

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Sound Transit Line Raises

Project No.: P03470

Project Manager: Meadow Nelson, TEPL-TPP-1

Location: King County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B4.6 Additions and modifications to transmission facilities

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to move and raise four transmission structures in Federal Way, Washington to accommodate Sound Transit's proposed elevated light rail project. The impacted transmission lines would be Tacoma-Raver No.1 500 kV, Tacoma-Covington No. 2 230 kV, Tacoma-Covington No. 3 230 kV, and Tacoma-Covington No. 4 230 kV. Tacoma-Raver No. 1 is double circuited with Tacoma-Covington No. 2. Tacoma-Covington No. 3 is double circuited with Tacoma-Covington No. 4.

Trucks, cranes, and specialized equipment would be used for the relocation and raising of the four transmission structures and to retire the existing structures. After the structures are relocated, the old locations would be restored by Sound Transit during their construction of a new roundabout and roadway that would be under the new elevated rail line.

BPA would move Tower Structure 6/5 on the Tacoma-Raver No. 1 500 kV about 50 feet to the west into a paved parking lot area, and its height would increase by approximately 65 feet. Tower base would be about 40 feet by 40 feet. The tower would have standard footings.

BPA would move Tower Structure 6/6 on the Tacoma-Raver No. 1 500 kV about 215 feet to the northeast to an existing paved multiple lane roadway. The roadway would be relocated by Sound Transit. Sound Transit proposes to move the roadway and put in a bypass road and a new roundabout. The height of Tower Structure 6/6 would increase by approximately 110 feet. Tower base would be about 55 feet by 55 feet. The tower would have standard footings.

BPA would move Tower Structure 6/5 on the Tacoma-Covington No. 3 230 kV about 75 feet to the east into a previously-disturbed area managed for low growing grass, and its height would increase by approximately 35 feet. Tower base would be about 62 feet by 62 feet. The foundation design for this structure would be a 4-foot diameter, 20-foot deep, reinforced concrete drilled shaft footing at each tower leg.

BPA would move Tower Structure 6/6 on the Tacoma-Covington No. 3 230 kV about 182 feet to the northeast into a paved parking area, and its height would increase by approximately 55 feet. Tower base would be about 47 feet by 47 feet. The tower would have standard footings.

BPA would also secure approximately 3,000 square feet of new right-of-way on the north edge of the existing right-of-way to accommodate the new structure locations.

The roadway next to the mall that crosses through the right-of-way would be closed to public traffic for most of the project. A pedestrian pathway with barricades would be created. A staging area would be anticipated on the north side of the project area. A new roundabout road path and revegetation of impacted areas is planned.

The Federal Columbia River Transmission System Act directs BPA to construct, acquire, operate, maintain, repair, relocate, and replace the transmission system, including facilities and structures appurtenant thereto. (16 United States Code [U.S.C] § 838i(b)). The Administrator is further charged with maintaining electrical stability and reliability, selling transmission and interconnection services, and providing service to BPA's customers. (16 U.S.C § 838b(b-d)). The Administrator is also authorized to conduct electrical research, development, experimentation, tests, and investigation related to construction, operation, and maintenance of transmission systems and facilities. (16 U.S.C § 838i(b)(3)).

Findings: In accordance with Section 1021.102 of the Department of Energy's (DOE) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Regulations (57 FR 15144, Apr. 24, 1992, as amended at 61 FR 36221-36243, Jul. 9, 1996; 61 FR 64608, Dec. 6, 1996; 76 FR 63764, Nov. 14, 2011; 89 FR 34074, April 30, 2024; 90 FR 29676, July 3, 2025 [Interim Final Rule]) and *DOE National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Implementing Procedures* (dated June 30, 2025), BPA has determined the following:

- 1) The proposed action fits within a class of actions listed in Appendix B of 10 CFR 1021;
- 2) The proposal has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion; and
- 3) There are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal (see attached Environmental Evaluation).

Based on these determinations, BPA finds that the proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review.¹

Christopher H. Furey
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Evaluation

¹ BPA is aware that the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), on February 25, 2025, issued an interim final rule to remove its NEPA implementing regulations at 40 C.F.R. Parts 1500–1508. Based on CEQ guidance, and to promote completion of its NEPA review in a timely manner and without delay, in this CX BPA is voluntarily relying on the CEQ regulations, in addition to the interim final rule to revise DOE NEPA regulations implementing NEPA at 10 C.F.R. Part 1021 and NEPA Implementing Procedures (dated June 30, 2025), to meet its obligations under NEPA, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 *et seq.*

Categorical Exclusion Environmental Evaluation

This evaluation documents environmental considerations for the proposed project and explains why the project would not have the potential to cause significant impacts on environmentally sensitive resources and would meet other integral elements of the applied categorical exclusion.

Proposed Action: Sound Transit Line Raises

Project Site Description

The Sound Transit Line Raises project site is in King County, Washington. The site is located near Township 21 North, Range 4 East, Section 16. The site is located on the south and east side of The Commons at Federal Way Shopping Mall. The multilane South 324th Street is located in the project area. Interstate I-5 is located about 1,000 feet to the east of the site. The surrounding area around the project area consists of the developed mall area with parking, roadways, and some residential development to the south.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The BPA archaeologist reviewed the proposed activities and determined that these activities at the project area do not have potential to cause effects to historic or cultural resources.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be soil disturbance for installation of the raised transmission line. Digging and excavation would be necessary for the project to install the four new transmission tower structures in the new locations.

Notes:

- Use Best Management Practices (BMPs) to limit soil transport by wind and water during construction.

3. Plants (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would be occurring in the BPA right-of-way adjacent to the mall that is currently partially developed with paved parking and road areas and previously disturbed areas with some landscaping. Some small areas of low-growing vegetation and landscaping may be cut or removed for installation of the project. Several trees on the south side of the right-way adjacent to the interstate may be trimmed or removed. Any non-paved areas after disturbance would be revegetated.

Notes:

- Re-seed cleared areas outside of paved areas with an appropriate type of replacement grass landscaping or other low growing vegetation. Replace any removed trees with similar trees in area not expected to impact transmission line or subsequent light rail line.

4. Wildlife (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The work would be in established BPA right-of-way. Several trees may be trimmed or removed between the mall parking lot and the interstate that are adjacent to the existing transmission lines. Based on the location in a highly developed and urbanized area, minimal wildlife are anticipated to be present and those that may be present are highly accustomed to noise and human disturbance. Installation of the raised towers is expected to occur during daytime hours with no effect expected to ESA-listed and special status species.

5. Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish (including Federal/state special-status species, ESUs, and habitats)

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: A retention drainage pond is located south of the parking lot between Structure 6/5 and Structure 6/6 on the Tacoma-Covington No. 2 Transmission Line. There are no streams within 2,500 feet. North Lake is located over 3,300 feet to the southeast of the project area. Sediment from soil disturbance are not anticipated to reach nearby water resources with the implementation of appropriate BMPs.

Notes:

- Utilize appropriate BMPs and fugitive dust plan to limit wind and water erosion of soils.
- Utilize appropriate filters during construction in the parking lots to collect garbage, debris, or vehicle oil leaks.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: Some wetland areas are located over 700 feet to the east and located on the east side of the interstate highway. Work would be limited to the project area that is west of the interstate and would not impact wetlands.

Notes:

- Utilize appropriate BMPs and fugitive dust plan to limit wind and water erosion of soils to wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: The project would not impact groundwater or aquifers. Infiltration to groundwater and aquifers would not be adversely impacted by the construction as runoff and erosion at the site would be controlled.

Notes:

- Utilize appropriate BMPs and fugitive dust plan to limit wind and water erosion of soils.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The raised transmission lines may impact the right-of-way. Activities for the installation of the relocation of the transmission structures for the future light rail line may include some road changes and noise increases in the project area. The roadway in the project area would be closed to traffic for most of the project, though there are alternative roadways for use in the area. A temporary pedestrian walkway would be created for public access. Some parking area would be unavailable during construction, but alternative parking exists around the shopping mall.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be some visual changes to the project area or surrounding environment. The completed work with the raised lines would be similar to the existing transmission lines. The change in height may be noticeable but would constitute a small overall change to the current visual state. The later addition of an elevated light rail line by Sound Transit next to the adjacent freeway would create the dominant some visual change to the mall parking lot, existing roadway, and adjacent areas.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: A small amount of dust and vehicle emissions would occur during installation. There would be small, sporadic increases in machine exhaust during periods of active work during construction.

Notes:

- Keep dust to a minimum by adhering to BMPs for ground disturbance.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: Nearby residents may experience increased noise during construction of this project. Noise impacts would be temporary and would occur during daytime construction hours with the greatest noise disturbance likely occurring at residences located near Structure 6/5 of the Tacoma-Covington No. 3 line. The highest levels of noise would be associated with the tower footing installations, which should be a few days to a week in duration. BPA or its contractor would secure a construction permit from the City of Federal Way and would comply with local construction noise ordinances. After construction, no ongoing noise increases are expected from the transmission line project.

Notes:

- Noise generating activities at Structure 6/5 of Tacoma-Covington No. 3 would only occur on weekdays during daylight hours (typically 8 to 5).
- Noise producing equipment would not be left idling and would be turned off when not in active use.
- Stationary construction equipment would be located as far as practicable from noise-sensitive sites.
- Provide landowners a construction schedule, including advanced notification of when construction would occur.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Workers on the project would be required to follow all applicable state and/or Federal safety standards, such as using hard hats and safety vests in construction areas. Work areas would be fenced off and excavated holes covered so that nearby residents and parking lot users cannot access work areas. Flagging and traffic control would be used.

Evaluation of Other Integral Elements

The proposed project would also meet conditions that are integral elements of the categorical exclusion. The project would not:

Threaten a violation of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety, and health, or similar requirements of DOE or Executive Orders.

Explanation: N/A.

Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

Explanation: N/A.

Disturb hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, or CERCLA excluded petroleum and natural gas products that preexist in the environment such that there would be uncontrolled or unpermitted releases.

Explanation: N/A.

Involve genetically engineered organisms, synthetic biology, governmentally designated noxious weeds, or invasive species, unless the proposed activity would be contained or confined in a manner designed and operated to prevent unauthorized release into the environment and conducted in accordance with applicable requirements, such as those of the Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the National Institutes of Health.

Explanation: N/A.

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: BPA project manager would continue coordination with neighboring landowners to avoid conflicts during construction. BPA is in ongoing coordination with Sound Transit, the City of Federal Way, and the underlying landowners including the shopping mall for this project.

Based on the foregoing, this proposed project does not have the potential to cause significant impacts to any environmentally sensitive resource.

Signed:

Christopher H. Furey
Environmental Protection Specialist