



PRESS RELEASE

Top solar provider celebrates as part of the Metro Green Line successfully goes solar

IPS Solar completes this two-year project which helps lower the strain on parts of the local power grid

A quarter mile of the Metro Green Line, which connects Minneapolis and St. Paul with light train transit service is now even more energy efficient. Roseville-based IPS Solar, recently named the second fastest growing company in Minnesota by Inc. Magazine, has completed installation of 2500 solar panels in the western part of St. Paul. The one megawatt solar pilot project will help reduce the energy usage, and strain on the electric grid, by using renewable energy sources.

IPS Solar will celebrate the completion of this project with a ceremonial ribbon cutting on October 17. City leaders as well as representatives from Xcel Energy will participate in the event.

"This is a major step in demonstrating both the viability and promise of the Energy Innovation Corridor," said Eric Pasi, chief development officer of Innovative Power Systems. "The area we targeted for this pilot project is rich with potential sites for clean power and other energy-saving projects."

Since the Metro Green Line runs on electricity, Pasi says he hopes that, "By lowering the strain on the electric grid, one goal of the project is help to reduce the need for future distribution lines and to make the grid more robust"

Commercial real estate companies see solar power as a revenue-generating opportunity

Such large projects are trending in Minnesota, which now ranks among the top five states in annual sales and installation of solar power. "There are many reasons behind the swift momentum," says Pasi, who says his IPS workforce has grown by more than 50 percent since the end of 2016.

"Solar is a low-cost, clean energy option. It has gained the attention of commercial real estate professionals because in most cases there's no need to pay upfront. Xcel Energy's Community Solar Gardens program is helping commercial businesses and municipalities create income from underutilized space on their roofs and property."

Minnesota is pioneering these Community Solar Gardens, which are popping up in Red Wing, Chisago County and Carver County. "Locally, only 10 to 20 percent of roofs are ideal for solar panels. Community Solar Gardens give commercial, municipal and residential customers the opportunity to subscribe to an off-site solar installation," explains Pasi. "Each month as the system produces energy, the customers' electric bills are credited based on the number of shares they subscribe to."

The company's first three large-scale Community Solar Gardens became operational about a year ago; each generates enough electricity to power roughly 1,000 homes. Pasi says that as many as 100 more Community Solar projects are in development. "As a state, we will increase our total installed solar capacity by nearly tenfold since 2014. A lot of people will start seeing solar panels in the landscape around the Twin Cities."



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Why is Minnesota so solar friendly?

"Minnesota has a very good track record with wind power, especially in the southwest part of the state," comments Pasi about our affinity for clean power sources. "The jobs created based on that industry have been important to our economy. Years ago, we saw indications that solar would become more economical, and at some point would reach parity with fossil fuels. That's happening now. Minnesota's legislators had the foresight to adopt policies, such as community solar, that encourage our clean energy business climate."

No out-of-pocket costs to subscribers

IPS Solar was recognized by Solar Power World as the number one commercial solar developer in Minnesota, and the 16th largest commercial solar developer in the country.

With its long track record of successfully completing solar projects, Pasi explains that IPS Solar is in a great position to make solar systems affordable to school districts, municipalities, businesses and consumers. "We have financing partners who pay for the equipment at no out-of-pocket cost to the host or subscriber. We enter into an agreement to sell the solar credits generated by our projects at a predictable price, which typically results in immediate savings for our clients."

Subscribers appreciate knowing what they will pay for their energy. There's also a substantial cost savings. "Over time, electric company rate increases can really add up," points out Pasi. "We help organizations forecast their energy costs into the future. Those savings grow over time as electricity rates increase. Over a long-term contract, they may be saving 25-30 percent on their electricity rates over time."

Surprising ways that solar is positively impacting our communities

Pasi says that solar energy has benefits that extend beyond clean, cost-efficient energy. "IPS Solar has been doing a lot of work with school districts and helping educators incorporate STEM learning into their curriculum. These systems create data based on power performance, solar irradiance and weather. Students can chart that data, conduct experiments and learn about the technology." This fall, the company hosted its second educator workshop in Red Wing, where the local school district is leasing 40 acres for a large solar garden. "We're excited to help educators with solar energy coursework."

And these Community Solar Gardens are truly "gardens" in the best sense of the word. "We are implementing best practices for bee and butterfly habitats around solar fields by supporting native species of prairie grass. Community Solar Gardens are a very environmentally friendly way to care for land over 25 years."

For the fast-growing staff at IPS Solar, solar energy is a very gratifying venture. "We love helping organizations capture revenue from underutilized real estate – whether it's the roof or the ground – to help them become more profitable. It's a positive contribution to our state's economy, environment and future generations."

Ribbon Cutting

Tuesday, October 12th, 3pm to 4pm

University Enterprise Labs, 1000 Westgate Dr, St. Paul, MN 55114