



Co-Locating Transmission In Highway Rights-of-Way

Oregon Legislature
Informational Hearing
February 2026



Energy Needs Are Growing

- Advanced manufacturing
- Electrification
 - Transportation
 - Building/home heating
- AI / data centers

Climate change and extreme weather require a more resilient power system



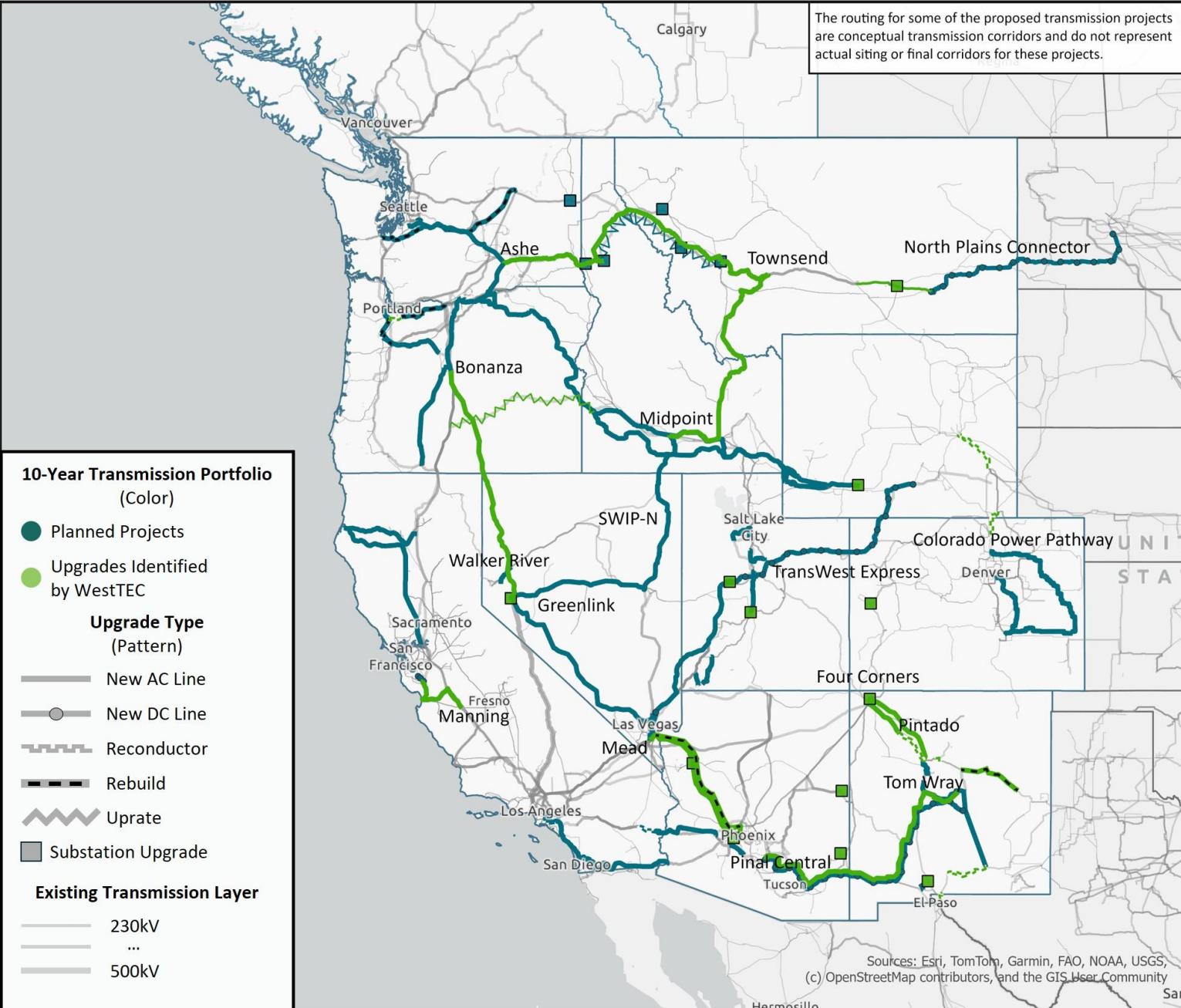


Is the Transmission System Ready to Meet These Needs?

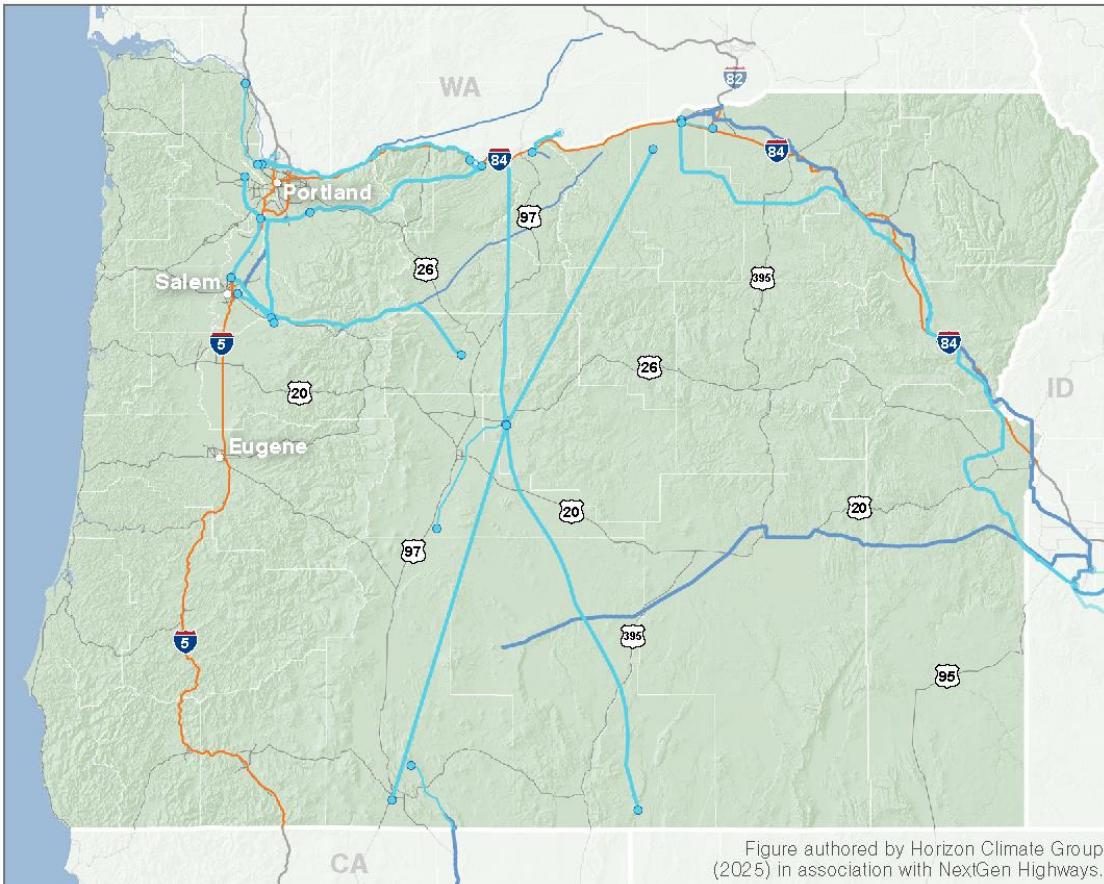
- NREL's 2024 National Transmission Planning Study found the U.S. transmission system will need to double in size by 2050 to meet demand
- But transmission project timelines are getting longer, not shorter – with negative effects on reliability and costs for consumers

Transmission Needs Across The West

The newly released WestTEC 10-Year Horizon Study identified the need for more than **12,600 miles** of new transmission in Oregon and other Western states, at an investment of **\$60 billion**.



Planned Transmission Projects in Oregon



Federal & state highways

- Co-located transmission siting **rarely or not allowed** (Orange line)
- Co-located transmission siting **allowed** (Grey line)

Planned transmission projects

- Substations
- Transmission lines by voltage
 - ≤ 230 kV
 - 231 kV to 345 kV
 - 346 kV to 745 kV

Connected West Study

- AC Overlay
 - ≤ 230 kV
 - 231 kV to 345 kV
 - 346 kV to 745 kV

Oregon Energy Strategy, 2025

"The pace of transmission expansion along existing and new corridors is creating a critical bottleneck to meeting reliability, affordability, and clean energy goals."

--Oregon Dept. Of Energy



**NEXTGEN
HIGHWAYS**



An aerial photograph of a two-lane asphalt road with white dashed lines, curving through a landscape of green grass and hills. The road starts in the bottom left and extends towards the top right of the frame.

Siting fatigue/frustration is real,
and it's a threat to energy
infrastructure deployment

One Simple Solution to the Bottleneck: Use Existing Rights-of-Way

- NextGen Highways promotes the strategic and safe **co-location** of electric and communications infrastructure in existing highway rights-of-way.
- State-level efforts work to lift outdated regulations that prohibit or restrict co-location.

History of Utility Accommodation: Interstates and Freeways

- 1959: American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHO) policy
→ No longitudinal occupations on interstates; crossings allowed
- 1969: AASHO policy – same as 1959, expanded to include freeways
- 1989: AASHTO (formerly AASHO) allows longitudinal in special cases ("strictly controlled conditions")
- 1996: Telecommunications Act signals major changes:
→ Telecoms inquire about using interstates and freeways for longitudinal fiber installations; state DOTs start allowing it
- 2003: Wisconsin DOT changes its Utility Accommodation Policy (UAP) to allow longitudinal *electric transmission* in Interstates and freeways
- April 27, 2021, FHWA memorandum, *"State DOTs Leveraging Alternative Uses of the Highway Right-of-Way Guidance"*



A wide-angle photograph of a multi-lane highway at sunset. The sky is filled with dramatic, orange and yellow clouds. The highway curves through a landscape of green hills and fields. Several vehicles are visible on the road, moving away from the viewer. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and scenic.

The public prefers
infrastructure to be built where
there is already infrastructure.

Co-Location Challenges

- 40+ state DOTs – including Oregon – have prohibitions or restrictions on co-location in interstates and other controlled access highways
- Utilities/transmission providers do not consider highway ROW for transmission siting
- Utilities and state DOTs typically do not proactively collaborate



Oregon DOT Policy

“Installations that may be allowed on freeways are generally limited to crossings only...”

“Only extreme hardship cases will be considered for new longitudinal installations that are inside the freeway access control lines.”

-- DOT Rule, 734-055-0080



Tonquin Project

Why is PGE doing the Tonquin Project?

The Tonquin Project will add a new substation and upgrades to 11 miles of 115 kV transmission lines in Tualatin, Sherwood, Stafford, Wilsonville and unincorporated Clackamas County. These improvements will strengthen the grid, making it more resilient and reliable while adding capacity to meet future needs. Added flexibility will enable energy to flow from different substations, reducing power outages and enhancing system redundancy.

Why can't this project go down I-5 or I-205?

PGE considered opportunities for routing in this area along Interstate 5 and Interstate 205; however, following coordination with the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), PGE eliminated alternative route links along these two interstate freeways as ODOT's regulations and policies restrict placing electric transmission lines in or adjacent to highway right-of-way absent demonstration of "extreme hardship." As a general matter, the agency does "not allow longitudinal installations within the right of way."



Success Story: Wisconsin

- 2003 WI legislature passed bill prioritizing highways for new transmission
- Hundreds of miles of transmission built in state and interstate highway rights-of-way
- 100+ miles in I-90



States Opening Co-Location Policy

- 2024, Minnesota: Legislation opens all state highway rights-of-way to transmission co-location
- 2025, Colorado: Legislation opens state highways to co-location and prioritizes existing rights-of-way over new corridors
- 2026: Legislation moving through committee in Iowa and Virginia legislatures, being considered in Mass., Michigan and Illinois

Co-Location Outcomes

- Speed transmission development
- Impact fewer private landowners
- Lessen environmental impacts
- Support reliable, affordable, clean energy
- Support transportation electrification

National Coalition Members



Americans for a
Clean Energy Grid



ACORE
AMERICAN COUNCIL ON
RENEWABLE ENERGY



American Clean
Power Association



AUTONOMY
INSTITUTE



CLEAN AIR
TASK FORCE



Clean Energy Buyers Association



CEN
CONSERVATIVE
ENERGY NETWORK



EARTH GRID™

ELECTRANIX
SPECIALISTS IN POWER SYSTEM STUDIES

GridLAB



LSPower
Innovation and Investment in Energy

NASEO
National Association of
State Energy Officials

NEMA
National Electrical Manufacturers Association

The Nature
Conservancy

NISKANEN
CENTER

POW
PROTECT OUR WINTERS

RIVIAN

RMI
ENERGY. TRANSFORMED.

SCENIC
AMERICA

SOUTHERN
ENVIRONMENTAL
LAW CENTER

Smart Electric
Power Alliance

Solar Energy
Industries Association

VEIR

Union of
Concerned Scientists

WORLD
RESOURCES
INSTITUTE

NEXTGEN
HIGHWAYS





Thank you!

For more information, please check out our website (www.nextgenhighways.org) or send us an email (info@nextgenhighways.org)





