

Energy leaders warn: NY electric grid must grow for Micron and other new big users

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This National Grid substation will provide power to the Micron Technology chip fabs in Clay. Electric grid operators say large loads like Micron could make the grid less reliable unless more generating facilities come online.

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The operators of New York’s electric grid are warning with increased urgency that growing demands on the electric system – especially from mega-customers like [Micron Technology](#) — threaten to outstrip the system’s capacity to supply power.

A new 10-year forecast issued Wednesday by the New York Independent System Operator cites “greater uncertainty” about how much electricity will be needed in the future and how it will be supplied.

Some of the uncertainty stems from New York’s plan to eliminate fossil fuel power plants at the same time it pushes customers to [heat their homes](#) and fuel their cars with electricity. Now, additional pressure comes from plans for several big Upstate electric users, the largest of which by far will be Micron Technology’s planned microchip plant in Clay north of Syracuse.

“These many factors introduce greater uncertainty in the forecast of energy use in New York State and, thus, greater risk to the reliability of the grid in the future,” the NYISO reported.

Micron has asked the NYISO to connect to the grid as early as 2025, drawing up to 480 megawatts of power to support its first two of four planned chip fabs. That's enough power for roughly half a million homes. In a second phase, Micron would seek another 480-megawatt connection.

At full capacity Micron could use as much power as [Vermont and New Hampshire combined](#), according to documents the company submitted to a local development agency. Several other so-called "large loads" are also asking to connect to the power grid, including a hydrogen production facility in Massena.

At the same time, aging power plants have shut down faster than new wind and solar farms have come online, the NYISO says.

There is growing urgency to build new transmission lines and generating facilities to handle the anticipated growth in demand, said Kevin Lanahan, a vice president at the NYISO.

"When you couple in the development of these ... high-load projects like Micron, the combination of all these elements could erode the reliability margin in various different parts of the state," Lanahan said. "That's the message we wanted to get across."

The NYISO, a nonprofit organization that operates the state electric grid and wholesale power markets, has warned for several years that pockets of the state – especially New York City – would be at risk if fossil fuel power plants shut down before renewable energy sources come online to replace them.

More recently, the organization has warned that energy-intensive developments planned for Upstate could also strain the system.

In a quarterly report issued in October, the NYISO said: "The rapid growth of large load projects poses a risk to the future reliability of the New York grid if it is not matched with the equivalent addition of new resources."

Earlier this year, the NYISO said the potential for future electricity shortages in the New York City area was serious enough to require a formal plan to avoid them, which the organization is now developing.

The situation in Upstate has not reached that point, Lanahan said, but grid operators will continue to monitor it closely. In the meantime, the message is that New York needs to develop more generating capacity.

"We need more of those renewable resources online," he said.

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