



Routing and Siting Process

Define project study area and identify preliminary alternative route segments

The project study area was based on required transmission interconnections, including a new 115 kV line between Xcel Energy's existing Curry Substation, located approximately 0.5 miles east of the intersection of NM 270 and Norris Street in Curry County, New Mexico, to the existing Xcel Energy Bailey Substation located approximately 0.2 miles south of the intersection of State Route 214 and North 1st Street in Bailey County, Texas. Possible transmission line segments were identified based on existing corridors, such as rights-of-way and associated corridors (roads, railroads, other utilities) as well as existing land uses and parcel boundaries.

Engage the public and local agencies

Preliminary route segments presented to the public help gather input and feedback from property owners, elected officials, agencies and organizations. Open houses provide an opportunity for the public to meet the project team to discuss the project purpose, design specifications and requirements, engineering and land right issues and the process for selecting a preferred route.

Conduct an opportunities and constraints analysis

Data is gathered for the routing and environmental analysis efforts, including existing homes near the alternative routes; other structures such as communications towers, wind turbines, airports, center-pivot or rolling irrigation systems,

and oil wells and pads; inventory opportunities such as road, railroad, utility or other linear corridors and rights-of-way; and environmental resources such as wetlands, drainages, sensitive habitat for wildlife and plant species, and cultural resources. The data collected will be used in the routing and siting process where criteria are examined. Additional data will be collected to address specific siting criteria established by the Public Utilities Commission of Texas (PUC) for the Certificate of Convenience and Necessity (CCN) permit application.

PUC siting criteria

- The number of habitable structures within 300 feet of segment centerline
- The number of AM transmitters within 10,000 feet of segment centerline
- The number of FM microwave transmitters within 2,000 feet of segment centerline
- The number of private airstrips and FAA-registered airstrips with runways shorter than 3,200 feet within 10,000 feet of centerline
- The number of FAA-registered airstrips with at least one runway longer than 3,200 feet within 20,000 feet of centerline
- The number of heliports within 5,000 feet of centerline
- The number of center point pivot and rolling irrigation systems crossed
- The number of parks and recreational areas (owned by a governmental body or an organized group, club, or church) within 1,000 feet of centerline

Route refinement

Data collected during the opportunities and constraints phase will be studied and mapped using a geographic information system (GIS). Routing and siting the proposed transmission line and substation will focus on opportunities and constraints and whether there are any avoidance or exclusion areas to consider. Opportunity areas include linear corridors that may provide suitable opportunity for co-locating a transmission line, such as a road, highway, railroad or utility right-of-way. Another linear opportunity is following parcel boundaries if there are limited conflicts with structures or commercial operations. Avoidance areas include environmentally sensitive areas, such as federally listed and protected biological species, recorded archaeological sites or historic structures on the National Register.

Exclusion areas include sensitive locations that are likely to have regulatory or legislative protections and restrictions, or areas with extreme physical constraints. A comparative matrix will summarize and quantify the data collected and help rank the alternatives in relation to environmental, land use, engineering and cost impacts.

Environmental assessment and alternative route analysis

Following route refinement, an environmental assessment will be prepared addressing the feasible route alternatives. It will summarize the routing process, input from the public and agencies, and the results of the environmental assessment. A preferred alternative will be selected based on the analysis. The report and CCN application will be submitted to the PUCT.

CCN application

A CCN application will be submitted to the PUCT, pursuant to P.U.C. Subst. R. 25.174. The environmental assessment and alternative route analysis will be included, along with engineering data, cost estimates and public involvement documentation.

Public hearings

The proposed project will be considered at a public hearing with the PUCT. The public can provide comment and testimony on the proposal.