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MPSC approves two new major transmission lines to be built by Michigan Electric Transmission Co.

The Michigan Public Service Commission approved the application for construction of two new major electric transmission lines in southern Michigan, granting Michigan Electric Transmission Co. (METC) the certificates of public convenience and necessity for the projects meant to strengthen Michigan's power grid, reduce grid congestion and allow for more integration of renewable energy into the grid ([Case No. U-21471](#)).

METC sought approval of two certificates of public convenience and necessity (CPCN) for new electric transmission lines in the central and southern Lower Peninsula. One is the Nelson Road to Oneida project, a 39-mile, 345 kilovolt (kV) double circuit line between substations in Gratiot and Eaton counties. The other is the Helix to Hiple project, a 55-mile, 345 kV double circuit line between substations in Calhoun and Branch counties. METC also sought approval for the construction of a new Helix Substation as part of the project. The projects were proposed as part of the Midcontinent Independent System Operator's (MISO) Long-Range Transmission Planning initiative, with the MISO Board of Directors approving the portfolio of projects that included these projects in July 2022.

Under [Public Act 30 of 1995](#), the MPSC has authority for siting of transmission lines in Michigan that are more than 5 miles long and that transfer 345 kV or more electricity. In Act 30 cases, which are contested, the Commission must issue an order within a year of an application. This is the first approval of high-voltage transmission lines by the MPSC in more than a decade, and the lines are the largest to be approved since the MPSC approved the Thump Loop in February 2011.

METC submitted one proposed route and one alternate route for each line, as required by statute. The MPSC today approved the Nelson to Oneida line to be built on METC's alternate route and the Helix to Hiple line to be built on METC's proposed route.

The Commission found that, for the Nelson to Oneida line, the alternate route was reasonable and preferable to the proposed route, noting it has fewer heavy angles and road crossings, impacts fewer wetlands and hydric soils, and uses a long-standing existing utility right of way, displaying sounder routing principles.

For the Helix to Hiple line, the Commission found the proposed route reasonable, saying the alternate route would have avoided impact to the R&R Ranch Airport but would result in more impacts on archeological sites, increase the number of residences within 500 feet of the line's right of way, and expand the number of parcels crossed by the line.

The Commission found that both lines are needed to ensure increased energy reliability, capacity, and renewable energy integration, and that the project will not present an unreasonable threat to public health and safety. The Commission found that, while the projects will include some environmental impairment, approval is permissible under the Michigan Environmental Protection Act, because there is no feasible and prudent alternative.

The Commission noted that there were a number of instances where METC's engagement with landowners was cursory at best, ranging from the pro forma summaries of comments from individual landowners seeking to explore minor route modifications to the single email exchange with Michigan Department of Natural Resources officials that resulted in eliminating the crossing of the Maple River State Game Area from consideration, resulting in 16 additional private parcels being included in the route for the Nelson to Oneida Line. Accordingly, the Commission conditioned approval of this certificate on a number of actions METC must take:

- METC must consider landowners' specific requests for minor modifications to the major transmission line routes approved in this order. The Commission directed METC to file a memorandum in the case detailing how impacted landowners may submit minor route modification requests to the company and to file a monthly report documenting any minor modification requests, how METC accommodated the request, or why it was unable to do so.
- METC must provide landowners along the approved routes and adjacent landowners with contact information so that they can communicate concerns to METC about the projects. The Commission required METC to file monthly reports detailing the communications received from these landowners.
- METC must investigate every noise complaint received by landowners to ensure there is not a system issue that needs to be addressed.

Intervenors in the case include Clean Grid Alliance; Michigan Energy Innovation Business Council; The Institute for Energy Innovation; Citizens Utility Board; Sierra Club; the Knaggs Intervenor Group and the Nelson-Oneida Intervenors (groups of multiple affected landowners), Dawn and Robert Lust, and Rose and Robert Williams.

The Commission directed MPSC Staff to work with interested organizations and persons to develop voluntary filing guidelines for use by applicants pursuant to Act 30, to promote clarity, efficiency and transparency. The Commission opened a separate docket for this purpose, Case No. U-21930, addressing MPSC Staff concerns about Act 30's lack of clarity on what constitutes an alternate route, to what degree private

benefits need to be estimated in advance of a project, and whether the law provides for sufficient and clear interaction between an applicant and landowners.

For more information, read the MPSC's [issue brief](#) on this case or the MPSC brief on its role in [electric transmission line siting](#).

COMMISSION SEEKS COMMENT ON STEPS TO IMPROVE RATE CASE PROCESS

Continuing its work exploring how to improve the MPSC's rate case review process, the Commission today directed MPSC Staff to file a draft proposal for exploring the potential to create proceedings to cover the issues of costs of service and rate design separately from the determination of revenue requirement ([Case No. U-21637](#)). The Commission directed Staff to file the proposal by Oct. 30, 2025, and convene collaborative meetings with interested persons in December 2025. Staff must then file a report summarizing discussions by Jan 15, 2026, and interested persons may file comments by Feb. 16, 2026. In addition, the Commission invited comment on several issues: the appropriate schedule for a contested settlement in a rate case; a new process for demand response reconciliations; and how potential bill impacts should be communicated to customers during rate cases. Comments may be mailed to Executive Secretary, Michigan Public Service Commission, P.O. Box 30221, Lansing, Michigan 48909; emailed to LARA-MPSC-Edockets@michigan.gov, or submitted via the Submit Comments option located within the E-Docket file for the case. The proceeding to improve the rate case process grew out of the Public Act 231, part of the [2023](#) updates to the state's energy laws.

MPSC OUTLINES STEPS TO EXPAND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The MPSC outlined a number of steps it is taking to expand opportunities for public participation in cases before the Commission ([Case No. U-21638](#)) as the agency works to broaden public engagement in Commission activities, as outlined in Michigan's 2023 [overhaul of state energy laws](#). The Commission noted that MPSC Staff are working to establish a Community Partner Network (CPN), building relationships between the MPSC and communities and organizations across the state with the aim of identifying opportunities for improved and expanded public engagement. In addition, the Commission today encouraged parties in contested cases to review public comments and to use those comments, if appropriate, to inform discovery requests and testimony. The Commission said it will implement strategies to increase public awareness about filing of rate cases and other cases likely to be of significant public interest, making it easier for members of the public to identify and connect with intervenors in those cases and encouraging opportunities for meaningful public comment. Potential strategies include providing notification of case filings and pre-hearing information to the CPN and through the Commission's social media channels, as well as the creation of a dedicated webpage regarding these cases, their schedules and approved intervenors. Finally, the Commission said it will develop a framework to govern the MPSC's public participation efforts, which will be published on the Commission's website and updated periodically based upon lessons learned and input received from community-based organizations and members of the public who engage with the Commission.

MPSC APPROVES NEW DISTRIBUTION PLANNING FILING REQUIREMENTS, SETS DEADLINES FOR COMMENTS, NEXT CASES

As part of its work to improve the electric distribution planning process, the MPSC today approved new distribution system plan filing guidelines and a new protective order to be used in distribution plan cases ([Case No. U-20147](#)). The Commission also set new deadlines for regulated utilities to file their next distribution plans, and set deadlines for comment on current distribution plans filed by Alpena Power Co., Northern States Power Co.-Wisconsin, and Upper Peninsula Power Co. Meanwhile, the Commission also directed Consumers Energy Co. and DTE Electric Co. to begin updating their hosting capacity maps at least quarterly, and monthly for any feeder that has had more than 500 kilowatts of generation added since its last quarterly update, and also included new information to be included in future distribution plans including grid modernization strategies and multiple load forecasts to better inform grid investments.

MPSC OKS AMENDED REPORTING REQUIREMENTS FOR NATURAL GAS WELLS

The Commission approved a motion by Riverside Energy Michigan LLC to revise notification and reporting requirements for natural gas wells operated on vacuum in the Antrim Shale Formation (ASF) in northern Michigan ([Case No. U-16230](#)). Riverside sought to ease the reporting requirements for how frequently companies must report average monthly wellhead pressure for each well operated under vacuum. The Commission, finding that the amended reporting will not impact safety operations in the ASF, granted the amendment, noting that average monthly wellhead pressure will still be gathered and available for review by MPSC Staff, and that the amendment will ease the regulatory burden for well operators.

COMMISSION OKs AMENDED CAPACITY CONTRACT FOR INDIANA MICHIGAN POWER CO.

The MPSC approved Indiana Michigan Power Co.'s (I&M) application for approval of an amended and restated capacity purchase agreement ([Case No. U-21189](#)). The Commission in August 2023 approved a 7-year capacity-only purchase agreement for 210 MW of capacity accredited by regional transmission operator PJM from the Montpelier Generating Station, a natural gas facility in Wells County, Ind., part of the utility's work to meet goals laid out in its [first integrated resource plan](#) approved by the MPSC. I&M indicated that the amended contract is necessary to account for changes to PJM's rules on effective load carrying capability and its impact on capacity accreditation.

MPSC APPROVES INDIANA MICHIGAN POWER CO'S PSCR RECONCILIATION, DISALLOWS MORE THAN \$3M IN COSTS

The MPSC approved Indiana Michigan Power Co.'s (I&M) application for reconciliation of its power supply cost recovery plan costs and revenues for the 12 months ending Dec. 31, 2023 ([Case No. U-21262](#)). Today's order set a net underrecovery of \$16,286,307, including interest, as the company's 2024 power supply cost recovery reconciliation beginning balance. The Commission disallowed \$2,250,305 in costs associated with its intercompany power agreement with Ohio Valley Electric Corp., under MPSC Code of Conduct rules governing transactions between affiliated

companies, and \$793,238 in unit power agreement costs at I&M's Rockport Unit 1. The Michigan Department of Attorney General, the Sierra Club and the Citizens Utility Board of Michigan intervened in the case. MPSC Staff also participated.

MPSC APPROVES DTE ELECTRIC CO. APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF SOLAR PROJECT CONTRACTS

The MPSC today approved DTE Electric Co.'s application for contract approval for the 80-megawatt (MW) Beecher Solar Project in Raisin and Palmyra townships in Lenawee County ([Case No. U-21361](#)). The Commission approved an engineering, procurement and construction master service agreement with Barton Malow Co. to design, engineer, construct, install, start up and test the Beecher Solar Project and master supply agreements with Boviet Solar USA Ltd and Canadian Solar (USA) Inc. for solar panel modules. DTE Electric estimates the project's installed cost is \$2,259 per kilowatt (kW) and the price is expected to be \$79 per megawatt-hour (MWh). The Commission in May approved a special contract between DTE Electric and the University of Michigan for an 80-MW site to meet U of M's annual requirement for renewable energy credits.

COMMISSION WAIVES SOME FEES IN ENERGY SITING APPLICATIONS

The MPSC today opted to waive, until further notice, some of the fees the agency had proposed to help fund the Commission's costs for reviewing siting applications for certain utility-scale wind, solar and energy storage facilities under Public Act 233 of 2023 (PA 233) ([Case No. U-21547](#)). PA 233, which went into effect in November 2024, granted the MPSC siting authority for utility-scale renewable energy projects, and the Commission in October 2024 approved application instructions that include information on requirements, fees and other matters. Noting PA 233's permissive language that the MPSC "may" assess reasonable application fees, the Commission today postponed the collection of base application fees (\$10,000 per application), additional Staff hour fees (billed hourly), and formal complaint fees. Fees associated with expert consultant testimony, external public meetings, court fees and environmental reporting and testing, and other fees remain in effect.

MPSC OKs NEW CONSUMERS ENERGY CO. NATURAL GAS STORAGE PIPELINE

The MPSC today approved Consumers Energy Co.'s application to construct and operate a new natural gas pipeline to connect a new C-1103 well to the company's existing C-991 line ([Case No. U-21835](#)). Consumers is installing the new C-1103 well in its Cranberry Storage Field in Clare County's Winterfield Township. The new well and pipeline will help ensure the company can meet required natural gas storage capacity and injection/withdrawal rates for the field. The utility estimates the cost of the 150-foot pipeline will be \$759,250, which the company would seek to recover in an upcoming natural gas general rate case.

COMMISSION APPROVES DEFERRED COSTS FOR DTE GAS CO.

The Commission approved an application by DTE Gas Co. to defer increased costs for services provided by DTW Michigan Lateral Co. (DMLC) for the Traverse City/Alpena Reinforcement Project, or TCARP ([Case No. U-21917](#)). DTE Gas requested that any change in costs resulting from a Commission order increasing rates above those

included in DTE Gas's base rates incurred for its DMLC TCARP services be deferred as a regulatory asset. TCARP is designed to provide a redundant supply of natural gas, improving reliability for about 91,000 DTE Gas customers in northern Michigan.

For information about the MPSC, visit www.michigan.gov/mpsc, sign up for its [monthly newsletter](#) or other [listservs](#). Follow the MPSC on [Facebook](#), [X/Twitter](#) or [LinkedIn](#).

To look up cases from today's meeting, access the [MPSC's E-Dockets filing system](#). Watch recordings of the MPSC's meetings on the [MPSC's YouTube channel](#).

DISCLAIMER: *This document was prepared to aid the public's understanding of certain matters before the Commission and is not intended to modify, supplement, or be a substitute for the Commission's orders. The Commission's orders are the official action of the Commission.*

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