



WIRES: Voice of the Electric Transmission Industry

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## WIRES UNIVERSITY SPEAKERS ARGUE FOR RAMPING-UP TRANSMISSION INVESTMENT

**WASHINGTON, DC** – On the same day that the U.S. Senate held confirmation hearings for two new FERC Commissioners and a Deputy Secretary of Energy, and the RTO/ISO Council had its annual meeting in Washington, the WIRES organization presented an educational program on Capitol Hill that made clear that the hard work of building a robust North American electric transmission infrastructure is still an unfinished and urgent agenda. During a daylong “WIRES University” session, speakers focused on subjects not typically part of the domestic infrastructure debate: the economic benefits of transmission investment, workforce sustainability, cross-border trade with Canada, technology deployment, resource diversity and bulk power markets, energy security, and consumer costs.

The keynote speakers were Congressmen Jerry McNerney (D-CA) and Tim Walberg (R-MI), and Patrick McCormick, Chief Counsel of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. In discussions among expert panelists and the audience, the day’s consensus themes stood out:

- Electric power will soon penetrate even more deeply into the modern economy and our daily lives, making a stronger grid a necessity
- A robust transmission grid will be key to adapting the electricity supply chain to new, dynamic, and often unforeseeable economic and technological developments
- Distributed energy resources complement, and even depend upon, the wires network, instead of obviating it
- Electric transmission investment delivers the best ‘bang for the buck’ over time; building now will save consumers billions of dollars in the long run
- Planning for incremental additions to the transmission grid principally for reliability purposes is old school; planners need to focus on larger, interregional projects to integrate this critical network

- Energy storage, demand response, energy efficiency, microgrids, advanced materials, and other technologies provide the grid with flexibility and strength and need to be part of any grid expansion strategy
- Construction of linear infrastructure like transmission and pipeline facilities are always controversial but Congress and regulators can provide leadership in helping industry attract capital and in improving the efficiency of regulation

In the words of Chief Counsel McCormick, "While our grid is the envy of the world, new transmission investment is needed." He urged WIRES to develop a "specific" agenda for the Committee to consider. In the course of the daylong program, speaker after speaker emphasized the transformation occurring in our electric system, how critical the viability of that system is for the North American economy, and why only a robust transmission grid will ensure that we can adapt to economic and technological change in the future. However, given the barriers to developing transmission, a process that typically takes 10+ years, regulators and legislators hopefully will learn from this discussion, urged WIRES Counsel and the day's Moderator Jim Hoecker.

WIRES University was co-sponsored by the National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA), the GridWise Alliance, and the Environmental and Energy Study Institute (EESI), and conducted in conjunction with the Grid Innovation Caucus of the House of Representatives. The presentations and a video of the day will be available on the [WIRES website](#) and from [EESI](#).

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### **About WIRES**

WIRES is an international non-profit trade association of investor-, publicly-, and cooperatively owned transmission providers, transmission customers, regional grid managers, and equipment and service companies. WIRES promotes investment in electric transmission and progressive state and federal policies that advance energy markets, economic efficiency, and consumer and environmental benefits through development of electric power infrastructure. For more information, visit [www.wiresgroup.com](http://www.wiresgroup.com) or contact Jim Hoecker at 202-378-2316.