

Subject: Protecting Communities & Ecosystems from Transmission Line Impacts

To: Whomever It May Concern

Recent transmission line proposals affecting the Edwards Plateau—particularly the region known as “Flash Flood Alley”—have raised significant concerns among residents and environmental stakeholders. In light of recent flood events, there is growing interest in legislative and regulatory measures that prioritize public safety, ecological integrity, and community well-being in infrastructure planning.

The Friends of the San Saba (FOSS), a local advocacy organization, is urging the Public Utility Commission (PUC) and the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) to reevaluate transmission routes that may impact the San Saba River and adjacent flood-prone areas. Their recommendations include:

- Considering alternative corridors, such as the proposed Interstate 14 route
- Reassessing the necessity of certain segments
- Avoiding development within designated flood plains

FOSS has mobilized community members under the message “Texas CAN do better than this!” and is encouraging property owners to work with county officials and elected representatives to support resolutions that reflect these priorities. They also caution that current routing strategies may inadvertently divide communities, increasing the likelihood of controversial segments being approved. Collective advocacy is essential to ensure fair and balanced decision-making.

In addition to environmental and infrastructure concerns, residents have raised serious questions about the human health and agricultural impacts of high-voltage transmission corridors—particularly in areas with prolonged exposure. According to the National Cancer Institute, American Cancer Society, and other health organizations, long-term exposure to electromagnetic fields (EMFs) has been associated with elevated risks of childhood cancers, neurological decline, reproductive challenges, and chronic sleep disruption linked to operational noise and EMF interference.

These concerns extend to animal and agricultural health as well. Ranchers report reduced cattle productivity, respiratory issues, and birth defects near transmission lines. EMF exposure has also been linked to weakened bee colonies, threatening pollination services critical to Texas agriculture. Wildlife migration patterns are

disrupted when habitats are fragmented by towers and cleared corridors, compounding ecological stress.

Together, these risks reinforce the importance of routing transmission infrastructure away from vulnerable communities and ecologically sensitive areas—and strengthen the case for localized, moderately redundant microgrids in regions with demonstrated need. Compared to large-scale centralized transmission systems, microgrids offer:

- Resilience during extreme weather events
- Reduced vulnerability to single-point failures
- Tailored energy solutions for individual communities

This approach aligns with current grid modernization efforts and supports both reliability and environmental responsibility. While many microgrids incorporate renewable energy sources, Texas also has the opportunity to leverage its abundant natural gas resources as part of a balanced, regionally appropriate energy mix.

Microgrids contribute meaningfully to disaster resilience through:

- Island Mode Operation: Ensuring continuity for critical services during outages
- Distributed Energy Resources (DERs): Reducing reliance on vulnerable long-distance transmission
- Rapid Recovery & Emergency Support: Accelerating post-disaster restoration and coordination
- Tailored Design: Matching local risk profiles and energy demands
- Redundancy and Flexibility: Maintaining power even if one component fails

Real-world examples underscore these benefits (1):

- In North Carolina, microgrids sustained essential services during Hurricane Helene
- In California, microgrids supported isolated communities during wildfire-related outages
- On Ocracoke Island, a microgrid restored power within three days after Hurricane Dorian

With thoughtful infrastructure planning—prioritizing microgrids and minimizing floodplain development—Texas can build a more resilient, equitable, and health-conscious energy future.

According to FOSS, ERCOT has proposed five transmission routes to the west. Coordinated public engagement could help guide the selection of less disruptive alternatives or prompt a broader reconsideration of the current plan.

Your leadership on this issue could play a vital role in advancing responsible infrastructure development and long-term regional resilience.

Respectfully,

Erin Cotto

(1) <https://sepapower.org/resource/the-microgrid-case-studies-community-resilience-for-natural-disasters/>