

## Proposed New York-New England National Interest Electric Transmission Corridor Designation

*The U.S. Department of Energy's National Interest Electric Transmission Corridor Designation program is designed to improve electric transmission and reliability throughout the country. Transmission upgrades were proposed for ten regions across, including the New York-New England transmission corridor which links the two electric systems.*

**Proposed project capacity:** 345 kilovolts

**Current system capacity:** 115 kilovolts

**Length of upgrade:** Approximately a 60 mile stretch of transmission line.

**Location:** The [transmission corridor right-of-way](#) extension would likely impact 17 towns. These include Stephentown and Nassau, NY, and Lanesborough, Hinsdale, Windsor, Plainfield, Ashfield, Hancock, Dalton, Peru, Conway, Shelburne, Greenfield, Montague, Deerfield, Erving, and Northfield, MA.

**Maximum possible corridor width:** 1 mile

**Potential maximum impacts:** Berkshire

Regional Planning Commission [completed a study](#) analyzing the impacts that a mile wide right-of-way could have on the environment and local communities. Within Berkshire County, they found that the proposed right-of-way would impact “905 buildings, ranging from just one in Peru to 323 in Lanesborough, and 832 parcels of land totaling 13,546.23 acres, including endangered species habitat.” This doesn't include the impacts to Hampshire and Franklin County towns.

**Regional system operators:** ISO New England and New York ISO



The DOE's NIETC proposal to update the New York-New England, if confirmed, would grant them a larger right-of-way (1 mile wide according to the initial DOE proposal) and eminent domain over households within the new borders. It is unclear how the larger right-of-way would be utilized for upgrades and whether the land would be clear cut or significantly disturbed otherwise. The DOE has maintained that the proposed NIETC boundaries will undergo revisions based on community feedback and internal research throughout the remaining phases of the process. Currently, the right-of-way for the transmission line from New York-New England varies from around 200 to 300 feet. Based on the DOE's initial proposal, the right-of-way for the transmission line would extend to 1 mile wide, impacting properties and the environment along the 60 mile stretch of transmission line.

Transmission capacity upgrades are often necessary with increased electrification and clean energy sources increasing electric demand throughout New England. The environmental impact

of transmission upgrades and clean energy infrastructure projects should remain as minimal as possible to preserve natural resources and critical habitat.

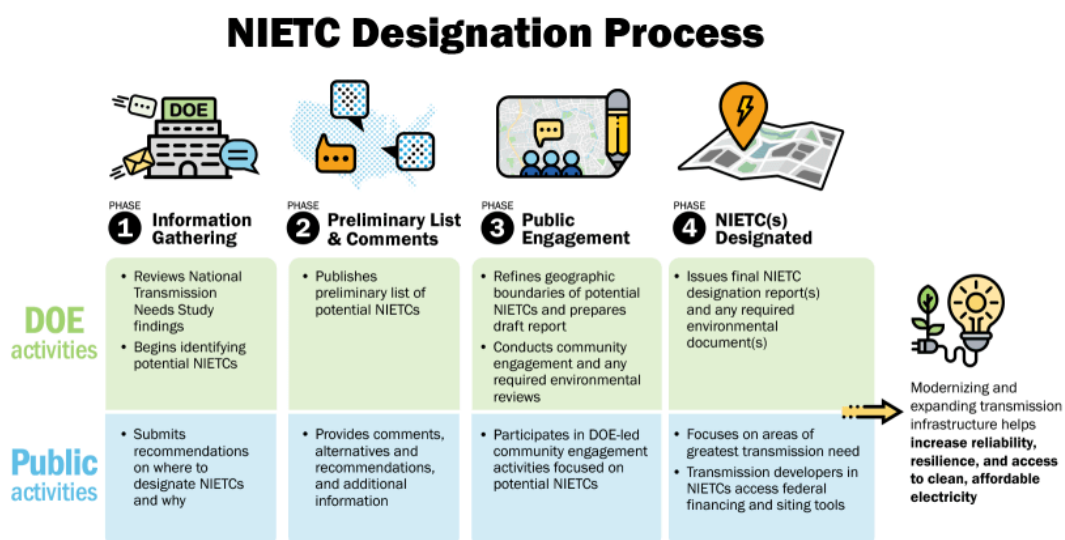
While electric transmission reliability and functionality will certainly be crucial throughout the clean energy transition in New England, electric demand in New England’s future will likely not surpass past demand. According to ISO-New England’s [Electricity Use Site](#), the top ten peak electricity demand days in New England all occurred before 2014, with the majority taking place prior to 2007. Electric usage efficiency programs have lowered energy usage in the Northeast, and although electric demand is expected to increase in the future, peak demand will likely not surpass previously observed levels.

With the advent of smarter technology to improve energy efficiency in many industries, there is an opportunity to reduce non-essential electric usage in the future as electric demand increases amidst the climate crisis. Battery storage technology can identify times of elevated electric demand and shift non-essential electric usage to night time and other lower demand times as well, further reducing peak electric demand and the need for major transmission capacity upgrades. Also, [virtual power plants](#) (VPP) are emerging as a strategy that can help balance electric demand. VPPs utilize and manage the inactive electric potential of hundreds or thousands of households and businesses in a region to meet electric demand. VPPs not only reduce peak demand, but they may also help make electricity more affordable and reliable.

**Public comments and opinions:**

Eversource, the energy utility that operates the transmission lines, commented on the Department of Energy’s proposed NIETC designation for the New York-New England transmission line. They noted that the widening is far more than needed for the transmission project and is “concerning for the host communities.” Eversource even added that “the existing right-of-way in Massachusetts is several hundred feet wide, with sufficient scope and size to accommodate a new 345kV transmission project.” They also raised concern with the designation process and potential lack of community outreach, mentioning that community acceptance would be much more likely if the width of the proposed right-of-way was significantly decreased.

**Proposal phases and future:**



The DOE NIETC designation process involves several different opportunities for community, public, and organizational input. The process is currently entering Phase 3 (anticipated to begin Fall 2024). Phase 3 is the primary public engagement phase, where the DOE will host in-person and remote opportunities for public engagement and opinion. It is not clear yet what these comment sessions will look like. The DOE also intends to disseminate information to local news outlets during Phase 3. The main purpose of community engagement is to revise the proposed geographic boundaries of the NIETCs based on community needs and opinions. Any required environmental reviews under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) will also be initiated at this phase.

***The upcoming public comment and outreach phase beginning this fall will be essential for communities impacted by these proposed changes to voice their concerns and opinions. A growing number of stewardship and conservation groups have and are continuing to voice their concerns about NIETC to the Department of Energy's Grid Deployment Office. Public outreach is a critical component of any project with a potential impact to property owners and the environment.***

**While the official public outreach phase (Phase 3) for the Department of Energy begins this fall, comments, concerns, and suggestions can be directed to [NIETC@hq.doe.gov](mailto:NIETC@hq.doe.gov) at any time.**

**Resources:**

**[DOE Webinar Released at the Beginning of Phase 2](#)**

- **[Phase 2 comments of Berkshire Regional Planning Commission](#)**
- **[Phase 2 comments of Franklin Regional Council of Governments](#)**
- **[Post-Phase 2 comments of Berkshire Environmental Action Team](#)**

- [National Interest Electric Transmission Corridor Designation Process](#)
- [DOE Proposes National Interest Electric Transmission Corridor Designation Process](#)
- [DOE Virtual Power Plants](#)
- [DOE Biden-Harris Administration Invests \\$2.2 Billion in the Nation's Grid](#)
- [The Berkshire Eagle: 'We plan for these.' Here's how utility companies will keep the electricity going so you can run your air conditioning units](#)
- [The Berkshire Eagle: The Department of Energy is eyeing the Berkshires as a place to strengthen the grid](#)
- [The Berkshire Eagle: Eversource, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission urge US to keep power corridor as narrow as possible in upgrade project](#)
- [Berkshire Regional Planning Commission Study](#)
- [ISO New England Key Grid and Market Statistics](#)

*For more information on the permitting process for electric transmission facilities, consult the [Federal Energy Regulatory Commission page](#) on permitting. This proposal is separate from the [Northeast States Collaborative on Interregional Transmission](#).*

October 18, 2024, [team@thebeatnews.org](mailto:team@thebeatnews.org)