

From: Lauren Ebersol <lebersol27@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, May 17, 2024 2:24 PM
To: PUC - Clerk <PUC.Clerk@vermont.gov>
Subject: Your role in adding grid capacity

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Dear Commissioners and future Electric System Planning Committee,

My name is Lauren, and I'm a resident of Burlington. I'm reaching out about an urgent problem regarding our nation's electric transmission capacity. Across the country, electricity reliability is threatened by an aging and fragmented grid that cannot support the increased load brought on by economic growth or withstand extreme weather.

In 2021, we saw how extreme weather events like Winter Storm Uri can easily jeopardize power grids that aren't interconnected with the rest of the country. Shoring up our transmission capacity ensures fewer blackouts and a stronger ability to balance our growing electricity load. An inevitable side effect of continued American economic growth is additional strain on the grid, which means we will need all hands on deck in adding new capacity and making the grid operate more efficiently wherever possible.

Fossil fuels may cause over 350,000 premature deaths in the U.S. per year. Expanding the U.S. power grid helps us reduce reliance on fossil fuels, especially the dirtiest "peaker" plants, which are dispatched when electricity demand peaks and a region quickly needs more energy. There are a number of peaker plants in the state, often in the poorest regions, and this is especially important to me. Recent federal legislation has emphasized the need for clean energy in at-risk communities, and we must do whatever we can to ensure this carries through, as these communities have been disproportionately harmed for far too long.

Helping to alleviate that grid strain is where public utilities commissions can step in. As regulators, you have several tools at your disposal to help improve this situation. I urge you to consider incentivizing utilities to use grid-enhancing technologies and improve their demand management to make power delivery more efficient, and to implement other regulations that help push utilities to be more energy efficient.

I think it's essential that our utilities are held to the highest possible standards and don't add to the problem by continuing outdated practices that put unnecessary strain on the grid. As someone who cares deeply about our natural resources, our ability to transition to clean energy is important to me. As a state, Vermont has decided to move towards clean energy before many others. However, this will not carry through in implementation if the grid cannot withstand the additional energy, making this a never-ending cycle where we just keep using the fossil fuel energy that we always have.

Please work to implement these reforms, which will go a long way toward improving our grid capacity. I hope that this will be considered for the Electric System Planning committee. Thank you for considering this perspective.

Sincerely,

Lauren

Lauren Ebersol (she/her)

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