

FactSheet

April 2010

I-5 Corridor Reinforcement Project Keeping local lights on

Who is BPA?

Bonneville Power Administration is a not-for-profit federal agency that provides about a third of the electric power and 75 percent of the high voltage electric transmission in the Pacific Northwest. We work to provide the Pacific Northwest low cost, reliable, environmentally responsible electricity recognizing that we are accountable and want to work collaboratively with Northwest citizens.

It's been 40 years since a high-voltage transmission line has been built in the southwest Washington-northwest Oregon area. Yet, in that time, the project area's population has more than doubled. Businesses and industries along the I-5 corridor have mushroomed, bringing in jobs, new housing and new support services such as hospitals and schools.

This is great news for the area. The challenge, however, is that it takes more electricity to support these new businesses, homes and services. The Bonneville Power Administration has worked for years to stretch its transmission system serving the area so that it could avoid new construction.

Today, our transmission system is close to its limits. Without a new line, BPA will be unable to adequately serve local needs in the very near future. Meanwhile, increasing transmission congestion in the area poses a threat of interruptions and outages in power delivery.

What is congestion?

Transmission lines are much like highways, but, instead of cars, they move electrons. Like highways, if they are overloaded they can become congested. The result is gridlock where nothing moves. This gridlock can lead to power outages that threaten health and safety, disrupt businesses and industries, curtail many activities and in general, disrupt our lives.

Why is the line needed at this location?

In the case of the I-5 corridor, the need for new transmission is primarily local to serve the growth in southwest Washington and northwest Oregon.

The Northwest was once a winter-peaking region in terms of energy use. But the emergence of new homes, most of which have air conditioning, has increased demand for energy in the summer. Summer energy demand in Cowlitz, Clark and Multnomah counties is on the rise. Cowlitz energy use is 6 percent higher than it was in 2005. During the same period, Clark County energy use increased more than 20 percent during the summer months. Multnomah County's summer demand is up 18 percent since 2005.

What is BPA proposing?

BPA is proposing the I-5 Corridor Reinforcement Project, which calls for a new 500-kilovolt transmission line to run between potential new substations at Castle Rock, Wash.,



and Troutdale, Ore. The distance between the two proposed substations is approximately 70 miles.

So far, we have identified a large number of route segments that can be combined in various ways to form different possible routes between the two substations. They vary in length and include both existing and new rights-of-way. Any number of identified route segments can be combined to form a reasonable transmission line alternative that connects the two substations. We will also consider not building the transmission line and substations.

Currently BPA is taking public comment and evaluating routes for the line. We will prepare an environmental impact statement in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act to evaluate the potential impacts of the proposed project and to inform the agency's final decision.

Is BPA listening to the people?

We are listening carefully to local residents and others who could be affected by the project. This feedback continues to help shape the routes we are considering. We appreciate and rely on the engagement of all interested and affected individuals in these decisions.

In fall 2009, we held six public meetings attended by nearly 3,000 people and received more than 7,000 comments from landowners, stakeholders and agencies.

Since then, our staff has attended a number of community organized meetings, and we continue to encourage and welcome public input. We are using comments and information we've collected to analyze and refine the proposed route segments and produce a draft environmental impact statement. Involvement by all stakeholders ultimately provides the information we need to make the best-informed decision about whether and where to build a new line and substations.

We invite comments through a variety of methods. See the end of this fact sheet for information on how to contact us.

If I live in the area, how will I benefit?

"Keeping the lights on" is not just a slogan at BPA. Our mission is to provide you with adequate and reliable energy. This is the main driver for the new line. In addition, the line will enable us to bring in renewable energy from eastern Washington and Oregon to more populated areas in the

region, which will help your local utilities meet state renewable resource mandates and will keep your air cleaner. Access to low-cost power also will allow your utility to keep local rates as low as possible.

Aren't there health issues?

Health, safety and environmental protection are top priorities and will be addressed in the environmental impact statement. BPA monitors the latest scientific studies on electric and magnetic fields and relies on the latest research from multiple respected sources. The best available information will be used to make a final decision. Additionally, we meet all National Electric Safety Code regulations and standards in the design and construction of our high-voltage transmission facilities. We follow industry best practices when we design and locate new transmission facilities and conduct extensive environmental analysis prior to moving forward.

Won't conservation take care of growth needs?

BPA and regional utilities are aggressively developing conservation. The Northwest has achieved 3,700 average megawatts of electricity savings through energy efficiency in the last 30 years (enough electricity to power all of Idaho and western Montana). BPA and regional utilities are designing programs to capture over 5,000 aMW — equal to the output of five nuclear plants — of energy efficiency in the next 20 years.

Even assuming the success of these programs, it is becoming more difficult to meet increased energy demand through these measures alone. This is why we are now considering building a new high-voltage power line in the area. We will, however, also explore non-wires alternatives to a new line in our environmental review.

We're outgrowing the existing transmission system. Our aging transmission system is stressed with its existing use and can no longer accommodate requests to move more power.

Will this project bring in more renewable power?

Yes. Many new requests for transmission service are from wind projects. The line will help transmit renewable energy from east of the Cascades to populations centers along the

I-5 corridor and beyond. Northwest states must comply with renewable energy requirements passed by their legislatures. Locally, a new line would help Cowlitz PUD manage the output of its White Creek and Harvest Wind projects in the Columbia River Gorge. It would also allow Clark PUD to manage the output of the Combine Hills wind facility near Milton Freewater, Ore.

Where will the power go to?

Most of the power moved by a new transmission line would serve local needs. The primary purpose of this project is to keep pace with the local population growth and energy needs.

As with any addition to the high voltage transmission system, the line could play a role in facilitating the exchange of power within the Pacific Northwest and between utilities across the West.

Western utilities have traded power for many years to each other's mutual benefit. When one region experiences increased demand on its system, the other region can send power. It works both ways. This keeps both regions' rates lower by reducing the need for each region to build expensive thermal plants that would be used only during extreme conditions. For example, about 15% of BPA's revenues are derived from surplus power sales. All of this revenue is used to lower rates for Pacific Northwest customers such as Clark and Cowlitz.

How can I get involved?

There are several ways to be informed and to get involved in the I-5 Corridor Reinforcement Project:

Get on the mailing list

If you received this in the mail, you are on our mailing list. If you would like to be added to the list, please visit the project website at www.bpa.gov/go/i5 and view the "Get Involved" link. You also can call us toll free at 800-230-6593 and leave your name, address and other contact information so we can add you to the list.

Go online

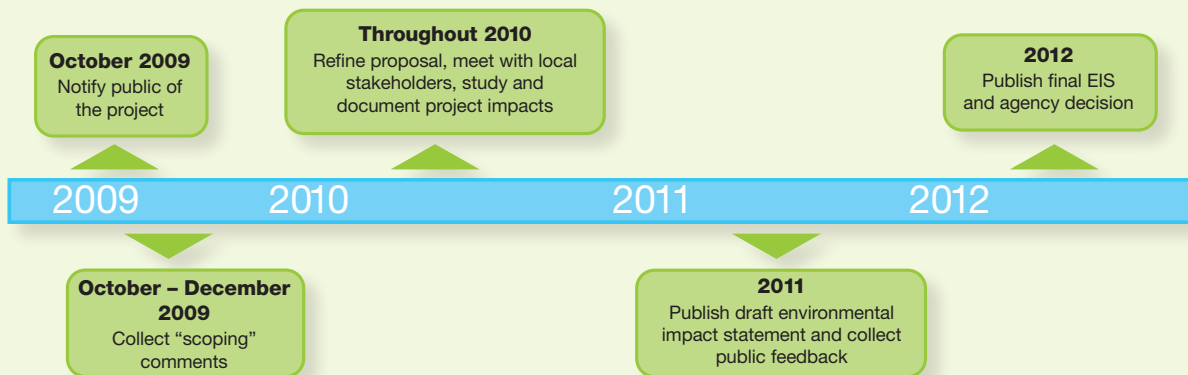
Visit the project website at www.bpa.gov/go/i5. The website has a wealth of information about the project. It will be updated throughout the public and environmental review.

Submit comments on the project

You may submit comments, suggestions or requests to BPA in a number of ways. Online at www.bpa.gov/go/i5. By mail at BPA I-5 Corridor Reinforcement, P.O. Box 9250, Portland OR 97207. Toll free at 800-230-6593. By fax at 888-315-4503.

What is the time line?

BPA has not made any final decision about building the line or where it might be built. Extensive study and analysis are required by law before the final decision is made. The draft environmental impact statement is scheduled for release in 2011, after which another round of public meetings and public comment will be conducted before BPA finalizes the EIS and makes a decision. If BPA decides to proceed with a new line after the environmental review is complete, construction could begin in 2012-2013 with completion as early as 2015.



I-5 Corridor Reinforcement Project Study Area Map

Dec. 21, 2009

