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There is a lot of buzz around clean technology, distributed energy resources (DERs), microgrids, and other technological innovations in the renewable energy and clean transport industries and how these developments can contribute to solving longstanding environmental justice issues. As these innovations develop, energy markets will undergo substantial changes to which consumers and industry participants alike will need to adapt and leverage. Every other week, K&L Gates' The Energizer will highlight emerging issues or stories relating to the use of DERs, energy storage, emerging technologies, hydrogen, and other innovations driving the energy industry forward. To subscribe to The Energizer newsletter, please click here.

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY PROVIDES US$2.5 BILLION TOWARD NEW ELECTRIC VEHICLE BATTERY CELL MANUFACTURING FACILITIES

On 25 July 2022, the U.S. Department of Energy Loan Programs Office (LPO) announced that it would provide a first-of-its-kind US$2.5 billion loan as a conditional commitment to General Motors (GM) and LG Energy Solution's joint venture: Ultium Cells LLC (Ultium) for the construction of electric vehicle battery cell manufacturing facilities. The financing will support three facilities: one in Ohio, one in Tennessee, and one in Michigan. That funding will come from LPO's Advanced Technology Vehicles Manufacturing program, which supports domestic manufacturing of fuel-efficient vehicles and components.

Ultium's facilities are slated to create more than 5,000 jobs and will manufacture lithium ion battery cells that utilize a nickel-cobalt-manganese-aluminum chemistry. The battery cells will be used to support GM's manufacturing of light-duty electric vehicles and will assist in meeting its goals of creating capacity to produce one million electric vehicles by the end of 2025 and eliminating 100% of tailpipe emissions by light-duty vehicles by 2035.

The funding of new domestic battery manufacturing facilities complements the US$7 billion of funding made available under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act intended to accelerate the supply chain for critical battery minerals and a circular economy. The funding also furthers the goals outlined in the National Blueprint for Lithium Batteries 2021 – 2030 that was issued by the Federal Consortium for Advanced Batteries in June 2021.

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U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION WILL CERTIFY FIRST SMALL NUCLEAR REACTOR

On 29 July 2022, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) announced that it would certify a small modular reactor designed by NuScale for use in the United States. The NRC must first publish a final rule in the Federal Register approving the design; the certification will be effective 30 days from publication of the final rule.

NRC's certificate verifies that the small modular reactor designed by NuScale meets the federal agency's safety requirements. NuScale submitted its initial application for certification in 2016, and the design has been undergoing technical review since that time. The small modular reactor is an integral pressurized-water reactor, and the design is based on a Multi-Application Small Light Water Reactor developed at Oregon State University in the early 2000s.

The NRC's certification is the next step in NuScale's plan to begin operation of the first small modular reactor power plant in the United States, which will be located in Idaho Falls, Idaho. The planned power plant is part of the Carbon Free Power Project, a consortium headed by the Utah Associated Municipal Power Systems. The goal of the Carbon Free Power Project is to provide reliable, safe, and competitive carbon-free energy to communities across the Intermountain West.

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