Alternative Energy Spurs Fastest Growing Occupations

- Alternative energy jobs in solar and wind are at the top of the list for gains during this period.
- The list also reads like a “who’s who” for future mobility.
- Michigan will play an important role in America’s energy future with growth in renewables, electrified, connected, and autonomous vehicles. Job gains in these occupations should help the state to prosper in the future.

The economics of renewables have become increasingly attractive. Three factors combine to establish growth in both wind and solar, as well as other renewables, in the months ahead:

- Unit costs have declined. The Energy Information Administration’s April 2017 report shows both wind and solar with lower cost than natural gas-fired electric utilities (top table).
- The development of new technologies which allow for micro-grid build-outs with attractive payback periods.
- Overall policy enhancements through investment and production tax credits.

As a result, jobs in wind and solar occupations are projected to grow substantially in the years ahead.

- The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics recently released their Occupational Outlook Handbook in January 2018. Their economists are projecting 105% growth and 96% growth in solar installers and wind turbine service technicians, respectively, during the 2016-2026 period (see 2nd table).
- Also notable are the strong growth rates of health care occupations given the aging baby boomer population, but also the strong growth of occupations related to IT and digital platforms. Many of these occupations will also contribute to the growth in new mobility — ride hailing services, connected and automated vehicles, especially after 2020.

What about Michigan’s outlook for these occupations? The BLS collaborates with Projections Central to establish state occupational projections.

- At present, the report includes long-term projections for each occupation by state out to 2024.
- Michigan has no reported solar or wind jobs in these projections.
- California has 57% of all U.S. projected jobs in solar panel installations by 2024, as well as 27% of all wind technician jobs.