



THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION WANTS TO 'BUILD A BETTER GRID'

In response to Title I of the IIJA, the Department of Energy issued a Notice of Intent on January 12, 2022, (87 Fed. Reg. 2769) setting forth a broad initiative to support development of “nationally significant transmission projects and grid upgrades” to enhance grid resilience, improve reliability, and address climate change. DOE estimates that the electric transmission system will need to expand by 60 percent by 2030, and may need to triple its capacity by 2050 to attain clean energy goals set by state and federal governments.

The Building A Better Grid Initiative will involve (a) convening state, tribal, and stakeholder groups to accelerate transmission deployment, (b) enhancing transmission planning in coordination with the FERC by conducting studies and examining the need for planning with national scope, (c) deploying more than \$20 billion in federal financing tools (loans, contracts, partnerships, grants), (d) facilitating efficient permitting through federal agency coordination and “route-specific” transmission corridor designations, and (e) transmission-related research and development. These programs will begin immediately but are expected to extend for several years into the future

The Council will participate in these developments. It is not hard to imagine, for example, how railroad rights-of-way could (or should) qualify for transmission corridor designations and perhaps funding. The Council will engage with the Department of Energy to explore adoption of a generic designation of railroad rights of way as eligible electric transmission corridors, to trigger federal siting authority under the IIJA. Companies interested in discussing or participating in this option, can contact Jim Hoecker and Steve Griffith directly!