

# Primary Ask to Joe Morelle for BIG WIRES Act 2024

There are two pieces to the puzzle of solving the projected U.S. electricity consumption: one is permitting reform, which has a long way to go, but thanks to your Congress, made significant progress under the Inflation Reduction Act by giving NEPA the authority to fast-track infrastructure projects. But building new electricity generation infrastructure is not enough unless there is adequate transmission to deliver it, which brings us to our main ask for today: the BIG WIRES Act (sponsored by Sen. Hickenlooper / CO)

So, the BIG WIRES Act is technology-neutral and simply mandates regional power zones to increase their interregional transmission capacity to the lesser of 30% of their peak demand or 15% of their peak demand over their current load. Now, as a PhD student, numbers like this throw me off. So, I poked a few experts and found that the DOE conducted the "National Transmission Needs" study, which found that 30% is just scratching the surface when it comes to meeting projected U.S. electricity consumption.

Before I forget, elements of the BIG WIRES Act were discussed during the debt ceiling negotiations earlier this year. But the result was simply a call for a three-year study of interconnection needs (by NERC, or the North American Electric Reliability Corporation). Interconnections have already proven their worth, both in extreme weather events and in bringing green energy to places that would otherwise burn fossil fuels, such as the Pacific Intertie between California and the Pacific Northwest. In addition, there are numerous studies, such as the DOE's, showing that the U.S. needs transmission lines, and it needs them fast.