

# National Interest Electric Transmission Corridors (NIETCs)

*This overview is intended to provide Kansans with information about a Department of Energy transmission corridor project that could potentially involve areas of our State and to explain the role and responsibilities of the KCC.*

## Background

The **U.S. Department of Energy (DOE)** has initiated the process of designating several **National Interest Electric Transmission Corridors (NIETCs)**. A NIETC is not a transmission line, but rather a geographic area that the agency has identified as having present or expected transmission capacity constraints or transmission congestion that adversely affects consumers. Currently there are two preliminary NIETCs with partial locations in Kansas, the Midwest Plains NIETC and the Plains Southwest NIETC. The DOE's stated goal is to expedite the build out of a resilient and reliable electric grid and address the lack of electric transmission infrastructure which can harm consumers by directly contributing to higher electricity prices, more frequent power outages from extreme weather, and longer outages as the grid struggles to come back online.

The **Federal Power Act** authorizes the Secretary of Energy to designate any geographic area as a National Interest Electric Transmission Corridor if the Secretary finds that consumers are harmed by a lack of transmission and that the development of new transmission would increase reliability and reduce consumer costs.

## Project Milestones

### **Phase 1 – Information Gathering**

On December 19, 2023, the Grid Deployment Office released final guidance for the NIETC designation process and opened the first 45-day window for public submission of information and recommendations on NIETC designation.

### **Phase 2 – Preliminary List and Comments**

On May 8, 2024, the Grid Deployment Office released a preliminary list of 10 potential NIETC corridors and opened a 45-day comment period on the potential corridor locations. The list is still under evaluation and fewer than 10 corridors may be selected.

### **Phase 3 – Public Engagement**

Anticipated to begin in Fall 2024, the public engagement phase includes refining geographic boundaries of potential NIETCs, initiating any required environmental reviews under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other applicable federal statutes, preparing a draft report, and conducting community engagement. Public activities will focus on DOE-led community engagement activities focused on potential NIETCs.

### **Phase 4 – NIETC Designations**

The designation phase includes issuing the final NIETC Transmission preliminary list of boundaries of potential designation report(s) and any required environmental reviews. Public activities will focus on

areas of greatest transmission need and providing access to transmission developers in NIETCs for available federal financing and siting tools. The timeline for this phase of the process has yet to be communicated by the DOE.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is the role of the KCC related to the NIETCs?**

The designation of NIETCs is a federal project under the direction of the Department of Energy. At a high level, under certain circumstances, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) may grant permits within a NIETC where a state does not have authority to site a transmission line or a state siting authority has not acted on an application to site a transmission line for over one year or has denied an application. This includes granting the transmission developer the ability to obtain rights-of-way by exercise of the right of eminent domain. For Kansas, the KCC has statutory siting authority and will continue its responsibilities under Kansas law as the agency that evaluates applications for companies seeking to operate as a public utility in Kansas as well as approving the routes of any transmission line 230kV or higher and longer than 5 miles that is constructed in the State.

### **Will any of the corridors be located in Kansas?**

The preliminary list of 10 corridors released in May included the potential selection of the Midwest Plains NIETC, and the Plains Southwest NIETC. (See DOE maps and information on pages 3 and 4)

The proposed Midwest Plains NIETC is approximately 5-mile-wide, 780-mile long traversing an east-west geographic area that includes parts of Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, and Indiana, and portions of an existing 345 kV transmission facility. This proposed corridor follows the same route as the Grain Belt Express line which was approved in 2011 by the KCC. The route of the line was approved by the KCC in 2013. If the Midwest Plains corridor is selected as a NIETC, the approved route of the Grain Belt Express will not change. However, it would open up federal funding for the project.

The proposed Plains Southwest NIETC is an approximately 345-mile-long from east to west and 220-mile-long from north to south geographic area of significantly varying width (from less than five miles to near 100 miles). The Plains-Southwest potential NIETC crosses the Eastern–Western Interconnection seam, including portions of New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas. This potential NIETC is much wider in Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Texas than it is in Kansas.

### **If the Midwest Plains corridor is approved, who will decide if additional lines are added?**

Any company requesting permission to operate as a public utility in Kansas will apply to the KCC for a certificate of convenience. If that is granted, a proposed route will be submitted to the agency for review. The siting process, by Kansas statute, requires public notice, a public hearing and a public comment period. If the KCC denies a permit to build a transmission line in a NIETC, then there is a process for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to issue a siting permit for the construction of a transmission line.

### **Phase 2 of the Preliminary NIETC public comment period is over. Will there be another opportunity for public input?**

Phase 3 of the NIETC designation process, as identified by DOE, includes public engagement. DOE will announce and lead community engagement activities.

**Resources for more information:**

<https://www.energy.gov/gdo/national-interest-electric-transmission-corridor-designation-process>

<https://www.energy.gov/articles/biden-harris-administration-announces-initial-list-high-priority-areas-accelerated>

 Midwest - Plains



**Fast Facts**

- Approximately 5 miles wide, 780 miles long
- Includes portions of Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, and Missouri
- Includes parts of existing 345 kV transmission right-of-way
- Interregional corridor between PJM Interconnection, Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO), and Southwest Power Pool (SPP)

*The map and fast facts shown above were supplied by the Department of Energy.*



## Plains - Southwest

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### Fast Facts

- Approximately 5-100 miles wide, 345 miles long east to west, and 220 miles long north to south
- Includes portions of Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas
- Interregional and cross-interconnection corridor between Southwest Power Pool (SPP) and WestConnect, with potential to facilitate interconnection with Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT), Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO), and PJM Interconnection

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