

SunZia Frequently Asked Questions for Draft Environmental Impact Statement Notice of Availability

What is the SunZia Southwest Transmission Project?

The proposed SunZia Southwest Transmission Project is composed of two planned 500 kilovolt transmission lines located across approximately 520 miles of Federal, State, and private lands between central New Mexico and central Arizona. The purpose of the SunZia Project is to transport up to 4,500 megawatts of primarily renewable energy from New Mexico to markets in Arizona and California. The permitted route originates at a planned substation in Torrance County, New Mexico, and terminates at the existing Pinal Central Substation in Pinal County, Arizona.

Prior environmental documents include a Final Environmental Impact Statement in 2013, a subsequent Environmental Assessment and Finding of No New Significant Impact in 2015 to accommodate burial of approximately five miles of the transmission line in three locations within the Department of Defense's White Sands Missile Range Northern Call-Up Area, and then a Record of Decision in 2015. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) issued a right-of-way grant to SunZia Transmission, LLC in 2016, authorizing use of a 400-foot-wide right-of-way across 183 miles of Federal lands administered by the BLM. Construction on the lines has not begun.

SunZia is now proposing to amend the existing right-of-way grant in four components. These amendments to SunZia's existing right-of-way are the scope of this project, not re-siting the entire path for the transmission line. See the **Project Introduction** document for more information and maps.

What is the project status?

The Bureau of Land Management is currently accepting public comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The 90-day Draft Environmental Impact Statement public comment period ends on August 1, 2022. For more information, please see the other questions in this document and the **Project Introduction** document for more information and maps.

How can I participate in the process?

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) published a Notice of Availability of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement in the *Federal Register* on May 2, 2022, which initiated a 90-day public review and comment period. The BLM will hold three virtual public meetings during the comment period, the registration links and call-in access is in the table below.

Public Meeting Dates	Time	Virtual Registration Link	Call-In Option
June 21, 2022 (Tuesday)	2-4 PM AZ 3-5 PM NM	https://swca.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Dj5Q9FolS1Co77bgqclDyw	888-475-4499 (Toll Free) Webinar ID: 916-8433-8122
June 28, 2022 (Tuesday)	5-7 PM AZ 6-8 PM NM	https://swca.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_JpbMLotYQuWMIoksfmE2lQ	888-475-4499 (Toll Free) Webinar ID: 943-5627-8375
June 29, 2022 (Wednesday)	12-2 PM AZ 1-3 PM NM	https://swca.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_WWPsixiNSn6xyHUeK_nDOA	888-475-4499 (Toll Free) Webinar ID: 954-9784-5908

Upon publication of the Notice of Availability of the Final Environmental Impact Statement, there begins a 30-day period during which implementation cannot occur, as well as a concurrent 30-day period when members of the public may file protests on any proposed BLM Resource Management Plan amendments. The BLM encourages substantive comments (comments that

avoid opinions and are specific; describe the significance of the impacts and how they affect you, others, places, and activities; provide any new information that is relevant to the project [e.g., potential affected resources]; and discuss modifications to existing alternatives or suggest other reasonable alternatives with justification) concerning the proposed SunZia Southwest Transmission Project. For comments to be considered for inclusion in the Final Environmental Impact Statement, the BLM must receive them by August 1, 2022.

How do I access the Draft Environmental Impact Statement?

You can access the Draft Environmental Impact Statement on the Bureau of Land Management's project ePlanning website at <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2011785/510>. Click "Documents" on the menu on the left.

How do I make a good/substantive comment?

The Bureau of Land Management encourages substantive comments (comments that avoid opinions and are specific; describe the significance of the impacts and how they affect you, others, places, and activities; provide any new information that is relevant to the project [e.g., potential affected resources]; and discuss modifications to existing alternatives or suggest other reasonable alternatives with justification) concerning the proposed SunZia Southwest Transmission Project. You may submit comments at any time during the 90-day comment period by:

- Submitting comments electronically via the ePlanning site: <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2011785/510>. Click the green "Participate Now" on the left menu.
- Mailing comments to:
SunZia Comment Period
Bureau of Land Management, New Mexico State Office
301 Dinosaur Trail, Santa Fe, NM 87508
- Submitting verbal comments via a telephone hotline: 1-888-959-2510

To have your comments considered for the Final Environmental Impact Statement, please submit them by August 1, 2022. Comments can only be submitted in the above ways.

Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

What happens to my comments?

To have your comments considered for the Final Environmental Impact Statement please submit them by August 1, 2022. ***Substantive comments make a difference!*** (For what makes a comment substantive, see the above *How do I make a good/substantive comment?* question.) Substantive comments can create change within the project, provide alternatives or mitigation options, change the analysis of the project, and help federal agencies make more informed decisions.

The Bureau of Land Management is legally required to respond to all substantive comments received during this 90-day public comment period. Their response can be found in an appendix to the Final Environmental Impact Statement when that is published.

How can I stay informed on the SunZia Project?

- Visit the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) ePlanning site for this Project: <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2011785/510>
- To add your name to the email or mailing list, go to BLM's ePlanning site for this Project: <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2011785/510>
- For specific Project inquiries, contact Adrian Garcia, Project Manager, BLM New Mexico State Office at 505-954-2199
- Individuals in the United States who are deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability may dial 711 (TTY, TDD, or TeleBraille) to access telecommunications relay services. Individuals outside the United States should use the relay services offered within their country to make international calls to the point-of-contact in the United States. Call the project hotline at 1-888-959-2510.

Who is the lead agency? What decision(s) do they have to make?

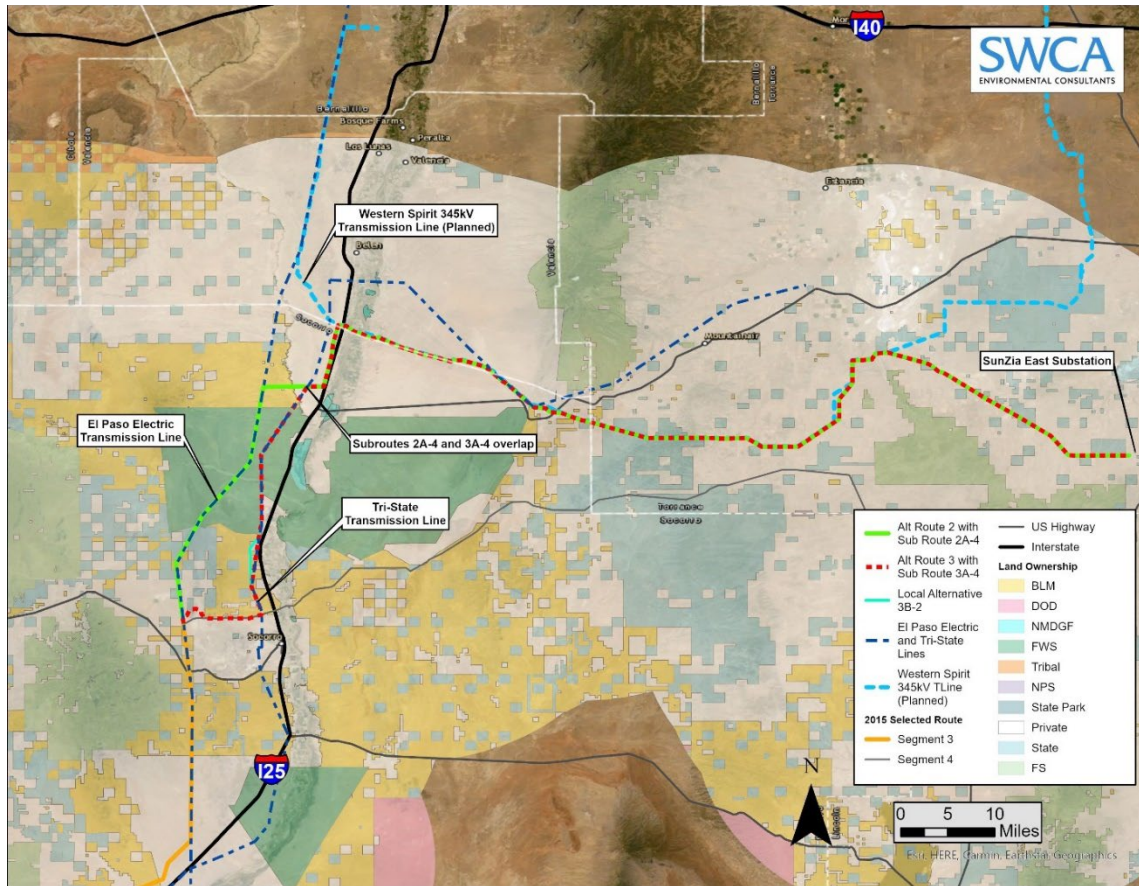
The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is the lead Federal agency for National Environmental Policy Act compliance. After careful consideration of the analysis conducted in the Environmental Impact Statement, the BLM will decide whether to issue a right-of-way grant amendment for the proposed SunZia Project, and if so, under what terms and conditions. Additionally, as lead Federal agency on the Environmental Impact Statement, it is the BLM's decision to consider and analyze in detail route alternatives, in addition to those requested by SunZia. See the **Project Introduction** document for more information and maps.

Does the Draft Environmental Impact Statement identify an agency preferred alternative?

An agency preferred alternative is the alternative that the lead agency, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in this case, prefers above the other project alternatives. Selecting an agency preferred alternative does not mean the alternative will be the approved alternative in the BLM's decision, that is decided in the Record of Decision at the end of the National Environmental Policy Act process.

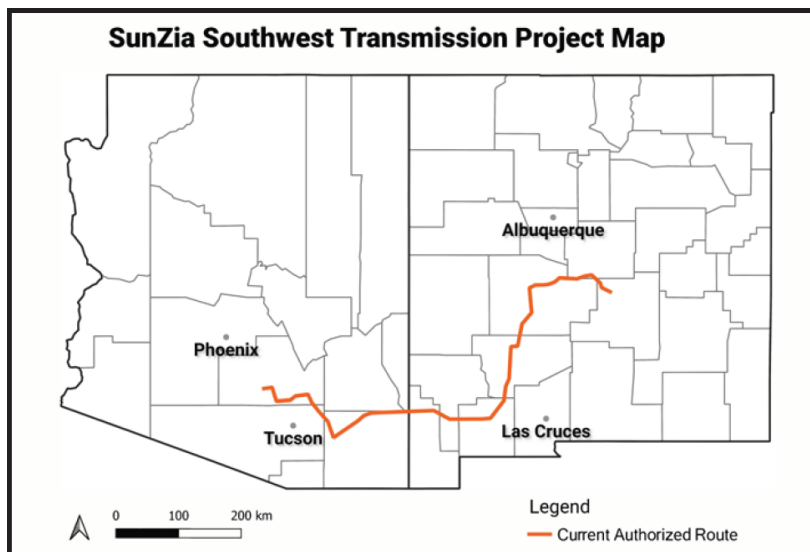
The BLM has identified parts of the four proposed project components as the agency's Preferred Alternative. The agency's Preferred Alternative is as follows:

- Component 1: Localized route modifications 1–5, and the 2015 Selected Route (the no action alternative in this Environmental Impact Statement) for local route modification 6 in the Pinal Central area
- Component 2: All access roads and temporary workspaces outside the granted right-of-way
- Component 3: Alternative Route 2 (Subroute 2A-4) and Alternative Route 3 (Subroute 3A-4), which include crossing the Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge as well as co-locating the proposed SunZia transmission line with the Western Spirit transmission line at the Rio Grande crossing. For Subroute 3A-4, the agency's Preferred Alternative includes Local Alternative 3B-2 to avoid two private residences near the Project
- Component 4: The revised location for the SunZia West substation



If the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) does not grant a right-of-way amendment, can SunZia still build the transmission line?

Yes. SunZia would carry forward with building along the route permitted in 2015 if the BLM does not grant a right-of-way amendment that uses one of the proposed Segment 4 alternative routes. (Note: Segment 4 lies between Corona, Belen, and Socorro, New Mexico.) The map below shows the entire permitted 2015 route.



What is the need for the transmission line? How would it fit into the regional electric grid?

In 2010, the National Renewable Energy Laboratory identified New Mexico as one of the top 10 wind potential states; however, new transmission infrastructure is needed to tap its wind energy potential. In central New Mexico, near Corona, where SunZia's proposed transmission line would begin, there is more than 4,500 megawatts of wind energy capacity. The capacity of two 500-kilovolt transmission lines could transport that energy over the 520 miles of the SunZia Project route, to reach power markets in Arizona and California.

What is the National Environmental Policy Act?

The National Environmental Policy Act was passed by Congress in 1969 and signed into law on January 1, 1970. This law established a landmark national environmental policy, which, among other things, encourages environmental protection and informed decision-making. It provides the means to carry out these goals by:

- Mandating that every Federal agency prepare a detailed statement of the effects of "major Federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment"
- Establishing the need for agencies to consider alternatives to those actions
- Requiring the use of an interdisciplinary process in developing alternatives and analyzing environmental effects
- Requiring that each agency consult with and obtain comments of any Federal agency which has jurisdiction by law or special expertise with respect to any environmental impact involved
- Requiring that detailed statements and the comments and views of the appropriate Federal, State, tribal, and local agencies be made available to the public

The National Environmental Policy Act process is intended to help public officials make decisions that are based on understanding of environmental consequences, and take actions that protect, restore, and enhance the environment (40 Code of Federal Regulations 1500.1(a)).

Please see the following websites for more information on the National Environmental Policy Act and Environmental Impact Statements:

- [The Council on Environmental Quality's Citizen's Guide to National Environmental Policy Act](#)
- [The BLM's National Environmental Policy Act Handbook](#)
- [The Council on Environmental Quality's Forty Most Asked Questions Concerning National Environmental Policy Act Regulations](#)

What is an Environmental Impact Statement?

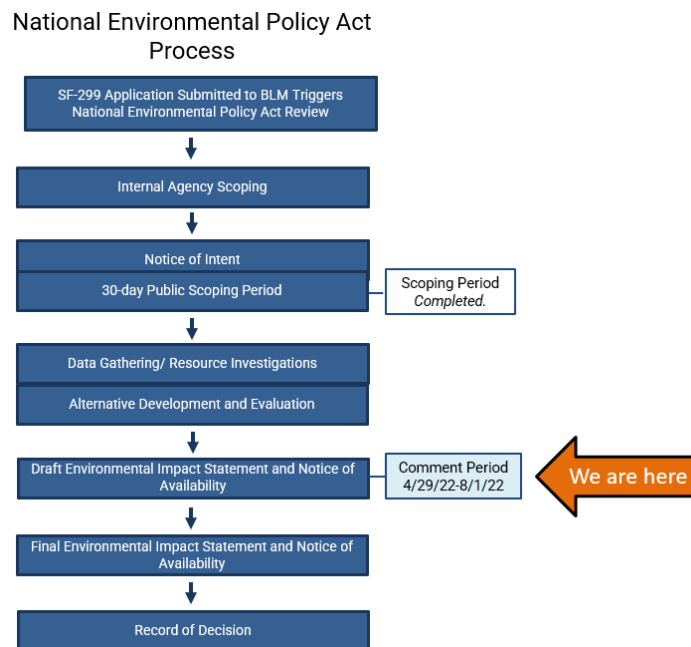
An Environmental Impact Statement is prepared for major Federal actions that may have a significant effect on the environment. The purpose of an Environmental Impact Statement is to identify potential environmental issues related to the project, analyze the project's impacts on resources, describe alternative actions, disclose impacts to the public, and support informed decisions. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement and a Final Environmental Impact Statement over the course of the National Environmental Policy Act process.

The Environmental Impact Statement is a public document, and the public is encouraged to provide input throughout the development of the Environmental Impact Statement. In addition to the public, the Environmental Impact Statement will inform Federal, State, and local permitting agencies as well as Cooperating Agencies and Native American Tribes. Proposed

amendments to SunZia's right-of-way grant will require a plan amendment to the Socorro Field Office Resource Management Plan, which is analyzed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

The Environmental Impact Statement is not a decision document, but it is intended to provide information to the BLM and other agency decision makers to support informed decisions. While the BLM's decision applies only to the land that it manages, its Environmental Impact Statement analyzes impacts to all potentially affected lands. Decisions on non-BLM land will be made by the appropriate agencies and landowners.

There are several steps involved in preparing an Environmental Impact Statement, as defined by the National Environmental Policy Act and the Council on Environmental Quality's regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act. See the diagram below for a visual representation of the process. The Environmental Impact Statement process begins with the publication of a Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement in the *Federal Register*. The Notice of Intent initiates the scoping period, during which agencies, groups, and the public can provide feedback and submit their comments for review. The BLM and any Cooperating Agencies then use the information derived from internal and public scoping to identify potential resource concerns, project modifications, additional alternatives to the proposed action, and environmental mitigation measures.



The public comment period and meetings provide a formal opportunity for public engagement in the National Environmental Policy Act process. After public review of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, comments are considered and incorporated into the Final Environmental Impact Statement, and a Notice of Availability for the Final Environmental Impact Statement is published in the *Federal Register*. The Environmental Impact Statement process ends with the issuance of the Record of Decision. The Record of Decision approves, approves with stipulations, or does not approve the proposed action.

Didn't the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) already do an Environmental Impact Statement and an Environmental Assessment? Why are they doing another SunZia Environmental Impact Statement?

The BLM completed a Final Environmental Impact Statement in 2013, a subsequent Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact in 2015 to accommodate burial of approximately five miles of the transmission line in three locations within the Department of Defense's White Sands Missile Range Northern Call-Up Area, and then a Record of Decision in 2015. The BLM issued a right-of-way grant to SunZia in 2016, authorizing use of a 400-foot-wide right-of-way across 183 miles of BLM land. Construction of the lines has not begun.

In December 2020, SunZia applied to amend the right-of-way grant to (1) accommodate localized route modifications requested by landowners; (2) analyze the effects of access roads and temporary work areas outside the granted right-of-way; (3) reroute eastern-most Segment 4 to be closer to the generation source, parallel the Western Spirit 345 kilovolt transmission line, and move the route out of the area north of the White Sands Missile Range Northern Call-Up Area used for military missile testing, operations, and training; and (4) analyze the effects of proposed SunZia West Substation in Pinal County, Arizona. See the **Project Introduction** document for more information and maps.

Why is SunZia proposing to cross the Cibola National Forest or the Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge?

A continuous long-distance path that avoids crossing Federal lands is not feasible because of the extent of Federal land in the region and constraints posed by sensitive resources, certain land uses, lands with special designations, and/or rugged terrain.

SunZia conducted a detailed siting study during 2019-2020 that resulted in the network of alternative routes, some of which are analyzed in the environmental impact statement. The eastern portion of the SunZia Project would generally parallel the Western Spirit 345-kilovolt transmission line. West of the boundary of Valencia and Tarrant counties, the route would diverge into alternative routes that consider large blocks of lands specially designated with protective management prescriptions, which severely limit opportunities for routing. The alternative routes were developed to avoid the specially designated lands to the extent feasible. For example, Alternative Route 1, the longest route, would extend far to the west to go around Bureau of Land Management specially designated areas, but would require traversing the Cibola National Forest including a U.S. Forest Service Inventoried Roadless Area. Alternative Routes 2 and 3 would avoid the BLM and U.S. Forest Service specially designated areas and would use existing utility easements that pass north-south through the Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge.

Alternative Route 1 has passed U.S. Forest Service's Second Level Special Use Screening criteria and mitigates conflict with existing and future military training activities already authorized on the Cibola National Forest. This proposal is being analyzed under the U.S. Forest Service 1985 Cibola National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.

The 2013 Environmental Impact Statement dismissed crossing through the Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge, stating that a new transmission-line right-of-way crossing the Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge would conflict with refuge management policy and restrictions that prohibit commercial uses as stated in the Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge land grant deed. Co-location with the existing transmission lines was not considered in the 2013 Environmental Impact Statement. El Paso Electric Company has a 345-kilovolt line in a 100-foot easement, and Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, Inc. has a 115-kilovolt line in a 50-foot easement. SunZia is proposing to replace the existing line infrastructure with one that could accommodate both the existing line and the proposed SunZia line. SunZia would request

temporary access to refuge lands outside of existing easements for construction support and material storage.

Co-location is now being analyzed in detail in consideration of the number of large specially designated areas in the Segment 4 reroute study area posing constraints to siting the proposed transmission lines and associated facilities and the discussions with the Department of Defense regarding the White Sands Missile Range Northern Call-Up Area. See the **Project Introduction** document for more information and maps.

What would the transmission line look like?

The transmission line structures would measure about 135 feet tall. Tower heights would vary from 100 to 170 feet in height, depending on terrain. The distance between structures may range from 1,200 to 1,600 feet (3-4 structures per mile). The right-of-way grant area would be approximately 400 feet wide. The proposed structures would include a combination of guyed and self-supporting steel tubular and lattice structures, although the final structure types used would depend on site-specific engineering design and land use constraints.

The proposed alternative to co-locate SunZia's route with the Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, Inc. easement would replace Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, Inc.'s existing 115-kilovolt transmission line structures with double-circuit, monopole (single pole) structures that support both the Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, Inc. line and the proposed SunZia line in a vertical configuration. The new transmission line structures would measure on average 165-200 feet in height compared to the existing Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, Inc. structures, which are between 60-80 feet in height.

How are the interests of tribal governments taken into consideration?

Tribal consultation is required under Executive Order 13175 Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments. In addition, tribal consultations are required under the National Historic Preservation Act process when undertakings have the potential to affect properties significant to Native American Tribes.

Tribal concerns, including impacts on Indian trust assets and potential impacts to cultural resources, will continue to be given due consideration. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) initiated Tribal consultation with 29 tribal governments. The information about historic and cultural resources within the area potentially affected by the proposed action has been used to assist the BLM in identifying and evaluating impacts to such resources. The BLM will continue to consult with Native American Tribes on a government-to-government basis in accordance with Executive Order 13175, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, and other policies.

During the previous Environmental Impact Statement process, the BLM consulted with 11 tribes and developed a Programmatic Agreement to address treatment of historic properties. The Programmatic Agreement will likely be amended to fit the current Environmental Impact Statement process.