The Solar Electric Vehicle Charger Project at Vermont Law School

Vermont Law School will host a publicly accessible solar EV/PHEV charging station on campus in South Royalton, Vermont. The project is under construction and will be completed by the end of January 2013. The project includes a 9.2 kW solar photovoltaic (PV) system and a General Electric DuraStation dual level 2 (240v) charger that would be accessible to the public. In addition, VLS will install up to three level one charging outlets (120v) so that up to five plug-in vehicles could charge at a time. The charging station will be constructed in a highly visible parking lot next to the main campus.

The 9.2 kW solar PV array is being constructed adjacent to Chelsea Street at the main entrance to VLS and highly visible to anyone approaching downtown South Royalton from I-89 and Route 14. The project is being designed and built by Rutland, Vermont based SameSun of Vermont Inc. SameSun of Vermont only uses U.S. manufactured products and local labor. The solar panels are manufactured in SolarWorld's Oregon manufacturing facility. German headquartered SolarWorld, the largest U.S. solar panel manufacturer, has been recognized by three independent rankings as the global renewable-energy industry's leader in sustainable corporate management, environmentally sound manufacturing and transparent financial reporting.

Located conveniently between exits two and three on Interstate-89 in the Village of South Royalton, the VLS campus offers a unique geographic location for such a facility. VLS employs approximately 160 full-time equivalent positions and has over 600 students. In addition, each year brings thousands of visitors (including parents, prospective students, alumni, visiting faculty, trustees, and other guests) to campus for reunion, commencement, lectures, meetings, and conferences. Each summer, VLS also hosts a full academic program in Environmental Law and Policy that attracts hundreds of additional students, faculty, and distinguished guests from across the country as well as internationally. Because VLS offers no residential facilities for students or faculty, a majority of VLS community members commute by car to campus. According to a recent transportation survey conducted by the Campus Greening Committee, while some half of respondents live five miles or less from the campus, many students and employees commute from the surrounding counties of Orange, Rutland, and Washington. Because only limited public transportation serves these rural locations, VLS must employ innovative strategies for reducing the carbon impact of the school's commuters. The introduction of an EV/PHEV charging station will support commuters who currently own PHEVs, and encourage others to purchase them. With such a high profile station, interest in EVs and PHEVs is sure to grow.

VLS is utilizing three sources of funding to pay for the Solar EV/PHEV Vehicle Charging Station. The primary source of funding is the newly established VLS Green Revolving Fund. Net-metered electric revenues from the solar array will pay back the funds investment over time. In addition, Green Mountain Power and the Vermont Small Scale Renewable Incentive Program have provided grant funding for the project. The VLS Green Revolving Fund is specifically designated to encourage energy projects on campus, and aims to recover savings from such projects for future energy related investments on campus.