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It always seems impossible until it's done.
- Nelson Mandela

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Electricity

PV Installed Over Farm Land Boosts Yield for Some Crops - Generates Electricity, Too.

In Japan, farmers are installing PV panels in a checkerboard pattern (see picture in the link). The 30% shading doesn't harm many crops and actually increases yields of other crops. (G)

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-05-26/solar-farmers-in-japan-to-harvest-electricity-with-crops.html>

Transportation

Electric Airplane Prototype From Airbus

A number of companies are making prototype electric airplanes. Now Airbus has joined the party. (G)

<http://spectrum.ieee.org/energywise/transportation/alternative-transportation/airbuss-efan-electric-plane-takes-flight>

Google Makes 100 Self-Driving Cars

An EV with a 100 mile range built for Google. “Googly” cute. Google prototype design. No pesky steering wheel or pedals to get in the way. 25 MPH maximum speed. Summon it with your smartphone, tell it the destination, get in, and push go. Note that the car knows in advance where it is, where you are, where you want to go, and where it needs to go to get a recharge. This means that the car can automatically make certain that it has enough charge. The 3 minute video is fun and heart-warming. (G. Video & article).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CqSDWoAhvLU>

<http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/may/28/google-self-driving-car-how-does-it-work>

Energy Storage, Etcetera

"We are not thinking big enough" - Tesla's CTO Regarding Battery Storage

It is pretty safe to say that Tesla Motors has done more for batteries than any company since the invention of the AA battery. And they will soon break ground on a battery pack “gigafactory” that will have Tesla doing even more - literally doubling worldwide lithium ion battery production in one factory.

That Tesla CTO JB Straubel recently said “we are not thinking big enough” on battery storage is worth pondering. He went on to say: “I really love batteries. I might love batteries more than cars.” (G)

<https://www.greentechmedia.com/articles/read/Tesla-CTO-on-Energy-Storage-We-Should-All-Be-Thinking-Bigger>

Research: Making Ethanol Efficiently With Carbon Dioxide, Water, and Electricity

Perhaps the biggest problem with lots of wind & solar electricity on the grid is having too much electricity at certain times. If commercially feasible, this research would allow excess electricity to be stored as practical, relatively non-toxic, ethanol. This research uses electricity to make ethanol from carbon monoxide and water. Other research uses electricity to make carbon monoxide from carbon dioxide. (PG)

<http://www.technologyreview.com/news/526456/a-less-resource-intensive-way-to-make-ethanol/>

The End of US Electric Utilities as We Know Them?

This has been an interesting month for US electric utilities. Barclays downgraded US electric utility bonds both in the short and long term due to competition from solar and storage. Citigroup says the age of renewables has begun. And finally, New York state has launched major regulatory reform for electric utilities. (all G)

<http://blogs.barrons.com/incomeinvesting/2014/05/23/barclays-downgrades-electric-utility-bonds-sees-viable-solar-competition/>

<http://reneweconomy.com.au/2014/citigroup-says-the-age-of-renewables-has-begun-69852>

<http://www.greentechmedia.com/articles/read/new-york-launches-major-regulatory-reform-for-utilities>