

Behind our backs, in plain sight, our Texas legislature passed HB 5066 in 2023 empowering ERCOT to empower PUCT to perform a study and create a Plan that will be implemented regardless of what voters and legislators think about the Plan. The legislation appears to give PUCT carte blanche to approve the plan and proceed with the implementation as they see fit. Neither voters nor legislators can question the plan that the PUCT decides upon.

While this article is meant to provide education and background, our efforts to preserve and conserve Texas land and resources can NEVER cease. We cannot settle for nor stand down in this battle to save Texas. As usual, we list questions and resources. OUR LEGISLATORS NEED TO HEAR FROM ALL TEXANS. Whether city dweller or rural, all taxpayers, our land, recreation, water, habitat, wildlife, birds, insects, and livestock are all going to pay the price charged by this plan that receives no feedback other than a few lawyers who only seem to argue for line placement for individuals who can afford the fees.

Per ERCOT in their published document in January summarizing the Plan:

The ERCOT System is experiencing rapid changes, including trends of substantial growth in demand and increasing penetration of Inverter-Based Resources (IBRs). ERCOT's 2024 Regional Transmission Plan (RTP)¹, which includes an analysis of needed transmission improvements for 2026- 2030, including an unprecedented amount of economic growth led by a significant increase in large load interconnections (i.e., data centers, hydrogen and hydrogen-related manufacturing, crypto mining, and electrification). The forecasted summer peak demand for 2030 exceeds 150 GW, of which approximately 50 GW is large load growth. This unprecedented load growth coupled with the growing amount of congestion already present in today's system prompted discussions about introducing 765- kV infrastructure to the ERCOT Transmission Grid. The 765-kV addition would enable power to flow more efficiently through long-distance transmission from resource-rich regions to load centers.

The cost - \$33 BILLION to be paid by rate payers.

New 765-KV lines total 2,468 miles of 200 foot right of way and heavier steel towers in excess 200 feet in height emitting minimum 50 decibels of noise. Additionally, there are new 345-kV lines for 349 miles, and 138 -kV lines for 324 miles. All these lines plus additional infrastructure total 71,474 acres to be removed from open land, homesteads and as proposed, they will cross wild Texas rivers.

We need to act now and seek information, ask questions, contact our legislators and not stop until there is full transparency, accountability and WISDOM being utilized to determine what is best for Texas, her residents, her economy, and her resources. As is typical, developers and utility companies who race for the pot of gold funded by taxpayers continue to paint a picture of certainty as they determine what is best for Texas which happens to be in their best interests. Just as we cannot understand the burgeoning size of the new giant wind turbines and thousands of acres of sprawling solar farms burning up our clouds, we cannot imagine the size of the new monsters in town and their environmental impact on our land, resources, bodies and animals.

Are they safe? - The utility companies and developers say they are, but of course they are the ones building them. One of the developers indicated only an Environmental Assessment will be performed. In Texas, an environmental study is a general term for any investigation into environmental conditions, while an Environmental Assessment (EA) is a specific, often preliminary, public document used under federal (NEPA) and state frameworks *to determine if a project's impact is significant enough to warrant a more detailed Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or if a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is appropriate.* An EA itself is a level of review, not the entire process, and it aims to understand an activity's effects on the environment.

In other words, **no** Environmental Impact Study will be performed by peer reviewed professionals, only an EA. More info is found on our website about this.

Here are some questions to ask our legislators –

1. It was a **Biden Era Mandate** to electrify the Permian Basin, which should now be obsolete. What is the plan now? The current published mandates are vague and over generalized. Take power to the Permian basin? But they have all the natural gas.
2. **Is it redundant to build transmission to West Texas** when they are perfectly capable of providing their own generation locally and distribution via smaller microgrids? *Billions have already been spent on upgrades in that area.*
3. **The cry for more transmission has been going on for years** and references to our ageing infrastructure about. Why the slam-dunk rush now with no legislative or taxpayer input? While some of this may be true, hasn't much of our infrastructure has been updated many times over? This is an ongoing process. The cries of those who want more transmission *that the ratepayer pays for* have largely come from the wind and solar industries. And the Transmission Service Providers (TSPs) are happy to oblige. (\$) Note the past lesson of spending \$12 BILLION on the Texas Competitive Renewable Energy Zone lines which did little to help during the winter of 2021.
4. **The same can be said for datacenters who are now pushing the agenda**; if they wish to establish themselves in West Texas, there is plenty of natural gas to do so. For the record, datacenters cannot run on solar, wind or battery power. They need 24/7 *reliable* energy. The ONLY reason they buy into wind and solar is for the money – credits to offset their tax burden, so the average taxpayer is now dinged twice. Again, what is the REAL agenda here?
5. **Technology is changing fast**, and this is a huge expenditure, which has been 10-15 years in the making and two different presidential administrations. What consideration has been given to security risks? Lack of attention to this all important point could set us up for major unreliability issues in the future.

6. **Are the TSPs going to add security features to their transformers and substations?** This cost would add about \$40 MILLION for the entire project to give protection against Electromagnetic Pulse (EMPs) and Geomagnetic Disturbances (GMDs).
7. **There is no benefit to our local areas**, since there will be NO offtake to our rural utilities. For example, the Dinosaur to Longshore line will remove some of the rural dependable dispatchable nuclear power to go west and leave the area where it is generated and needed.
8. **This project is already costing millions to ratepayers** in attorneys fees to try to protect their land thoughtless and tyrannical encroachment.
9. **This project does NOT appear to be in the public interest NOR for the good of a stable and reliable grid at the local levels.** According to ERCOT President, Pablo Vegas, on the Senate Hearing on April 9, 2025, he mentions that there is no population growth in the forecast, just increased forecast for datacenters and industrial use. While the main criterion of the plan states an increase in oil and gas production and hence the need for transmission, the charts provided by ERCOT show almost level production. So, what is their plan REALLY for about?
10. **As is typical for our various governments, is the history of this project in question?** Disturbances in the Permian region brought on by solar based inverters and blackouts as seen in 2021 Winter Storm Uri and others, were these storm events the excuse to drive this transmission plan which lines the pockets for many utility and energy developers (including inefficient renewables) more so than overriding rational and economical and technological solutions for reliability?
11. **Is it correct to understand that legislators will not be able to approve the Plan?** It would appear that the PUC is given inherent authority to approve any plan and spend any amount of ratepayer money with little oversight and few guardrails and NO environment impact studies.

12. **Restated another way, who has final authority to implement the Plan that ERCOT developed and PUCT approved?** Did our legislators know that in the passage of HB 5066, the Plan would cost \$33 BILLION to be borne by their voters??? It was almost a unanimous vote. Did the legislators think about what it will do to our utility rates, affecting the poor among us more than anyone else?
13. **ERCOT currently has 170 GW of generation available for a 40% margin.** But 70% of that is wind and solar which cannot be always relied upon. And 13 GW of batteries might last 15 minutes or less. Therefore, we have 100 GW of dispatchable generation that we can use with up to 90 GW necessary in summer or winter high demands – not enough margin thanks to the expensive inefficiency of environmentally hazardous and costly solar, wind and batteries. Is it right for the ratepayer to pay for the mistakes of ERCOT and PUCT, who are presumably experts that have exhibited poor decision making that succumbs to corporate interests instead of Texas residents?

The PUCT and ERCOT mission statement is to provide reliable service for their customers and to protect the ratepayer. Based upon the questions above, lack of transparency, inability to quickly address changing technologies, and more, it appears that these goals are not being achieved. It looks more like the continual patching and more patching of a broken system that taxpayers are continually paying for and corporate interests keep cashing in.

ERCOT PLAN: <https://www.ercot.com/files/docs/2025/01/27/2024-regional-transmission-plan-rtp-345-kv-plan-and-texas-765-kv-strategic-transmission-expans.pdf>

TEXAS HOUSE COMMITTEE REPORTS:

<https://capitol.texas.gov/tlodocs/88R/analysis/html/HB05066H.htm>

