

Proposed “Electric Transmission Corridor” Raises Concerns



A US Department of Energy program to create several “National Interest Electric Transmission Corridors (NIETCs)” has generated some backlash in various locales, including Brown County.

According to a recent press release from the Kansas Corporation Commission, two (of possibly as many as ten) NIETCs would be in Kansas, including one which would parallel the route of the “Grain Belt Express” transmission line, which has already been approved and will pass through Brown County just south of Fairview.

That corridor would be five miles wide, two and a half miles on each side of the Grain Belt Express.

According to the KCC press release, the purpose of the NIETCs would be to “expedite the build out of a resilient and reliable electric grid.”

The press release notes that the Federal Power Act authorizes the Secretary of Energy to designate any geographic area as an NIETC if the Secretary finds that “consumers are harmed by a lack of transmission and that the development of new transmission would increase reliability and reduce consumer costs.”

In particular, the corridors are intended to meet future generation and demand growth, and increase “clean energy integration.”

The NIETC paralleling the Grain Belt Express (GBE), like the GBE itself, undoubtedly would be intended to provide additional transmission capacity, if and when needed, from the wind farms of western Kansas to markets in the upper Midwest.

A “Grid Deployment Office” of DOE identified the potential corridors and invited public comment, starting last December.

In May, the list of potential corridors was finalized and public comment was once again invited.

A third “public engagement” phase will begin soon, during which the geographic boundaries of NIETCs would be “refined,” environmental reviews would be undertaken, and still more “community engagement” would take place.

The fourth and final step in the process will be the formal designation by the Energy Secretary of NIETC routes.

As to what might come after that, the KCC press release notes that any company requesting permission to operate as a public utility in Kansas would still have to apply to the KCC for permission. And the usual steps would be taken before any such permission were granted—including public notice, a public hearing and a public comment period.

However, if the KCC were to deny a permit to build a transmission line in the NIETC, “there is a process for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to issue a siting permit...”

The KCC press release continues, if a “state siting authority” (i.e., the KCC) has not acted on an application for a transmission line within a year, or has denied an application, the FERC may step in and issue a permit.

Moreover—and herein is the main source of public controversy—“this includes

granting the transmission developer the ability to obtain rights-of-way by exercise of the right of eminent domain.”

Public meetings have taken place in several Kansas towns, including Hiawatha, at which local residents have expressed opposition to the possibility of land being taken by eminent domain.

Brown County commissioners are exploring a “resolution” of opposition to the idea, and there are similar moves in other Kansas counties.

Both Senators Moran and Marshall are on the case, as is Attorney General Kobach. “Government overreach” and “Washington bureaucrats” seem to be frequently invoked terms. Senator Moran had this to say last week:

“Kansans have made themselves clear: their land is not for sale to the federal government. When the Senate returns to Washington, I will introduce legislation to help protect Kansans’ private property.”

“This legislation will ban federal funds from being used to condemn private property to be used in a NIETC designation (sic) and prohibit the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission from using its authority to overrule a state’s rejection of an electric transmission project.”

“...I will continue to work to protect multi-generational farms and businesses and the rights of property owners across our State from federal overreach.”

We will no doubt be hearing much more about this subject.

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More Bad News for Rural Mail Customers

The August 30 edition of *The Kansas Publisher*, the monthly publication of the Kansas Newspaper Association, carries an article from the National Newspaper Association warning that things are likely to get worse before they get better for mail delivery in rural areas—including, but not exclusively, for newspapers.

According to the article, to which the Kansas Press Association contributed, the US Postal Service has filed a petition with the Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) for a new “service standard” that would add a day to rural delivery times.

The requested rule would provide that, if a newspaper is further than 50 miles from a Regional Processing and Distribution Center, an additional day would likely be



added to expected delivery times for any mail that entered into the newspaper’s local post office.

John Galer, a rural newspaper publisher in Illinois and member of a USPS advisory committee, commented that “The plan is offered in the name of cost-cutting. In reality, it is just the same old story, one of inefficiency and unreliability.”

Galer added that, “There

is no question that USPS has severe financial problems... It was supposed to produce more than a billion dollars in profit this year under its new ‘Delivering for America’ plan.

“Instead, it looks like losses of close to \$7 billion will be reported...USPS has been driving its mailers away with postage increases that have risen several times faster than inflation; at the same time it is delivering mail slower.

“That certainly results in less mail. Now it wants a reward for its predictions of less mail. At some point, Congress has to step in to protect rural America.”

Amen.

Art Appreciation



Pictured above is Fairview Mayor Art Vonderschmidt building a giant easel. The easel will hold the sheet metal portion of the new Fairview Mural (i.e., the part of the old Fairview sign above

the concrete base). This will allow our mural artist, Christy Klein-Tross, to paint the sheet metal portion of the mural indoors and at ground level so that it can be installed immediately when the

old, corroded sheet metal is removed.

Art is a man of many talents, and Fairview is fortunate that he interprets his job description broadly, to include easel-making when necessary.

Windmill News

The photos below show a vintage windmill in the Ag Museum’s new windmill building and its installation on an 80’ tower along the museum’s “windmill row.”

Shane Spanger assembled the rebuilt head, a 1929 Aeromotor with an eight foot diameter wheel (a newly galvanized one “to give the mill a

little extra flash!”).

The American flag on the vane was hand-painted by Patty Ingraham of Fairview.

The freshly refurbished mill was mounted on an 80 foot Baker Mfg tower. Jade Millwrights of Hiawatha supplied the 100’ crane, and Mark Henry of Mid America Windmill Company did the instal-

lation—that’s him, casually standing on top of the tower, 80 feet above ground level.

The new windmill building, a 40’X100’ structure, will soon house Shane’s collection of vintage windmills, mounted on short towers to allow visitors to view the mechanisms up close.

