



WestTEC Transmission Study: Advancing Montana's Energy Future

WestTEC's 10-year West-Wide Transmission Study provides an actionable plan to advance critical transmission projects that strengthen reliability, integrate new resources, and enable economic growth in Montana and across the West.

About the WestTEC Study


Through an unprecedented effort paid for and driven by over 70 regional utilities and stakeholders, WestTEC's *West-Wide Transmission Study: 10-year Horizon Report* identifies transmission projects required for reliable and efficient grid operations through 2035. This infrastructure is needed to strengthen reliability, drive economic growth, increase access to a deeper market, expand power sharing across a wider footprint, and preserve affordability. While this summary focuses on projects located in Montana, the broader portfolio also includes transmission investments in neighboring states, including Idaho, that will provide significant reliability and economic benefits to Montana.

WestTEC benefits for Montana

WestTEC transmission projects would deliver significant benefits to Montana, including:

- **More resilience.** Supports critical electricity transfers to keep the lights on during extreme events, such as winter storms and heat waves.
- **More economic development.** Enables 30% load growth by 2035, positioning Montana to attract and grow new industries.
- **More generation.** Enables 4 GW of new capacity, representing a 39% increase from today.

Montana 2035 outlook

 **30% load growth**

 **1,019 miles** of transmission upgrades*

 **4 GW** of new generating capacity

*Includes interstate transmission projects with mileage outside of Montana.

Total investment in Montana

The WestTEC study identified a need for \$5.3 billion of new or upgraded transmission in Montana — an investment roughly five times the costs of fixing the roads and bridges impacted by the June 2022 Yellowstone National Park flooding.

While this may seem daunting, one of the four identified projects is already detailed in previous utility plans.

Montana has the expertise, resources, and institutions to deliver these projects. The following page reviews the full project portfolio and outlines what is next.

Proposed WestTEC transmission projects in Montana

In Montana, WestTEC confirmed the need for one project already identified by an incumbent developer. It also identified three projects that are not yet formally planned and will require sponsors. All projects must be completed by 2035 to meet growing demand and maintain reliability in Montana and across the West.

Bonneville Power Administration project

BPA has identified a need for a \$545 million upgrade to an existing 90-mile transmission line from Montana to Washington. This includes construction of a new substation, replacement of electrical wires, and electrical equipment upgrades at BPA's existing substations in Montana.

North Plains Connector

GridUnited is developing a high-voltage direct current transmission line from Colstrip, Montana, to the Eastern Interconnection. The project will enable up to 3 GW of power transfer between the Eastern and Western Interconnections. While the project was modeled in the WestTEC's *10-Year Transmission Study*, it was outside the scope of the study and not included in the stats on the previous page because it is an interregional line. NorthWestern Energy has signed a nonbinding memorandum of understanding for 300 MW of rights on the line.

Newly proposed projects

The WestTEC plan identified two new lines costing \$4.7 billion to address interstate needs, improve interregional power flow, and help meet NERC reliability criteria under stressed system conditions. WestTEC also identified a 500 kV series capacitor upgrade on the existing Colstrip–Broadview line costing \$67 million. Early coordinated action on these projects is essential to ensure reliability through 2035.

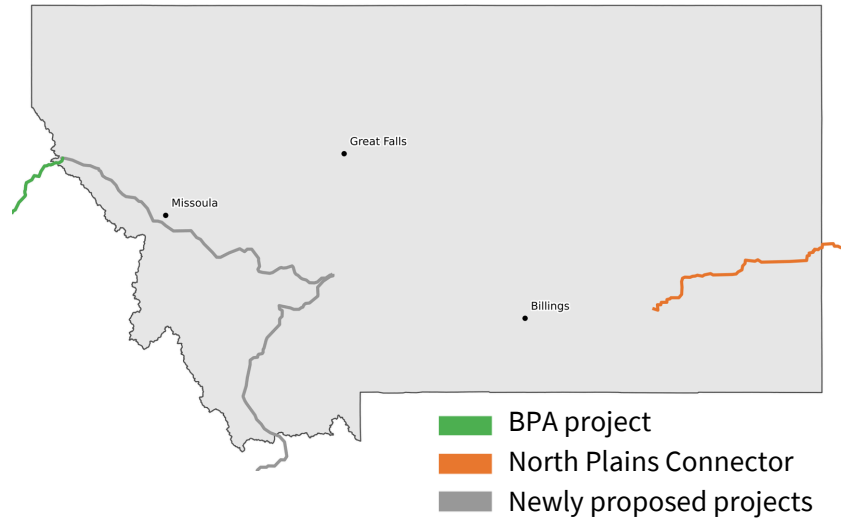
What happens next?

WestTEC's 10-Year Transmission Study provides an actionable roadmap for advancing transmission in Montana. Given the long timelines for siting, permitting, and construction, it is critical to move these projects forward now. Incumbent and independent developers must complete their planned projects, while newly proposed projects will need to be advanced through new partnerships. Strong coordination across stakeholders will be essential to ensure these projects are successfully delivered.

Coming soon...

Expected later in 2026, WestTEC's 20-Year horizon study will build on the 10-year horizon study by examining Western grid needs through 2045 under varied load growth, policy, and technology futures. Extending the planning horizon enables more proactive decision-making, helping ensure that near-term investments deliver the greatest long-term value at the lowest overall costs. Additionally, the 20-year study will quantify the cost savings delivered by the portfolio.

WestTEC transmission portfolio in Montana by project developer



Source: Horizon Energy Systems, 2026, ourgridfuture.org