



WIRES: Voice of the Electric Transmission Industry

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MR. PRESIDENT: ELECTRIC INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS YOUR HELP, NOT TAXPAYER MONEY

WASHINGTON, DC — In his State of the Union speech tonight, President Trump promises to repair the Nation's critical infrastructure. We applaud the sentiment but remind policy makers that, if they want to ensure a vibrant 21st Century economy, regulatory reform and a signal to private capital to invest in the electric grid will be key to getting the job done. No part of our infrastructure is more in need of expansion and upgrade and yet so impeded by multiple layers of planning, permitting, and delay, than is the high-voltage transmission system. Mr. President, your leadership can prepare the way for the future electrified economy by helping expedite the development of a modern, integrated bulk power system.

WIRES President Nina Plaushin of ITC Holdings observes that "the "President's plan to rehabilitate our infrastructure regrettably omits one critical component: the nation's electric grid. We hope that the President and Congress will recognize the important role the power grid plays in enabling virtually all types of other infrastructure and deployment of new technologies. With reasonable regulatory reforms, Washington policy makers can unleash private investment in the grid. Our studies show that transmission investment grows our economy, creates jobs, and makes America globally competitive — all while delivering reliable electricity services and lower costs to customers."

The U.S. relies on nearly 700,000 miles of transmission lines, the biggest machine ever made. However, much of the high voltage grid is many decades old, overly dependent on old electro-mechanical technology, often congested, unable to reach clean, location-constrained sources of generation like wind or solar, and ill-prepared for the advent massive electrification of personal and commercial transportation, electric heating, and the digital systems and devices that will become more commonplace. Electric transmission will play a new role in the future. While power generation is becoming more decentralized and diverse, electricity demand increasingly relies on big new markets for power, public preferences for remote energy resources, and the demands of digital technologies. In that new environment, recent WIRES studies have demonstrated that it will be the wires network that will integrate these resources and make the system more resilient, dynamic, and economical.

“Infrastructure cannot just be about highways and bridges anymore,” added Jim Hoecker, WIRES’ Counsel and former Chairman of FERC. “Massive federal funding is not an answer in this case. Instead, we should recognize that the regulatory scheme inherited from a bygone era typically delays development of needed transmission facilities for up to 15 years — 4 to 5 times that needed to permit a gas pipeline — deters important innovation, and forces states into zero-sum squabbles about who pays for infrastructure that serves many jurisdictions. Even after the industry’s major investment of the past decade, engineers still rate the U.S. grid D+. That jeopardizes America’s competitiveness and our quality of life. The President has given this sector a chance to make its case for more transmission and I hope regulators and Congress are prepared to help.”

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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 or contact Jim Hoecker at 202-378-2316.