

State News for NSPE Members

\$32 Million Boosts Broadband in West Virginia

West Virginia has received preliminary approval for over \$32 million in funding for broadband projects at the West Virginia Broadband Summit, [WVNews reports](#).

The funds will be allocated to two programs, Line Extension Advancement and Development (LEAD) and Major Broadband Project Strategies (MBPS), as part of the West Virginia Broadband Investment Plan. These projects are expected to benefit more than 6,000 targeted locations, creating approximately 793 miles of new infrastructure. An additional \$16 million in matching funds has been added to the total fund, with more funding expected in the future.

Governor Jim Justice expressed his commitment to ensuring that all West Virginians have access to advanced internet connectivity. The West Virginia Department of Economic Development, Office of Broadband, will administer the program funds. The projects announced under the MBPS program will utilize public-private partnerships to maximize investment and prioritize community involvement. [Read more](#).

Public Energy Authority Receives Solar Projects Update

Two FirstEnergy subsidiaries in West Virginia hope to have small-scale solar power plants up and running between 2024 and 2026, [The Parkersburg News and Sentinel reports](#).

Members of the West Virginia Public Energy Authority received a briefing recently from Douglas Hartman, director of energy services for Akron-based FirstEnergy, on new solar projects being built by MonPower and Potomac Edison.

MonPower and Potomac Edison are constructing five solar sites on nearby coal ash disposal sites it owns in its service areas. Solar locations in phase one of the project include Wylie Ridge in Hancock County, Rivesville in Marion County, Fort Martin in Monongalia County, Davis in Tucker County and Marlowe in Berkeley

County.

The effort is being made possible through Senate Bill 583 passed in 2020, which is designed to support economic development for solar projects targeting brownfields and other low-value sites. The bill allows each utility to develop 200 megawatts of solar generation, though the utilities are limited to only 50 megawatt increments to start. The bill also requires an 85% subscription rate and includes options for energy storage. [Read more.](#)

AI to Power ‘Forward-Thinking’ West Virginia’s Road Maintenance

West Virginia is rolling out an experiment with artificial intelligence for its roadways that it hopes will make it the envy of the nation, [Bloomberg Law reports](#).

A five-year Mountain State pilot program will test how AI, aided by lasers and other tools, can help maintain the state’s transportation network, one of the largest in the US. West Virginia’s concrete implementation of an AI solution comes as a number of states have begun to study the possibilities inherent in the cutting-edge tech.

“We’re trying to be forward-thinking,” said Clay Riley (R), a member of the state House of Delegates who co-sponsored the legislation (HB 3214) that established the pilot program. “I think you will see other states who say: ‘You know if we can spend our dollars more wisely by using technology, that’s what we want to do.’”

Stay up to date on legislative issues through the [NSPE Advocacy Center](#).

Vermont PE Rises to Top Leadership



William (Bill) Atkinson, P.E., F.NSPE, was installed as NSPE’s 2023–24 president during a ceremony at NSPECon23 in Louisville, Kentucky, on August 3. He has spent most of his career volunteering for NSPE and various engineering organizations that hold true to his passion for protecting the public through licensure and ethical engineering decision making.

Atkinson serves as the engineering manager and lead engineer at Vermont Mechanical Inc., a mechanical and plumbing design build contractor that focuses on healthcare and commercial construction (where he has been employed since 2001). He currently directs the service and engineering departments.

Throughout his engineering career, Atkinson has taken on various volunteer and

leadership positions within NSPE, the Vermont Society of Professional Engineers, ASHRAE, and NCEES. He served on the Vermont Board of Professional Engineers and the University of Vermont College of Engineering Advisory Board. He has also served as an ABET observer and as the president of the Clarkson University Vermont Alumni Chapter. He is a licensed professional engineer in New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont.

Atkinson lives in Essex, Vermont, with his wife, Kim Atkinson, P.E., and two young active sons. When he and his wife are not working they are often found coaching or enjoying the outdoors in all seasons.

Honoring Excellence in the Profession

NSPE members were recently honored for their outstanding contributions to the profession during NSPECon23 in Louisville, Kentucky.

Engineering Education Excellence Award

This award recognizes licensed engineering faculty who have demonstrated the ability to link engineering education with professional practice. It is sponsored by the Professional Engineers in Higher Education (PEHE) interest group.



Waterloo Tsutsui, Ph.D., P.E., is a senior research associate in the School of Aeronautics and Astronautics at Purdue University where his primary aim is to provide a rigorous education that nurtures an engineering mindset among students and empowering them to analyze, communicate, and solve complex problems. He ensures students derive maximum advantage from meticulously designed educational experiences integrated into their curriculum, fostering lasting knowledge and capabilities that extend far beyond the confines of the classroom for the ultimate benefit of students. As an example, Tsutsui implemented virtual labs and visualization in lab courses as an innovative way to link engineering practice to education.

New Professional of the Year Award

This award recognizes a young NSPE member who has made outstanding contributions to the engineering profession and the community during the early years of one's career.

Sri Kumar, P.E., is the president and CEO of Connico, a national consultancy serving the aviation, civil, and transportation markets. In his current role, he is responsible for outlining the company's strategy for the future, ensuring the company continues to execute its goals, and delivering excellence to clients from Tampa to



Seattle. He is also committed to building Connico's employee-focused culture and is passionate about developing a strong, diverse, and uniquely talented team who work each day on solving some of the nation's most complex infrastructure challenges.

Emerging Leaders Program Seeks Candidates



The [NSPE Emerging Leaders Program](#) is seeking the next group of engineering change-makers. Candidates with 5–8 years of professional experience in the engineering field who are prepared to think strategically about their career and begin taking on leadership roles are [invited to apply](#).

The 2024 ELP syllabus and related time-commitments are available and the application for the program is due by **Thursday, August 31**.

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