Tennessee to Get $203 Million in Water Infrastructure Investments

The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) announced 43 grants totaling $203,244,525 from the state’s American Rescue Plan (ARP) fund, part of which TDEC is administering in the form of drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure grants.

Of the 43 grants, 14 are collaborative grants and 29 are non-collaborative grants, representing 132 individual projects, according to a Local 3 News report. This brings the total ARP funds awarded by TDEC to $401,694,562 since August.

Governor Bill Lee commented on the significance of these grants, saying, “These grants will address important water infrastructure needs across rural and urban Tennessee communities. We look forward to the improvements these projects will bring, and we commend the communities who have gone through the application process.” Read more.

Tennessee Tech Unveils First Electric Bus to Serve a Rural Area in Tennessee

Tennessee Tech engineers have teamed up with the Upper Cumberland Human Resources Agency on a new, electric shuttle bus that’s been three years in the making, according to a News Channel 4 report.

“It is the very first electric shuttle bus in rural transit agency in Tennessee and we’re proud to make that happen,” said Tennessee Tech Engineering Associate Professor Pingen Chen.

The shuttle is the latest push from Tech engineers and researchers to change perceptions about electric vehicles. While EVs are becoming more popular in urban areas, they’re still rare in rural communities. Chen says a lot of that has to do with a lack of familiarity with the vehicles, as the spread of information can take longer to
reach far-out areas.

Day-to-day, the new shuttle will move students and the larger community around town. While it does, researchers will study how electric public transportation can work in less populated towns. It's a case study they hope will serve as an example for rural areas across the south. The UCHRA owns the vehicle, with support from TDOT and the US Department of Transportation's Vehicle Technologies Office. Read more.

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**Tennessee Tech Aerospace Engineering Research Team to Develop Electric-Powered Commercial Aircraft**

NASA has chosen Tennessee Tech engineering researchers to lead a team of five universities and three industry partners in the CarbonLess Electric AviatioN (CLEAN) project as part of the agency’s University Leadership Initiative, Local 3 News reports. With an estimated budget of $8 million, the project is tasked with developing an electrified, 150-passenger aircraft with an ammonia-based integrated propulsion, power, and thermal management system to meet the ambitious goal of zero-emission air travel by 2050.

The team is led by Rory Roberts, Ph.D., associate professor of mechanical engineering and head of the Propulsion, Power, and Thermal Systems Laboratory at Tech and includes faculty members Bruce Jo, Ph.D., associate professor of mechanical engineering, and Ahmad Vaselebehag, Ph.D., assistant professor of mechanical engineering.

The project will not only help solve one of aviation's key challenges for the future, but also create opportunity for aerospace workforce development. The team will directly employ 98 undergraduate and graduate students as researchers across the five universities, with 58 opportunities at Tech alone. This will provide students with the necessary skills and future technologies the aerospace industry will depend on as they develop next-generation aircraft. Read more.

*Stay up to date on legislative issues through the [NSPE Advocacy Center](https://www.nspe.org).*

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**Don’t Hesitate to Share Your PE Story**

*By Britt Smith, P.E., F.NSPE, President 2022–2023*

Have you ever thought about how many people will ever need to hire an engineer? Probably not very many. But as engineers, we have a huge impact on their lives and in countless ways. For example, we all expect clean water to
come out of the faucet, the lights to come on when we want, the bridge we cross on the way to work to be safe, the air we breathe to be clean, and the products we buy for our kids to be safe. When engineers do their best work, most people don’t even notice. Yet, as a profession we strive to make everyone’s life better.

The work of our profession by design affects the lives of many people—likely tens of thousands on a daily basis. In my case, I work in the public works department in the community that I reside and that means the decisions I make don’t just affect nameless strangers. The people in this community are my neighbors, my friends, and my family. Read more.

New Policy Documents: The Signature and Stamp, Key Issues for the PE

The Committee on Policy and Advocacy has released the “What a PE Says with their Signature and Stamp” document. The document provides a general awareness of the PE signature and stamp process and includes best practices and lessons learned for those considering developing or improving their own process. The committee recently updated and released the documents, “What is a PE?” and “Key Issues for the Professional Engineer.” Updated position statements can be accessed here.

QBS Awards Program Accepting Nominations

NSPE is seeking nominations for the 2023 QBS Awards. The QBS Awards program promotes and recognizes the exemplary use of the qualifications-based selection process.

Award winners serve as examples of how well the QBS process works, and they help NSPE promote the practice of QBS in jurisdictions that do not use, or underuse, QBS to procure engineering services. A maximum of one QBS Award may be presented to the federal government sector, the state government sector
(includes all governmental units under the state level), and nongovernment sector.

The deadline for nominations is **Monday, May 1** (close of business). Access the awards information and nomination form here.

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