



Governors'
**Wind &
Solar Energy**
Coalition

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November 9, 2018

The Honorable Neil Chatterjee, Chairman

The Honorable Cheryl A. LaFleur

The Honorable Richard Glick

The Honorable Kevin McIntyre

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

888 First Street, NE

Washington, DC 20426

Subject: *Interconnection Seams Study*

Dear Chairman Chatterjee and Commissioners:

The [*Interconnection Seams Study*](#)¹ was released in July at a symposium hosted by Iowa State University. Within this remarkable study are the answers to major policy challenges that confront the Commission today.

The study shows that unifying the Eastern and Western U.S. power grids will make the nation's electrical system more resilient, efficient, reliable, competitive, and less vulnerable to cyber-attacks. This collaborative effort, by the national labs, grid operators, electric utilities and others, provides a sound solution to many issues with which the Commission has grappled for years.

Modernizing the nation's electrical transmission and distribution system is as important to our states' economic development today as creating the nation's interstate highway system was 60 years ago. It is nearly impossible to transmit electricity among the nation's three major grids — Eastern Interconnection, Western Interconnection, and Electric Reliability Council of Texas. As a result, very little electricity moves among these regions, further weakening the reliability of the nation's overall transmission system. By comparison, China has committed \$315 billion through 2020 for ultra-high voltage power lines to build a national transmission system to carry energy where it's generated to where it's needed.

The Commission's Order 1000 is the nation's legal and policy foundation for the expansion and modernization of our electrical transmission system. It provides the framework to improve reliability and competition so that consumers have access to lower

¹*Transgrid-X 2030 Symposium | July 26, 2018 | Ames, Iowa,*
<https://register.extension.iastate.edu/transgridx/symposium-information/documents>

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cost and cleaner energy sources. Order 1000, however, has not succeeded in promoting the national and inter-regional transmission planning that is needed and that can address many of the challenges confronting the states and the Commission. And while our states differ in many respects, they all recognize that enhanced transmission is essential to the nation's energy future.

Next Steps

As policy leaders, we have a responsibility to begin a national discussion of the benefits a unified transmission system can provide our states. Also, as policy leaders, the Commissioners have a statutory responsibility to shape and lead that discussion.

To address these concerns, we suggest the Commission, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Energy, consider convening a series of meetings in partnership with the states, regional transmission organizations, members of Congress, and the private sector to discuss the *Interconnection Seams Study* and to identify the nation's transmission needs, including integration of the nation's major grids, as well as multi-state and inter-regional transmission challenges.

It is our hope that these proposed meetings will show how a unified transmission system could benefit our states' economies — creating jobs and strengthening national security and resilience. A strong national transmission system will support the economic growth our states and the nation need.

The Coalition would welcome the opportunity to participate in a series of meetings with regional transmission organizations and other stakeholders to discuss the *Interconnection Seams Study* and other transmission needs. Please contact Larry Pearce, the Coalition's executive director (402-651-2948 or larry@governorscoalition.org) if we can assist you.

Sincerely,



Steve Bullock
Chair and
Governor of Montana



John Carney
Vice Chair and
Governor of Delaware



Jeff Colyer
Former Vice Chair and
Governor of Kansas

cc:

Hon. Lisa Murkowski, U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
Hon. Maria Cantwell, U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
Hon. Martin Heinrich, U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
Hon. Greg Walden, U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce
Hon. Joe Barton, U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce
Hon. Rick Perry, U.S. Department of Energy
Hon. Francis Brooke, Special Assistant to the President