

ERCOT to Determine How Tenaska Trailblazer Energy Center Interconnects To Electric Transmission System

In February, Tenaska, developer of the Trailblazer Energy Center proposed near Sweetwater, submitted an interconnection request to the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) for access to its electrical transmission grid.

ERCOT is a nonprofit corporation, regulated by the Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUCT) and the Texas Legislature. As the region's independent system operator, ERCOT schedules power on an electric grid connecting 38,000 miles of transmission lines in Texas.

The Trailblazer Energy Center will be designed to generate approximately 600 megawatts (MW) of electricity, enough to meet the energy needs of approximately 600,000 Texas homes.

"When traffic and population increase, roadways need to accommodate all the travelers needing access. Connecting new plants to the electric grid is very similar," said Scott Helyer, vice

president of transmission for Tenaska's Business Development Group. "ERCOT will weigh our application with other interconnection requests and needs in the area. Then, it will make a determination on the best way to connect the project to the grid and ultimately, include the project in its plans to accommodate growing energy production, the demand for energy across the state, and the state's energy priorities."

All power producers, whether baseload facilities like Tenaska Trailblazer, peaking facilities that provide power in times of peak demand – like hot summer days, or renewable energy providers like wind generators, must apply to interconnect their generation facilities with ERCOT.

ERCOT handles each request by first conducting an interconnection study to evaluate the impact of the project on transmission facilities in the area.

Once the study is complete

and ERCOT has determined what upgrades to the transmission system may be necessary to interconnect the new project, the new generation facility must sign an interconnection agreement. The agreement is intended to ensure operation that affords all other transmission users the protections to which they are entitled under state law and ERCOT protocols.

"At 600 MW, the Trailblazer Energy Center would be only a small piece of the transmission pie here in West Texas," Helyer said, "especially with the prominence of wind generation in this area and its rapid rate of growth."

The PUCT is currently considering transmission expansion programs that specifically accommodate wind generators in West Texas and support the rapid growth in the industry.

Tenaska understands wind generators and how they will benefit from expanded transmission capability. Dallas-based Tenaska Power

Services Co. (TPS), a Tenaska affiliate, provides management and marketing services for approximately one-third of the electric capacity of wind generators in Texas – more than 1,500 MW. Many TPS wind customers operate in West Texas.

"We're all part of the same transmission puzzle that ERCOT and the PUCT are piecing together," Helyer said. "One thing is clear: when the highway expands in the right places many people benefit."

To help answer questions about the Tenaska Trailblazer Energy Center, the company has established a Web site, www.tenaskatrailblazer.com, which is updated periodically. For more information about Tenaska, visit www.tenaska.com.

This article is part of a series of special reports from Tenaska to the Sweetwater Reporter, addressing specific topics related to the Tenaska Trailblazer Energy Center.