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New Federal Rule Will Overhaul Transmission Planning As Electric Grid Strains.

The sprawling rule requires transmission operators to plan along a 20-year horizon and work with states to develop data-driven projections of needs.

A divided Federal Energy Regulatory Commission on Monday issued a long-awaited overhaul of how regional electric transmission lines are planned and paid for, a move cheered by clean power groups but blasted by a conservative commissioner who said it was driven by “special interests” and exceeds the commission’s authority.

The commission’s final rule on transmission planning and cost allocation, intended to prod utilities and grid operators across the country into more forward-looking, comprehensive and cost-effective planning of large electric transmission lines and better account for the broad benefits those wires provide, was nearly three years in the making. It passed on a 2-1 vote, with the commission’s two Democratic appointees voting yes and the lone Republican opposed.

FERC Chairman Willie Phillips said an aging grid, increasing severe weather, demand growth from new manufacturing, data centers and increasing electrification as well as a changing generation mix all threaten reliability at a time when construction of the high voltage transmission lines that help get power to where it’s needed has slumped to a record low.

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Route Fifty

By Robert Zullo,
Reporter, New Jersey Monitor

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