

Section 368 Energy Corridor Revisions RMPA/EIS

Public Scoping Meetings

Questions and Answers

January 25, 2024

The BLM hosted six public scoping meetings for the Section 368 Energy Corridor Revisions RMPA/EIS Project in January 2024, four in-person meetings and two virtual meetings. The purpose of the scoping meetings was to 1) inform the public about the Section 368 energy corridors that will be evaluated during the planning effort; 2) solicit feedback from the public concerning potential issues, concerns, potential alternatives, and information regarding projects within the project area that the BLM may not already be aware of; 3) describe how to provide effective comments during the scoping period; and 4) initiate a discussion about socioeconomic conditions and request input from affected communities.

The following summarizes the questions and topics that were posed during the public scoping meetings and provides a response.

Virtual Public Scoping Meetings

Two virtual public scoping meetings (webinars) were held during the scoping period; 123 members of the public attended the webinars. The first webinar was held on January 9, 2024 from 10am to 11am Mountain time. The second webinar was held on January 18, 2024 from 10am to 11am Mountain time. The agenda for the virtual public scoping meetings included:

- A presentation describing background information, the current RMPA/EIS effort, a description of the energy corridors that will be evaluated during the planning effort, and a description of how to provide public comments
- Question and Answer session
- Socioeconomic strategies workshop that described socioeconomic analysis and a request for input from local communities

The virtual public meeting PowerPoint slides and recordings are available on the BLM project website: <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2022227/510>

Question and Answer Sessions

Virtual Public Meeting – January 9, 2024

1. **Question:** In southeast Arizona, a proposed solar farm would have displaced a generational ranching operation on BLM lands. The suggestion that these two leases did not have to be mutually exclusive was dismissed. The BLM office indicated that the solar farm was a higher value lease and any mitigations or reparations to the ranchers would have to be offered by the solar project. Although this lease did not go forward, the local ranching family felt unprotected. **Answer:** This planning effort aims to identify preferred pathways for linear energy transport facilities, i.e., electric transmission and pipelines. The environmental impact statement will

evaluate potential impacts on all resources, including livestock grazing. Although the corridors would be designated for energy transport infrastructure, other uses would be allowed if they are deemed compatible with the use for which the corridor was designated. This effort is focused on modifying the Section 368 corridors to guide future linear development. As stated above, future projects proposed within the corridors would be subject to site-specific NEPA.

2. **Question:** Can you please confirm if the entire Corridor 16-104 is being proposed to be deleted or just the last 45 miles that does not have infrastructure?

Answer: The entire corridor is being proposed for deletion.

3. **Question:** Could you clarify what is meant by ‘braided’ corridor?

Answer: A corridor braid is a secondary route or pathway that connects to the designated energy corridor at both ends. For example, the regional review recommended that Corridor 113-114 remain designated in its current location, but that a secondary branch be designated along the TransWest Express authorized ROW from milepost 1 to milepost 100, creating an alternate pathway that avoids the pinch points and resource conflicts within the Dixie National Forest.

4. **Question:** Can you please confirm the length of Corridor 18-23?

Answer: Corridor 18-23 is 240 miles long.

5. **Question:** It was unclear from the brief look I had at Corridor 30-52 and whether the corridor would cross the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail. Will corridor planning sufficiently consider national scenic trail corridors/management areas and minimizing impact of those resources?

Answer: The Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail does not intersect Corridor 30-52. However, the BLM will consider National Scenic Trails and National Historic Trails in their analysis. One of the BLM’s goals is to minimize impacts on all resources.

6. **Question:** Will corridors be for multiple use or a single use only? Will the corridors be used for recreation, livestock grazing, etc.?

Answer: To the extent possible, use of corridors for grazing, recreation, etc. will be allowed. However, the primary purpose of the Section 368 corridors is to support the nation’s need for long distance energy transport facilities. As such, projects that would infringe upon that would be considered lower priority. If new actions are proposed within the corridors, they will be required to go through a site-specific NEPA analysis. It is possible that new transmission or pipeline facilities would restrict use of the corridors for multiple use. Whether or not recreation and livestock grazing would be an allowable use within the corridor would be considered when project-specific infrastructure is proposed. Note that one corridor, the Wamsutter to Powder Rim corridor, is specified as electric-only; the other corridors are multi-modal, meaning that BLM would evaluate applications for any linear infrastructure (pipeline, overhead, etc.).

7. **Question:** Where can I find maps showing the proposed change and the existing corridor details? Width, length, etc.

Answer: Shapefiles for the designated corridors and the proposed changes can be found on the [BLM project website](#). The [Corridor Mapping Tool](#) displays the current corridors and allows users to add resource layers to determine the proximity of a corridor to a particular resource. In addition, maps for each of the seven corridors are posted to the [BLM project website](#) and the [Regional Review Final Report](#) also describes the recommended changes.

8. Question: How can we change Class III Cultural Surveys from 30 meters to 15 meters? Because in the reservation the BLM corridor which is ½ mile wide and Kern River Gas line going through reservation after survey was completed and contractors started excavating, an arrowhead was found in the BLM corridor.

Answer: This would be a project-specific consideration as more is known about a proposed project, and the requirements would be based on those details.

9. Question: Will deleting the entire Corridor 16-104 impact the land rights of the existing infrastructure at all?

Answer: No, removing the corridor designation for Corridor 16-104 would not impact the land rights (right-of-way authorization) of the existing infrastructure. However, the route would no longer be considered a preferred pathway for energy transport infrastructure and future infrastructure would not be encouraged to be sited within that corridor.

10. Question: What impacts will BLM Corridor have around Avi Kwa Ame National Monument [the new national monument in southern Nevada that was established on March 21, 2023]?

Answer: The recommendations in the regional review formed the preliminary alternatives under consideration for this planning effort; they are considered the BLM's starting point. The regional reviews were conducted between 2017 and 2022 and the final report was complete prior to the Avi Kwa Ame National Monument designation in March 2023. The recommended change for Corridor 27-41 would cross the National Monument in two locations. The BLM will consider all new designations, including the Avi Kwa Ame National Monument, during its environmental review. The BLM is also seeking input on the recommendations, including alternate pathways to extend the corridor into Arizona or modifying the corridor width near the Monument. However, this effort will not affect any of the existing infrastructure that may fall within the National Monument. The monument proclamation addressed the existing infrastructure and acknowledged that it would continue to be within the Monument.

11. Question: How does the presence of existing BLM leases affect corridor planning in light of the likelihood of displacement of the existing leases? As you do the corridor planning and it's on a macro or a large scale, do you consider the existing uses as part of your decision whether to avoid or whether to just continue through with the proposed corridor? And how do you consider existing leases and potential impacts for displaced or potentially displaced leases?

Answer: Yes, the BLM considers existing uses within the energy corridors. During the regional reviews, the BLM considered how the corridors could be modified to better drive future infrastructure without impacting existing uses and existing resources within those corridors. The BLM is not eliminating uses with this planning effort, and will disclose potential impacts on existing uses in the EIS.

12. Question: For Corridor 138-143, will the BLM consider a requirement to co-locate on existing infrastructure where the corridor crosses the entry road to Dinosaur National Monument and the Yampa River rather than allowing multiple lines to cross?

Answer: The Wamsutter-Powder Rim Corridor addition would follow the TransWest Express authorized ROW. When possible, the BLM encourages co-location and will consider the road through the Dinosaur National Monument in its environmental review.

13. Question: Does having a Section 368 corridor encourage or discourage energy generation siting (i.e., solar) within the corridor?

Answer: One of the siting principles identified in the 2012 Settlement Agreement is that Section 368 energy corridors should be sited to ‘provide connectivity to renewable energy generation to the maximum extent possible while also considering other sources of generation.’ The corridors are sited to meet the needs of future renewable energy, although siting of renewable energy facilities within energy corridors is generally discouraged because it could inhibit the use of the corridor for which it was designated.

14. Question: You said that interagency operating procedures will not be part of this process. Does that mean you will not consider the recommended interagency operating procedure additions in the 2022 report relating to LWCs (Lands with Wilderness Characteristics), habitat connectivity and migration corridors, etc.?

Answer: New interagency operating procedures (IOPs) will not be adopted through this planning effort because IOPs are requirements established by both the BLM and USDA Forest Service. The current effort to revise energy corridors only applies to BLM-administered lands. However, the BLM may consider adding the recommendations for IOPs as presented in the 2022 Final Report as BLM best management practices (BMPs).

15. Question: You mentioned Greenlink Transmission Corridor. Will this be added in the future for connection to adjacent states in Nevada?

Answer: This planning effort considers revisions recommended in the regional review that cross state boundaries. Because the Greenlink Transmission project is not an interstate energy project in proximity to any of the corridors being considered, the route is not currently being considered for energy corridor designation through this effort.

Virtual Public Meeting – January 18, 2024

1. **Question:** Has an MOU been initiated with the Bureau of Reclamation?

Answer: Yes, the BLM has executed an MOU with the Bureau of Reclamation Arizona District.

2. **Question:** My question is in regard to Corridor 27-41. Looking at the slide quickly, it looks like the corridor would be widened to approximately 2 miles? Do you have any idea at this point how much of that 2-mile-wide corridor would be developed or what sort of impacts would result from this project?

Answer: The regional review recommended revising Corridor 27-41 to a 2-mile width. Future development could occur within the corridor, but the number of transmission lines or pipelines would depend on the applications received, project needs, and project-specific analyses. The expanded width provides greater flexibility to avoid sensitive resources that might be found within the corridor during project-specific analyses, and may allow for more facilities within the corridor. Since linear energy facilities have different footprints and different requirements for ROW width and spacing, it is not possible to know how much of the corridor could be developed, or left undisturbed, at this time.

3. **Question:** What are the proposed changes for Corridor 81-213 in New Mexico?

Answer: The recommendation in the regional review is to re-align the corridor along an existing transmission line from milepost 1 to milepost 18 and to re-align the corridor along the SunZia and Southline transmission project ROWs.

4. **Question:** So it's my understanding that there would be individual compliance for each implemented project under this EIS, where there I'm assuming there's going to be a cultural programmatic agreement to phase implementation of actions.
Answer: This planning effort does not include any specific project proposals; corridors are a Resource Management Planning land use designation. If a transmission line or pipeline project were to be proposed within a designated corridor, they would be subject to project-specific NEPA and any applicable compliance efforts at that time.
5. **Question:** Has an MOU been initiated with the State of Utah?
Answer: No, the BLM has not executed an MOU with the State of Utah.
6. **Question:** Can you elaborate on the statement in the rationale section of Corridor 30-52: "Maximize utility through collocation with planned infrastructure"?
Answer: For Corridor 30-52, the regional review recommended an additional route that follows the Ten West Link Transmission Line Project ROW. The proposed changes would maximize utility, by allowing multiple routes, while also collocating with infrastructure (in this case, planned infrastructure along the authorized but not yet operational Ten West Link project).
7. **Question:** The review committee made almost 100 recommended revisions to the initial corridor decision. This proposal includes a small fraction of those. Can you discuss why?
Answer: For this effort, the BLM is only evaluating corridors where the recommended revisions cross state lines in order to maintain an east-west/north-south connection between the designated energy corridors for future infrastructure. The recommendations for the other corridors can be addressed individually by the states or field offices through the normal course of resource management plan amendments or project-specific amendments without requiring the interstate collaboration.
8. **Question:** Why is the Wyoming/Colorado corridor proposed electric-only?
Answer: Corridor 71-133 (not evaluated in this effort) runs parallel to Corridor 138-143 and is designated as underground-only. The proposed corridor addition (Wamsutter-Powder Rim) is recommended electric-only to accommodate transmission lines similar to the corridor proposed for deletion, Corridor 138-143.
9. **Question:** How does an energy corridor affect private property owners whose property is within the designated areas?
Answer: This effort would only designate energy corridors across public lands. The BLM does not have any jurisdiction over private lands.
10. **Question:** Are energy projects currently going through NEPA process with BLM in areas where changes are proposed going to be delayed/impacted?
Answer: Any efforts currently undergoing the NEPA process will be taken into consideration during this analysis.
11. **Question:** Is the GIS available on the website you shared earlier?
Answer: Shapefiles for the designated corridors and the proposed changes can be found on the [BLM project website](#). Maps for each of the seven corridors are posted to the [BLM project website](#) and the [Regional Review Final Report](#) also describes the recommended changes. The

[Corridor Mapping Tool](#) also displays the current corridors and allows users to add resource layers to determine the proximity of a corridor to a particular resource.

12. **Question:** Where do we find comprehensive list of site changes including those to be made by RMP?

Answer: A list of the recommendations identified in the regional review can be found in the 2022 Final Report at www.corridoreis.anl.gov/documents.

13. **Question:** Why are corridors and renewable energy projects not considered as connected actions under landscape planning? There's absolutely no connection between siting transmission corridors and the resultant solar and they keep saying they're independent and separate projects that are not connected to each other, but they clearly are. And that's what I have a question about because no one will answer that question for me. It's like putting the cart forward before the horse 4 or 5 times and it is a process that's really running amok right now within our state. And in fact, what is interesting is because with the 2022 final report for the Section 368 corridors there were several recommendations made to move one of our corridors and the recommendations were not even addressed as an alternative in the local RMP and there's been, I mean there's like 6 years of comments that this should be looked at and it's all being ignored. Specifically, Corridor 18-224, the Esmeralda section, from milepost 85 to 166. That's 80 miles of corridor that has never been developed and your recommendations, the final report recommendations were to move that to the east. And Green Link West looked at that alternative and it wasn't valid so we never even evaluated it. As a result, we now have 60,000 acres of solar planned for an area that's in an area of a proposed ACEC.

Answer: To answer the first question, this effort is a planning effort and no specific project application is being considered; no connected actions would result without a project. When we look at corridors and additional infrastructure being placed within those corridors we do not want the infrastructure to impede the intent of those corridors to provide for electricity transmission and pipelines. So if there are large land uses within a corridor, it makes it hard for the transmission and pipelines to go in there.

14. **Question:** For Corridor 27-41, will the recommended change replace the existing energy corridor or is this in addition to? It also sounds as though it's being widened. In relation to the existing corridor, there are a lot of breaks and gaps within that corridor. And so it makes it a little bit challenging to put transmission through. Is there a reason for all the breaks and gaps because my understanding is some of that land is BLM land and it just makes it a little difficult to fully utilize it. I'm particularly interested in the Pisca substation along that route and you encounter breaks, and gaps in the corridor when you're trying to plan transmission.

Response: The recommendation in the regional review is only for the eastern 20 miles of the corridor. The recommendation including re-routing the corridor along existing infrastructure and extending the corridor along the existing infrastructure to connect to Corridors 41-47 and 41-46 in Arizona to make that an interstate connection. The recommendation in the regional review also included widening the corridor to match the corridor width in California. Gaps along the corridors generally include non-BLM land, including Tribal lands, private lands, state lands, or lands managed by other federal agencies such as the Bureau of Reclamation or Department of Defense.

In-Person Public Scoping Meetings

Public scoping meetings in an open house format were held between 4pm and 7pm local time in the following locations:

- January 9, 2024 – Cedar City, Utah at the Cedar City Heritage Center
- January 10, 2024 – Laughlin, Nevada at the Laughlin Regional Government Center
- January 11, 2024 – Phoenix, Arizona at the BLM National Training Center
- January 17, 2024 – Craig, Colorado at the BLM Little Snake Field Office

Twenty-three members of the public attended the in-person public scoping meetings. Public scoping attendees included industry representatives; federal, state, and local government; non-governmental organizations; and Tribes.

Topics discussed during the public scoping meetings included, but were not limited to:

- Multiple use of the corridors (i.e., fiber optic, solar development, and recreational uses)
- The proximity of the recommendation for Corridor 27-41 to the Avi Kwa Ame National Monument as well as the 2 mile-wide corridor width
- Impacts on traditional lifeways, cultural landscape, cumulative effects from solar and wind energy development as well as other buildup/development within the cultural landscape, and the need to recognize the importance of these lands for future generations
- Collection of ethnographic data
- Renewable energy development in the vicinity of the corridors being evaluated
- Potential impacts on the local economy and private land in the vicinity of the corridors being evaluated.
- Cultural resources identified along the TransWest Express Transmission Line project in Colorado.