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Gretchen Whitmer, Governor
Dan Scripps, Chair
Katherine Peretick, Commissioner
Shaquila Myers, Commissioner

[X/Twitter: @MichiganPSC](#)
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Jan. 29, 2026
News media contact: [Matt Helms](#) 517-284-8300
Customer Assistance: 800-292-9555

MPSC improves siting process for high-voltage transmission lines, strengthening public engagement and urging more flexibility in route options

The MPSC today approved new recommended guidelines to help ensure better public engagement in the siting process for new high-voltage electric transmission lines and to encourage more flexibility in routing the lines needed to strengthen Michigan's power grid.

The Commission approved new Voluntary Filing Guidelines for Applications for Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity, which will serve as a key document defining the MPSC's expectation from transmission line developers for improved public participation for landowners impacted by new transmission lines and more routing options to address landowner concerns ([Case No. U-21930](#)).

The new guidelines are part of the MPSC's work to improve the process by which high voltage transmission lines are sited in Michigan following the Commission's approval last year of the state's first interstate high-voltage transmission project in more than 50 years. The guidelines come as the regional grid operator moves forward with the two largest portfolios of backbone electric transmission projects in U.S. history, including a number of projects slated for Michigan.

"As we continue to build the grid of the future, these additional safeguards help ensure that affected landowners have a seat at the table and a voice in the process," MPSC Commissioner Katherine Peretick said. "We expect that people whose properties may be impacted by new high-voltage lines should be heard, and their concerns adequately addressed."

The approval of Michigan Electric Transmission Co.'s (METC) two projects in July of last year — the Nelson Road to Oneida project, a 39-mile, 345 kilovolt (kV) double circuit line between substations in Gratiot and Eaton counties, and the Helix to Hiple project, a 55-mile, 345 kV double circuit line between substations in Calhoun and Branch counties — marked the first new high-voltage transmission lines authorized by the MPSC in more than a decade, and the lines were the largest to be approved since the Commission authorized the Thump Loop in February 2011.

At the same time, the Commission [noted its disappointment](#) in a lack of meaningful engagement with impacted landowners when METC sought approval for the two major new transmission lines in southern Michigan. As a result, the Commission directed MPSC Staff to work with interested organizations and persons to develop voluntary filing guidelines for use by applicants for future lines, to promote clarity, efficiency and transparency. The Commission directed Staff to address concerns about a lack of clarity in the statute 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 landowner

The order issuing guidelines today is a result of that engagement. Among other improvements, new guidelines recommend that transmission line construction plans should identify the proposed study area and general information the construction plan should contain, including information for a dedicated point of contact for the public and the applicant's plan for soliciting information from the public and municipalities within the study area.

The guidelines also recommend:

- Applicants invite to a public meeting all affected landowners and municipalities through which the transmission line will pass and include all landowners and municipalities within one mile of the proposed right of way.
- Applicants identify and review multiple alternate routes with landowners and municipalities to develop a fuller understanding of land considerations and landowner comments when refining final routes in applications.
- Applicants consider landowner-submitted route adjustments.
- Providing for a dedicated comment period to allow for additional feedback after the final public meeting held by applicants.
- The addition of topics that should be addressed during public meetings, including information related to electric and magnetic fields produced by transmission lines and general project and process information.

The guidelines also include provisions to improve public notice materials sent to impacted property owners, and additional materials to be included in future applications, including justification for rights of way and study areas, the use of route optimization and evaluation software, assessment of suggested routes submitted by the public, and more.

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.

Participants in the case included residents Erik Birchman, Valerie Wohlscheid-Brennan and Robert Halpin; METC and International Transmission Co.; American Transmission

Co.; Michigan Energy Innovation Business Council; Advanced Energy United; Clean Grid Alliance; Consumers Energy Co.; DTE Electric Co.; and MPSC Staff.

COMMISSION APPROVES 2 UTILITY VOLUNTARY GREEN PRICING MEASURES

The MPSC approved orders on several utility voluntary green pricing programs (VGP), which allow customers to voluntarily specify that a certain amount of electricity they buy from a utility is to be generated using renewable energy sources, with the costs of the program billed only to participating customers. Michigan's VGP programs are among the most robust in the country, giving residential and business customers the option to directly support Michigan's transition to cleaner energy. The MPSC approved a joint stipulation among parties in Consumers Energy Co.'s VGP program, approved by the Commission in August 2024, to update its C54.50 tariff to include details the utility omitted ([Case No. U-21374](#)). In addition, the Commission approved Indiana Michigan Power Co.'s amended ex parte application for approval of biennial updates to its VGP program ([Case No. U-18353](#)).

MPSC OKS AVOIDED COST RATES IN CONSUMERS ENERGY SOLAR PROJECTS

The Commission approved orders updating the full avoided cost rates smaller, independent power producers receive when selling power to Consumers Energy ([Case No. U-21090](#)). Under the Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act of 1978 (PURPA), small power production facilities and cogeneration facilities, known as qualifying facilities (QFs), have a right to interconnect with and sell power to local utilities. Avoided cost rates represent the cost a utility avoids when it buys from a QF instead of generating or purchasing the power itself. The Commission approved Consumers' Nov. 3, 2025, application to base these PURPA full avoided cost rates on the costs associated with the 145.8 megawatt (MW) Logan Solar project. The Commission also approved an updated bundled outflow rate for its Simple Renewable Program, based on the output of Consumers' power purchase agreement with the 300 MW Freshwater Solar project, which had been proposed in an application filed on Aug. 7, 2025.

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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](#).

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