Empowering National Energy Reliability, Growth, and Infrastructure (ENERGI) Act

Leadership Now MBA Policy Challenge 2026

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Executive Summary

Since 2009, China has constructed dozens of ultra-high voltage (UHV) transmission lines, building a continental-scale electric grid that moves power from resource-rich regions directly to population, manufacturing, and data centers. The United States has built no UHV transmission lines. The constraint is not a lack of private capital but the absence of a policy framework that enables transmission infrastructure.

The Empowering National Energy Reliability, Growth, and Infrastructure (ENERGI) Act addresses this failure directly. By establishing a National Electricity Transmission Authority and executing a phased 10-year UHV buildout plan, the ENERGI Act is projected to create 2 million high-paying American jobs while lowering electricity costs, stimulating economic growth, strengthening national security, and positioning the United States to outcompete China in the industries that will define the next century. Built on four pillars (Authority, Planning, Community Engagement, and Cost Allocation), the ENERGI Act is the Interstate Highway System of the data-driven age. This infrastructure will belong to all Americans and drive another century of American economic leadership.

Problem Framing

The U.S. grid is fragmented into more than 3,000 utilities, which are tied together in three largely isolated electrical interconnections: the Eastern, Western, and Electric Reliability Council of Texas interconnections (U.S. Department of Energy 2015). As a result, electricity cannot easily flow from regions with abundant generation to high-demand population or industrial centers, because of transmission congestion that forces system operators to rely on more expensive and often more carbon-intensive generation (Sofia and Dvorkin 2026). Furthermore, this reduces the resilience of communities impacted by extreme weather events by limiting their ability to import electricity from less-affected regions, increasing the risk of localized shortages and outages (Goggin 2021). Ultimately, these constraints translate into higher energy bills for Americans in the long run (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency 2018), the curtailment of significant amounts of clean energy that could otherwise support emerging industries (e.g., data centers) (Ansolabehere et al. 2024) and provide broader opportunities for communities (Kurland et al. 2025), and the prolonged reliance on existing fossil fuel infrastructure, which has substantial climatic and public health consequences (U.S. EPA OAR 2022).

Beyond domestic impacts, transmission constraints also have important implications for U.S. international competitiveness. While the U.S. has yet to deploy an ultra-high voltage (UHV) transmission line, China has constructed dozens since 2009, enabling long-distance, high-capacity electricity transmission that has supported industrial development and growth (U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission 2025). This international context supports the need for the U.S. to expand its transmission infrastructure. Meeting future electricity demand, particularly from rapidly growing sectors such as data centers, which are projected to consume approximately 1,200 TWh by 2035 (Ansolabehere et al. 2024), will require substantial investment. Without such efforts, meeting this demand could take as long as 80 years (Ansolabehere et al. 2024), limiting economic growth and reducing the efficient utilization of renewable energy resources.

Princeton's Net-Zero America study projects that 75,000 miles of new high-voltage transmission lines will be needed by 2035, requiring a two-to-five-fold expansion of current capacity (Larson 2021). Recent project failures highlight market appetite for investment, as well as the structural barriers the ENERGI Act will overcome. Clean Line Energy Partners spent eight years and $100 million attempting to build a single interstate transmission line before folding in 2017, not because of technological or market failures, but because of an eminent domain vacuum and state veto power that no private developer could overcome alone (Gold 2019). These are precisely the gaps the ENERGI Act is designed to close.

Policy Design

Pillar 1 — Authority and Institutional Framework

The ENERGI Act establishes the National Electricity Transmission Authority (NETA), a new federal body modeled on the Federal Highway Administration. The NETA plans, permits, and facilitates the financing of interstate high-voltage transmission corridors but does not own or operate lines. Instead, private enterprise builds and operates under NETA-issued licenses. Critically, the NETA receives federal siting authority for designated corridors. Projects meeting NETA Equity and Environmental Standards qualify for an expedited National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review track, eliminating the five-to-ten year permitting drag that currently causes 77% of queued generation capacity to withdraw before reaching commercial operation (Rand et al., 2025). NETA authority is expressly limited to interstate corridors of national significance and does not displace state-regulated distribution utilities, preserving existing state jurisdiction over local infrastructure and addressing the core constitutional objection that has historically stalled federal transmission legislation.

Pillar 2 — Planning: Timeline and Route

The ENERGI Act executes a phased 10-year buildout anchored by a legally binding timeline and a professionally staffed corridor planning function. In the first 18 months, the NETA is founded, a corridor designation process is established, and the first National Transmission Needs Assessment is published. From years two through four, the Tres Amigas SuperStation, an already partially planned interconnection hub in Clovis, New Mexico, serves as the Act's inaugural project, physically connecting all three U.S. electrical interconnections for the first time and activating a true national electricity market. From years four through eight, 12 UHV transmission lines totaling approximately 1,000 GW of capacity are constructed, with routes determined by a dedicated team of land and permitting professionals and prioritized toward data center corridors and reshoring manufacturing hubs, where the economic return on transmission investment is highest. From years eight through ten, eight additional lines totaling approximately 1,000 GW are built, focused on rural electrification, tribal land corridors, and western renewable export routes. Throughout all phases, construction and operating contracts are awarded through a competitive bid process; the NETA sets corridor standards and secures rights of way while private enterprise builds.

Pillar 3 — Community Engagement: Land Use, Community Consultation & Consent

Community opposition has blocked the development of transmission lines and renewable energy projects throughout the United States, causing delays, permitting difficulties, increased costs, and even project cancellations (Ansolabehere et al. 2024; Nilson and Stedman 2023). Early and sustained engagement, combined with community benefit frameworks, is therefore essential for project success (Ansolabehere et al. 2024; Nilson and Stedman 2023; Kurland et al. 2025), and forms a core component of the ENERGI Act. The Act recognizes the rights of states, local communities, and the sovereignty of tribal nations over their lands, ensuring that these stakeholders are included in decisions regarding project design, cost allocation, and benefit distribution, with benefits tailored to local needs.

To implement this, the ENERGI Act will follow an interactive and legally binding planning cycle. Failure to follow required consultation and permitting procedures may result in judicial review under the Administrative Procedure Act. The cycle begins with the conceptualization of a corridor project by NETA, followed by consultation with local, state, and regional stakeholders. Feedback is integrated, and the project can only proceed with the consent of affected stakeholders. Once consent is obtained, a revised corridor plan is issued, and construction may commence. While the consent requirement may add time to the planning process, it is expected to dramatically reduce the risk of litigation and political opposition.

To further incentivize genuine engagement, NETA will maintain an equity scoring system. Projects earn expedited permitting by demonstrating strong performance on community benefit criteria, including local hiring, reduction of PM2.5 emissions, Indigenous engagement, and the use of community benefit frameworks, such as host community agreements, transmission partnership agreements with nonprofits, participating transmission owner agreements with tribal entities, and other innovative structures (Kurland et al. 2025). Higher scores unlock faster permitting tracks, further mitigating delays in the planning process and providing a financial incentive for meaningful engagement rather than mere procedural compliance.

Finally, NETA will include a mediation board, a neutral federal body to resolve siting disputes before they escalate into political vetoes. Every stakeholder will have representation, including NETA, Indigenous representatives, local communities, and, when applicable, state and county officials. This mechanism is designed to prevent issues where a single state delegation can block a nationally significant project.

Pillar 4 — Cost Allocation

The ENERGI Act is designed to be self-financing over its project lifecycle. The NETA charges a regulated transmission access fee of approximately $0.005 per kilowatt-hour on all power transmitted through NETA-designated corridors, with fee revenue covering corridor maintenance, NETA operating costs, and the gradual repayment of build costs over time. A beneficiary-pays principle is hard-coded into all NETA corridor licenses: utilities, data center operators, and manufacturers that demonstrably benefit from a corridor pay a proportionate share of its costs, eliminating the free-rider dynamic that has stalled voluntary interregional transmission planning for decades. The NETA access fee structure ensures that this investment is recovered from those who capture its value rather than passed indiscriminately to ratepayers.

Private capital is further mobilized through a hyperscaler co-investment mechanism. Data center operators that pre-commit to corridor upgrade costs receive priority NETA queue processing, formalizing the commitments made under the White House Ratepayer Protection Pledge by Amazon, Google, Meta, Microsoft, OpenAI, Oracle, and xAI into statutory law.

Impacts

This policy is estimated to result in approximately 2,031,360 total full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs and 684,000 direct FTE jobs, and stimulated a total economic activity of $384 Billion, using the IMPLAN model created by The Brattle Group and WIRES (The Brattle Group 2011).

The policy would lead to a direct reduction of system electricity costs by 46% ($62/MWh) by significantly reducing transmission congestion and enabling low-cost renewable energy generation sources (Brown and Botterud 2021). This would amount to approximately a reduction of $248 Billion in system electricity costs, which would reduce the electricity price paid by the final consumer, considering the total US electricity consumption as approximately 4,000 TWh (US EIA n.d.). Every dollar spent on transmission capacity would lead to a benefit of $4.70 for electricity consumers. (Zimmerman et al. 2025).

The electricity demand in the US is constantly rising with the electrification of households, transportation, industries and the recent exponential growth of data centers and AI. The growing demand cannot be met by just increasing generation capacity, but it needs a promising transmission capacity such as this policy. It is important to meet this demand not just for the sake of continued electricity consumption, but for preventing widespread blackouts and outages from imbalance of supply and demand.

Building transmission reduces the need for expensive new generation and lowers total system costs. The U.S. DOE finds that transmission expansion can reduce total system costs by $270–$490 Billion by 2050, largely by avoiding new generation investment (US DOE n.d.).

This policy also enables increased advanced manufacturing capacity of the US such as semiconductor fabrication and gigafactories which consume high amounts of electricity. Reliable and available electricity encourages the reshoring of this manufacturing capacity to the US, which is currently in countries that have ultra-high voltage transmission lines connecting such industries to the grid (USCC 2025, Shu and Chen 2018).

Novelty

The ENERGI Act is the first of its kind. It is being proposed at a moment in time when electricity reliability and rising electricity prices are some of the most pressing concerns in the US. There are extensive literature and government-funded studies that have presented the importance of transmission capacity in our power system. However, there have been no attempts at building an ultra-high voltage national transmission corridor because of two main barriers to implementation, which are siting/land acquisition and cost allocation. The policy design of the ENERGI Act addresses both these concerns, in a robust and rigorous manner.

The land acquisition problem is addressed through the formation of a National Transmission Authority, whose sole purpose is to oversee a just and comprehensive consultation process involving state actors and indigenous communities. The cost allocation problem is addressed through a hyperscaler co-investment mechanism, timed perfectly when data centers and hyperscalers are ready to invest in grid interconnection and reliability for their continued existence. The cost recovery is further addressed through regulated transmission access fees and the stimulated economic output.

Outside of energy reliability and reducing electricity cost, this policy contributes to job creation, increased economic growth, and US's competitiveness in the manufacturing sector. This policy reimagines our approach to manufacturing competitiveness in advanced sectors, by identifying reliable, long-distance, large-capacity power transmission capacity as a key enabler in supporting energy-intensive manufacturing clusters.

Risks and Tradeoffs

This policy addresses the risk of tokenization of communities by taking several measures such as engaging communities at the early stage of development before routing decisions are made and community benefit agreements that guarantee revenue sharing, local jobs, and infrastructure investments. The ENERGI Act looks at community consultation as a shared decision-making process with tangible local benefits, rather than procedural compliance.

The policy foresees regulatory capture by data centers as a possible risk and will provide guardrails such as rate regulation oversight to prevent price gouging, non-discrimination rules and auctions/standardized interconnection processes to prevent monopolization, and a requirement of firm commitments for interconnections.

The policy is also cognizant of the environmental impacts of the project and will prevent it by having extensive consultations during the planning phase, using route optimization with environmental data, using existing corridors whenever possible, and enabling compensatory mitigation for habitat restoration and conservation.

The policy will encourage the use of domestically produced materials and avoid supply chain constraints through domestic manufacturing incentives, standardized/streamlined infrastructure designs, and allied sourcing strategies to diversify imports for materials that need to be imported.

Summary

The ENERGI Act represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to modernize the backbone of the U.S. economy. By addressing the structural barriers that have long constrained transmission development, the Act unlocks a future of lower energy costs, greater reliability, and sustained industrial growth. As electricity demand accelerates and global competition intensifies, building a national UHV transmission network is not only an infrastructure investment; it is a strategic imperative for American leadership in the 21st century.

Appendix

Phase Summary

Phase	Timeline	Lines / Capacity	First Project	Priority Focus
Phase 1	Yrs 1–4	1 hub node	Tres Amigas SuperStation, Clovis, NM	Connect all 3 U.S. interconnections; activate national market
Phase 2	Yrs 4–8	12 lines / ~1,000 GW	Data center corridors (VA, TX, Midwest)	AI/data centers, reshoring manufacturing, Great Plains wind
Phase 3	Yrs 8–10	8 lines / ~1,000 GW	Rural & tribal corridors	Rural electrification, tribal land renewable export, western solar
Total	**Yrs 1–10**	**20 lines / ~2,000 GW**	—	National UHV grid serving all constituencies

Key Model Assumptions

Assumption	Value	Basis
Total UHV lines planned	**20**	Phase 2 (12) + Phase 3 (8)
U.S. cost per line	**$8B/line**	Estimated based on highest-cost Chinese UHV line, includes materials, construction labor, design, right of way
Total build cost	**~$160B**	Derived: 20 lines × $8B
NETA access fee	**$0.005/kWh**	Low end of FERC transmission rates ($0.005–$0.025/kWh)
Utilization — ramp (Yrs 1–2)	**0%**	No lines operational during NTA setup
Utilization — ramp (Yr 3→10)	**+6.25 pp/yr**	Linear ramp from first line (Yr 3) to full buildout (Yr 10)
Utilization — steady state (Yr 10+)	**50%**	Estimated
Annual throughput at full buildout	**~8,760 TWh/yr**	2,000 GW × 50% × 8,760 hrs ÷ 1,000
Annual revenue at full buildout	**~$43.8B/yr**	8,760 TWh × $0.005/kWh
Discount rate (NPV)	**7% real**	Standard US Government rate for private market rate of return
Projection period	**20 years**	10-yr build + 10-yr steady-state operations

Key Metrics Summary

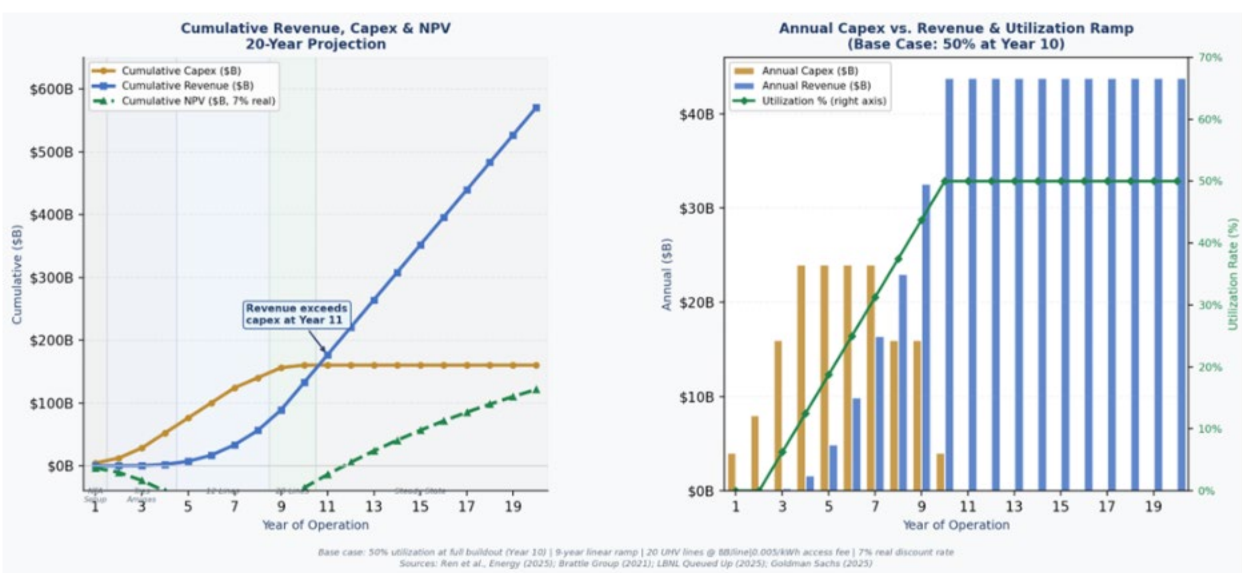
Key Metric	Value	Note
Total Build Cost (20 lines × $8B)	**$160.0B**	Estimated
Annual Revenue at Full Buildout (Yr 10)	**$43.8B**	$0.005/kWh × 8,760 TWh at 50% utilization
Cumulative NPV at Year 10	**($35.0B)**	Discounted at 7% real; negative reflects ramp lag
Cumulative NPV at Year 20	**$121.3B**	Strong positive — full decade of steady-state rev
Cumulative Revenue at Year 20	**$570.5B**	Revenues build strongly through steady state

Years 1–10: Build & Ramp Phase

Metric	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5	Yr 6	Yr 7	Yr 8	Yr 9	Yr 10
Build Progress										
Lines Operational	—	—	1	3	6	9	12	14	17	20
Capacity (GW)	—	—	100 GW	300 GW	600 GW	900 GW	1,200 GW	1,400 GW	1,700 GW	2,000 GW
Utilization Rate	0%	0%	6.3%	12.5%	18.8%	25.0%	31.3%	37.5%	43.8%	50.0%
Capital Costs										
Annual Capex ($B)	$4.0B	$8.0B	$16.0B	$24.0B	$24.0B	$24.0B	$24.0B	$16.0B	$16.0B	$4.0B
Cumulative Capex ($B)	$4.0B	$12.0B	$28.0B	$52.0B	$76.0B	$100.0B	$124.0B	$140.0B	$156.0B	$160.0B
Revenue										
Annual Throughput (TWh)	—	—	55 TWh	329 TWh	986 TWh	1,971 TWh	3,285 TWh	4,599 TWh	6,515 TWh	8,760 TWh
Annual Revenue ($B)	—	—	$0.3B	$1.6B	$4.9B	$9.9B	$16.4B	$23.0B	$32.6B	$43.8B
Cumulative Revenue ($B)	—	—	$0.3B	$1.9B	$6.8B	$16.7B	$33.1B	$56.1B	$88.7B	$132.5B
Net Position (7% Discount Rate)										
Annual Net Position ($B)	**($4.0B)**	**($8.0B)**	**($15.7B)**	**($22.4B)**	**($19.1B)**	**($14.1B)**	**($7.6B)**	**$7.0B**	**$16.6B**	**$39.8B**
Cumulative NPV ($B)	**($3.7B)**	**($10.7B)**	**($23.5B)**	**($40.6B)**	**($54.2B)**	**($63.6B)**	**($68.4B)**	**($64.3B)**	**($55.3B)**	**($35.0B)**

Years 11–20: Steady-State Operations Phase

Metric	Yr 11	Yr 12	Yr 13	Yr 14	Yr 15	Yr 16	Yr 17	Yr 18	Yr 19	Yr 20
Build Progress										
Lines Operational	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20
Capacity (GW)	2,000 GW	2,000 GW	2,000 GW	2,000 GW	2,000 GW	2,000 GW	2,000 GW	2,000 GW	2,000 GW	2,000 GW
Utilization Rate	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%
Capital Costs										
Annual Capex ($B)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cumulative Capex ($B)	$160.0B	$160.0B	$160.0B	$160.0B	$160.0B	$160.0B	$160.0B	$160.0B	$160.0B	$160.0B
Revenue										
Annual Throughput (TWh)	8,760 TWh	8,760 TWh	8,760 TWh	8,760 TWh	8,760 TWh	8,760 TWh	8,760 TWh	8,760 TWh	8,760 TWh	8,760 TWh
Annual Revenue ($B)	$43.8B	$43.8B	$43.8B	$43.8B	$43.8B	$43.8B	$43.8B	$43.8B	$43.8B	$43.8B
Cumulative Revenue ($B)	$176.3B	$220.1B	$263.9B	$307.7B	$351.5B	$395.3B	$439.1B	$482.9B	$526.7B	$570.5B
Net Position (7% Discount Rate)										
Annual Net Position ($B)	**$43.8B**	**$43.8B**	**$43.8B**	**$43.8B**	**$43.8B**	**$43.8B**	**$43.8B**	**$43.8B**	**$43.8B**	**$43.8B**
Cumulative NPV ($B)	**($14.2B)**	**$5.2B**	**$23.4B**	**$40.4B**	**$56.3B**	**$71.1B**	**$85.0B**	**$97.9B**	**$110.0B**	**$121.3B**



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