Energy and Technology Committee
JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-7017
Title: AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY TRANSMISSION AND GRID-ENHANCING TECHNOLOGIES.
Vote Date: 3/18/2025
Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute
PH Date: 2/27/2025
File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Energy and Technology Committee

CO-SPONSORS OF BILL:

Rep. Mike Demicco, 21st Dist.
Rep. Mary Mushinsky, 85th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill would establish a task force to study transmission infrastructure in the state and the use of Grid-Enhancing Technologies (GETs) to upgrade our infrastructure. Grid-Enhancing Technologies offer opportunities to improve existing infrastructure without having to replace it altogether, and pose as a potential answer in the state's mission to reach its climate goals by transitioning to clean energy. Conducting a study on transmission infrastructure in the state can aide the legislature when making crucial decisions on GETs by providing efficiency and cost analyses.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

Requires Electric Distribution Companies (EDCs) or transmission owners to develop and submit project alternative plans including Grid Enhancing Technologies (GETs) for projects submitted to the Siting Council. This language also allows for the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) to approve the employment of GETS in any base rate or capital improvement proceeding. It allows for PURA and the Office of Consumer Counsel (OCC) to hire consultants to assist in any proceeding before certain federal agencies (such as the Department of Energy (DOE)).

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Katie S. Dykes, Commissioner, Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP):
DEEP supports the deployment of advanced transmission technologies on Connecticut's transmission system but submits that we do not need another study of the opportunities, capabilities, and benefits that they can offer. This work has been completed by numerous entities and already demonstrates that advanced transmission technologies can help to reduce ratepayer costs. The State should instead pursue reforms that will lead to the actual deployment of these technologies, where appropriate, on the transmission system. One way to achieve this goal is to bring further transparency to the transmission planning processes of the state's transmission owners and by reforming the existing regulatory processes to ensure alternatives are adequately developed and considered.

Claire E. Coleman, Consumer Counsel, Office of Consumer Counsel (OCC):
Grid-enhancing technologies (GETs) allow for the capacity of existing transmission lines to be improved while preventing unnecessary infrastructure construction. Encourages the Committee to consider taking more proactive steps to encourage integration of modern transmission technologies including GETs and advanced conductors. Transmission owners in Connecticut should be required to include the evaluation of GETs alternatives to full-scale replacement of transmission lines for projects within Connecticut. This evaluation could create a more reliable and efficient transmission system. OCC encourages the committee to add a seat for the OCC to the task force as the lone voting representative on the ISO-NE representative body.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Alan Trotta, United Illuminating:
A task force focused on Connecticut will be able to study GETs in the context of what works best for Connecticut's own needs, which is valuable as there are many categories of GETs that have benefits that vary based on specific needs and system conditions. United Illuminating looks forward to being able to bring to the task force the experience of Avangrid in analyzing and implementing GETs.

Ed Hawthorne, President, AFL-CIO Connecticut:
Supports the Bill so long as the bargaining units who represent the line workers, technicians, and mechanics at Eversource and United Illuminating are given representation.

Hilary Pearson, Vice President, LineVision:
GETs are critical tools that help to optimize existing infrastructure, reduce congestion, and save money for Connecticut ratepayers while ensuring that the grid is prepared for increasing load growth. GETs can offer numerous benefits to Connecticut, and we need to deploy every possible tool to cost-effectively increase the capacity and resilience of our transmission system.

Oliwia D. Krupinska, Policy and Regulatory Analyst, Alliance for Climate Transition:
Mitigating costs of investments in the grid is a core consideration as Connecticut residents struggle with high energy bills and these technologies can be the answer to how to cost-effectively improve grid capacity. They allow us to do more with the infrastructure already in

place, minimizing how much is spent to supply energy. The study that comes out of this bill should also include advanced conductors. They can carry double the electric load compared to standard conductors. Without which, an increase in demand requires larger transmission lines which will require a major investment into land acquisition and infrastructure building.

Shannon Laun, Vice President, Conservation Law Foundation:
Connecticut is actively participating in region-wide efforts to accelerate transmission buildout in a coordinated and efficient manner. GETs can play a significant role in deferring or avoiding the need for new transmission lines. The US Department of Energy found plenty of opportunity for GETs to support existing grid infrastructure and alleviate transmission constraints. Given the challenges New England has experienced in siting new transmission lines, GETS should be deployed to minimize costs and avoid delays.

Curran Lehr, Business Development Manager, Bekaert:
The integration of innovative solutions in becoming increasingly vital. Advanced conductors can enhance the grids capacity and efficiency and offer substantial cost-effectiveness. As electric demand grows, investments in capacity, efficiency, and reliability will become more important. Advanced conductors offer higher ampacity and can significantly increase the capacity of the grid.

Cary Lynch, The Nature Conservancy:
The existing transmission system in New England is unable to integrate and utilize the amount of clean energy required to achieve a net zero carbon energy system by 2050 without upgrades. Curtailment of the renewables will happen, costing ratepayers millions annually. Planning today for New England's transmission needs through 2050 will reduce costs and support system reliability. A transmission planning process that results in little regional or interregional capacity and only plans incremental regional upgrades will be inefficient and unreasonably expensive. Increased interconnection between regions could lower electricity prices. Comprehensive transmission planning will be required to meet future system needs while being as efficient and cost-effective as possible. GETs maximize transmission and can help make our grid more reliable, secure, and affordable and should be incorporated. They support our current need for a more reliable system.

Anastasiya Poplavska, Acadia Center:
GETs are lower-cost solutions that will save Connecticut ratepayers money. GETs and advanced conductors increase transmission efficiency and maximize the capacity of existing power lines. GETs and advanced conductors can have a faster deployment period as compared to new transmission construction. The utility business model provides a fixed rate of return and does not incentivize utilities to minimize the cost of system upgrades via GETs and advanced conductors.

Kat Burnham, Senior Principal, Advanced Energy United:
Advanced transmission technologies, including grid-enhancing technologies and advanced conductors, can optimize our energy system, reduce system costs, and ensure timely integration of renewables. While new transmission lines can take a decade or more to develop and build, GETs and advanced conductors can be constructed with project timelines and payback periods of 1-3 years or even months. New England's reliance on natural gas for winter heating and electricity makes the region particularly vulnerable to supply disruptions or price hikes and advanced transmission technologies can offer crucial savings.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None Expressed.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

Leticia Colon, Lillian Brough, Edgardo Mejias, Efficiency for All:
Gives informative testimony on methods of increasing energy efficiency and measures that can be taken to reach state energy efficiency goals. Includes facts, case studies, and testimony from residents and ratepayers on topics ranging from current state energy makeup to demand reduction information.

Reported by: Aston Foley **Date: 03/26/2025**