

We need your ideas

Your comments will help us ensure that we are using appropriate criteria to select proposed routes for the transmission lines, that we have accurate and up-to-date information about resources in the project area and that we are analyzing the appropriate issues in the EIS. You can provide your comments at the public meetings from Feb. 12 to 23 by filling out a comment sheet, by visiting with project staff or by marking your comments on detailed sheet maps of the proposed and alternative routes. You can also submit comments on the EPTP Web site at <http://www.wapa.gov/transmission/eptp/commentform.htm>

Written comments, questions and information

on the scope of the EIS may be mailed, faxed, or e-mailed to Mr. Jim Hartman, Environmental Manager, Western Area Power Administration, Rocky Mountain Region, P.O. Box 3700, Loveland, CO 80539; fax (970) 461-7213; or e-mail eptp@wapa.gov. For persons wishing to leave voice messages, the toll-free number is (888) 826-4710. Comments need to be submitted by March 9 to be factored into route refinements that will be presented in the Draft EIS.

For more information about the project, including background material and maps, visit the EPTP Web site at <http://www.wapa.gov/transmission/eptp.htm>



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Eastern Plains TRANSMISSION PROJECT

JANUARY 2007

Public meetings set for Eastern Plains Transmission Project

A second series of public meetings on proposed transmission facilities in eastern Colorado and western Kansas is set for 10 communities between Feb. 12 and Feb. 23.

Western Area Power Administration seeks your comments on proposed and alternative routes for the Eastern Plains Transmission Project. Based on comments received at the public scoping meetings in August and September 2006, and during the public comment period, Western identified proposed transmission line routes and alternative routes to evaluate in the Environmental Impact Statement. **Western has modified some of the alternative routes presented at the meetings in August and September in response to comments.** We encourage you to attend one of the upcoming meetings to review the revised proposals and provide your comments.

The open-house meetings will provide you an opportunity to see how previously received comments have been incorporated into the alternative routes that will be evaluated in the EIS, to review the proposed routes and alternative routes and comment on the alternative routes. In addition, you can continue to provide comments on other issues and concerns related to the preparation of the EIS.

Open-house meetings will be held from 3 to 7 p.m. at all locations except as otherwise noted.

- **Feb. 12, Brush, Colo.**-Carroll Building, 418 Edison St.
- **Feb. 13, Limon, Colo.**-Limon Community Building, South Room, 477 D Ave.
- **Feb. 14, Burlington, Colo.**-Burlington Education and Community Center, 420 South 14th St.
- **Feb. 15, Wray, Colo.**-City Hall, Community Room, 245 West 4th St.
- **Feb. 16, Byers, Colo.**-Byers High School, Meeting Room #537/#538, 444 East Front St.
- **Feb. 19, Lakin, Kan.**-Veterans Memorial Building, 207 North Main St.
- **Feb. 20, Sharon Springs, Kan.**-Community Activity Building (CAB), Wallace County Fairgrounds
- **Feb. 21, Lamar, Colo.**-Lamar Community Building, Multi-Purpose Building, 610 South 6th St.
- **Feb. 22, Hanover, Colo.**-Hanover Junior/Senior High School, Cafeteria/Auditorium, 17050 South Peyton Highway, Colorado Springs (Hanover).
NOTE: This meeting begins at 4 and ends at 8 pm.
- **Feb. 23, Avondale, Colo.**-McHarg Park Community Center Gym, 405 Second Street

Alternatives refined, proposed routes identified

Western received many site-specific comments about the preliminary alternative corridors presented at public scoping meetings during August and September. The alternative corridors were broken into segments which could be combined and adjusted to best respond to specific concerns on the ground. Segments of the preliminary corridors have been adjusted in response to comments received and additional ground and aerial surveillance. Most often, the adjustments involved moving a segment to avoid residential impacts. Some segments were modified based on comments providing new information about wildlife habitat or other resources.

We then compared the refined alternative routes with each other through a comparative analysis. The routes compared were the most accurate to date, reflecting continued reconnaissance and refinement following the public scoping meetings. The comparative analysis began with an evaluation of the effects and impacts for each route alternative. The effects for each route alternative were assessed using 47 criteria in seven categories: land use, geology and soils, water resources, vegetation, wildlife, cultural resources and engineering. Western continues to refine the routes and, as indicated above, seeks further comments on the routes.

Land Use

The land use category considered a large number of factors. To minimize agricultural impacts, the best rank was given to the fewest linear miles of prime, dryland and irrigated farmland crossed, as well as to the fewest transmission structures in these fields. The best rank also was given to the greatest number of miles of rangeland crossed since these fields do not contain crops. The greatest number of miles following an existing linear feature, such as a road or pipeline, also was an advantage for minimizing new impacts and for sharing rights of way.

To avoid impacts to residential areas, the most favorable ranking was given to locations which contained the fewest residences within 500 feet of a proposed transmission line, the fewest residences within 0.5 miles of a line, the greatest distance to existing or planned subdivisions and the fewest number of structures which would need to be acquired or relocated. The most favorable ranking also was given to the fewest number of transmission-line miles within 0.5 miles of a town or municipal boundary.

It was an advantage to minimize the number of existing oil and gas wells and communication towers within 200 feet of a transmission line. It also was an advantage to minimize the length of

We heard from you during scoping

Western is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement for the Eastern Plains Transmission Project under the National Environmental Policy Act. NEPA defines the process of scoping as “an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues related to a proposed action.”

Western conducted 10 open-house public scoping meetings in August and September 2006. Scoping meetings were held from 3 to 8 p.m. to allow the public flexibility to attend at their convenience. Large-format informational displays and take-home fact sheets provided information about the project. Sheet maps based on aerial photography and parcel boundaries illustrated the reference centerlines and corridors. The sheet maps helped landowners and interested individuals identify property, issues and concerns within specific preliminary alternative corridors.

Three hundred and fifty-seven individuals attended the scoping meetings. Landowners with agricultural or residential land were the primary attendees. Additional attendees included representatives from the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, local government officials, local electrical utility representatives, media, envi-

ronmental groups, local financial institutions, local business owners, wind energy advocates and other interested parties.

Western received comments at the public scoping meetings on comment forms and as written suggestions on sheet maps. Written comments on the sheet maps were primarily site-specific information or concerns regarding particular preliminary alternative corridors. Western representatives engaged many stakeholders at the public scoping meetings and recorded oral comments on comment sheets.

Comment forms, letters, e-mail, fax and phone correspondence were accepted after the public scoping meetings until Sept. 30, 2006.

Western also considered all comments received between the end of the scoping period and Dec. 31, 2006, when the scoping summary report was finalized.

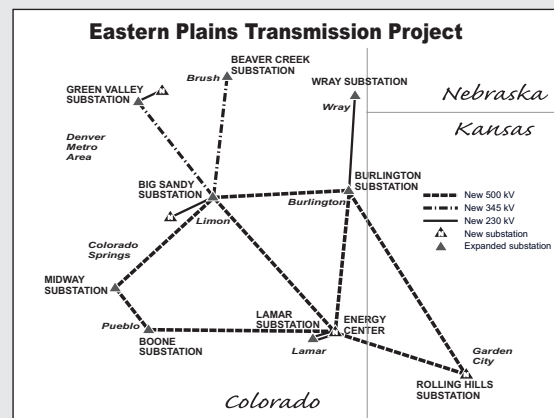
Western received a total of 1,348 substantive comments from 95 commenters. The preliminary alternative corridors and Tri-State’s generation projects received the most comments. Other topics of high interest among the public who commented included agriculture, air quality, cumulative effects, health and safety, land use, mitigation, public participation and meeting process, social and economic values and water resources.



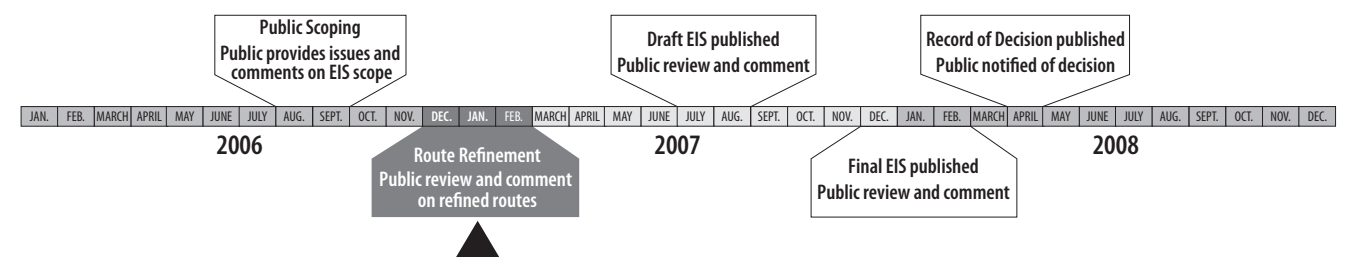
About EPTP

Western Area Power Administration proposes to participate with Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, Inc., in constructing approximately 1,000 miles of high-voltage transmission lines and related facilities in eastern Colorado and western Kansas, expanding existing substations and constructing new substations, constructing access roads and construction staging areas and installing fiber optic communication facilities.

Tri-State would own and operate the proposed transmission lines. In exchange for its participation in constructing the project, Western would receive 275 megawatts of capacity rights on the proposed transmission lines.



EPTP Environmental Impact Study Timeline



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and alternatives and transportation to waste disposal sites

- **Health and safety** – health effects to workers and local residents, health issues related to emissions and discharge from coal-fired power plants; require detailed emergency management plans
- **Land use** – effects to lands caused by proposed coal-fired power plants
- **Mitigation** – proposed use of adaptive resource management
- **Noise** – conduct baseline noise monitoring; consider projected peak and 1-hour average and maximum noise levels and alternative noise reduction measures
- **Social and economic values** – assist local agencies with infrastructure upgrades related to generation project construction and operation, financial effects of proposed power plants on Tri-State’s members and financial liability to each consumer, liability if carbon emissions limitations are imposed
- **Special status species** – increased deposits of various pollutants on habitats of special status species, effects on special status species on and near the proposed plant site and related components
- **Vegetation** – metal uptake by plants from coal-fired power plant emissions
- **Visual resources** – effects to visibility caused by plant emissions
- **Water** – total water consumption of all generation units and effects to existing wells, springs, and wetlands; increased deposits of pollutants on waters; amount and characteristics of waste water discharge
- **Wildlife** – protect water at the source for use by wildlife, provide measures to keep wildlife away from waste ponds and disposal sites

Energy alternatives

Several comments suggested Western consider and assess energy resource alternatives to coal-burning power plants, including conservation, renewable energy sources, such as solar, wind and

biomass and cleaner methods of fossil fuel generation.

Process and public involvement

Some commenters suggested that all public meetings should be conducted in a question and answer format with all questions and answers recorded and transcribed. Others questioned the involvement of Tri-State employees in the public meetings. Additional comments suggested providing a staffed complaint hotline to address neighborhood problems, especially during construction; providing public training on permitting and NEPA to all communities designated as environmental justice communities and providing independent experts to communities and others to review permit applications and technical reports.

Preliminary alternative corridors

Western received many comments related to the preliminary alternative corridors, often involving specific locations. Western is using these comments to refine the alternative routes and develop proposed routes. In addition to site-specific comments, Western received comments on general criteria to use in selecting routes, including:

- Route transmission lines to avoid homes, residential areas, farmsteads, developed and populated areas, center pivot irrigation systems, conservation easements and native prairies.
- Use existing linear features, such as utility rights of way, roads, section lines, edges of fields and pasture lines.
- Site transmission lines near wind farms.
- Avoid visual effects.
- Avoid properties that already have transmission lines and other infrastructure projects.
- Avoid “spider-webbing” out of substations.
- Give all feasible alternatives equal consideration and analysis.

transmission line in proximity to private and public airports, conservation easements, stewardship trust lands, recreation areas, wildlife areas, state parks and other non-wilderness areas, and designated scenic areas and routes. Transmission-line miles crossing state lands (which were not granted special conservation status) and Bureau of Land Management lands, however, were considered favorable to take advantage of public access.

Geology and Soils

To minimize erosion and other environmental impacts, the best ranking was given to the fewest number of transmission-line miles crossing slopes greater than 15%, or the fewest lines built in highly erodible soil, sandy soil, or soil with a low potential for reclamation.

Water Resources

To minimize water quality impacts, the best ranking was given to the fewest number of crossings of perennial streams, lakes, wetlands, seeps, riparian areas or springs greater than 800 feet. Likewise, the best ranking was given to the fewest transmission-line miles within a floodplain.

Vegetation

The best ranking was given to the fewest miles of untilled landscapes impacted by transmission lines and to the fewest miles requiring removal of trees.

Wildlife Habitat

To avoid impacts to wildlife, the best ranking was given to the fewest miles of transmission lines within wildlife habitats. The habitats included big game winter range or production areas, turkey production or roosting areas, great blue heron nesting or roosting areas, bald eagle habitats, greater and lesser prairie chicken range or production areas and raptor nest buffers.

Cultural Resources

To avoid cultural resource impacts, it was considered most favorable to minimize the number of designated or eligible National Register of Historic Places sites, landmarks or monuments within a transmission line right of way.

Engineering

In this category, a shorter transmission length

was considered an advantage to reduce the costs of construction. Likewise, fewer towers and fewer angle structures to complete a turn in direction represented lower construction costs. It also was considered favorable to minimize crossing existing transmission lines, highways and railroads. Use of existing access roads was an advantage for construction and for operation and maintenance. If new, necessary roads need to be constructed, however, the best rank was given to the lowest number of new road miles or overland access necessary. Routes within 0.25 miles of low-voltage lines were considered siting opportunities while those within one mile of high-voltage lines were considered constraints.

Comparative matrix

A matrix allowed individual routes to be ranked against one another to weigh those representing the least impact to the human and natural environments in comparison to the other routes. In this method, lower rankings were considered most favorable, with a ranking of “1” signifying the best score. To determine a final score, each route was subtotaled and ranked in each category. The category ranks were totaled for an overall route ranking. In this way, a single category was less likely to bias the results.

Using the comparative matrix analysis, we selected proposed and alternative routes based on lowest level of effects considering all criteria. We then modified the proposed and alternative route selection based on overriding concerns, such as effects to residences.

Minimizing impacts to residences was a common consideration in breaking a tie between routes. It also was an overriding consideration in selecting the proposed and alternative routes, even where another alternative ranked more favorably. We sought opportunities to avoid the physical and aesthetic effects of locating transmission structures near residential properties while minimizing or mitigating other impacts.

The proposed routes represent the results of our analysis at this time. They are subject to change based on your comments and new information that is discovered as we conduct further analysis of the routes.

What you told us during scoping

The examples that follow are not intended to represent a catalog of all comments received during scoping, but rather to provide a representation of the range of comments received. The complete scoping summary report is available on the EPTP Web site at <http://www.wapa.gov/transmission/eptp.htm>.

Many comments Western received suggested various resource topics to evaluate in the EIS. Western will consider the direct, indirect and cumulative effects of the EPTP on the following:

- **Access and transportation** – especially the effect of construction activities and increased traffic
- **Agriculture** – including effects to irrigated cropland, irrigation systems, difficulty of farming around structures and safety of livestock
- **Air quality** – dust control and vehicle emissions during construction and roadway use
- **Aquatic species and habitats** – effects to aquatic habitats and systems from construction, maintenance and presence of transmission facilities
- **Cultural and historic resources, including Native American religious concerns** – effects to resources such as human remains, archaeological items, Native American graves and significant cultural and historic sites, including the Sand Creek Massacre site
- **Electrical characteristics and radio and television interference** – effects of transmission line operation on other electrical systems such as electric and metal fences, GPS-equipped farm equipment, radios and other transmission lines and the effects of electric and magnetic fields on human and animal health and safety
- **Environmental justice** – effects on rural, low-income communities, relative effects on rural and urban areas, the distribution of wealth and profit from the proposed project and the exclusion of Baca County, Colo. from the project area
- **Floodplains and wetlands** – effects to floodplains and wetlands; protection of hydrologic processes, aquatic ecosystems and functioning riparian areas; development of a wetlands mitigation plan; establish buffer zones around perennial seeps and springs and wetlands
- **Geology** – especially as related to erosion and slope stability
- **Hazardous materials and solid waste** – potential for hazardous material leaks, spills and exposure
- **Health and safety** – effects to human and animal health cause by air pollution, electric and magnetic fields, slope-stability issues and erosion, static electricity or stray current
- **Land use, including residential, commercial and industrial uses** – compatibility of land uses such as conservation easements, residences, commercial and industrial areas, existing utility corridors, wind farms, agriculture and ranching and transportation
- **Noise** – effects of noise from construction and operation of the project, including electrical noise
- **Paleontology** – no comments received, but Federal law requires the EIS address effects to paleontological resources
- **Recreation** – effects on recreational activities and areas, including hunting and fishing and scenic resources, including mitigation measures to reduce intrusion into recreational areas
- **Social and economic values** – including effects on land and property values, loss of crops, noxious weeds, general economics of the project and the economic impact upon communities
- **Soils** – especially existing erosion of sandy soils caused by previous utility projects and the difficulty of reclamation in sandy soils
- **Special status species** – effects to special status species, including lesser prairie chicken, green toad, Topeka shiner and greater sage grouse and to rare vegetation and habitats such as remnant prairie and grassland revegetation areas

- **Vegetation, including noxious weeds** – effects to vegetation, including high quality or rare plant communities, local crops and vegetation; avoidance of large contiguous tracts of grassland and native prairie; sources of noxious weeds, including areas under transmission structures
- **Visual resources** – effects to viewsheds, including major and scenic roadways, homes and farmsteads, skyline visual effects and potential for light pollution and dust pollution
- **Water** – effects to water resources, including groundwater, surface water, drinking water and municipal water sources, effects to water quality and quantity; interaction of wells and irrigation systems with transmission structures
- **Wildlife, wildlife habitat and migratory birds** – effects to specific species, including dove, quail, deer, antelope, elk and horned lizards; displacement of wildlife and habitat fragmentation and the potential for bird collisions with transmission towers and lines and electrocution

Cumulative effects

Western received comments suggesting other past, present or reasonably foreseeable projects be included in the discussion of the cumulative effects of the EPTP, including:

- Existing and proposed transmission lines
- Peak to Prairie Project and Fountain Creek Crown Jewel Project in El Paso and Pueblo counties, Colo.
- Relocation and widening of Highway 27 in Sherman County, Kan.
- Conglomeration of existing transmission lines and utility facilities and rights of way south of Sharon Springs, Kan.
- Southern Delivery Water Project
- Drought

Tri-State's generation projects

Many comments suggested that Western should address the effects of Tri-State's generation projects in the EIS. Topics suggested for

analysis and discussion include:

- **Access and transportation** – disruption of local traffic flow during construction and operation of the generation facility, upgrades required to local infrastructure and increased railroad activity delivering coal to generation facilities
- **Agriculture** – loss of productive agricultural land when water is sold from the land for use in coal-fired power plants, increased deposits of various pollutants on agricultural regions
- **Air quality** – air pollution control measures, effects to human health, wildlife and agriculture from air quality issues including carbon dioxide, methane, mercury, atmospheric sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, particulates and other pollutants
- **Alternatives to coal-fired generation** – including integrated gasification combined-cycle coal generation, natural gas and renewable sources of energy and financial analysis of generation alternatives
- **Climate** – greenhouse gas emissions and effects on global warming, carbon dioxide capture and storage technology
- **Cultural and historic resources** – effects to significant cultural or historic properties from construction and operation of the generation facilities
- **Cumulative effects** – effects related to new coal-fired generation units and coal consumption and combustion
- **Environmental justice** – health and environmental effects of the generation units on minority and low-income populations
- **Generation** – long-distance transmission of electricity vs. local, decentralized generation; technical details of generation plants, such as capacity, coal use and pollution control systems; water sources and delivery system
- **Hazardous materials and solid waste** – identity and characteristics of hazardous materials used, stored or transported at generation sites, analysis of waste disposal sites

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