

Federal Land Permitting for Transmission Lines in the Western United States



Committee on Regional Electric Power Cooperation
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Corridors vs. Reliability

- **BLM Corridor Philosophy**: “Whenever possible the BLM will manage ROW use of public land through a system of designated corridors. Use of designated corridors for future ROW grants will be actively encouraged by the BLM. A designated corridor is a preferred location for the placement of rights-of-way.” (BLM Manual 2802.1 B.1&2)
- **The Western Electricity Coordinating Council (WECC) reliability standards are performance based rather than prescriptive.**
- **Separation distances are proposed by transmission line applicants and reflect - -**
 - **Level of utility’s risk aversion**
 - **May be on the order of miles**
 - **Difficult to justify separation distance when many existing transmission lines are close to each other**



Cumulative Effects and Regional Planning

- **BLM and WECC consider proposals on a case-by-case basis.**
- **The large number of simultaneous proposals raises questions about:**
 - **Viability of transmission proposals,**
 - **Generation mix,**
 - **Remote vs. centralized generation,**
 - **Individual or low voltage circuits using up available 'suitable' corridors.**
- **BLM and the Forest Service evaluate locations for transmission lines on the lands they administer. They do not manage the electric utility grid, meet electricity demand, or determine the type of electrical generation.**

Potential High Voltage Transmission Line Projects In the Western United States



LEGEND

Transmission Line Corridors

- Gateway South Project
- Gateway West Project
- TransWest Express Project
- Mountain States Transmission Interline Project
- Northern Lights Cellulo Project (Conceptual)
- Northern Lights Inland Projects
- Wyoming to Colorado Interline Project (TOT3)
- Boardman to Hemingway Project
- Southwest Interline Project
- Southern Wyoming to Marketplace Project (Conceptual)
- Sunzla Project
- High Plains Express Project (Conceptual)
- Navajo Transmission Project
- Palo Verde to Devers Project
- Sigurd to Red Butte Project
- First Wind Project (Conceptual)

Jurisdiction/Ownership

- Bureau of Land Management
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- U.S. Forest Service
- National Park Service
- Department of Defense
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- State/Private

REFERENCE FEATURES

- State Boundary
- Interstate
- Highway

Data Source Information

Land Ownership: BLM Denver Service Center, 2007.
 NOTE: Transmission corridors are schematic and do not represent precise locations.

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Environmental Issues

- **Endangered Species and Wildlife Habitat**
- **Cultural Resources (especially landscapes associated with National Historic Trails)**
- **Visual Resource concerns**
- **Routing on public or private lands (NIMBY)**
- **Associated effects of new generation sources**
- **Multiple approvals as federal, state, and local levels**
- **NEPA analysis time (approximately 36 months)**
- **Economic uncertainty and proposal changes**



The Way Out

- **If time allows, develop a regional master generation and transmission plan. Otherwise, evaluate proposals to:**
 - **Establish a balance between electric transmission reliability and environmental effects,**
 - **Consider land uses and effects of generation types,**
 - **Build transmission lines with future capacity,**
 - **Issue ROW Grants for future expansion,**
 - **Multiple owners in same grant area or on same towers,**
 - **Revise existing corridor designations, include non-public lands,**
 - **Reduce authorization complexity,**
 - **Streamline or exempt certain environmental requirements.**

