

BPA NEWS

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BONNEVILLE POWER ADMINISTRATION
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BPA seeks innovative solutions for peak congestion in southwest Washington and northwest Oregon

*The pilot program would test solutions that may defer the need
to build the proposed I-5 Corridor Reinforcement Project*

Portland, Ore. – The Bonneville Power Administration is releasing a request for offers on products or measures from third parties that might assist in alleviating transmission congestion in southwestern Washington and northwestern Oregon.

The request for offers, or RFO, would establish a pilot program to address congestion in the near term as well as inform BPA on whether cost-effective options exist that could potentially defer the need to build the proposed I-5 Corridor Reinforcement Project by five or more years.

In February of 2016, BPA released a final environmental impact statement on the I-5 project, a major step in the siting of a proposed line that would resolve congestion for BPA's transmission service in southwestern Washington and northwestern Oregon. However, the document does not represent a decision to build the transmission line.

The final EIS explains that BPA has previously explored non-wires solutions but to date has not found any combination that address the issue in the long term and are operationally, commercially, and economically feasible. However, BPA recognizes that technologies are continuously evolving and new advancements or strategies for their use could provide a solution that pushes out the need to build, reducing upward pressure on BPA electric rates.

“We want to make sure that we make the right investment at the right time for BPA and the people of the Northwest,” said Jeff Cook, the vice president of Planning and Asset Management for Transmission. “While construction of a physical line would resolve capacity limitations along this corridor for the foreseeable future, it is a costly undertaking.

It also would introduce new infrastructure in this vicinity that we recognize is of intense concern to local communities.

“By testing new advances in congestion management on our system, we may be able to uncover a solution that helps us defer the need to build in the immediate future.”

In order to maintain system reliability, BPA must operate its bulk electric system to continually balance the supply, or generation, of power with the demand, or use, of that power. That balancing act is subject to both the physical limitations of the lines transmitting the power as well as the geographic location of the power’s generation and the path the electricity must travel to reach an end user.

With southwest Washington and northwest Oregon, the generation used to meet the demand for electricity mainly comes from remote locations to the north or east, where the abundant sources of hydroelectric and wind power lie. Much of that power must travel along a transmission corridor known as South of Allston that has not been reinforced with additional capacity since the 1970s. Since then, the population around that corridor has more than doubled. During the most acute periods of high electric demand, the amount of power traveling on those lines can approach or exceed safe operating limits.

Currently, BPA’s ability to manage the generation or demand along this path is more limited in the summer. These conditions create a reliability risk. With the increasing population in southwest Washington and northwest Oregon, and the corresponding increase in demand over time, that reliability risk grows as more electricity moves on the existing lines South of Allston.

“The response to this RFO will help us to see if there are adequate resources in the region to sufficiently manage that congestion and shift the electric load elsewhere,” Cook said.

About BPA

The Bonneville Power Administration, headquartered in Portland, Ore., is a nonprofit federal power marketer that sells wholesale electricity from 31 federal dams and one nuclear plant to 142 electric utilities, serving millions of consumers and businesses in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, western Montana and parts of California, Nevada, Utah and Wyoming. BPA delivers power via more than 15,000 circuit miles of lines and 261 substations to 475 transmission customers. In all, BPA markets about a third of the electricity consumed in the Northwest and operates three-quarters of the region’s high-voltage transmission grid. BPA also funds one of the largest fish and wildlife programs in the world, and, with its partners, pursues cost-effective energy savings and operational solutions that help maintain affordable, reliable and carbon-free electric power for the Northwest. www.bpa.gov

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