DOE GDO May 16 National Interest Electric Transmission Corridor Designation Phase 2 Webinar

WHITNEY BELL: Hello and welcome to the National Interest Electric Transmission Corridor Designation Phase 2 webinar. I'm Whitney Bell with ICF, and I'll be your host today. Throughout today's webinar, we will use the acronym NIETC to refer to this program.

First, I have a few housekeeping items for today's webinar. None of the information presented herein is legally binding. The content included in this presentation is intended for informational purposes only relating to the Preliminary List of Potential National Interest Electric Transmission Corridors, Preliminary List.

Any content within this presentation that appears discrepant from the Preliminary List is superseded by the Preliminary List language. The purpose of this webinar is to provide an overview of the Preliminary List and to inform interested parties on how to submit comments and information to DOE as requested in the Preliminary List.

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The Department of Energy invites the public to submit comments on the potential NIETCs to the email on your screen. The window for comments is open until June 24th. We will not answer your questions live during today's webinar, but you can submit questions to be answered later to the email on your screen and in the chat during the webinar.

If you have technical questions or issues, you may type them in the chat box and select Send to Host.

And then finally, a popular question that we do receive is, we will post a copy of today's presentation on the May 16th National Interest Electric Transmission Corridor Designation Phase 2 Webinar web page by this coming Monday.

The recording of today's webinar will be available on that same page in about two weeks. And we will alert you via email when those materials are available online. The link to that page should be in the chat now.

All right, with all of those announcements out of the way, let's go ahead and get started. To kick off today's meeting, we'll have Maria Robinson, the director of Grid Deployment Office, joining us. Maria, welcome. I'll turn this over to you.

MARIA ROBINSON: Thank you so much, Whitney. Appreciate it. Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Maria Robinson, Director of the Grid Deployment Office here at the Department of Energy. We here at the Grid Deployment Office are working really hard to improve and expand our transmission and distribution systems and developing high capacity electricity lines nationwide.

For some of you, this might be at least the second transmission rule related webinar from that you've attended in the past 24 hours. Maybe you were even on the one on Monday too. But yesterday, you might have joined us to learn about our final rule on the Coordinated Interagency Transmission Authorizations and Permits Program or CITAPP, which will help accelerate federal environmental reviews and permitting processes.

Today, excited to talk about our update on National Interest Electric Transmission Corridors or NIETCs. Last week, we released a preliminary list of 10 potential NIETCs, which reflect geographic areas that the Department of Energy has identified as high priority for transmission development.

By releasing this preliminary list, we've kicked off phase 2 of our four phase NIETC designation process. Our team will be sharing more details on the next steps right after I finish speaking here. But if you'd like a full refresher on the four phase process, we have another handy webinar that you'll be able to find on our website.

NIETCs, these are a valuable tool to accelerate transmission development where it's needed most in order to strengthen grid resilience and lower electricity costs for consumers. In addition to unlocking federal financing opportunities for projects, NIETC designation also creates an opportunity for developers or utilities to utilize the environmental analysis and public engagement conducted by the Department of Energy in the NIETC during phase 3 of our designation process.

What I really want to emphasize today as part of this webinar is that this preliminary list represents just the next step in a multi-phase process that we've really intentionally designed to create multiple opportunities for public input. We're relying on feedback and information from everyone impacted in this process to directly inform how we proceed with final NIETC designation and ensure that we can effectively and efficiently build new transmission infrastructure where it's needed most across the United States.

In that vein, thank you very much to everyone who submitted information during our phase 1 process, and thank you in advance to everyone who's going to submit information during phase 2. We really appreciate you being here today and participating in this process with us.

I'm delighted now to pass it off to someone who's worked incredibly hard on this program. And we're really grateful for her leadership here, Gretchen Kershaw from GDO, who will share more information about this preliminary list and next steps on the designation process. Gretchen, over to you.

GRETCHEN KERSHAW: Thanks, Maria, for getting us started. So let me just take control these slides and we can move over to the agenda. I also have with me Dr. Adria Brooks, who will be taking you through the individual potential NIETCs, so I want to just intro her quickly before moving on.

So first, we're going to go through a brief introduction of National Interest Electric Transmission Corridors and their impact, including the transmission facility financing direct loan program. From there, we're going to cover the four phase NIETC designation process just at a high level and explain where we are at this point in that process.

Then I will give a quick overview of the preliminary list of potential NIETC announced last week before turning it over to Dr. Brooks to talk through the threshold need determination that DOE made for each of these potential NIETC and then to go through each of the 10 individually. And then we'll conclude by talking about opportunities for public participation in this phase of the process and sharing a few key dates.

So to start, what is a National Interest Electric Transmission Corridor or NIETC? So here on the slide we have a definition that is not the statutory definition or the legal definition, but rather our attempt to explain the concept of a NIETC. So a NIETC is an area of the country where inadequate transmission harms consumers.

And that can be currently or looking out into the future. And of course, that DOE has designated as a NIETC. And development of new transmission in a NIETC is needed to address consumer harms. And just to be clear, that includes upgrading existing transmission to increase its capacity in addition to the potential for building new transmission.

And the concept of consumer harms that may justify NIETC designation is broad. We are certainly talking about economic harms, but we're also talking about harms to reliability, harms to resilience, as well as that inability to access clean, diverse, and affordable electricity supply.

So that slide just covered what of NIETC. This slide is the so what. Is the impact of DOE's designation of an area as a NIETC? So first, NIETC designation focuses attention of the public, of policymakers on the greatest areas of transmission need. But it also unlocks key federal financing and permitting tools to advance transmission deployment within these areas.

And as you can see here on the slide, there are three tools unlocked. One, public-private partnerships under the Bipartisan Infrastructure law's Transmission Facilitation Program. Another, direct loans under the Inflation Reduction Act's Transmission Facility Financing Program, which I will talk a little bit more on the next slide. And federal siting and permitting authority under Section 216(b) of the Federal Power Act for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, or FERC, in certain limited circumstances.

Here at the bottom of the slide, just want to highlight this note. NIETC designation is not a route determination for a specific transmission project. It is also not endorsement of a specific transmission solution. And it's not selection of or preference for a specific transmission project for any purposes.

So what this means is that a transmission developer developing a project within a NIETC must apply separately for these tools you see here on the slide unlocked by NIETC designation and be evaluated based on the criteria for that specific program. It also means that NIETC designation is not what determines the appropriate facilities to address needs within any given NIETC.

It's up to market participants, transmission planning entities, state and local authorities, tribal entities, and potentially FERC to determine that. In many cases, the solution will be constructing new transmission facilities. But in other cases, the solution may be alternatives, such as distributed energy resources or advanced grid technologies.

As promised, a little bit more about Transmission Facility Financing or the TFF program. So this program was created by the Inflation Reduction Act. And through this program, DOE can provide direct loan support for transmission facilities designated by the Secretary of Energy to be necessary in the national interest under Federal Power Act, section 216(a).

So in the guidance document that DOE released last December about the NIETC designation process, we stated that we intend to deem transmission facilities that would be located within a NIETC eligible to receive a loan under the TFF program. While Congress did not specify a maximum volume of loans that may be issued under the TFF program, Congress appropriated $2 billion to DOE to carry out the program.

And this $2 billion appropriation can be used to pay the credit subsidy cost for loans made under the program and may be leveraged for a much larger total loan volume than $2 billion. And so in the announcement last week, DOE set out minimum eligibility criteria for direct loans under this program. They are derived directly from the statute. They're briefly here on the slide. The applicant must be a non-federal borrower, constructing or modifying transmission located within NIETC that addresses the transmission need that underlies the NIETC designation. The loan must also satisfy certain statutory requirements related to the term, percentage of cost covered, and no subordination to other financing.
What DOE also announced last week is that we are currently inviting input from transmission industry stakeholders about the scope of eligible projects for TFF loans and the associated project financing requirements. And this input we hope to use to inform our formal TFF application and evaluation process we're currently developing. And we anticipate opening in the spring of next year.
We're also interested in hearing from utilities and project developers who are considering seeking TFF support for a specific project in or near one of the potential NIETCs identified in the preliminary list. And I believe that you can find in the chat and here on the slide the email address to contact us by July 31st. After July 31st, we may continue gathering information as we work through the development of the formal application and evaluation process. So this slide depicts the four phase NIETC designation process that we announced last December. And as Maria mentioned, there is a webinar dedicated entirely to these four phases.
But just to orient everyone in this call, we wanted to talk about the four phase process at a high level and where we are right now. So a key to this process is that it creates multiple opportunities for public input, starting with initial proposals to feedback on an increasingly narrow list of potential NIETCs.
Just at the highest level, the first phase involves DOE evaluating our most recent triennial National Transmission Needs Study. We do this to identify areas where we believe that NIETC designation may be particularly valuable.
And then opening a phase 1 information submission window, giving the public the opportunity to suggest where we should consider designating a NIETC and why. So when we issued that guidance document in December, we opened a phase 1 window, which closed in early February.
Following the close of that window, we have reviewed the submissions, made threshold need determinations for each potential NIETC, meaning we've made preliminary findings about the transmission need within these areas. And we have preliminarily identified whether any of the statutory factors that DOE is allowed but not required to consider are relevant to the potential NIETC.
So for those, we're talking about things like maximizing existing rights of way and furthering national energy policy goals. So we have completed phase 1 for this iteration of the NIETC designation process started last December. And we are now here at the red circle with the star at the start of phase 2.
So the preliminary list that we released last week initiates phase 2. That list includes the rough geographic boundaries of each potential NIETC that we are continuing to consider, our preliminary assessment of transmission needs and consumer harms, preliminary evaluation of the relevant discretionary factors from the statute, and a high level explanation of why the potential NIETC in this list are moving to phase 2.
And just to be clear, potential NIETC that are not on this preliminary list are not moving forward to phase 2 in the ongoing iteration of the NIETC designation process. But resubmissions are allowed in future iterations following the opening of a new phase 1 window.

So issuance of the preliminary list opens a public comment period and a second information submission window. And we're going to talk later about what information DOE is soliciting in phase 2. But generally, we are inviting comment and information on the potential NIETC as well as potential impacts on environmental, community, and other resources within the area of the potential NIETC.

When the phase 2 window closes, we will conduct what the guidance document calls a technical completeness assessment for each potential NIETC and preliminarily review all the comments that we receive. So what this means is we will rank the potential NIETC based on the relative completeness of information that we have available, all on the boundaries, on the potential impacts on environmental, community, and other resources.

And then we'll also look at all of those comments before we determine which potential NIETCs we move into phase 3. In phase 3, there is a lot of concurrent activity. We will be refining the boundaries of each potential NIETC based on the additional information gathered during phase 2 and also all the information we're gathering during phase three.

We will initiate environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA. And what that looks like may differ based on the nature of each potential NIETC as well as the information that we have available at the time that we initiate and go through that process.

So once we reach phase 3, each potential NIETC will proceed on its own timeline. In addition, in phase 3, we will conduct robust public engagement for each potential NIETC. This will be tailored to the potential NIETCs under consideration. This may include public meetings and workshops, both in person and virtual.

We will also, in phase 3, assess the transmission needs, the consumer harms, and the discretionary factors more in depth than we have done to date. So these activities culminate in DOE issuing one or more draft designation reports and draft environmental documents and opening a public comment period on both of those documents, again, all during phase 3.

And then the fourth phase is the conclusion of the NIETC designation process, when DOE issues final designation reports and any needed final environmental documents. So I know that's a lot of information. Just want to emphasize two quick points on this slide.

One, the potential NIETCs that we announced last week still have a long way to go before being designated. And the other key point here is the boundaries are rough. And they will be refined through public input during phases 2 and 3 as well as the NEPA review process.

So we touched on some of the considerations for potential NIETCs in going through the four phase process. But I want to pull out a few key ones to highlight before we talk about the list. Top, of course, is the presence of pressing transmission needs.

So the preliminary findings of transmission needs-- which Dr. Brooks is going to explain in more detail in her part of the webinar-- they're predominantly based at this stage on DOE's 2023 National Transmission Needs Study released last October, though we also evaluated other information submitted in phase 1 and publicly available, as you can see as you read through the preliminary list document.

The next key consideration is the relevant discretionary factors from Federal Power Act section 216(a)(4). So essentially the statute lists a variety of factors the DOE may consider. And we look at all of those factors.

The third key consideration here on this slide is the relative completeness of information. So I was just talking about this with the phases. We are looking for where we at least have enough information to

develop rough geographic boundaries of areas and also where NIETC designation is likely to catalyze transmission development.
This ties into our next key consideration, which is the utility of the tools unlocked by NIETC designation for resolving barriers to transmission development within the area. So this is a big one. What DOE is preliminarily finding here with this list is that the areas included in the potential NIETC constitute targeted, high priority areas where NIETC designation is likely to catalyze transmission development.
This is to make the most efficient, effective use of DOE's resources at this time. So one important thing to remember is that NIETC designation is only one of the tools that DOE is using to address transmission needs nationwide. It is not going to be an effective tool for every transmission need, even if the need is significant and pressing.
The other important note is the DOE is not making any findings regarding the areas excluded from the 10 potential NIETCs. So these potential NIETCs are the result of DOE's first initiation of this new process. It reflects our consideration of information that we received from interested parties during phase 1, as well as the internal DOE analysis that went with those submission reviews.
But it also reflects the fact that NIETC designation, including conducting environmental reviews that will begin in phase 3, is both time and resource intensive for DOE, as well as interested parties engaged in the process. So we are seeking a balance with this list.
Which brings us to the final key consideration listed here, and that is public engagement and with a diverse set of interested parties. So one of the primary drivers of this new process is public engagement, multiple opportunities from phase 1 all the way to phase 4. This is enabling DOE to uncover potential issues within NIETCs and then to use that information, both to carefully develop the boundaries of the potential NIETCs and to assist siting authorities by engaging relevant interested parties early in the process.
So we're almost ready to move to the map, I promise. But just a quick disclaimer before we get there. I've mentioned a couple times, but the maps in this webinar presentation, on GDO's website, and those in the preliminary list of potential NIETCs should be viewed as rough approximations. We are providing the maps for illustration purposes only.
We make no claims about the validity or accuracy of the GIS data underlying the maps. And we do not intend to make the GIS data used to generate the maps available at this time. The geographic boundaries of any potential NIETC that proceeds to phase 3 may ultimately differ from what is included in the preliminary list announced last week.
We do encourage public input on the boundaries and on any of the information presented or not presented in the maps. So just to be clear, the boundaries are not final until we have issued a final designation report and completed environmental review in phase 4.
So this map shows all 10 of the potential NIETCs that we announced last week in the preliminary list for this iteration of the designation process. So Dr. Brooks is going to walk through them individually. I just want to provide a few overarching comments while we're looking at the full map.
First, each of these potential NIETCs is based on one or more proposals from the public and reflects DOE internal analysis. This includes combining proposals that we received, drawing boundaries based on information that we know to date on environmental and other resource constraints, as well as existing electrical infrastructure.

In the preliminary List of Potential NIETCs document available on our website, there are three different maps for each potential NIETC, one of which highlights the existing electrical infrastructure and one highlights the known resources for the environmental information. So encourage you to look at all the maps for each potential NIETC as you develop comments and information submissions for phase 2.
Also, as you can see, almost all of them are interregional. This is consistent with DOE's preliminary finding in our December guidance that NIETC designation may be particularly valuable, where the Needs Study finds a need for increased interregional transfer capacity. Some of the potential NIETCs cross the divide between the Eastern and Western grids. Others abut that divide, as well as the divide with the Texas grid.
There are only seven limited connections between the Eastern and Western grids, and six of those seven are at least partially included in these potential NIETCs. While all of the potential NIETCs address key findings from the needs study, some also address transmission needs identified by regional transmission planning entities, and all of them reflect multiple drivers of transmission needs.
In most cases, the potential NIETCs here include one or more transmission projects in some stage of development, spanning from the conceptual stage, all the way to the permitting stages, where NIETC designation could help advance development of those projects as well as others. As you can see, there's a variety in the width and length of the potential NIETCs.
This is due to the information that we have to date for the different areas, the population centers, land status, existing infrastructure, and other considerations. And the variety also reflects our desire to maintain some flexibility at this stage of the designation process, recognizing, again, that there are multiple phases remaining before final NIETC designation. Now I will turn the webinar over to Dr. Brooks to walk us through the needs and the individual potential NIETCs.
ADRIA BROOKS: Thank you, Gretchen. So as Gretchen had mentioned during phase 1, DOE made these threshold need determinations for each of the potential entities, determining current and anticipated future needs such that transmission development in any of these lists, any of the preliminary lists or any of the individual corridors, could help address these needs.
So this dashboard just illustrates the adverse impacts on consumers or our broad categories of need. But there's a lot more detail in the preliminary documentation that Gretchen talked about. So while I'll go over broad strokes, high level categories here, please know there's a lot of detailed information in the document.
And again, at the very end of the presentation, we'll talk through what are the types of information we're seeking from you all to help us supplement the information that we have here. So as mentioned, DOE encourages multi-driver, multi-value transmission planning. And we're taking a very similar approach in our NIETC designation.
So we want to be sure that we're maximizing the impact across a range of transmission needs that may be addressed through transmission developments in any one of these potential corridors. So at a high level, the six new categories of threshold need determination are reliability and resilience, congestion, consumer costs, future generation and demand growth, and then finally, clean energy integration.
Looking at the dashboard in all 10 of the potential NIETC, we see the majority of them-- transmission development there could help address reliability and resilience, future generation demand growth, and clean energy integration, while at least half would also help with the impacts of high congestion on the transmission system or would help lower high consumer costs.

I'll go through each of these one by one, and again, give a little more detail, though there is more detail on the preliminary documentation. So first we have the New York, New England potential NIETC. The geography here is approximately one mile wide and 60 miles long. It's connecting just outside of Albany, New York, and then into Western Massachusetts.

It does include sections of existing State Highway and then also high voltage transmission right of way. This is an interregional corridor connecting the New York ISO with ISO New England. We turn to look at the transmission needs in this area.

We see that development in this potential NIETC could help maintain and improve reliability and resilience. For example, winter cold events like the January 2018 bomb cyclone. Alleviating congestion and reducing consumer costs.

The 2023 needs study did look at congestion all across the contiguous United States and found that the highest within interconnection congestion anywhere in the country was between New York and New England, so right where this potential NIETC could help alleviate some of that.

Development here might help meet future generation and demand growth. Again, turning to the 2023 needs study, we looked at 300 different power sector scenarios that all try to estimate future transmission system needs, given growth of the power sector. In scenarios that match current market trends and national laws, the needs study found that an estimated 250% increase in existing inter-regional transfer capability between these two regions is going to be needed by 2035.

Now, that is for existing trends. If we are to look, though, at some of the state policies within New York and the ISO New England region, there are lots of states that have pretty aggressive clean energy or greenhouse gas reduction policies. In order to meet scenarios that's more in line with those state policies, the need study estimates that more than an 800% increase interregional transfer capability may be needed between these two regions. So that's very significant. And then, of course, development in this area could help increase clean energy integration on either side of the NIETC.

Moving on to the next one, the New York, Mid-Atlantic, this is approximately 4 miles wide and 12 miles long. This potential NIETC does include multiple interconnection points to the existing power grid between New Jersey and New York City. There's also the potential here to facilitate the onshore transmission upgrades that would be needed to link offshore wind from the Atlantic Ocean to bring it onshore onto the power grid.

I'll note here that this map is pretty zoomed out, so it's hard to see all the detail. But the maps that Gretchen mentioned that are in our preliminary list documentation do show more zoomed in areas. So you can really try to understand a little bit more about where the boundaries are-- the illustrative boundaries for this NIETC.

And then again, this is an interregional corridor connecting New York ISO with the PJM interconnection. Moving on to transmission needs in this area, so that development could help maintain and improve reliability and resilience. So again, cold weather events have impacted both these regions. So the 2018 bomb cyclone, winter storm Elliot as examples.

I'll also note that this area encompasses an area identified by NYISO as having a near-term liability need. So reliability and resilience, both from a 2023 needs study, as well as local planning and grid planning studies have found that there is a reliability need.

Development here could help alleviate congestion and reduce consumer costs. Again, in the needs study, we found there was persistently high priced demand areas in New York City region and then also a really high congestion value between New York City and mid-Atlantic over the last several years.
And then finally, development could help meet future generation and demand growth in either region. So our mid-Atlantic potential NIETC, this has multiple parallel sections. Each one is approximately two miles wide and up to 180 miles long.
This does include portions of four states-- so Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia. The potential NIETC does encompass multiple interconnection points to the existing grid, and it does largely parallel existing high voltage transmission right of way. It is a regional corridor, all within the PJM interconnection footprint.
And again, taking a look at those resource maps that Gretchen mentioned in the potential list documentation will show you more information about where the illustrative boundaries of this NIETC are, and including areas that were preemptively excluded given understanding of potential resource impacts.
So moving on to transmission need, again, see the ability to maintain and improve reliability and resilience by developing transmission in this potential corridor. So that's not only from needs study findings, such as an understanding that there's going to be significant load growth in the PJM area, coupled with resource retirements and extreme weather events. Again, winter storms really impacting the area.
But this is also a region where the local planning authority, so PJM and their own grid reliability studies, did identify local reliability needs here. Development here could help reduce consumer costs and then finally meet future generation and demand growth as well.
So the next potential corridor is the mid-Atlantic to Canada. So this is approximately 1 mile wide and 42 miles long. It does include onshore portion of Northern Pennsylvania, but then also an offshore portion in Lake Erie, reaching up to the Canadian border, where there's a discussion of developing transmission on the other side of this border, connecting it to Canada onshore.
So this is an interregional corridor, obviously interregional international corridor. So connecting PJM to the independent electric system operator in Ontario. Transmission needs in this area to maintain and improve reliability and resilience. So the PJM area, again, 13 states and also DC, significant load growth amongst all these regions in the mid-Atlantic, and they're facing some resource retirements in the near future. So a need for additional generation.
And then additionally, the development here would help increase clean energy integration. So the Ontario system on the other side of the border is over 90% emissions free. And there are several member states within the PJM area that are looking for increased access to clean energy given state emission reduction goals. So development here could help in that regard.
Next, we have the Midwest Plains potential corridor. So this corridor is approximately five miles wide and 780 miles long. This does include portions of four states, again-- Illinois, Indiana, Kansas and Missouri. This does include portions of the existing transmission system right of way. And it's also interregional corridor between three of our planning regions. So PJM, now also the Midcontinent ISO or MISO, and SPP, the Southwest Power Pool.
Transmission needs here, again, maintain and improving reliability and resilience. So in addition to the extreme events, we've seen in these areas, NAERC-- so the North American Electric Reliability

Corporation-- has categorized a portion of the areas that you see here on the map as high risk for their vulnerability to those winter storms and to other extreme events like them.
Alleviating congestion and reducing consumer costs. Turning back to the needs study, needs study did find really high historic congestion between the Plains and the lower Midwest, which is the exact area of this potential NIETC.
There's also the ability to develop low cost generation in the Plains and then to bring that to what have been historically high priced demand centers in the Midwest. Meeting future generation and demand growth, the connection between the Midwest and the Plains we've seen is having among the highest absolute need for interregional transfer capability looking into the future.
So a lot of need there in absolute terms. In relative terms, because there's already a pretty substantial transmission system, we're seeing about 175 increase is going to be needed by 2035, looking at scenario-based planning for the needs study. And then, of course, to increase clean energy integration that could be developed in any of the states that border or that go through this potential NIETC.
So moving on to the Northern Plains. So there's multiple sections again being shown in this potential NIETC. Each one is approximately 10 to 50 miles wide, and we're expanding from 300 miles long East to West to 400 miles long North to South.
Several states here. So portions of Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and several tribal nations as well. This is a regional corridor all within the Southwest Power Pool or SPP, although I'll note that it does abut several of the interconnections to connect from the Eastern interconnection to the Western interconnection.
And then while this does appear to be a very broad potential NIETC, it is focused primarily on existing infrastructure. So either highway or lower voltage transmissions around 100 kV transmission. Again, looking at some of the reports that are in the documentation or the resource maps that are in the documentation will help identify that in a way that this map doesn't show.
Transmission needs in this area, alleviating congestion and reducing consumer costs. So there's certainly an opportunity here to develop low cost generation in the northern part of SPP and then to bring that down to higher priced demand areas in the Southern portion of SPP.
Meeting future generation and demand growth, again, looking at the 2023 needs study predicted there's a need to nearly double the SPP transmission system by 2035 in order to account for future power sector assumptions, the type of power sector we're expecting to see in 2035 given current laws.
Increase clean energy integration. and then importantly, this last point-- improving energy justice among tribal communities. So this is unique to all of the other potential NIETCs in our preliminary list. The lack of high voltage transmission here-- so I had mentioned there's 100 kV transmission in this area that the NIETCs are following.
That lack of high extra voltage to 30 kV and above disproportionately impacts tribal communities who may be seeking to develop energy resources on their own land. So improving the transmission system here, upgrading the transmission system here, may allow the connection of tribal generation to other markets in SPP and beyond.
So turning to the Delta-Plains potential corridor, this is approximately four to 18 miles wide and 645 miles long. It includes portions of both Oklahoma and Arkansas. Again, it encompasses multiple interconnection points to the existing transmission system, which is part of why you see a few forks in this potential NIETC.

It's both following existing transmission system to access interconnection points as well as trying to reach other demand centers. This is an interregional corridor, so connecting SPP or the Southwest Power Pool with the Midcontinent ISO footprints. And again, there's the potential to facilitate cross interconnection transmission into the Western interconnect. And that will become more clear in the next couple of slides.
So turning to transmission needs in this area, a need to maintain and improve reliability and resilience. So for example, again, resource requirements that are expected in the area. Also increasingly frequent winter storms. So winter storms Uri and Elliot as examples. And then also as we get into the Delta, the impacts of hurricanes on the power system.
Alleviating congestion. 2023 needs study found there's persistent congestion between Eastern and Western Oklahoma. So development of transmission in this NIETC could help alleviate that. There's also a really high historic congestion between the Plains and the Delta region. So reaching into Arkansas, reaching into the Delta region could help alleviate that congestion.
Meeting future generation and demand growth. Needs study estimates about a 400% increased interregional transmission between these two regions is going to be needed by 2035. And then finally, increasing clean energy integration. Lots of clean energy resources along the boundaries of this NIETC that could be developed.
So moving into the Western interconnection or across the two seams of the Eastern and Western interconnection, we have the Plains-Southwest NIETC. This is approximately 5 to 100 miles wide, 345 miles long east to west, and then 220 miles long north to south. This is our broadest geographic area. With that, it is far reaching. Like others, it does include several transmission projects under development, not just a single project. There's lots of discussion of projects already under development or that could be developed that are somewhere within this NIETC.
It includes portions of Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. This is both interregional and cross interconnection. So we're connecting SPP and the Eastern interconnection with the WestConnect footprint and the Western connection.
There's also the potential to facilitate interconnection with the Texas grid or with the Electric Reliability Council of Texas, ERCOT. And again, developments in this potential NIETC, along with some of the other potential NIETCs we've already presented, could be as far reaching as connecting to MISO or PJM further East.
Transmission needs in the area, so again, to maintain and improve reliability and resilience. The needs study identified that cross interconnection transmission has many, many reliability benefits, especially with increasing extreme weather events. Could help meet future generation and demand growth.
So this is a place, again, of very high need. Needs study determined or estimated about 900% increase in current inter-regional transfer capacity is going to be needed by 2035. And then finally, increased clean energy integration. Pretty diverse set of resources available, between the panhandles of Oklahoma and Texas and into New Mexico.
So in the same area of the country, we also have the Mountain-Plains-Southwest potential NIETC. So this is approximately 10 to 100 miles wide and 540 miles long. It includes portions of Colorado, New Mexico, and a small sliver of Texas.
Again, including multiple substations and existing transmission facilities. So lots of places to develop more transmission to better interconnect the grid. This is both interregional and cross interconnection. So again, SPP on the Eastern interconnection and then connecting the WestConnect and the west

interconnection footprints, with the potential to connect to the Texas grid as well, given that long north-south boundary with ERCOT along the Texas border there.
Transmission needs in this area, so maintain and improve reliability and resilience, alleviate congestion. So among the highest congestion in the country was found between the Mountain and the Plains. That was only second to congestion that was found between the Southwest and Texas and Plains and Texas. So should there be the opportunity to develop more cross interconnection development with ERCOT, there's a lot of congestion need there that transmission could help facilitate or alleviate that need. And we're seeing the congestion in these three regions really is increasing year after year.
Development here could also help meet future generation and demand growth. So like the last potential Southwest-Plains area, we estimate there's about a 900% need for increase in existing interregional transmission is going to be needed by 2035. Between the Mountain and the Plains, an estimated 300% increase in existing interregional transmission. And then again, turning to Texas, should that become an option, between Plains and Texas a 1,200% increase by 2035 is estimated to be needed. And then finally, of course, to increase clean energy integration, a good resource mix in the southwestern portion of the country.
So our final NIETC is also our most narrow. So the Mountain-Northwest potential NIETC is approximately 0.3 miles wide or 1,500 feet and 515 miles long. This includes portions of Nevada and Oregon. One reason why it is so narrow is because it is co-located with existing Bureau of Land Management or BLM section 368 energy corridors in Nevada.
And it does follow existing infrastructure for the majority of its length. This is an interregional corridor all within the northern grid footprint, but connecting the Pacific Northwest to the mountain region. There's also the potential to facilitate interconnection with the California ISO.
Should development here occur, connecting to the rest of the transmission system will give it access to California. So transmission needs, again, to maintain and improve reliability and resilience. In addition to load growth and near-term resource requirements, there's also in this part of the country the concern for wildfires and how that impacts the power grid. So additional transmission capacity could help there. Alleviating congestion. There has been historic congestion in this portion of the western interconnect. This helps parallel some of those congested paths and could, again, alleviate that congestion with increased capacity. Meeting future generation demand growth and then finally increasing clean energy integration. And with that, with all 10 of them, I'll turn things back over to Gretchen to talk about public participation in the next phase.
GRETCHEN KERSHAW: Dr. Brooks. So we have provided a lot of information from our perspective at the Department of Energy. We want to turn now to talking about how members of the public, any interested party, can share their perspective with DOE during phase 2 of this four phase process.
So when we released the preliminary list last week, we initiated phase 2 of the process and we opened a public comment period and what we call a phase 2 information submission window. So an interested party, just to be clear, can participate in any phase of the NIETC designation process, regardless of whether they participated in earlier phases.
So if you're thinking, well, I didn't submit comments on phase 1, can I participate in phase 2? The answer is yes, and the answer will continue to be yes as we proceed into subsequent phases. This is a 45-day window. It closes at 5:00 PM Eastern time on June 24th.

So during this window, we are asking for two buckets of information. The first is comments on the preliminary list of potential NIETCs. So this means commenting on which potential NIETC should we prioritize from those in our preliminary list of 10 and why.
This also means commenting on our preliminary finding of transmission need and consumer harms, like Dr. Brooks just went through. All the preliminary findings that we've made for each potential NIETC. So commenting on those, providing additional information to inform our analysis as we proceed, commenting also on the relevant discretionary factors that are in the Federal Power Act that may be relevant to each of the potential NIETCs.
Just a note on consumer harms, when you think about comments there, the consumer harms do not have to be within the geographic area that's designated as the NIETC. They're also not limited to economic harms, nor to a certain time horizon. So certainly do include economic impacts, like unnecessarily high consumer costs.
But we're also thinking about things like longer power outages, delayed access to diverse, clean, and reliable electricity supply. The second bucket of information that we are asking for input from the public on are the boundaries of the potential NIETCs, as well as the potential impacts on the environmental community and other resources that may be contained within or near to the potential NIETCs we've put out in our preliminary list.
So the goal with that bucket of information is to help us refine the boundaries, but also facilitate environmental review for those potential NIETCs that do move into phase 3. And the information that's requested in phase 2 is organized into 13 resource reports, which are listed here on this slide.
They are titled based on the contents. So we have a general description of geographic boundaries, water use and quality, fish, wildlife, and vegetation, cultural resources, socioeconomics, tribal resources, communities of interest, geological resources, soils, land use, recreation, and aesthetics, air quality and environmental noise, alternatives, and reliability and safety.
And just thinking about how do these 13 resource reports, for those who are sort of familiar with other programs relate, they are similar to those that DOE included in our final rule released at the end of April under Section 216(h) of the Federal Power Act for the Coordinated Interagency Transmission Authorizations and Permits or CITAP program.
They are also similar to those included in FERC's regulations under Section 216(b) of the Federal Power Act. But just note that in both cases, these resource reports for the NIETC process do differ from those other programs to reflect the nature of NIETC designation as opposed to siting and permitting a specific transmission line under those separate authorities, even though they're all under Section 216 of the Federal Power Act.
This slide just offers a few examples of the types of information that we're requesting. So things like the location of wetlands, recreational areas, historic properties, residences and businesses, crop land, existing or proposed transmission projects, endangered species and other wildlife, and existing or planned environmental reviews.
Just to be clear, interested parties are welcome to submit information they have relevant to any of the 13 resource reports. So for example, if an interested party only has information relevant to one of the 13 resource reports or even one particular data request within a resource report, that is OK. And we welcome that piece of information to the extent you can identify this is part of resource report 5 and this is the data piece that I'm responding to, that will help us sort the information.

But we do welcome any amount of information from any interested party. And also note that the guidance document we released in December as well as the preliminary list document that we released last week, provides information on how to request confidential treatment for materials sent to DOE as part of the NIETC designation process.

This includes how DOE will handle information on potential impacts on tribal resources. So we do encourage you to review this information before submitting anything that may be potentially sensitive to our inbox.

This slide includes some of the key dates we've mentioned already. Just put them in one place. First, the close of that public comment and information submission window on the preliminary list of potential NIETC. That window closes on June 24th. Second is the close of the initial outreach period for the transmission facility financing program. And that closes on July 31st.

Third, our anticipated initiation of phase 3 of the NIETC designation process. We are anticipating moving to phase 3 sometime this fall. And last is our anticipated opening of formal applications for the transmission facility financing program. And again, we're looking at next spring for opening those formal applications.

Just to note that the time it takes to complete phases 3 and 4 of the NIETC designation process are variable. They are based a lot on the level of information that we have available and the necessary environmental documentation. So we don't have those here because they will proceed on the different timelines based on each potential NIETC.

So I want to thank you so much for joining the webinar. Again, I think it's been dropped in the chat. It's here on the slides. If you want to contact us about the NIETC program, there's a dedicated email inbox for that. That's also where you submit comments.

You can also contact us about the Transmission Facility Financing program or TFF. We have a dedicated different email inbox for that. We also have a wealth of information and resources on our website. This includes about the NIETC program, about the Transmission Facility Financing program.

We have down in the-- if you scroll down to the very bottom of that NIETC page, there's a Resources section that includes a link to the NIETC guidance document. That has more detail on the four phase process. We also have frequently asked questions for both programs. For NIETC, we've broken them down into questions about the different phases.

We have fast facts about each potential NIETC. And then we have there in the resources, that top link is the official, if you will, preliminary list of potential NIETCs. It's a larger document that has all of those maps that we've referenced that are a lot more detailed than the maps we had in the webinar today. So I'll turn it back over to ICF to close us out.

WHITNEY BELL: Yes, thank you so much. Thank you to Maria and Gretchen and Dr. Brooks. As Gretchen said, this does wrap up today's webinar. Today's presentation will be available on the NIETC designation phase 2 webinar page by Monday. And the recording will be available on the same page in about two weeks. We'll send that out to everyone when it is ready. So thank you so much for joining us today. Take care, everyone, and we will see you next time.