

Testimony in support of HB and HB
Oregon House Energy and Environment Committee
February 25, 2025

My name is Angus Duncan. I represent the Natural Resources Defense Council, a national non-profit energy and environmental organization. I am a former Member and Chair of the Northwest Power Planning Council and of the Oregon Global Warming Commission. I am presently representing NRDC in the WestTEC process that is developing ten- and 20-year plans for upgraded and new transmission in the western United States.

I wholeheartedly support the two bills being advanced by Representative Mark Gamba and his co-sponsors. Together the bills will create a much-improved climate for rebuilding our electricity transmission grid within Oregon’s boundaries and interconnecting with the balance of the western grid. They are consistent with the regional planning underway in the WestTEC process.

The State Transmission Authority will enable Oregon to engage with public and private sector developers and users of the transmission system supporting the careful but expeditious rollout of transmission capacity increases into and out of the state.

The GETS bill will enable and encourage utilities and transmission providers to build the highest efficiency system afforded by today’s technology, whether new lines or upgrades of existing lines.

The rationales for these state and regional efforts can be stated in a straightforward manner:

- The region and country are facing significant increases in electricity loads, from electrification of home and business heating, cooling and transportation, to data center and industrial load growth, to decarbonizing the power system by shifting from fossil to zero carbon fuels and technologies.
- Existing lines, already inadequate, also don't extend into the wind resource prairies of the American plains states, or into the solar resources of the desert southwest; or offshore, to connect us to the fleet of floating wind turbines that are a likely future resource.
- The region and country have let electricity infrastructure languish from inattention, inadequate capital investment and technological inertia. The BPA system – 75% of our region's high voltage transmission; the functional backbone of the grid – has added only 600 miles to the 15,000 that supported the region 35 years ago.
- Our ability to plan, site and develop new transmission alignments today can take ten to 15 years or more, while the loads and resources are ready and needed today.

NRDC needs to express its strong concern that we site and build only those new lines that are needed.

- First, we expect utilities to urgently develop the load-center resources available to them – the energy efficiency, rooftop solar, distributed storage and other such resources that can go on roofs, in basements and on urban sites such as brownfields.

- Second, we expect utilities will look to upgrade existing lines with energy storage, GETS and other new technologies that can make better use of existing lines.
- Third, we need utilities and developers to respect community, cultural and natural values in siting their facilities.

At the same time, we need communities, tribal governments and environmental organizations to join with utilities developers in seeking the least imperfect pathways for grid siting work. There will be few choices that do not require difficult tradeoffs.

We strongly encourage the Oregon Legislature to make its ante into the pot of commitments emerging at the state and regional levels today. We are encouraged by the thoughtfulness and content of these two bills and urge that Committee Members advance them in the process.