

Advantages of RTO West Performing Transmission Studies

The NW interconnected power system is owned by several TO's. Planning this transmission system has been very challenging due the competing interests of these owners. This is one of the main drivers behind FERC's push to develop RTO's. Order 2000 indicates that proposed RTO's must have ultimate responsibility for transmission planning and expansion of the system under its jurisdiction.

Many debates have taken place in the workgroups over whether the planning in RTO West should be coordinated by the RTO with the TO's running the studies or if the RTO should actually performed the studies. BPA is solidly in favor of the RTO performing the studies. To meet the full intent of Order 2000, the RTO must not only oversee the area studies; it must actually perform them. Reasons for this include:

- Since the RTO will be an independent entity, it would not be influenced by the market affiliates of TO's.
- It is well established that the RTO must perform seasonal and short term operating studies to determine the operating capability of the system under its control. Much useful information about the system is learned in these studies that can be used to propose reinforcements. Close interaction between the operating and planning studies would be difficult if these studies are done by different entities.
- Single utility planning is a very beneficial tool in the NW due to the many interconnected TO's systems. Looking at the system as if there was one owner can result in operation that is more efficient and expansions that are more cost effective. This could be most easily accomplished by having the RTO perform the studies.
- Having the RTO perform the studies would be more efficient and more responsive to customer requests. If the RTO only coordinated the studies, this extra layer would slow the process and require additional overall staff (the total number of planners required in the NW would increase). Customer requests will be coming to the RTO. Interaction would be improved if the entity interfacing with the customer was also performing the studies.
- Since RTO West will cover a large geographic area, it would be advantageous to have the planning function geographically dispersed over the NW. This could provide good customer contact, proximity to the systems in question in addition to ties back to the central office of the RTO.
- Different programs and data conversions are ongoing problems with joint studies. If the RTO were the entity that actually performs the studies, these problems would be minimized.
- The California ISO planning process started out in a coordination role. They have realized this was a mistake and are staffing up to become more involved in the studies.
- Due to initial inexperience of the RTO planners, there may need to be a transition from the TO performs to the RTO performs. This could easily be done in the three-year window of implementing the planning organization allowed by Order 2000.
- As mentioned earlier, transmission planning in the NW has been very challenging to say the least. With the advent of RTO West, there is an opportunity to create a better and more efficient process to accomplish this work. It would be a shame to lose this opportunity.