

**Grain Belt Express
February 2025 Public Meetings
Transcript**

00:00:00:00 - 00:00:29:23

Todd Stribley

Good afternoon everyone. My name is Todd Stribley, and I'm the director of environmental compliance with the Department of Energy Loan Programs office. I want to thank you for joining us today at this public comment meeting on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, or Draft EIS for the phase one Grain Belt Express Transmission Project. The purpose of this video is to provide information about the Loan Programs Office, the Draft EIS, and the Grain Belt Express Transmission Project, and how to provide input.

00:00:29:26 - 00:00:38:27

Todd Stribley

This video will be played during the in-person public comment meetings, as well as during the virtual public comment meetings.

00:00:39:00 - 00:01:00:27

Todd Stribley

For those attending the in-person meetings, each meeting has been designed as an Open House meeting to allow you to directly engage with the staff from the Loan Programs Office, or LPO, and staff from the Grain Belt Express LLC, a subsidiary of Invenergy, also known as the Applicant, and their environmental consultant, Tetra Tech. For the in-person open house meetings.

00:01:00:28 - 00:01:30:03

Todd Stribley

Three areas have been established to facilitate information exchange and collect any comments you may wish to present or provide on the Project. The Open House meeting areas include this area with a recorded presentation and an interactive poster board area

with specific information about the phase one Grain Belt Express Transmission Project. And finally, an area with LPO staff and a court reporter to allow you to verbally provide comments on the Project or submit comments in writing or electronically.

00:01:30:05 - 00:02:06:05

Todd Stribley

For those attending the virtual public meetings, the poster board information is available on the Appeals Project website that can be accessed at www.energy.gov/lpo/environmental-impact-statements. As I said, I am Todd Stribley the Director of Environmental Compliance with the Department of Energy Loan Programs Office, and joining me today is Brad Pnazek with Grain Belt Express LLC, the owner of the Grain Belt Express transmission Project.

00:02:06:08 - 00:02:32:09

Todd Stribley

And I also have Jack Middleton from Tetra Tech and Tetra Tech, a consultant hired by Grain Belt Express to assist in the development of the EIS. This public meeting is on the phase one Grain Belt Express Transmission Project, a new, primarily high voltage direct current or HVDC transmission line from Ford County in southwestern Kansas to Callaway County in northeastern Missouri.

00:02:32:11 - 00:02:37:29

Todd Stribley

We'll talk more about the Project in a few slides.

00:02:38:01 - 00:03:06:00

Todd Stribley

As we get started. I want to go over some general housekeeping items first. Please note that the virtual meeting is being recorded. Each person is automatically muted to ensure there's no background noise for those at the in-person meeting. Members of the Environmental Impact Statement Team, both LPO and the applicant are available to provide information

about the Project. We ask that engagements with LPO and the Applicant, as well as other members of the public be professional and respectful.

00:03:06:04 - 00:03:29:24

Todd Stribley

For the in-person meetings should you wish to provide oral comments to the court reporter, we ask that oral comments be limited to five minutes or less to allow others time to provide their comments. For the virtual meeting, there will be time for questions and comments after this video. These slides and this recording are also available on LPO's Project website.

00:03:29:27 - 00:03:38:15

Todd Stribley

Again, LPO appreciates your time and interest in the Project and for attending this Public Comment meeting.

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Todd Stribley

To begin today's presentation, I will discuss the work of the LPO and explain its role in the Project. Then Brad will tell us more about the Project and its history. After that, LPO and Tetra Tech will review the Draft EIS and I will finish by describing your role in the NEPA process. So let's talk about LPO and its role in the phase one Grain Belt Express transmission Project.

00:04:07:03 - 00:04:42:11

Todd Stribley

The Loan programs office as part of the United States Department of Energy and LPO, supports the financing of large scale energy infrastructure Projects in the United States through a number of programs. By providing federal financial assistance in the form of loan guarantees and direct loans. The DOE LPO's mission is to provide financing for the deployment and support commercialization of eligible clean energy and advanced

transportation technologies by serving as a “bridge to bankability” for innovative, large scale, high impact energy technologies.

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Todd Stribley

LPO achieves this by providing applicants with access to needed loans and loan guarantees. Additional information on LPO provided at the conclusion of this presentation, by a three minute presentation on getting to know LPO, which is also available on the LPO web page at www.energy.gov/lpo/loan-programs-office.

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Todd Stribley

Grain Belt express, LLC, also referred to as the applicant, is a subsidiary of Invenergy Transmission, LLC and has applied for applied to the LPO for a loan guarantee for the phase one of the Grain Belt Express Transmission Project. The loan guarantee is referred to as the Proposed Action. If approved, the Applicant would receive a federal loan guarantee and loan to support the construction of the Project, and the loan would be paid back with interest to the Federal government.

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Todd Stribley

The 2005 Energy Policy Act authorizes LPO to provide loan guarantees for Projects that “avoid, reduce, or sequester air pollutants or anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases” and “employ new or significantly improved technologies in the United States.” The LPO has determined that the Project meets this requirement, and has prepared the Draft EIS in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, also referred to as NEPA, to assist in determining whether to approve the request.

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Todd Stribley

What is the National Environmental Policy Act or NEPA? NEPA was signed into law in 1970, and it established a that national environmental policy and a process to implement it. NEPA applies to actions taken directly by Federal agencies, defined as major Federal actions, and requires federal agencies to assess the environmental effects of their Proposed Actions prior to making decisions.

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Todd Stribley

By making NEPA a requirement for federal funding, due diligence, and planning to avoid or mitigate environmental impacts when possible is incentivized. IN accordance with NEPA, which requires involving the public, tribes and other stakeholders. LPO is prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Project and is seeking comments on the Draft EIS. Now that you know more about LPO and the EIS development process, let's review the Project that is the subject of the requested federal financial assistance and defines appeals.

00:07:24:07 - 00:07:31:11

Todd Stribley

Proposed Action. I'll turn it over to Brad to talk more about the phase one Grain Belt Express Transmission Project.

00:07:31:11 - 00:07:33:15

Brad Phazek

Thanks Todd.

00:07:33:15 - 00:08:01:04

Brad Pnazek

Phase one. The Grain Belt Express Transmission Project is a proposed 578 miles of primarily high voltage direct current transmission line and associated facilities that will extend between southwest Kansas and northeast Missouri. The majority of the Project would utilize what is known as high voltage direct current transmission, or HVDC converter stations at each end of the line would convert electricity from alternating to direct current

00:08:01:04 - 00:08:04:00

Brad Pnazek

and back again for connecting to existing grid infrastructure in Missouri.

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Brad Pnazek

Phase two, which would continue the corridor from Missouri to Indiana through Illinois to help supply the Midwest, is earlier in planning and is not subject to the loan guarantee application with the LPO.

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Brad Pnazek

This might not be the first time some of you have heard about the Grain Belt Express.

Planning began over ten years ago.

In 2011, the Kansas Corporation Commission, or KCC, approved Grain Belt Express Clean Line LLC, to operate as a public utility with a route through the state approved two years later.

Following a five-year review process, the Missouri Public Service Commission, or MPSC, approved the route through Missouri in 2019.

In 2018, Invenergy entered an agreement to acquire the Project, and it is currently being developed under Grain Belt Express, LLC.

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Brad Pnazek

Following the acquisition, Invenergy conducted robust outreach with stakeholders and the public.

Consistent feedback expressed by stakeholders was a desire to see a greater share of benefits in the form of local power delivery to the Midwest.

As a result of community feedback, the applicant updated the design of the Project to deliver 2500 megawatts of power, or half the line's capacity, into points of interconnection with AECI and MISO in Missouri.

00:09:42:04 - 00:10:08:18

Brad Pnazek

This enabled the phasing of the Grain Belt Express Transmission Project.

Phasing the Project resulted in two segments, phase one from Ford County, Kansas to Callaway County, Missouri, the Project subject to the review in this EIS, and phase two from the HVDC Converter Station in Monroe County, Missouri to Sullivan County, Indiana.

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Brad Pnazek

In 2023, Both the Kansas Corporation Commission and Missouri Public Service Commission approved the Project phasing. The Missouri Public Service Commission approval also included the Tiger Connector. And now we have the LPO's EIS, which will continue through 2025.

Should the LPO grant a loan guarantee near the end of 2025, construction could begin in 2026, which would mean that the Project's operation could begin as early as 2029.

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Brad Pnazek

Each milestone in this timeline has required and continues to require coordination and engagement with property owners, elected officials, stakeholders, agencies, and the general public.

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Brad Pnazek

The HVDC transmission line begins in Ford County, Kansas near Dodge City; heads northeast to Barton County, near Great Bend; and continues north to Osborne County before turning east through Kansas.

It continues across the Missouri River and enters the state of Missouri near Saint Joseph before proceeding just past Moberly and into Monroe County.

From there, the Tiger Connector, a 345-kilovolt alternating current transmission line, heads south to Callaway County, east of Columbia.

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Brad Pnazek

Grain Belt Express LLC believes this Project is beneficial for four primary reasons. First, it addresses rapidly growing US energy demand as the US competes for global leadership in energy-intensive manufacturing and artificial intelligence industries by opening access to domestic energy resources and delivering system wide energy.

Second, the Project will enhance the reliability and resilience of the electric grid by improving national transmission infrastructure and establishing multiple new interregional transmission connections.

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Brad Pnazek

Third, this Project would benefit regional economic activity, including job creation and wages for workers involved in construction and maintenance and new tax revenue.

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Brad Pnazek

Lastly, it will strengthen national security by providing greater energy assurance for critical infrastructure and support US leadership in energy technology, innovation and development. Now, I'm going to turn it back to Todd.

00:12:50:11 - 00:13:10:29

Todd Stribley

To provide you with a brief overview of the Draft EIS. I will describe the Proposed Action and alternatives considered in the Draft EIS. Identify the NEPA cooperating agencies, and then Jack Middleton will provide an overview of the impacts presented in the Draft EIS.

00:13:11:02 - 00:13:35:23

Todd Stribley

The Draft EIS compares the impacts associated with the Proposed Action, or LPO, and the applicant execute a Loan Guarantee Agreement and the Project is built and put into service to the impacts associated with the No Action Alternative, where the LPO and the Applicant do not execute a loan guarantee agreement, and for the purposes of this NEPA review, LPO assumes that the Project would not be built or put into service.

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Todd Stribley

By comparing the expected outcomes of both alternatives, the Proposed Action versus the no action alternative, the EIS allows the LPO to transparently analyze the effects of the Proposed Action on the environment. The EIS also considers other actions that are related to the Project, but are not the subject of the loan guarantees, such as a new alternating current transmission lines in Kansas and various network upgrades in both Kansas and Missouri.

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Todd Stribley

These impacts are analyzed as indirect impacts in the Draft EIS.

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Todd Stribley

As part of the NEPA process, LPO has identified several NEPA cooperating agencies. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is a cooperating agency and has jurisdiction under the Rivers and Harbors Act, as well as the Clean Water Act. National Park Service is also cooperating agency and has experience in cultural resource preservation, assessing and analyzing impacts to National Historic Landmarks (NHLs) and managing NHL under the National Service Preservation Act, as well as administering National Historic Trails and their associated resources as defined by and outlined in the National Trail System Act. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is also a cooperating agency, and they have jurisdiction over the protection of the environment and human health, and have expertise in both air quality and water quality issues.

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Todd Stribley

In terms of the EIS development process and schedule, LPO announced its intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the phase one Grain Belt Express transmission Project in December of 2022, which is followed by a public scoping period and a series of public scoping meetings. The scoping period provided stakeholders and other government agencies, tribal nations and the general public the opportunity to provide local expertise and share what matters most to them.

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Todd Stribley

The information collected during the scoping period was used to define the range of issues addressed in the Draft EIS that is now available for review. Following the comment period on the Draft EIS, all substantive comments received will be evaluated and responded to,

and the Draft EIS will be revised accordingly and published again as a final EIS. LPO anticipates responding to comments and issuing a Final EIS in July of 2025.

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Todd Stribley

The LPO uses the EIS to inform the decision on whether to provide and execute a loan guarantee with the applicant. The final step in the NEPA process is publishing a Record of Decision, which documents LPs decision on whether to approve the Proposed Action and corresponds with the completion and execution of a loan guarantee agreement between LPO and the applicant.

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Todd Stribley

Based on the development of the loan guarantee agreement and the final EIS, LPO could issue a record of decision in November of 2025. Now I pass on the presentation to Jack, who will provide an overview of the impacts presented in the Draft EIS.

00:16:49:07 - 00:17:14:26

Jack Middleton

As Todd said, my name is Jack Middleton, and I'm going to discuss a little more about the Project and summarize some impacts discussed in the draft EIS. In order to understand some of the impacts, we need to go into a little bit more detail regarding the Project. Effects of the Project are split into three stages. Construction, operation and maintenance and decommissioning.

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Jack Middleton

We are not going to be talking about decommissioning here in order to focus on the more near-term impacts. However, analysis and decommissioning is included in the Draft EIS. If you'd like more details. First construction of the Project is expected to last three years in

total. Active construction would not be occurring at all spots along the line for that three years, but is instead estimated at around 4 weeks at any one location.

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Jack Middleton

The types of disturbance that would occur during construction include access routes, multi-use yards, and workspaces around transmission structures. Areas of temporary disturbance would be restored after construction. The operations and maintenance stage of the Project is expected to last more than 80 years. Activities during this stage of the Project include: annual inspections of the transmission line, equipment repair as needed, and vegetation management to maintain the right-of-way free of hazard trees.

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Jack Middleton

Throughout the development of the Project, the Applicant, has committed to more than 100 environmental protection measures or EPMs that minimize the impacts to environmental resources. The Applicant, as well as any contractors, would abide by these EPMs during all stages of the Project, as applicable.

Examples of EPMs include designing the Project to specifically avoid sensitive resources, such as wetlands, cultural resources, and certain wildlife habitat. Using specialized equipment to reduce impacts during construction.

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Jack Middleton

Developing plans to address discovery of cultural resources. And minimizing dust, erosion, and the spread of weeds. The applicant will also contract with compliance monitors to ensure that the EPMs are being implemented during construction. This is just a summary but the full list of EPMs is available in the Draft EIS. Now on to the actual impacts. This is a list of resources that were analyzed in the draft EIS.

00:19:33:08 - 00:19:55:23

Jack Middleton

Now on to the actual impacts. This is a list of the resources that were analyzed in the Draft EIS. In the next few slides I'm going to summarize some of the impacts of the Project that are described in detail in the Draft EIS. If you want to review the full scope of impacts, you can link to the EIS through the QR code on the screen. I'll pause for one moment if you'd like to scan the code.

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Jack Middleton

Okay, as I said, this is going to just be a summary of impacts. We will focus on those topics of highest interest or concern as identified during the scoping period for the EIS. The resources that you raised the most concerns about during the scoping meetings were Land Use, which we will discuss with Soils, Wildlife and Vegetation, Socioeconomics, Public Health, and Air Quality.

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Jack Middleton

One more thing that I need to discuss before we get into impacts is the analysis area. The analysis area is a wider area surrounding the Project that was examined to determine impacts. It is larger than the immediate Project area and is different for each resource. It sets the scene for the description of impacts by providing context to compare.

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Jack Middleton

To understand if the Project is having an impact on a resource, it is important to know the extent of that resource in the larger landscape.

So for instance, for land use and soils, approximately 80 percent of the area surrounding the Project, the analysis area, is considered prime farmland or farmland of statewide importance. The area surrounding the Project as also found to primarily consist of soils that are not susceptible to compaction or wind erosion but could experience water erosion.

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Jack Middleton

As far as impacts, the Project would cause a temporary disturbance to about 5,700 acres including prime farmland. This works out to about 10 acres of disturbance per mile of transmission. Erosion, rutting, and compaction could occur but these would be minimized by implementing the EPMs. There also may be some interference with equipment or livestock during the construction. Once construction is complete, the temporary disturbance would be restored to the past use and there would be a loss of the land underneath the structure base area.

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Jack Middleton

This amounts to less than a tenth of an acre per structure but could be as high as a tenth where access to areas is limited by the structures. There would be a total of about 0.4 acres of disturbance per mile of transmission, and agricultural use would not be restricted under the lines. For wildlife, about 71 percent of the area surrounding the Project is agricultural or developed vegetation like pastures or orchards.

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Jack Middleton

These areas, for the most part, don't have native vegetation and don't represent habitat for special status species. The primary type of habitat impacted would be agricultural. While some animals and plants do live in agricultural areas, this is not considered ideal wildlife habitat, especially for special status species. Impacts to wildlife habitat would include a temporary disturbance of about 850 acres of grassland habitat and 86 acres of forest.

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Jack Middleton

After construction is complete, the vast majority of this would be restored with only a small amount of disturbance to grasslands. There would be about 1,500 acres within the right of way that would be maintained free of trees and tall shrubs. This change from forested to

grassland vegetation is referred to as habitat conversion in the EIS, and would have to occur to maintain the safety of the line.

00:23:51:11 - 00:24:50:06

Jack Middleton

The socioeconomic study area examined the 14 counties in Kansas and 9 counties in Missouri where the Project occurs. Financing for the Project would support approximately 1,110 direct jobs through the onsite prime construction workforce, as well as numerous additional jobs in construction management, engineering, procurement, commissioning, logistics, and other scopes. Additional jobs would be supported indirectly through spending in the supply chain like parts manufacturers and concrete producers; as well and jobs that are supported because people have more money in their pocket to do things like go out to eat. Including jobs directly associated with Project operations and maintenance, such as on-site monitoring of the converter station sites, operations center staffing, annual inspections, vegetation management, and maintenance; as well as jobs supported through the supply chain and local spending, the Project is expected to support 205 jobs during operations and maintenance.

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Jack Middleton

The Project would also pay property taxes to the local jurisdictions resulting in an increase in local revenues. These taxes are estimated to generate nearly 35 million dollars of revenue during construction. During operations, the Project would generate nearly 16 million dollars of state and local revenue annually in the form of property taxes. The presence of the transmission line may also have an impact on local property values.

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Jack Middleton

There is not a lot of data that can predict what will happen to property values, but at least one study estimated that for properties up to 200 feet from a transmission line experienced negative impacts on property values ranging from 1 to 9 percent.

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Jack Middleton

For air quality, the same analysis area that examined the 14 counties in Kansas and 9 counties in Missouri where the Project occurs was used. All the counties in the analysis area have air quality that is below levels of concern as defined by the EPA. The main impacts for the Project would include the emissions from vehicles used in construction and the potential for dust.

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Jack Middleton

Grain Belt Express would reduce dust by implementing those EMPs. The estimated emissions from the Project construction would be equal to powering about 6,000 homes for a year. However, once the Project is operational, the greenhouse gas emissions would reduce significantly and there would be an overall reduction in more than 5 million tons of greenhouse gases. Overall, the estimated emissions would not cause the air quality in any of the counties to go above the limits that have been established by the EPA.

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Jack Middleton

And finally, we have public health. The analysis area that was examined includes the area near the Project. Because electricity is everywhere, from existing powerlines, to the phones in our pockets, to our houses, there are existing sources of electrical effects within the analysis area.

The Project would be constructed and built according to the North American Electric Safety Code.

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Jack Middleton

HVDC lines do not cause objects near the line to build up charge, so the majority of the Project would not be impacted by nuisance shocks. However, underneath the Tiger Connector, objects like vehicles, could build up small charges. The Project is designed to

limit the amount of this build up so that if nuisance shocks occur, they would be small. Once it is in operation, the risk of exposure to electric and magnetic fields would be below recommended exposure rates.

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Jack Middleton

Here we have a graphic that shows the recommended exposure limit up here in blue. The exposure that would occur as a result of the Tiger Connector is show on the first two graphs in dark blue and it is well below the recommended maximum exposure. The DC line is shown on the final graph and has both the exposure at the edge of the right of way as well as under the wires.

00:28:01:21 - 00:28:06:08

Jack Middleton

Both instances are well below the recommended exposure limits.

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Todd Stribley

Thank You, Jack. And now moving on to discuss your role in the NEPA process.

00:28:13:14 - 00:28:40:26

Todd Stribley

As part of the Draft EIS review period, we're holding four in-person open house meetings across the Project area with events in Dodge City and Concordia, Kansas, and in St. Joseph and Carrollton, Missouri. We're also holding two virtual public meetings on Zoom on February 19th and 20th. Additionally, the availability to review public meeting information and provide comments is available online throughout the public comment period.

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Todd Stribley

So at your convenience, the materials can be reviewed at www.energy.gov/lpo/eis-0554-grain-belt-express-transmission-line. And you can provide your comments and one of the many ways described on the website.

00:29:11:17 - 00:29:39:03

Todd Stribley

Meaningful public outreach is one of the most important components of the NEPA process. This means being proactive and sharing honest and transparent information with you and your community. It also means being receptive by listening to and considering your comments and answering your questions. As we discuss previously, the NEPA process for the Project included a public scoping period, and we're now in the public review period of the Draft EIS.

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Todd Stribley

The public review period of the Draft EIS is from January 17 to March 3, 2025. At the conclusion of the public comment period. All the comments will be considered reviewed and a comment response document will be prepared and any applicable updates will be incorporated into the final EIS. To promote informed decision making comments on the Draft EIS should be as specific as possible and address the accuracy of the information in the Draft EIS.

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Todd Stribley

The environmental analysis, including methodology, assumptions or provide information relevant to the analysis of the Proposed Action and or the no action alternatives. Comments should explain why the issues raised are important to the consideration of potential environmental effects. Where possible, comments should reference the corresponding section or page number of the Draft Environmental Impact statement,

proposed specific changes to those parts of the statement, and describe any data sources or methodologies that that support the proposed changes.

00:30:44:22 - 00:31:04:07

Todd Stribley

Comments that are not substantive will not be considered. Comments that are not substantive include simply agreeing or disagreeing with the Project without providing a reason or comments that do not pertain to the Project or Project area.

00:31:04:09 - 00:31:24:16

Todd Stribley

Attending these meetings is not a requirement for providing comments or for reaching out to our team as part of our outreach research process. Newsletters have been mailed out, and newspaper advertisements have been posted to both the in-person and virtual meetings, and also to provide information on the EIS process.

00:31:24:18 - 00:31:50:25

Todd Stribley

As well as providing the link to the EIS website. Anyone with questions, comments or concerns can fill out a form on the web on that website, or can contact us by email or by mail. You may also go to [regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov) and search docket number DOE-HQ-2023-0020. To leave a comment to reach us by mail,

00:31:50:27 - 00:32:28:11

Todd Stribley

Please send your comments to U.S. Department of Energy, Loan Programs Office, LP30 Grain Belt Express EIS, c/o: T. Stribley, NEPA Compliance Officer 1000 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, D.C., 20585. You can also email us at LPO_GrainBelt_EIS@hq.doe.gov. For those at the in-person meetings, comments can also be made with the court reporter or submitted at the public comment table.

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Todd Stribley

Comments received and or postmarked by March 3rd, 2025 will be considered and reviewed and included in the Response to Comments document as part of the final EIS.

00:32:44:00 - 00:32:57:05

Todd Stribley

On behalf of LPO and our study team, we thank you for your time and your interest in the phase one Grain Belt Express Transmission Project, EIS.

00:33:20:25 - 00:33:45:09

Jigar Shah

My name is Jigar Shah and I'm the Director of the Loan Programs Office here at the Department of Energy. What's the value of working with LPO? For a lot of entrepreneurs and innovators, they have worked for so long to get their technology to where they needed to get to and now, they have this big mountain in front of them. They've got to build a billion dollar Project, and without that billion dollar Project, they can't really validate their costs, how important their technology is to society, and really get down the cost curve and through the bridge to bankability.

00:33:45:11 - 00:34:07:29

Jigar Shah

The Loan Programs Office offers a few big things. The first is that we're patient capital. When the Loan Programs Office gives someone a loan, the goal is to help that company succeed. We're here to help you demonstrate your technology so that you can actually build the next Project and the Project after. The next big thing is that we're flexible. The Loan Programs Office knows that standard products often don't work in this particular environment. We have to create something custom for every single borrower.

00:34:08:01 - 00:34:34:05

Jigar Shah

Something like your Project has never been done before. And so, you need someone who really wants to think outside the box to help support your goals. The LPO is a long-term partner so for many of the loans on our books, and we have roughly \$32 billion dollars of loans on our books today. Those loans have been on the books with us for over 10 years. We're partnering with those companies each and every year, helping them figure out what are the best practices.

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Jigar Shah

You know, insurance rates have changed based on different factors around climate change or wildfire risk or other things. How do we problem solve to help solve those issues with you? Your reserve accounts are too high. How do we shrink those down to make them more manageable? We're here to really help you work through the entire life cycle of your Project and give you that long-term partnership.