



WESTERN
GOVERNORS'
ASSOCIATION

Accelerating Siting and Permitting of New Transmission Lines

AUGUST 2014

Problem

There is growing demand to build new transmission lines in the West. The demand is being driven by aging existing lines, an increasing need for energy, and the desire to tap emerging energy sources located in remote areas of the region by enhancing grid interconnections.

Siting and permitting a new transmission line is difficult and requires review and approval of overlapping and sometimes conflicting local, tribal, state, and federal regulations. This complexity can create confusion, project delays, and added expenses for project developers, regulators, and ultimately the public.

The Western Governors' Association (WGA) convened a Transmission Siting Task Force to identify ways to help developers and the public better understand and navigate the complex siting and permitting process.

Proposed Solution

Based upon the Transmission Siting Task Force's recommendations, WGA is developing an online toolkit to assist the full diversity of stakeholders during the transmission siting process. The Regulatory and Permitting Information Desktop (RAPID) Toolkit will integrate important information related to potential transmission routes and key permitting and siting requirements of federal and state agencies into one convenient website. Also, the RAPID Toolkit will help to facilitate communication between developers and agencies, and allow knowledge sharing of best practices among all stakeholders. The goal of this effort is to streamline the regulatory process and reduce the time needed for permitting new projects.



This WGA effort will build upon a website that the National Renewable Energy Laboratory is developing for the Department of Energy regarding siting and permitting for geothermal and solar power. The transmission section will be modeled after The Geothermal Regulatory Roadmap, which was beta tested in 2012 and 2013 with overwhelmingly positive response from industry and agencies.

Audience for RAPID Toolkit

The following stakeholders may find this toolkit beneficial:

- Transmission line developers and their consulting teams;
- Local, state, tribal and federal government staff, particularly those new to transmission siting and permitting;
- Senior state and federal regulators looking for ways to simplify and improve the process;
- NGOs and community leaders who want to understand the siting process and their potential roles;
- Diverse teams working on the development of a specific line and needing a common understanding of the regulatory process.



What Will the RAPID Toolkit Include?

- **Regulatory Roadmap:** Regulatory flowcharts for the transmission permitting processes required by western states, U.S. Department of the Interior and U.S. Forest Service will provide a graphic, easy-to-follow depiction of the work required to site and permit transmission lines within these jurisdictions.
- **Permitting Atlas:** Descriptions of individual states' and key federal agencies' siting and permitting requirements will complement the flowcharts by providing a comprehensive look at the players and environment within which the regulatory processes are conducted.
- **Resource Library:** This collection of links to regulations, permit guides, agency guidance, permits, and Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) will help transmission siting stakeholders. The library will also contain a GIS mapping tool and links to public tools housed on other websites.
- **NEPA Database:** A document database of National Environmental Policy Act filings will be searchable by state, agencies involved, and mitigation strategies employed or required by agencies.
- **Best Practices:** A collection of successful project permitting practices, such as MOUs, NEPA documents or NEPA processes, statements of need for transmission lines, and public involvement processes.

Feedback Requested

WGA and its contractor, Tetra Tech, have built a beta site to demonstrate some of the content for the RAPID toolkit. It is available for review at a broader DOE online platform called Open Energy Information (OpenEI): <http://en.openei.org/wiki/RAPID>.

WGA is seeking feedback on the proposed RAPID toolkit and beta site:

- Is this type of integrated siting and permitting roadmap needed? Will it lead to accelerated, more efficient and transparent siting and permitting?
- Is the format and content currently on the beta site easy to navigate?
- Do you think using a wiki platform is an effective and cost-efficient way to ensure the website is accurately updated?

Please provide feedback to:

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Updating RAPID

The prototype RAPID website is on a wiki-based platform, similar to Wikipedia, which enables logged-in users to edit and add information. With an active community of users, the wiki site would be kept up-to-date with new information and best practices. State and Federal regulators will be assigned to monitor certain pages and review, accept or reject any proposed changes made to their regulatory process information.

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