



Wimberley Loop Transmission Project

What is the project?

PEC is proposing to build a 138-kilovolt (kV) transmission line to the existing Wimberley Substation, approximately one-half mile north of downtown square in Hays County. The new line will provide more reliable electric service to the homes and businesses in the Wimberley area as well as improve voltage levels.

Why is this project needed?

Hays County is among the nation's fastest-growing counties, according to U.S. census data. With cities like Wimberley experiencing historic growth, a 138-kV transmission line is needed to meet the increasing demand for electricity and to continue serving our growing membership.

PEC has made several improvements to the distribution system in this area, but existing infrastructure will exceed capacity to the Wimberley Substation by 2025. Additionally, load connected to the Wimberley Substation exceeds 20 MW in summer and winter peaks.

Are there any alternatives that would not require this project?

PEC employed distribution alternatives in the past to delay building the transmission line, including upgrading distribution lines, but the load growth in the Wimberley area has exhausted these alternatives. To supply power to a growing area such as Wimberley, a 138-kV transmission line connecting to the existing Wimberley Substation is needed.

How will landowners along the route be impacted?

Similar to any project requiring the construction of electric utility lines, the project will require easements and transmission structures to build the new line. Additional equipment may also be necessary and may vary dependent on the route selected by the Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUC). Landowners will be compensated for fair market value for any land utilized in constructing the 138-kV transmission line.

What will the structure look like?

There are several types of structures that PEC may use to build the 138-kV transmission line connecting to the existing Wimberley Substation. Rights of way and cost constraints, coupled with public input and engineering information, will be used to decide the preferred transmission structure type. The PUC will ultimately approve the structure type(s) and material or finish for the project. Specific structure heights will be announced after the approved route has been surveyed and the line is designed. While it is impossible to estimate the exact height of these structures at this phase, PEC would anticipate proposing above-ground monopoles.

Is PEC required to receive PUC approval to obtain a CCN for this project?

Yes. Transmission-level utilities like PEC are required to seek approval from the commission prior to building new transmission lines. Once approved, the PUC will grant PEC a Certificate of Convenience and Necessity (CCN) amendment and direction on routing.

As part of the transmission line approval process, PEC will provide data justifying the need for the 138-kV transmission line connecting to the existing Wimberley Substation.

Will PEC consider multiple segments and routes?

Yes. As a part of the CCN process, the PUC requires PEC to evaluate multiple reasonable routes. PEC has retained an engineering firm to develop a study using available data including maps, aerial photos, and input from federal and state agencies and local officials to identify environmental and land-use constraints. Field reconnaissance will also help identify possible routes within the area.

Will I have an opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback on the project?

Yes. PEC plans to hold at least one open house for the public in 2023. At the open house, agencies, officials, potentially affected landowners, and members of the public will have an opportunity to review information about the project, including alternative route segments and environmental and land use constraints. PEC must ensure that the routing process accurately identifies and considers the values and concerns of the public and community leaders. Questionnaires and direct public contact will be employed once the initial routing information has been developed for public distribution.

A hearing may also be held at the PUC where landowners and other stakeholders may provide verbal or written input. More information can be found on the intervention process at the PUC's website:

<https://www.puc.texas.gov/agency/rulesnlaws/Participate.aspx>

How may I be affected if the route crosses my land?

Once the PUC selects a route, PEC will work with each landowner to purchase an easement to construct, operate, and maintain the new electric transmission line. New transmission structures and other equipment will be placed within the easement as determined by the final design of the transmission line. Periodic maintenance for vegetation management and line maintenance will also be conducted.

How much does PEC pay for an easement?

PEC will pay fair market value for transmission line easements. A copy of the applicable appraisal report will be provided to the landowner at the time an offer is made to purchase the easement. If a landowner disagrees with the determination of fair market value, the State of Texas Landowner's Bill of Rights describes the rights of landowners:

<https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/sites/default/files/files/divisions/general-oag/landowners-bill-of-rights-2022.pdf>

How wide is the easement for the transmission line?

Easements for the 138-kV transmission line will vary, depending on design constraints. Common widths are between 60-100 feet wide, or 30-50 feet on either side of the centerline of the route to the edge of the easement.

Will PEC clear vegetation and trees from the entire easement area?

PEC will attempt to mitigate the impacts to the easement area on a landowner's property, as required by PUC rules. Dependent on the route selected by the PUC, PEC may only need to trim some vegetation and trees, but for other routes it may be necessary to clear the entire easement to facilitate construction of the transmission line.

Can PEC build and place the transmission line underground in this area?

The cost of material, construction, and additional cooling requirements make underground transmission lines four to 10 times more expensive than overhead lines. PEC is proposing to build the transmission facilities above ground, due to the significant increase in costs for underground lines.

What happens once the PUC approves the project?

Upon PUC approval, PEC will conduct land, environmental, and cultural resource surveys to prepare necessary plans and specifications to build the transmission line. PEC will prepare the right of way for construction once real estate negotiations and acquisition of the necessary right of way or construction rights is complete. After the right of way is prepared, construction equipment and workers will enter it to construct the new transmission line. PEC does not anticipate any planned member outages for the construction of this project.

What is PEC's timeline for the project?

While the ultimate schedule is subject to both administrative, as well as design and construction uncertainties, PEC expects the new transmission line to be operational in 2026. This includes the necessary steps to assess the area and collect routing information, develop route alternatives, hold an open house meeting and collect input from the public, make adjustments to proposed routes, file the required application and receive approval from the PUC, acquire necessary easement rights, and construct the facilities.

What about electric and magnetic fields?

Electric and magnetic fields (EMF) are found everywhere, especially where electricity is used, including household items such as cell phones, hair dryers, and microwave ovens. It can also include electrical equipment, communications equipment, and power lines. Neither the state nor federal government have established any health standards relating to EMF.

More information can be found at www.niehs.nih.gov/health/topics/agents/emf/index.cfm.