

## REQUEST FOR STATEMENTS OF INTEREST BY INDIAN TRIBES

### National Transmission Planning Study

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is conducting a national study of transmission expansion scenarios that can support America's changing electricity generation mix and align with economy-wide decarbonization. What the study ultimately says about clean energy generation and transmission could affect Tribes, and DOE believes that outreach to Tribes is essential to ensuring its work is both technically effective and is consistent with the principles of energy justice. This backgrounder explains the study and outlines some of the areas where DOE is seeking input from Tribes. **DOE is seeking initial input by July 20, 2022.**

### The Study

In support of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), DOE's Office of Electricity launched the Building a Better Grid Initiative to catalyze the nationwide development of new and upgraded high-capacity electric transmission lines.<sup>1</sup> As one of the first steps, DOE is conducting the National Transmission Planning (NTP) Study to identify transmission that will provide broad-scale benefits to electric customers; inform regional and interregional transmission planning processes; and identify interregional and national strategies to accelerate decarbonization while maintaining system reliability.

DOE, the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, and the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory will work closely with a wide range of interested parties, including tribal governments, tribal enterprises, tribal utilities, and American Indian communities, so that the national results can readily inform inter-regional dialogue and the exploration of new value propositions. The Study will not replace current planning, but it will test additional transmission options that lie outside current planning.

Public engagement is a critical component of the NTP Study and will include four coordinated efforts: (1) webinars to inform the public of the study's status; (2) outreach to national and regional key stakeholder organizations to seek technical information from their membership and directly share key findings; (3) tribal outreach to seek the input of interested tribes in NTP Study



Photo Illustration by Raymond David / NREL

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<sup>1</sup> DOE published a notice of intent for the Initiative in the Federal Register on January 19, 2022. 87 FR 2769.



process; and (4) formation of a Technical Review Committee to gather specialized input through a subcommittee structure.

The NTP Study will inform DOE decisions about IIJA funds. The study may also inform the planning efforts of regional transmission organizations and utilities through an examination of emerging topics.

## The Energy Transition

The electric power industry is changing significantly: a different energy mix, expanded electrification needs, and new business models. America's generation mix is moving towards cleaner resources such as wind and solar power. Data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration shows that more than 102 gigawatts of coal capacity have been retired over the past decade, while during that same period the nation added nearly 150 gigawatts of wind and solar power. Some Tribes have felt the impact and opportunities of this transition directly.

A reliable, resilient electric grid is critical for withstanding climate change impacts and to achieving President Biden's goal of a national grid run on 100% clean electricity by 2035. However, the United States faces challenges as its electric grid infrastructure continues to age. It is becoming clear that there is insufficient transmission capacity – especially transmission that facilitates transfer of power across regions. Locations with significant renewable energy resources are often not located near demand hubs so increased capacity is also needed to move this clean power to where it is needed most.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which is now looking at major reforms to its rules for transmission planning, observes that:

A robust, well-planned transmission system is foundational to ensuring an affordable, reliable supply of electricity. Due to continuing changes in both supply and demand, ongoing investment in transmission facilities is necessary to ensure the transmission system continues to serve load in a reliable and economically efficient fashion. Such investments also support enhanced reliability, as larger, more integrated transmission systems result in a diversity of supply and demand conditions and a certain degree of redundancy that allows the system to better withstand failures during unexpected events. Proactive, forward-looking transmission planning that considers evolving supply and demand conditions more comprehensively can enable potential reliability problems and economic constraints to be identified and resolved before they affect the transmission system, which can facilitate the selection of more efficient or cost-effective transmission facilities to meet transmission needs.<sup>2</sup>

Market-driven changes in the electricity sector combined with the need to address climate change are leading to significant investment in new transmission infrastructure nationwide.

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<sup>2</sup> Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Building for the Future Through Electric Regional Transmission Planning and Cost Allocation and Generator Interconnection, Docket No. RM21-17-000, notice of proposed rulemaking (April 21, 2022).

DOE's objective for the NTP Study is to inform and direct these investments in ways that provide the greatest public benefit.

## DOE's Request to Affected Tribes

**DOE invites Tribes to provide brief statements of interest describing how national or regional transmission expansion plans might affect them. Statements should come from an official tribal agency or other person authorized to speak on behalf of the Tribe.**

The goal of this request for statements of interest is for DOE to hear from Tribes directly about their priorities during this energy transition. The statement should focus on issues related to transmission planning and large-scale energy development for export to the bulk power system. Matters such as the use of microgrids, energy efficiency, or distributed energy resources can be important to a Tribe, but they are outside the scope of the NTP Study. DOE encourages Tribes to contact with the Office of Indian Energy to address additional issues.

Statements of interest may include, but are not limited to:

- Identifying Indian tribes or tribal enterprises engaged in large-scale clean energy development or regional transmission planning.
- Providing a description of any tribal policies pertaining to large-scale clean energy development.
- Identifying ways to enhance tribal engagement in transmission planning.
- Any other interests or concerns relative to national or regional transmission planning.



Statements of interest can be sent to David Hurlbut (david.hurlbut@nrel.gov) or Faith Smith (faith.smith@nrel.gov). DOE requests responses by July 20, 2022, however there will be multiple pathways and timelines for participation. Interested parties are encouraged to subscribe to the email newsletter to receive the most current information about the Building a Better Grid, including the NTP Study.

## Further Information and Updates

Clarifying questions can be sent to:

David Hurlbut (david.hurlbut@nrel.gov)

Faith Smith (faith.smith@nrel.gov)

Additional information on the NTP Study, including a subscription link for project updates, is available <https://www.energy.gov/oe/national-transmission-planning-study>.