



Nevada State Office

March 11, 2024

Greenlink North Transmission Project

Scoping Overview

Background

On July 20, 2020 NV Energy submitted an SF-299 (“Application for Transportation, Utility Systems, Telecommunications and Facilities on Federal Lands and Property”) along with a Preliminary Plan of Development to the Bureau of Land Management Nevada State Office for a right-of-way (ROW) for the purpose of the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning of a new approximately 235-mile transmission line between Ely and Yerington, in White Pine, Eureka, Lander, Lyon and Churchill counties, Nevada (Project). The term of the ROW would be for 30-years, with option to renew.

On February 9, 2023 NV Energy also submitted a SF-299 and Preliminary Plan of Development to the U.S. Forest Service for a Special Use Permit (SUP) for the purpose of the construction, operation and maintenance, and decommissioning of a new approximately 10-mile transmission line across the Austin-Tonopah Ranger District in the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest. The term of the SUP would be for 30-years.

The Bureau of Land Management is the lead federal agency for the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) compliance for this Project.

Purpose of Scoping

On March 8, 2024 the Bureau of Land Management published a revised Notice of Intent (NOI) in the *Federal Register*, announcing the start of a 30-day public scoping period. The Bureau of Land Management also published a news release and made notifications via email and U.S. mail to parties on the Project mailing list.

The objective of public scoping falls into three broad categories that we are seeking public input on including:

1. The **relevant issues** associated with the project that warrant analysis;
2. Means to **minimize the effects** from the project; and
3. **Reasonable alternatives** that would meet the preliminary **agency purpose and need**.

Scoping – May to July 2023

The Bureau of Land Management completed a 45-day public scoping period from May 26, 2023 until July 19, 2023. The Bureau of Land Management hosted one virtual meeting, in addition to in-person meetings in Reno, Austin and Ely, Nevada. A Scoping Report was published on September 14, 2023. Twenty-four comment letters

and emails were received with the majority of them focused on concerns about impacts to cultural and wildlife resources. Impacts to wild horses was another area of public concern. One organization proposed a new alternative along I-80 to avoid the proposed alignment along U.S. Highway 50, which is informally known as the “Loneliest Highway in Nevada.” After this scoping period, the Bureau of Land Management determined that plan amendments would need to be evaluated for this Project, see Evaluation of Plan Amendments below.

Preliminary Purpose and Need

NV Energy has submitted SF-299s for a ROW from the Bureau of Land Management and SUP from the U.S. Forest Service.

- The Bureau of Land Management’s preliminary **purpose** is to respond to the ROW application submitted by NV Energy to construct, operate, and maintain, and a system of transmission facilities and associated infrastructure that would transmit electricity between the Ft. Churchill and Robinson Summit substations on public lands. The preliminary **need** for this action is to fulfil Bureau of Land Management’s responsibility under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and agency ROW regulations to manage the public lands for multiple uses, including the transmission of electric energy.
- The U.S. Forest Service’s preliminary **purpose** is to respond to the SF 299 ROW application submitted by NV Energy to construct, operate, maintain and decommission a transmission line over U.S. Forest Service administered lands within the Austin-Tonopah Ranger District of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest. The preliminary **need** for this action is to fulfill the Forest Service responsibility under FLPMA and in accordance with U.S. Forest Service regulations in 36 CFR 251 Subpart B that authorizes use and occupancy on National Forest System lands.

Preliminary Range of Alternatives

The Bureau of Land Management has identified a preliminary range of alternatives including:

- **No Action (No Build) Alternative** is required by the regulations. The Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service would deny the ROW/SUP applications.
- Applicant **Proposed Action** as described in their Preliminary Plan of Development.
- **Bureau of Land Management Preferred Alternative.** A combination of the Bureau of Land Management/U.S. Forest Service proposed alignments that may or may not be the same as the applicants’ Proposed Action. The Preferred Alternative would evaluate plan amendments on Bureau of Land Management-administered lands, see Evaluation of Plan Amendments below.
- Other **reasonable alternatives** identified as a result of scoping.

What is a Reasonable Alternative?

According to the Council on Environmental Quality, a reasonable alternative must meet all three criteria below:

- Meet the Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service’s preliminary **purpose and need**;
- Be **technically feasible**; and
- Be **economically feasible**.

Evaluation of Plan Amendments

The Bureau of Land Management has identified the following plan amendments that may be evaluated in the upcoming Environmental Impact Statement in the Project area:

- Amending the existing 2001 Consolidated Resource Management Plan in Carson City District, 1986 Shoshone-Eureka Resource Management Plan/Record of Decision in Battle Mountain District, and 2008 Record of Decision/Resource Management Plan in Ely District in order to establish a new 208-mile long by 3-mile wide utility corridor between Ely and Yerington, Nevada.
- Amending the 2015 Greater-Sage Grouse Plan to modify restrictions for major ROWs for greater than 100 kV high voltage transmission lines outside utility corridors in greater-sage grouse habitat management areas and proximity to leks.

Because the Bureau of Land Management will be evaluating multiple plan amendments, the document will be a combined Environmental Impact Statement/Proposed Resource Management Plan Amendments.

Planning Criteria

The Bureau of Land Management has identified the following preliminary planning criteria:

- *Criteria 1:* The Bureau of Land Management will use a systematic interdisciplinary approach to integrate physical, biological, economic, and other sciences.
- *Criteria 2:* The Bureau of Land Management will use the best available data regarding natural resources.
- *Criteria 3:* The Bureau of Land Management will consider the present and potential uses of public lands, and where existing Resource Management Plan decisions are valid, those decisions will remain unchanged.
- *Criteria 4:* The Bureau of Land Management will consider the relative scarcity of values and availability of alternative means and sites for recognizing those values.
- *Criteria 5:* Any plan amendments will be completed in compliance with Federal Land Policy and Management Act, National Environmental Policy Act, and all other relevant federal laws, executive orders, and Bureau of Land Management policies.
- *Criteria 6:* The Bureau of Land Management will seek coordination and consistency with other government programs including Tribal plans and policies.
- *Criteria 7:* Existing land use planning decisions will not change unless specifically amended.
- *Criteria 8:* Any Resource Management Plan Amendments will recognize valid existing rights.

Forest Service Pre-Decisional Objection Review Period

For the U.S. Forest Service, this proposed Project is an activity implementing a Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan and is not authorized under the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA); therefore, it is subject to the objection procedure at 36 CFR 218, Subparts A and B. Only those who submit timely Project-specific written comments during a public comment period are eligible to file an objection. Individuals or representatives of an entity submitting comments must sign the comments or verify identity upon request and must meet the requirements of 36 CFR 218 Subparts A and B. Comments received on the Forest's Proposed Action will be used to determine standing of objectors during the Pre-Decisional Objection review period.

How To Comment

Comments can be sent to: BLM_NV_greenlinknorth@blm.gov

Through the Project website at: <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2017033/510>

Or by U.S. Mail to:

BLM, Nevada State Office
Attn: Brian Buttazoni
1340 Financial Boulevard
Nevada 89502

Written comments will be accepted until end of business on April 10, 2024.