

Western Massachusetts Solar Forum – Session 3 Attendee Q&A Questions/Comments

The following are questions received from Attendees during Session 2. These questions have been shared with Session 2 speakers to inform them of the engagement and issues of interest to the community. We are not asking the speakers to offer direct answers to these questions. The Clean Energy Extension and our partners are using these questions to inform remaining Sessions and the agenda for the anticipated Part II of the forum in 2024. Thank you for these questions.

1. Can regional schools (comprised of multiple communities) apply for one Green Communities grant to electrify their bus fleet?
2. Surprised to hear Rich Kump say it's not a problem for low-income people to get solar loan. Are most banks now recognizing and factoring in the value and financial benefits of solar that allow low-income people to make solar loan payments?
3. Question for Nathan Phelps, which relates to Samantha who's looking for aggregation for Springfield. The DPU has proposed a serious set of regulations for new and existing Municipal Aggregations that will be crippling. What is the best way to counter?
4. Exciting work by Public Health Institute on Clean Choice Energy! Wondering about how CCE will help try to secure lower utility costs for low-income residents with the CCE?
5. Community choice energy report: <https://www.umass.edu/spp/research-action/projects/community-choice-electricity-programs-survey-massachusetts-municipalities>
6. Does CVEC only get involved from the beginning of a project (i.e., before installation)? Other way to ask: If a solar project has panels installed that are not yet online, can the project join CVEC?
7. CVEC: Will CVEC work with Western Mass municipalities?
8. 1/2 of current 3.8 GW of solar is located in forest areas. We need to 3x or 4x deploy rates to reach 2050 goal. Rooftop solar growth is lagging. We can't force prop owners to put up panels (or can we?). What is the plan to rapidly deploy on rooftop?
9. One of the findings from the Pecan Street project in Austin, TX was a need for microgrid devices at residences with rooftop solar to mitigate its power quality/harmonics effects to the distribution grid. Has this become an issue, and if so, who pays?
10. What's being done to build the infrastructure to support an all-electric power grid? Some of the substations are reaching capacity and will quickly become overwhelmed by the draw for electricity during this transition.
11. Can someone please provide the URL for the site Priya mentions?
12. How do we access the evaluation of lands across the commonwealth that could identify lands most suitable for solar development? Priya mentioned it (something that sounded like See-Nac). Thanks!
13. In my many years working in the environmental arena, balancing the environment against financial or other gains has always resulted in fewer resources to balance the next time! Why is it that more is always the answer?
14. Re: money access. Are Green Banks a reality and how is access being facilitated?
15. A question for Nathan Phelps--what exactly is the Energy Facility Siting Board?
16. Is Eversource going to be allowed to take over the Community Solar idea in MA?

17. Kerry - you mentioned MassCEC funding - Is MassCEC directly funding your organization or specific projects. How does this happen?
18. What are current opportunities & restrictions on community solar for communities in W. MA Eversource's region? Where do SMART incentives, net metering & such stand for community solar, especially for municipalities exploring community PV?
19. Does the 42% low-income discount for the customers of investor-owned utilities apply to generation services sourced from community aggregation projects? If so, how is it funded? By the co-op itself? Through the supplier services line-item surcharge?
20. With respect to the ownership vs leasing analysis: What about rooftop licensing? Where the homeowner receives access to "preferred pricing" for generation services in exchange for lease of their rooftop space? (ie panels and output developer owned)
21. For Jo: Unlike the 33% subsidies provided by the federal govt to promote residential solar deployment, the state's financial subsidies are anemic. When and how will state level subsidies meet the feds' level of commitment?
22. With an understood desire to focus on the built environment, how do you also ensure that urban EJ areas that are often concrete jungles with little green space are not overburdened as well as preserving green space?
23. For all the panelists - what do you think the largest barrier is to achieving greater equity in clean energy adoption and its benefits?
24. How might we factor in the cumulative effect of industrial solar across the state, region? For example, is the temperature near and at solar arrays higher, just like any built environment (concrete, etc.)
25. Christine: What lease terms are assumed in the analysis? Lease terms are often different for different companies and over time.
26. For Christine - if this data is from SREC II program, how do you accurately apply it to the current solar incentive program (SMART) or future programs which operate in a very different way (tariff vs. REC sales)?
27. No one has yet mentioned incentives for using less energy! NO question that poor communities suffer disproportionately, but they will suffer more if forests are damaged, so as we set priorities for solar location, can we put brownfields at the top?
28. When towns review permit applications how do you use these planning tools and values ensure it is "how" to build the solar array and not "where" (i.e., wealthy towns not hosting their fair share of infrastructure)?
29. What is CLF actually doing to help conservation in light of large scale solar development? I did not hear any specific actions or positions. Can you speak to what is being done by the organization?
30. For Jon: In my experience, solar developers only have to claim that energy generated will support low-income communities in order to get an "adder" in the SMART program but prior to getting the subsidy do not need to identify those recipients. CONT'D
31. CONT'D: Can you explain how DOER actually confirms with developers where this energy is going and how developers ensure this benefit is truly being received by low income communities?