

01/06 Draft Corridor Criteria – Alternative Development and Selection

The interagency project management team (DOE, BLM, USFS, and DOD) for the implementation of Section 368 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (designation of West-wide energy corridors) is developing criteria for designation of corridors and alternatives that will be used for evaluation in a programmatic environmental impact statement (PEIS). These criteria will help (1) guide selection of the various corridor proposals developed through public scoping and agency consideration and (2) assist in identifying a subset of corridors that will be carried forward for consideration in the environmental review process. Criteria consist of a set of explicitly defined constraints and/or opportunities that are used to screen corridor proposals. The screening process determines which proposed corridors are within the scope of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 and also consistent with the missions of each agency. Upon completion of the PEIS, the criteria will also be used in the Record of Decision(s) to select a set of preferred corridors (from the set of corridors analyzed in PEIS) alternatives and designate those corridors within federal land.

Criteria can be grouped into four classes: (I) purpose and need related to the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (Section 368), (II) energy transmission considerations, (III) agency missions, and (IV) siting constraints. For analysis and comparisons, it is important that criteria be developed so that they become suitable for the assessment analysis and can be mapped or portrayed in an electronic format.

I. Energy Policy Act criteria include:

- Corridors available for electricity, natural gas, oil, and hydrogen energy transport
- Corridor compatibility among energy types transported within the corridor (engineering and facility citing)
- Corridors designated in applicable agency land use plans (compatibility with FLPMA and other planning laws)
- Provide expeditious approval of applications in designated corridors
- Improve reliability
- Relieve congestion
- Enhance the capability of the national grid to deliver electricity
- Specify the centerline, width, and compatible uses of the corridor.

II. Energy transmission criteria include:

- Utilization of existing corridors (enhancements and upgrades)
- Supply and demand (resource and load) considerations
- Application of transmission R&D to corridor designation (current and future developments)
- Compatibility with other corridor and project planning efforts (utilities, states, regions)
- Security and vulnerability

III. Agency mission and policy criteria include:

- Corridor identified by a centerline and overall width with reasonable accuracy and precision on a digital map of known origin
- Corridor, from beginning to end, occur within a preponderance of federal land
- Corridor crosses more than one federal administrative unit (national forest district, BLM field office, or military reservation)
- Corridor location and possible designation responsive to requests from elected officials, tribal representatives, governmental officials, or others
- Provide access to renewable energy resources

IV. Environmental and socio-economic siting criteria include:

- Avoid unreasonable risk of a catastrophic event created by an extraordinary fuel type, public accessibility, or from extreme geologic or hydrologic hazards
- Avoid crossing Wild & Scenic Rivers in a category other than “Recreation”
- Avoid designated Wilderness Areas and Wilderness Study Areas
- With appropriate mitigation, exhibit acceptable impacts to visual or cultural resources, concentrations of rare botanical species, and roadless area
- With appropriate safety considerations and vegetation management, serve as a fire break or other public use
- Avoid critical habitat for endangered species
- Avoid Experimental Forests and Research Natural Areas and areas of major development such as recreation sites, camp grounds, and other areas of concentrated public use or high environmental concern