



# Planning and Regulatory Reforms to Unleash Transmission Investment

Improving the Grid

BY BRIAN SLOCUM

**P**roactive investment in the transmission grid is needed now to grow, sustain, and protect our twenty-first century economy. With a supportive regulatory environment, the private sector stands ready to make these vital investments in our nation's infrastructure.

That was the substance of testimony I had the privilege of contributing to the U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Subcommittee on Energy earlier this year regarding the state of the nation's energy infrastructure.

Since the time of my testimony, there have been efforts by the administration to reform the federal permitting process for electric transmission. We applaud these efforts. Now it is imperative that policymakers maintain their focus on implementing the new procedures and further streamlining the process.

We also need to take proactive steps to reform procedures for planning the transmission system to ensure we are examining the full value that transmission investments contribute to the grid and our economy.

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## Drivers of Transmission Investment

Transmission infrastructure is of growing importance to our economy, serving as a non-discriminatory regional platform for connecting consumers to energy markets. The transmission system is expected to be reliable and economic, to support state-level public policy goals, provide us with access to diverse generation resources across the country, and remain resilient in the face of shifting natural and man-made threats.

As customer expectations have increased, so too have the drivers for new investments in transmission infrastructure. Whatever the energy future may bring, we need a modern

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transmission system to provide the optionality to facilitate that future.

Moving forward, the story is clear: As our economy becomes more dependent on reliable and affordable access to electricity, the transmission grid becomes more stressed. Planning the grid to address these demands requires consideration of many complex factors, including potential threats to the system.



ITC Holdings staff at work and projects underway.



We now understand that redundancy in the transmission system, the existence of multiple pathways to connect electricity to consumers, offers perhaps the strongest protection against adverse events that can impact generation resources or the transmission system.

Investing now will ensure the resilience of the grid and resource diversity while keeping electricity prices low for consumers and businesses. Theoretically, no federal dollars are needed to strengthen the grid, increase resilience, and create jobs. The private sector, which we're a part of, is ready to make these investments now, provided the regulatory and planning environment is conducive to investment.

### Positive Steps

We applaud efforts by Congress and the Executive Branch to streamline the permitting process for new infrastructure. In some cases, permitting for a major interstate transmission line has taken nearly a decade to secure a range of federal, state and local permits.

I believe we can ensure the National Environmental Policy Act process can be completed in a reasonable amount of time while also maintaining the strong commitment to environmental stewardship we all share.

As we implement the latest federal permitting reforms, we should continue to look for ways to increase certainty around project review timelines. This will ensure that needed infrastructure can be built in an environmentally responsible manner.

### The Path Forward

To make the necessary investments in transmission infrastructure that we're ready to do, we must also use the latest and most comprehensive methodologies to plan and approve new transmission lines.

Planning the grid proactively requires that benefits of a potential investment be viewed more comprehensively, by integrating a range of project benefits and planning drivers

into criteria for approving projects.

This approach to system planning will help us to identify new transmission lines that connect the RTOs and ISOs, which as of today are still highly separated. More interregional connections will reduce congestion, enable new generation, and increase system flexibility and resilience against potential threats. We can do all this while still allowing for flexible approaches to joint RTO planning.

As we continue to have these important conversations, it is vital that we reinforce the role of the nation's backbone electric grid in enabling all other vital infrastructure. Let's invest now to bring our nation's high-voltage transmission system into the twenty-first century. [PUE](#)