

**BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION  
OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

Order Instituting Rulemaking to Promote Policy  
and Program Coordination and Integration in  
Electric Utility Resource Planning

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Rulemaking 04-04-003  
(Filed April 1, 2004)

**COMMENTS OF THE  
CALIFORNIA FARM BUREAU FEDERATION ON  
THE CPUC, CEC AND CAISO DECEMBER 14, 2005 WORKSHOP  
FOR TRANSMISSION PLANNING COLLABORATION**

**KAREN NORENE MILLS**

Attorney for  
California Farm Bureau Federation  
2300 River Plaza Drive  
Sacramento, California 95833  
Telephone: (916) 561-5655  
Facsimile: (916) 561-5691  
E-mail: kmills@cbbf.com

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## I. Introduction

Transmission planning has been and will continue to be of keen interest to the members of the California Farm Bureau Federation (“Farm Bureau”)<sup>1</sup> as ratepayers, but perhaps more predominately as landowners. Since a large number of farmers and ranchers operate their businesses on a daily basis around transmission towers and lines, they know first-hand the real consequences of any planning process. On occasion there has been a level of disconnection among the entities responsible for long-term planning. If long-term planning moves forward as expressed by participating CPUC Commissioner Grueneich, CEC Chairman Desmond and CAISO President Mansour, the Transmission Collaboration (“Collaboration”) can provide long-term benefits to all affected stakeholders.

That being said, Farm Bureau has specific concerns about the relationship of this planning process to the concept of transmission planning corridors and the implications to landowners from the creation of corridors.

## II. There Is No Current Authority To Identify Or Create Transmission Corridors

In Appendix B to the December 2, 2005, Assigned Commissioner’s Ruling the page titled “Infrastructure Development Process” lists under the

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<sup>1</sup> Farm Bureau is a voluntary, non-profit corporation representing more than 88,000 members throughout California. California farmers and ranchers sell \$24.8 billion in agricultural products annually, accounting for 9 percent of the gross state product, and hundreds of thousands of jobs in California. Farm Bureau's members expect to pay in excess of \$850 million for their electric service.

responsibilities for the CEC to “identify possible transmission corridors”. For those like Farm Bureau, who expressed strong objections to some of the concepts attendant to designation of transmission corridors as reflected in the debate on SB 1059 Electric Transmission Corridors (Escutia) during the 2005 legislative session, the reference to transmission corridors in the underlying concept raises serious questions. To some extent those concerns were alleviated by the discussions during the December 14 Workshop, through characterization of the transmission corridors envisioned in the collaboration as conceptual only.

In his initial remarks at the Workshop Mr. Mansour referenced the transmission corridors [Transcript page 129, lines 1 – 12]:

Utilities ahead of time more or less knew where the resources were coming from, and they planned it ahead, and they planned transmission to go with it.

Since the IOUs or the load serving entities do not have control necessarily with every location and all of the – all kinds of all types of resources, then we have to get more into scenario planning. So instead of one plan, it will be scenario plans that were identified by the CEC. And, as I said, a lot of it is driven also by policies.

And then also, at least at the conceptual level, the CEC will either define possible transmission corridors, at least at the conceptual level.

Chairman Desmond further explained how the conceptual transmission corridors would be utilized as part of this planning process [Transcript page 158 (lines 20 – 28) and page 159 (lines 1 – 16)]:

Clearly, land use and when does that constitute a taking? Is there something - - at what point in time does a landowner need to be compensated?

I think when we say conceptual, we mean at the most conceptual level, meaning general areas or directions that transmission - - we're not talking about identification of routes, not talking about a specific route, alternatives. When you get into this process down to the CPCN, that's where you will have gone through that land use identification proposal alternatives at a level of detail.

But in general, things like do we need a line that connects northern and southern California to take advantage of the Antelope Valley wind resources? How are we going to tap into geothermal resources? Is there a need for something in northern California to strengthen that it is supported by that?

And likewise, as it moves through this process here and this approval, at some point the utilities or PTOs are going to want to secure and expend dollars to secure those rights.

And so that approval process itself – the land – notion of land banking, for how long do they hold those rights, is it appropriate to acquire those, these are all questions we want to try and identify where it fits in this process so that there is greater certainty.

Clearly, the approach outlined by Chairman Desmond is better aligned with the goals of the Collaboration than that contained in the Energy Action Plan II dated October 2005. The Collaboration incorporates the key assumption that “No change in statutory responsibilities among state agencies and CAISO.” In contrast, the Energy Action Plan II lists as a key action (Electricity Adequacy Reliability and Infrastructure) “Support legislation to expand the CEC’s transmission corridor planning process coordinated with applicable federal and

state agencies, local governments and other stakeholders, to designate and preserve critical corridors for potential development in the future.”

From many perspectives the approach articulated by Chairman Desmond provides the pragmatic solution to ensuring the planning process moves forward. As he identified, the CPCN process is a far more appropriate context for identification of specific lands for a transmission line at this stage of California’s development and limited resources, it may be far too problematic to carve out specifically identified corridors, without unduly impairing affected property owners.

Property owners with farming and ranching operations very significantly feel the impacts of transmission lines on their property. With the increased demand on the system and focus on limiting potential outages as much as possible, orchard owners are being subjected to more severe pruning of trees under lines than ever before. As the planning process moves forward, landowners with farming operations will be concerned about potential lines. Consideration should be given in the planning processes to raising the heights of lines for safety particularly for 115kV and 230 kV lines.

### III. Conclusion

The Collaboration developed CEC, CPUC and CAISO presents tangible opportunities for planning efficiencies without undergoing major policy shifts. It is commendable that the key players have been willing to expend the time and focus to move the process forward. As it moves forward, it will be important to watch for “regulatory creep” such that more aggressive efforts are not undertaken than currently allowed.

Respectfully submitted,

**California Farm Bureau Federation**

By \_\_\_\_\_  
Karen Norene Mills, Attorney

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