

Eastern Interconnection Planning Collaborative Key Messages

Joint statement

Representatives from 17 bulk power system planning authorities in eastern North America have agreed to work jointly on forming an Eastern Interconnection Planning Collaborative (EIPC) for the sole purpose of developing an interconnection-wide view and analysis of regional transmission plans. Analyzing future transmission needs, especially as they relate to renewable resources, will necessitate a multi-regional approach to transmission planning that considers interconnection-wide impacts. Expanding on the existing planning expertise and protocols already employed on a regional basis in the Eastern Interconnection is the most efficient and timely means of accomplishing this goal.

The EIPC will develop a coordinated roll-up of existing transmission plans, analyze the combined system on an interconnection-wide basis, and identify gaps relative to state, provincial, regional, or federal policy goals. A key element of the collaborative effort is a grassroots approach that receives input from stakeholder groups, and state, provincial and federal officials.

Next steps include seeking a commitment to the process from all registered planning authorities in the east, having initial participants share the concept with stakeholder bodies in their regions, and continuing to develop the structure and processes necessary to begin work. The initial participants agreed to form a steering committee by April 30 and begin study team work before June 1.

KEY MESSAGE: The EIPC is an association of registered planning authorities joining together to use existing plans and processes in an efficient and effective way to achieve an interconnection-wide analysis in the East.

Transmission expansion plans in the Eastern Interconnection are developed today and coordinated on a regional and super-regional basis, but are not fully coordinated on an interconnection-wide basis. This full coordination can most effectively be done through a single collaborative approach that builds on existing processes.

Expanding existing processes to cover the entire Eastern Interconnection will require a “bottom-up” approach with broad stakeholder involvement, in particular, ensuring a role for federal, state and provincial officials.

The EIPC will provide demonstrated analytical results, and be poised to address future needs.

KEY MESSAGE: The EIPC is committed to an open and transparent process using a grass-roots approach to the roll-up of regional plans, consistent with FERC Order 890 principles.

Regardless of timing and shape of emerging challenges to transmission planning processes, planning authorities in the Eastern Interconnection must work together collaboratively due to the interconnected nature of the transmission grid. The EIPC expects policy makers to set goals – energy, environment, reliability, etc. – and allow the transmission planners to analyze and develop alternatives to satisfy the policy objectives. Interconnection-wide coordination and analysis ensures development of sound alternatives that facilitate policy objectives.

KEY MESSAGE: The primary objective of the EIPC is to provide an integrated, interconnection-wide view of regionally developed plans and to provide analysis identifying any gaps relative to state, provincial, regional or federal policy goals.

The collaborative approach leverages existing regional and system specific planning efforts and proactively develops an interconnection-wide analysis based on the roll-up of regional plans, consistent with Order 890 principles and existing processes. That process can be expanded to include scenario analysis in response to policy objectives. The formation of a collaborative approach also facilitates input from all interested parties, particularly federal, state and provincial officials.

KEY MESSAGE: The purpose of the EIPC is coordinated transmission analysis and planning rather than to determine cost allocation, deal with siting or permitting issues, or to set or influence energy policy.

The EIPC takes the approach that, in the U.S., Federal Power Act Section 205 filing rights and obligations remain with individual utility systems and ISOs/RTOs. The EIPC process will also expect that FERC Order 890 processes and existing queues will be respected. The EIPC will not attempt to resolve cost allocation issues, cost recovery, siting disputes, or permitting issues.

KEY MESSAGE: Coordination between planning authorities in the U.S. and Canada is essential and continuing.

The Eastern Interconnection works as a single transmission grid that follows the laws of physics. As such, coordination between Canadian and U.S. transmission plans, and between the governmental authorities is essential. Formation of the EIPC is the best way to accomplish this coordination.

KEY MESSAGE: Ultimately, the EIPC analysis may extend to examining the effectiveness and system impacts of a variety of transmission alternatives that address energy policy goals.

The initial effort of the EIPC will be to demonstrate the concept of performing an interconnection-wide analysis by expanding on existing regional planning efforts and other on-going study processes. Ultimately, the EIPC can identify potential interconnection-wide alternatives for addressing transmission needs that meet policy directives.

KEY MESSAGE: The EIPC will publish an interconnection analysis report to provide government and administration policymakers with an overview of planning efforts across the eastern interconnection.

Results from the EIPC effort will provide policymakers feedback on the potential impact on transmission system requirements of achieving national, regional and state or provincial requirements and energy, economic, and environmental objectives. The analysis and description of system impacts and alternatives will be provided to FERC.

Potential Q&A on the EIPC effort:

1. Will this serve the same function as that provided for in the legislation?

The approach used by the EIPC could be used to meet the transmission planning objectives envisioned in draft legislation under consideration in the U.S. House and Senate.

2. Why is this a better approach?

The EIPC is structured around a grassroots approach to the roll-up of regionally developed plans. The approach leverages existing regional and multi-regional planning efforts in a “bottom-up” approach that builds on existing processes. It is coupled with an open and transparent process that receives input from stakeholder groups and state, provincial and federal officials.

3. Will this in fact be an entity with staff, budget etc.?

It is too early to tell whether the EIPC will need to form a new entity to perform this work and how many staff might be needed. Initially the planning authorities forming the EIPC believe the work can be done with contributed manpower and resources.

4. Is the analysis in effect a plan for multi-regional transmission?

Initially the work will be to roll-up existing regional plans in a coordinated approach and to analyze the result on an interconnection-wide basis. This analysis can identify gaps relative to state, provincial, regional or federal policy goals. It can also identify a range of scenarios and options for regional plans, utilities and developers to consider. The EIPC does not envision developing a single plan that specifies a single set of facilities to be constructed along a specific timeline.

5. Will the analysis make recommendations?

The analyses will result in various scenarios and options rather than determine a single set of facilities to be constructed along a specific timeline.

6. Will the analysis include more than a roll-up of present transmission plans?

Yes. The EIPC will analyze the combined plans on an interconnection-wide basis and identify gaps relative to state, provincial, regional or federal policy goals.

7. How will you resolve issues?

The EIPC is founded on a collaborative decision-making model. The commonality of goals among all participants in the process will help ensure resolution of issues. If the collaborative process does not reach a resolution, alternative solutions can be defined.

8. The EIPC discussion states that policymakers should set the goals; does that include goals for the EIPC?

The EIPC process is based on the expectation that policy makers will set goals – energy, environment, reliability, etc. – and then allow transmission planners to analyze and develop alternatives to satisfy the policy objectives. The resulting analyses will provide feedback on the potential impact on transmission system requirements of achieving national, regional and state or provincial requirements and energy, economic, and environmental objectives.

9. When do we publicly release the fact of this formation?

The process has already begun with several of the initial planning authority participants sharing the concept with their stakeholder constituencies.