



Umatilla Electric Cooperative
750 W. Elm Ave.
PO Box 1148
Hermiston, OR 97838
Phone: (541) 567-6414

July 21, 2025

Re: Grid Access Transformation

Umatilla Electric Cooperative (“UEC”) is a load serving entity located in eastern Oregon. UEC is an electric cooperative made up of residential, commercial, irrigation, and industrial loads, and is owned by the members it serves. UEC is a preference customer of the Bonneville Power Administration (“BPA”) with a Network Integration Transmission (“NT”) Service Agreement and Regional Dialogue Power Sales Agreement.

On July 10, BPA presented a conceptual proposal for different treatment of NT Customers depending on the characteristics of the NT Customer’s load growth. BPA also introduced a new “readiness criteria” to apply to an NT Customer’s 10-year load and resource forecasts and line and load interconnection requests.

BPA’s Current NT Transmission Planning

Prior to addressing the proposals in BPA’s July 10 presentation, it’s important to recognize BPA’s legal obligation for NT Load service. BPA’s Open Access Transmission Tariff (“OATT”) states that the “Transmission Provider shall include the Network Customer’s Network Load in its Transmission System planning and shall, consistent with Good Utility Practice and Attachment K, **endeavor to construct and place into service sufficient transfer capability to deliver the Network Customer’s Network Resources to serve its Network Load** on a basis comparable to the Transmission Provider’s delivery of its own generating and purchased resources to its Native Load Customers” (emphasis added). BPA’s OATT makes no distinction by size, type, or any other factor when determining what is deemed to be Network Load. In fact, it is the Network Customer, not BPA, that determines Network Load. The BPA OATT defines “Network Load” as “[t]he load that the **Network Customer designates** for Network Integration Transmission Service under Part III of the Tariff” (emphasis added). OATT, Part I, Section 1.60.

This is further supported by Section 5 of UEC's Network Integration Transmission Service Agreement, which vests UEC with the right to submit initial Network Load information and to update it on an annual basis: "The Application provides the Transmission Customer's initial annual load and resource information. **Annual load and resource information updates shall be submitted to the Transmission Provider at the address specified in Exhibit D (Notices), by September 30th of each year**, unless otherwise agreed to by the Transmission Provider and the Transmission Customer" (*emphasis added*).

In follow up discussions between BPA and customers after the July 10 workshop, BPA staff stated that BPA's transmission planning department made a subjective "judgment call" to not include large loads submitted in NT Customer's 10-year load and resource forecasts in its long-term planning and study processes. There are at least two glaring defects in this proposed BPA "judgment call." First, BPA is attempting to unilaterally determine a Network Customer's Network Load. Under the BPA OATT, determination of Network Load is the sole purview of the Network Customer, not BPA. Second and in direct contravention of its OATT, BPA is endeavoring to **not** plan for or develop a plan of service to ensure sufficient transfer capability is in place for a significant portion of its current NT Load service obligation. Instead of addressing these blatant conflicts between its OATT and planning practices, BPA is proposing to apply load limits and readiness criteria in order to remove a significant portion of Network Load from its NT planning obligation.

Annual New Large Load Threshold

BPA is proposing to implement a threshold where any 13 MW or more load forecast increase during any year at any Point of Delivery must participate in Commercial Planning. UEC submitted comments on June 17 stating its position that the proposed 13 MW threshold is purely arbitrary and in addition to the OATT conflicts would result in negative and discriminatory outcomes. Implementation of the proposal will result in BPA decoupling a portion of NT Loads from its current NT Load service obligation and apply the TSEP study and cost allocation principles to larger NT Loads. This further result in BPA allocating the costs for network reinforcements directly to some NT Customers, but not others, based on an arbitrary 13 MW limit. Second, the proposal will relieve BPA of its NT planning obligation within its system assessment process for a significant portion of NT Loads, but not others. This will result in different treatment of similarly situated Network Customers based on an arbitrary standard. It would also effectively erase any planning distinction between BPA's Network Integration Transmission Service and its Point-to-Point Transmission Service. In other words, BPA is proposing to treat certain NT Customers the same as BPA treats its Point-to-Point customers in the assessment and planning for transmission service requests. To date, BPA has provided no response or feedback to UEC's comments.

At the July 10 meeting, BPA staff stated that "95% of NT forecasts will fit under this threshold" and warned customers that if they push too hard that NT Customers face the risk that BPA will

“make everything go through more extensive review, more study, more analysis, more delay”. These statements by BPA staff are extremely alarming. Putting aside the threatening and coercive nature of the statement, it implies that BPA will knowingly discriminate against a small subset of its NT Customers to benefit other NT Customers. Additionally, BPA’s alternate proposal, or “risk” as described by BPA, is the antithesis of BPA’s NT Load service obligation. Pushing all NT Load growth to BPA’s commercial planning is in direct conflict with BPA’s OATT, which obligates it to plan and construct its system to serve all NT Load growth as designated by the NT Customer.

What’s of equal concern is BPA’s proposal to apply its arbitrary 13 MW threshold to NT Load growth at Points of Delivery (“PODs”) rather than specific, single loads. The use of PODs will have the effect of removing diversified NT Loads (e.g., commercial, residential, irrigation) that are served at the same POD as large loads from BPA’s NT planning obligation. This will have the effect of treating diversified load growth differently across BPA’s NT Customers. This is not only arbitrary and discriminatory – it is once again inconsistent with BPA’s OATT. Under the OATT, a Network Customer may elect to designate less than its total load as Network Load. But, the OATT clearly states that a Network Customer “may not designate only part of the load at a discrete Point of Delivery” as Network Load. OATT, Part I, Section 1.60.

Readiness Criteria

BPA is also proposing to apply “readiness criteria” to NT Load service. Under this proposal, NT Customers must demonstrate that their line and load interconnection requests and 10-year load and resource forecasts are supported by “mature” line and load interconnection/generator interconnection plans of service, power purchase agreements, notice of award from request for proposal, and/or letters of intent signed by both parties. If NT Customers are unable to meet the readiness criteria, then their requests will not be included in BPA’s transmission queue. This means that BPA will not assess whether sufficient transfer capability is available, but perhaps more importantly, BPA will not conduct a study to determine the facilities necessary to serve the NT Customer’s load.

BPA seems to rely on FERC’s Order 2023 as a rationale for applying readiness criteria for service to NT Loads. But, this reliance is misplaced because Order 2023 only mandated that readiness criteria be applied to generation interconnection requests. BPA also seems to ignore the fact that its OATT already applies readiness criteria for Network Resources—an NT Customer must attest that it owns the resource, has committed to purchase generation pursuant to an executed contract, or has committed to purchase generation where execution of a contract is contingent upon the availability of transmission service when designating Network Resources.

BPA’s proposal to apply readiness criteria to 10-year load and resource forecasts will not only hamper BPA’s ability to meet its NT planning obligation, but it will also reduce the amount of information sharing and analysis between BPA and its customers.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Blake Weathers". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Blake Weathers

Vice President of Power Supply