Rail-Grid Collaborative NEWS No. 5

April 15, 2026 For more information, see *Rail-Grid.org* or *Contact us*.

RGC explores the potential for commercial innovation, environmental sustainability, and public benefit based on the sharing of ideas and information about the future of the rail and power networks. *Workshops - Conferences - Federal & State Engagement - Industry Intelligence - Regulatory Interventions & Comment - Policy Maker Briefings - Studies and Analysis – Commercial Approaches and Support*

Grid and Rail Work –SPRING 2026

Located at the intersection of the rail and electric power industries, RGC is committed to finding new ways for railroads, utilities, their workers and supply chains to succeed. RGC explores how to impact rail and electric policy, business, and technology on an integrated basis. Keeping America's basic industries running, competitive, and moving forward all at once is a tall order that RGC can reasonably expect to contribute to. You're receiving our Newsletter because you understand how challenging that mission is. RGC can help leverage the skills, innovation, and assets of these infrastructure industries as a pathway to investable opportunities!

I. PROJECT NEWS

In addition to policy analysis and advocacy in Washington and around the country, RGC identifies or initiates specific initiatives or business propositions that, in our view, represent important opportunities to enhance public benefits, magnify private investment, and secure positive outcomes for consumers in this time of economic uncertainty and technological transformation. Below are examples of our latest thinking about high value projects.

MAPPING PHYSICAL, OPERATIONAL, AND COST CHARACTERISTICS FOR THE BENEFIT OF POLICY MAKERS, SYSTEM DEVELOPERS, & PLANNERS

Deploying electric technologies and facilities in proximity to transportation activities or systems engineered for different purposes or with older technologies in mind can entail risk, costs, permitting and even social challenges. Opportunities can be missed or avoided altogether. As US electrifies legacy systems, the need for good information is growing with respect to the potential interaction between new developments, such as electrification, AI and new technologies, power supply adequacy, or geophysical obstacles, and legacy infrastructure features or networks.

To address the paucity of good data that could facilitate, help authorize, or operate new technology and infrastructures, development of a combined interactive map using web and GIS-based mapping of multiple systems and resources alongside the current statistical and regulatory record of existing (and even planned) systems can accelerate development, save money and time, and avoid unnecessary disturbance to the land and other operations. Such combined maps, building upon existing information, surveys, title searches, and fresh observation could spark and inform a new generation of economically efficient development. The resulting analysis might, for example, identify the best sites or technologies for 'discontinuous' overhead contact systems (OCS) with for battery support (along highways or along rail lines), instances where electrification of transportation would be optimal, technologies that avoid compromising signaling, safety, or other operations, the best industrial development or intermodal facility sites, or opportunities where co-locating new high-voltage transmission lines along linear (short or extended) rail corridors is a way to move grid expansion, clean energy, and reliability more quickly. Preliminary interactive rail and electric infrastructure maps created using Google MyMaps, can be supplemented and refined using more sophisticated GIS and database formats for a variety of applications, creating more detailed and layered geographic data. Rail-related placemarks on the maps may include:

- Electrical generation resources, lines, substations, and other potential electrical interconnection points
- Locations of overpasses/bridges, tunnels and pipelines near tracks, the area and/or legal status of railroad rights of way
- Geological conditions and obstacles
- Potential 'laydown' areas (i.e., construction staging/storage yards), including even their regulatory status)
- Existing and planned power transmission lines and/or rail electrification infrastructure (including rail transit systems)

A consortium can be assembled to finance and execute on the project. RGC would convene entities already invested in electric power (esp. transmission) and rail transportation, with appropriate skill sets. RGC proposed to start with one or more workshops to align the interests and objectives of railroads, highway regulators, electric utilities and transmission developers, supply chain elements, and GIS/mapping experts to discuss project finance, access to the work product, and the priorities, benefits, and responsibilities of the participants.

CO-LOCATION OF HIGH VOLTAGE TRANSMISSION WITHIN RAILROAD RIGHTS-OF-WAY

Siting high-voltage transmission within railroad rights of way would increase the scale and speed of transmission development more than would permitting and siting reforms. A cross-sector collaboration will optimize the value of available assets and technologies for the long run. It would arguably create both a stream of revenue for rail and open up nearby industrial development. Such co-location -- not to be conflated with electrification of freight rail motive power -- would necessarily establish a new relationship between rail and power delivery, a plausible but not inevitable foundation for electrification of aspects of rail operations consistent with trends in electrification across American industry.

Not only are railroads slated to become massive users and enablers of energy with all the benefits and risks that entails, no other industry has such a wealth of (potentially underutilized) real estate assets. Railroads, even the 600 so-called short lines, historically own and manage long linear ROWs on which they move passengers and freight.

On the electric side, State and federal policy makers acknowledge that siting and permitting transmission lines infrastructure is woefully inadequate to meet the coming surge in electricity demand in the 2030s as the result of industrial electrification, including data centers to serve AI, digitalization, regional planning, energy storage, mobile charging technologies, affordability issues. Large transmission lines (>345kV) that traverse undisturbed, private, or sensitive lands and resources have required 10 to 20 years and very patient capital to complete. Failure has major implications for national security and competition (compared with China). before completion. Moreover, the aging grid of regionally focused operations is out of synch with the interstate, inter-market future reality of the grid.

Significant examples now exist of Class 1 freight railroads agreeing to license rights-of-way to transmission developers, namely the SOO Green HVDC Link in the upper Midwest and the Champlain Hudson Power Express in New York State. But even these projects, which utilize the private lands of railroads to accelerate development, still require more than decades to plan, permit, and build. The objective must now be to work with railroads to create a profitable model of development that speeds transmission development across (or under) these already-disturbed properties while recognizing the special characteristics of the land and rail operations, eliminating as many variables and time-consuming technology and regulatory questions as possible. RGC asks any interested party and (especially) railroads to contact RGC about current work in the co-location area.

MINE - RAIL TRANSPORTATION CONNECTION

The opportunities to develop or upgrade new rail lines associated with mine operations entail deployment of new automation technologies powered by clean electric or hybrid motive power (e.g., electric traction motors supported by catenary cable installation and energy storage). Bringing mined products to the next stop in the supply chain requires the transportation of large volumes of heavy commodities across significant distances and typically challenging terrain. Railroads offer superior economics to trucking for heavy, bulk goods, and have historically hauled the majority of mined products throughout the United States. The cost efficiency, scalability, and energy advantages of rail transportation make it a natural backbone for an expanding domestic mining industry.

With the strategic focus of onshoring critical mineral production and the development of new battery and advanced technology manufacturing, the need for a steady, reliable supply of domestically mined goods, such as rare earths and lithium, is growing. Many new mining sites for such resources are located in the vast Southwest and the Upper Midwest of the U.S., regions where short line and Class 1 rail interchange points already exist and can be leveraged. Facilitating the efficient transportation by rail of critical mineral products should be a key part of any new mining project in this country, ensuring both economic viability and supply chain resilience.

RGC is exploring the need for meaningful dialogue with a broader set of stakeholders that results in concrete regulatory and legislative change. It has proposed to deliver

on the imperative to strengthen and expand mining in the US as a component of national security and industrial policy by developing a new capability to transport critical minerals by rail. This is both a regulatory reform challenge, a deployment of technology challenge, and a collaboration challenge for both the electric and railroad components of this concept. As a proof of concept, RGC aims to develop a model implementation plan for at least one mine site involving electrification and automation of rail service. As the only NGO working at the intersection of rail, power, and manufacturing, the RGC is uniquely positioned to guide this collaboration.**II.**

II. FEDERAL NEWS

In addition to the legislative work mentioned in last month' s letter (i.e., introduction of **The Rail and Highway Transmission Planning Act (HR 7504),** RGC is developing project ideas that involve novel application of electrical technologies in the transportation space. It is also working with the Build America Bureau (USDOT) on a process that will be aimed at identifying the best US transmission 'macrogrid' corridors to accelerate grid development by utilizing existing transportation rights of way. RGC expects more formal requests for information from USDOT in May at the latest.

The new projects described above (and which remain unfunded) are aimed at our main goals; namely, strengthening both rail and electrical infrastructure, supporting rail-based economic development and new manufacturing opportunities, ensuring electric reliability and promoting grid integration, and fostering better communications between the railroad and electric power industries.

Partnerships and Support For Twenty-first Century Industry

RGC has an innovative cross-sector agenda designed to a serve business, social, and public interests. We build bridges between elements of industry not accustomed to working together. RGC is a nonprofit "business league" that is member-supported and member-driven; its dues are tax-exempt; and its mission-driven activities and objectives are always open for internal discussion and new ideas.

Here's part of what RGC Members can look forward to:

- **OPPORTUNITIES** to study and advocate on current rail and energy drivers, become intimately involved in federal and state policy development, work on transmission planning, grid interconnection, interregional transfer capacity, and rail electrification issues
- **ENGAGEMENT** with state policy makers and decision makers at FERC, DOT, DOE and Congress to promote legislative and regulatory solutions that benefit utilities, railroads, supply chain participants, and labor
- **PARTICIPATION** in 2026 workshops to shape collaborative research and policy initiatives
- **COLLABORTION** with colleagues and companies with expertise, resources, and support ongoing studies and projects with strategic grid partners, public and private.
- **FRESH FOCUS** on the importance of infrastructure for rural economic development, modern electrical and data-based services, modernization of access to rail-served ports, mining operations, military installations and heavy industry, enhancing the reach, resilience, and reliability of the grid; and improving efficient utilization of real property assets like existing railroad rights of way, for public and private benefit.

The cost to participate are modest and depend on market position, ability to pay, and other factors. RGC aims primarily to cover its cost of operation and to encourage participation by the railroad or transmission industries, or stakeholders and supply chain participants including shippers, contractors, suppliers, RTOs, generators, advocacy organizations, state agencies, technology and law firms, cooperative and municipal utilities, and technology firms.

Organizations, individuals, academics, and public service institutions can also choose to partner with RGC or interested participants as financial sponsors of specific events focused on an important topic of development of specialized and compelling interest. RGC will help develop and administer any proposed project within its general scope.

Next Steps and Timeline

Event	Date
Weekly team meetings – invitation only Monthly Strategy/Legislative Meetings	Beginning January 2026 Starting April 15
Day-long Workshops, virtual & in-person	May, July, October 2026 TBD