



### FUTURE OF GAS DOCKET

The Stakeholder Committee convened on March 21st and April 25th to discuss workforce impacts, inequities in gas service, and scenario ranking results. Read more on page 3.

### ENERGY EQUITY FOR RENTERS

ACEEE launched an initiative that provides municipalities and community organizations with technical assistance in EE upgrades for renters. Read more on page 4.

### EC4 UPDATE

The full EC4 and its advisory board met throughout April and May to discuss legislative updates, solar grants, the CRO's initiatives. Read more on page 5.

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

**GECA** Fleet Electrification Incentives in MA Webinar - May 22

**RIPUC** Future of Gas Stakeholder Committee - May 23

**OER** Lead by Example Awards - May 29

**EBC** Climate Adaptation Forum - June 6

**EBC** Ocean and Coastal Resources Committee - June 26

## MEETINGS COVERED

Future of Gas Stakeholder Committee - March 21 & April 25

EC4 Advisory Board - April 4

EC4 - May 1

Energy Efficiency Technical Working Group - May 2

EC4 STAB - May 9

### Biden-Harris Administration Announces \$7 Billion Solar for All Grants to Deliver Residential Solar, Saving Low-Income Americans \$350 Million Annually and Advancing Environmental Justice Across America

The EPA and the White House jointly announced sixty Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) Solar for All awards, including forty-nine state-level awards, six awards to serve tribes, and five multistate awards. The Solar for All awards, totaling \$7 billion, will be deployed over the next five years to bring the benefits of solar energy to over 900,000 low and moderate income (LMI) households. The Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources was selected to receive \$49 million for solar projects in low-income and disadvantaged communities. This grant competition is funded through the Biden-Harris Administration’s Investing in America Agenda via the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan stated, “The selectees will advance solar energy initiatives across the country, creating hundreds of thousands of good-paying jobs, saving \$8 billion in energy costs for families, delivering cleaner air, and combating climate change.”

### Policy & Regulatory Updates Groups Celebrate Updated Energy Efficiency Rules for New U.S.-Backed Homes | ACEEE

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently announced updates to energy efficiency codes for federally supported housing nationwide. These updates will lower housing costs, shift risk to lenders, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions as well as other forms of pollution. Additionally, the code updates are estimated to save single-family homes and multi-family units \$15,071 and \$5,886, respectively, over the next thirty years. Lowell Ungar, the federal policy director of the ACEEE stated “This long-overdue action will protect homeowners and renters from high energy costs while making a real dent in climate pollution.” Other policy experts had similar sentiments, expressing the relationship between rising temperatures due to climate change and rising energy costs, which lead to housing instability and increased energy burdens. The energy efficiency code updates demonstrate how comprehensive energy solutions can target interlinked issues stemming from climate change.

## TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

## National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) RI EV Infrastructure Plan

### NEVI

“provides funding to states to strategically deploy electric vehicle (EV) charging stations and to establish an interconnected network to facilitate data collection, access, and reliability. Funding is available for up to 80% of eligible project costs”

### RI’S USE OF NEVI

- Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Plan
- The OER, RIDOT, and RIDEM comanaging
- Receiving \$23 million over a 5 year term (2022-2026)
- 2 phases announced so far

### PHASE 1

- Began in December 2023
- Upgrades to existing & installation of additional EV charging infrastructure
- Park and Ride, Route 117, Warwick
- Park and Ride, Ashaway, Hopkinton

### PHASE 2

- Begins later this year
- Focuses on community-based public EV charging infrastructure
- Site selection for phase 2 infrastructure will be based on community input and priority setting

Rhode Island's Public Utility Commission (PUC) continues their investigation of Rhode Island's future regulated gas distribution at their 10th stakeholder meeting on March 21st, 2024. Facilitated by Apex Analytics, stakeholders participated in a [policy discussion](#) to explore various perspectives and concerns raised when considering Rhode Island's transition to clean and renewable energy sources.

When considering the decommissioning of RI's current gas distribution system, stakeholders raised concerns about the negative impacts on the existing workforce this would have on workers in the industry. Many stakeholders agree that the decommissioning of the gas system should be a long-term, manageable transition. The goal is to enact an equitable decommission to ensure minimal displacement of present-day workers. Stakeholders also discussed that methane leakage rates are continuously underestimated, which leads to the underestimate of emissions from the gas system.

Some stakeholders brought attention to the inequitable gas services in western RI. RI's gas system was originally developed to provide gas access to urban areas in the state and has not been significantly developed since. Historically, the west side of RI has not had equitable access to gas service due to lack of infrastructure. Thus, western RI is primarily utilizing oil. Stakeholders mentioned that it would be beneficial to include western RI customers in the transition to distribute both costs and equitable access across the entire state.

Stakeholders agree that RI's superpower is that there is a single utility providing service to nearly all of Rhode Island's electric and gas customers. This gives RI a unique opportunity to work towards the decommissioning process as one entity working toward an energy efficient goal rather than a competitive dynamic between energy industries.

The next Future of Gas meeting took place April 25th, 2024. E3 presented their [Energy Environmental Economics: Technical Analysis Report](#). This presentation reviewed modeling updates and the implementation of previously received feedback. It was mentioned that low-income goals around energy efficiency are not to the ideal standard, as weatherization and upgraded appliances in low-income households are lacking. Stakeholders discussed how landlords are not incentivized to provide lead inspections for their properties and tenants.

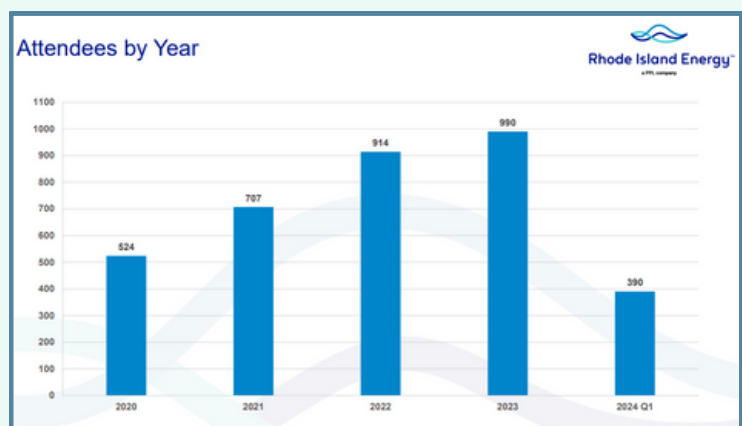
Apex previously had stakeholders rank various transition scenarios consistent with the suggested emissions reductions goals. Ranked first was High Electrification, second was Continued Use of Gas, third was Staged Electrification, fourth was Hybrid Electrification and Delivered Fuels Backup, fifth was Hybrid Electrification and Gas Backup, and sixth was Alternative Heat Infrastructure. Stakeholders continued with a discussion

of the strengths and weaknesses of each scenario. They mentioned how if scenarios required a new policy or nonexistent support, then that may make the scenario less ideal. One stakeholder asked if it is a Constitutional right to be able to burn gas in your home. Many stakeholders acknowledged that policy changes and development are necessary to achieve the goals of the Act on Climate.

The next Future of Gas Stakeholder meeting will be held on May 23rd.

## EE Technical Working Group

The Energy Efficiency Technical Working Group (TWG) had a meeting on May 2nd, 2024. RI Office of Energy Resources (OER) presented their 2025 Energy Efficiency Plan Priorities. These priorities include aligning energy efficiency with RI's climate goals and infrastructure planning, coordinating energy efficiency programming with State and Federal programming, ensuring equitable program delivery and access, focusing and emphasizing the importance of thermal programming, and supporting and promoting workforce development and education opportunities in efficiency industries. Rhode Island Energy (RIE) discussed an Energy Efficiency Workforce Development overview that has an intended purpose of growing the energy efficiency workforce and supporting residential and commercial sectors. During this overview, partners and networks, HVAC training programs, and future ideas were discussed. Below is a graphic from RIE's Workforce Development Overview presentation. The graphic below displays the increase in attendees from 2020 to present day (Quarter 1 of 2024). The top 6 attendees by occupation are architects, general contractors, code officials, adult trainees, realtors, and energy specialists.



## State Regulators Approve Rhode Island Energy's Proposed Reduced Summer Electric Rates

State regulators approved legislature lowering summer electric rates for Rhode Islanders in March of this year. The default electricity supply price will see a 43% drop from winter prices, coming it at 8.91 cents per kwh. The average RI household consuming 500 kwh per month will see net savings of \$31.39, roughly 19% of the current average electric bill. These prices took effect on April 1st and will be in place until September 30th. In contrast, gas prices will be on the rise in the following year. The gas, safety, and reliability plan for fiscal year 2025 requires the company to collect \$83.9 million in revenue, translating to a bill increase of \$77 annually per customer. Several municipalities including Barrington, Narragansett, and Providence can opt out of RIE electric pricing by participating in a community aggregation plan to leverage bulk buying power and secure lower prices for all community members.

# 43%

DROP IN SUPPLY PRICE

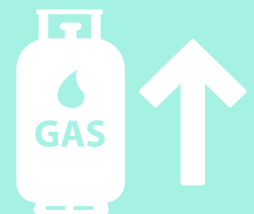


# \$31.39

AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SAVINGS

# \$77

ANNUAL GAS BILL INCREASE



### ACEEE Energy Equity for Renters

“Protect the climate, reduce energy costs, and preserve affordable neighborhoods.”

ACEEE launched an Energy Equity for Renters initiative. On average, rental homes consume 15% more energy per square foot than owner-occupied homes. Additionally, renters spend, on average, 6% more of their income on energy bills than homeowners, but are largely prohibited from making home energy efficiency upgrades. ACEEE is tackling these inequities by providing ten local governments and community-based organizations with technical assistance in upgrading energy efficiency measures in rental housing. Simultaneously, ACEEE aims to preserve and expand affordable housing in the ten jurisdictions. The initiative will address weatherization, renter energy burdens, residential electrification, residential greenhouse gas emissions, and help to preserve affordable rental housing.

**The Rhode Island Energy Efficiency Council (EEC)** is a group of stakeholders that serves all customers to ensure the utility is investing in the least expensive resource - energy efficiency. Learn more at [www.rieermc.ri.gov](http://www.rieermc.ri.gov)



The Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council (EC4)'s Advisory Board met on April 4th, 2024. Legislative updates included an amendment to the Act on Climate: House Bill 80-43: State Agency Ambition Reporting. This amendment directs EC4 to develop a template for state agencies to track emissions and progress toward legislative goals. Additionally, Providence Mayor, Brett Smiley, signed a municipal ordinance which will require all city owned buildings to be carbon neutral by 2040.

The full EC4 met on May 1st, 2024. A \$49 million grant will be invested in community solar and rooftop solar, and Clean Rhode Island was awarded a \$3.5 million grant for environmental justice projects back in October of 2023. During this meeting there was a presentation on electrifying transit in RI. RIPTA's R-Line fleet is being replaced with zero-emission battery-electric buses. This electric fleet of 14 buses is slowly transitioning the original diesel buses out of use. Additionally, RIPTA is seeking \$19.5 million in Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grants to accelerate their development of a bus stop improvement program. They hope to increase transit ridership through improving rider experience and quality of facilities. The EC4 then gave their Lead by Example presentation where they elaborated on their mission, programs to support state agencies, key performance indicators, school programs, and municipal programs.

May 9th was the EC4's Science and Technical Advisory Board (STAB) meeting, Chief Resilience Officer, [Kim Koriath](#), presented EC4's Spring 2024 Resilience Update presentation. She provided detailed information on the Ocean State Climate Adaptation and Resilience (OSCAR) fund and the RI Climate Resilience Program. The board then shared a detailed update on RI's Priority Climate Action Plan & Climate Pollution Reduction Grant application. Rhode Island applied for \$47.8 million from the EPA to assist the state in developing transportation, buildings, and waste and working lands sectors. In total, the EPA has \$4.6 billion of funding to distribute and over \$35 billion requested in applications. The funding will be granted to chosen applicants at the end of the summer.

### Research Highlight

#### Getting Homeowners to Invest in Comprehensive Retrofits is Hard: Here's How To Do it | ACEEE

A survey of 1,500 US homeowners was completed to determine preference on home energy update packages. The survey also explored demographic data regarding willingness to upgrade and preference on upgrade packages. Furthermore, they devised the best marketing and encouragement tactics. The ideal comprehensive energy retrofit is designed to achieve at least a 20% decrease in household energy consumption. [Key findings](#) showed that packages including home heating, hot water heating, and appliance upgrades were most popular among homeowners. Additionally, ACEEE found that 65% of respondents were willing to invest upwards of \$1000 for comprehensive home energy upgrades. A zero-interest loan with no upfront costs was found to be the most effective financial incentive in increasing upgrading behavior. Homeowners across all demographics responded that upfront costs, bill savings, and home comfort were the most important aspects to target in marketing strategies. The authors recommend tailoring marketing approaches to these consumer elements and increasing financing opportunities to maximize uptake of different home energy upgrade packages.

### RIPTA's Zero Emission Fleet Transition: R-Line Electrification

In May of 2018, Rhode Island allocated approximately \$10 million to begin RIPTA's development of an all-electric, zero-emission bus fleet. With a portion of the funds, a pilot demonstration with three leased electric buses was conducted which allowed RIPTA to explore and learn the new technology, test bus performance and limitations, and train staff on all-electric buses. RIPTA then purchased fourteen New Flyer Xcelerator XE40 battery-electric busses (213 kWh batteries) to take over RIPTA's busiest service route, the R-Line. Full electrification of the R-Line will result in 20% of all RIPTA passenger trips being zero-emission. The R-Line connects the cities of Providence, Cranston, and Pawtucket, and services approximately 9,000 riders daily. This fleet of electric buses will recharge daily at 350 Montgomery Avenue in Cranston by the newly established four 450 kW overhead pantograph heavy vehicle fast chargers.

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