

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 12, 2025

The Honorable Chris Wright
Secretary of Energy
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20585

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I am writing to request that you offer my constituents in New Mexico more clarity and engagement on the National Interest Electric Transmission Corridor (NIETC) Designation Process. Specifically, I ask that you extend the deadline from April 15, 2025, offer my constituents and elected officials a public briefing, and provide more clarity about the NIETC process and any potential plans for withdrawing private lands.

There has been a great deal of confusion about what a NIETC designation would mean and about how New Mexicans can participate in the process to voice their opinions about transmission needs in Eastern New Mexico. Many New Mexicans have come to my office concerned that the federal government plans to take rights-of-way for up to fifteen miles wide in the proposed Southwestern Grid Connector Corridor.

My preliminary understanding of the NIETC process is that this is a process to determine if transmission is needed in different parts of the United States – including Colorado, New Mexico and Oklahoma – and that no determination to build new transmission is being made. Unfortunately, my office has been unable to confirm this understanding or to engage directly with anyone from the Department of Energy on this issue because of the Trump Administration's halt on any external engagements. This is unacceptable and must change immediately.

Eastern New Mexico is populated by many ranchers, farmers and agricultural workers who prioritize rural and quiet living. Some of these communities live off of the electric grid or autonomously without any need or desire for new transmission projects through their property. Cattle ranchers depend on their land remaining undisturbed to ensure grass is available for grazing. They are all concerned about building transmission through their land that would not benefit them or their communities.

Understanding the sensitive nature of these issues, I urge you to take the following actions: ensure that my office is given a direct contact to engage with on the NIETC process; extend the deadline for public comments; provide an opportunity for the public and elected officials in New Mexico to have a briefing and ask questions; and provide more clarity about any potential plans for withdrawing private lands. Full transparency and active engagement on the NIETC process is needed to ensure the public has every opportunity to be informed and heard.

Sincerely,



Ben Ray Luján
United States Senator