintain reliability, affordability, and resiliency.

"The energy transition will touch all 1,300+ communities in New England, and the region needs a new paradigm for infrastructure siting and engagement that gives those communities a meaningful voice even as the build-out of renewable energy and grid infrastructure accelerates," said **Jamie Dickerson, Senior Director, Climate and Clean Energy Programs at Acadia Center**. "The region's communities and people are at the center of its energy transition just

as much as the grid itself is, underscoring the imperative of delivering real community benefits and shifting the environment of engagement toward a virtuous cycle of improved social standing and acceptance.”

The report also examines the challenges and friction points that often hinder positive clean energy development and shape communities’ posture as potential hosts for clean energy projects. Through interviews with stakeholders representing a range of interests – renewable energy developers, state regulators, local community leaders, and more – the report offers a behind-the-scenes look at the real-world factors influencing community support and responses. Case studies highlight key siting and engagement examples in the region, including:

- **Vineyard Wind** in Massachusetts
- **King Pine Wind** and **Aroostook Renewable Gateway** in Maine
- **East Eagle Substation** and **Cranberry Point Energy Storage** in Massachusetts
- **Johnston Winsor Solar III** in Rhode Island
- **Twin States Clean Energy Link** transmission line between New Hampshire and Vermont

The report outlines actionable options and opportunities state and local governments, project developers, and community stakeholders may take to improve public support for and expedite the deployment of clean energy infrastructure with impactful community benefits. These options are coming into clearer focus as some states in the region have very recently considered and enacted reforms to state siting and permitting laws in 2024, including most notably in Connecticut and in Massachusetts, where lawmakers passed a wide-ranging climate bill anchored around a significant overhaul of the state’s siting and permitting framework.

As these states and the New England region transitions away from fossil fuels to a decarbonized grid, success will depend on active and meaningful community engagement. Without local buy-in, critical clean energy projects will continue to face significant headwinds and delays, putting the region’s climate goals at risk.

On December 5, Acadia Center and CATF will host a webinar to discuss key findings from the report. Read the full report [here](#) and register [here](#).

About Acadia Center

[Acadia Center](#) is a non-profit organization with over 25 years of experience dedicated to advancing transformative clean energy solutions that promote a livable climate and a more equitable economy in the Northeast United States and beyond. Through rigorous data analysis and strategic partnerships, Acadia Center advocates for policies that significantly reduce carbon emissions and address systemic energy challenges. By collaborating with governments, industries, and communities, Acadia Center’s bold strategies help to ensure an inclusive and sustainable energy future for all.

About Clean Air Task Force

[Clean Air Task Force \(CATF\)](#) is a global nonprofit organization working to safeguard against the worst impacts of climate change by catalyzing the rapid development and deployment of low-carbon energy and other climate protection technologies. With 25 years of internationally recognized expertise on climate policy and a fierce commitment to exploring all potential solutions, CATF is a pragmatic, nonideological advocacy group with the bold ideas needed to address climate change. CATF has offices in Boston, Washington D.C., and Brussels, with staff working remotely around the world.