Maine Department of Energy Resources
Transmission Planning Stakeholder Group Meeting #3
Pursuant to Resolves 2025, Ch. 57
March 27, 2026 | Meeting Summary

Meeting in Brief

Maine Department of Energy Resources (DOER), formerly the Governor's Energy Office (GEO), convened the third meeting of the Transmission Planning Stakeholder Group to provide updates and context surrounding Maine's transmission efforts and the Study Regarding the Future of Electric Transmission Infrastructure in the State. Fourteen (14) members of the stakeholder group defined in Resolve 2025, Ch. 57, and approximately 39 other interested parties participated. The meeting focused on the existing processes and procedures for the siting and permitting of transmission infrastructure, including opportunities for public engagement, as well as best practices in planning, siting, permitting, and community engagement around transmission.

The following summary provides an overview of the presentations given during this third meeting of the Stakeholder Group, along with the questions and comments from participants. A list of the Stakeholder Group members in attendance is attached to this document. Presentation slides are available here.[1]

Context and Updates

Celina Cunningham, DOER, welcomed everyone and gave an overview of the Transmission Study process. She reminded participants of Resolve 2025, ch. 57's requirements, which mandate a report and recommendations to the Legislature in September 2026. Celina then provided a summary of Stakeholder Group Meeting No. 2 that took place in December 2025. She also announced that DOER plans to conduct an additional three (3) meetings before the submission of the report on September 1, 2026. Celina underscored that each of these meetings would continue to be focused on the topics of the Resolve. [For more information on these upcoming Stakeholder Group meetings, please click here.]

Presentation on Existing Processes for Transmission Planning, Siting, Permitting, and Public Engagement

Nate Grady and Ben Joseph, from the consultant E3, presented a detailed review of existing processes for developing new and upgrading existing transmission infrastructure in Maine. They highlighted who the major actors are, and how projects move through different phases to completion.

[1] https://www.maine.gov/energy/studies-reports-working-groups/current-studies-working-groups-transmission

Stakeholders' questions and comments following this presentation are summarized in the Stakeholder Input and Questions section below.

Presentation on Best Practices for Transmission Planning, Siting, Permitting, and Engagement

Ben Joseph, E3, provided a review of best practices in transmission planning, siting, and permitting. David Plumb, CBI, provided an additional overview of stakeholder engagement best practices for siting and permitting of transmission projects.

All slides are available here.

Stakeholder Group Input & Questions

Stakeholder group members' questions and comments following each presentation are summarized below. Responses from E3, DOER, or other state organizations are italicized in suborder bullets.

Context and Updates

- Is the Northern Maine project included in the scope of this discussion?
    - *DOER: This study is focused on the State's overall future electric transmission infrastructure needs, not any one specific project or approval process. The study may offer lessons and ideas that could apply to specific projects.*
- A stakeholder urged DOER to include in the study analysis and guidance around integrating new transmission into the existing grid. The stakeholder shared past experiences with generators, who were surprised to learn they could not simply plug into existing infrastructure
- A stakeholder noted the timeline to finish the study in September and emphasized that the Northern Maine initiative should be well-informed by this study. The stakeholder expressed support for the study and stressed the importance of getting transmission projects right the first time. The stakeholder also asked whether an analysis of non-wires alternatives would be incorporated into the study.
- DOER noted that work has begun on the Maine Energy Plan, which is updated every two years, and will also be informed by this Transmission Study effort. DOER offered to discuss the separate process offline with interested participants and welcomed participation in the related request for information.

Presentation on Existing Processes for Transmission Planning, Siting, Permitting, and Public Engagement

- A stakeholder asked about the Office of the Public Advocate's (OPA) role in looking into non-wires alternatives, particularly in cases when a transmission line is named in statute.
    - *OPA: This analysis is handled on a case-by-case basis.*
- A stakeholder noted the challenge of achieving site control that a developer faces, as well as the impact of advocates that operate outside of the formal processes. The stakeholder

also noted that projects are often built by multiple entities, raising complexity.

Presentation on Best Practices for Transmission Planning, Siting, Permitting, and Engagement

- A stakeholder emphasized that much of the stakeholder engagement work needs to happen outside the formal permitting process, since the formal process functions more as a hearing, and projects will struggle if engagement doesn't happen beforehand. The stakeholder also noted that community benefits require consideration of financial aspects, including how ISO-NE Transmission Cost Allocation excludes certain costs from recovery, which can influence how much developers are willing to invest in community benefits and who pays for community benefits or other aspects of projects that are included to respond to community interests. Finally, the stakeholder noted that financial risk must be weighed against timeline goals (i.e., permitting alone can take 2 years), so the group should consider when a line needs to be in service and the timeline to achieve that.
- A stakeholder raised the challenge of incorporating community benefits into regulatory review from an environmental perspective, noting how project purpose is considered in Site Law and NRPA, that impacts are considered differently, and that citizens should not be the ones weighing environmental impact. The stakeholder asked whether the best practices literature includes incorporating this analysis earlier in the process, so that stakeholders are not responding to a fully baked proposal, and so that a non-wires alternatives process can be built in earlier.
    - *E3: This is a good point and something to look into further, including more thorough evaluation at the planning stage. E3 will take this back and explore further.*
- A stakeholder asked whether, from a best practices perspective, there is an opportunity for a streamlined or time-compressed process for projects with significant statewide impact on citizens and ratepayers, rather than stacking onto existing processes. The stakeholder noted that projects increasing reliability and service for Mainers could benefit from a quicker timeline.
    - *DEP: DEP has discretion to prioritize and has been working with consultants to complete some project reviews. Balancing priorities is challenging because stakeholders across transmission, housing, renewables, and resilience all want their projects prioritized. DEP is using the consultant community to bolster capacity for this.*
- A stakeholder asked questions about the potential for different regulatory processes if a transmission line is built by a utility or a non-utility company, such as a renewable energy developer.
    - *DOER: DOER offered to follow up with the stakeholder on this topic.*
    - *PUC: The group should circle back on this point.*

- A stakeholder noted that many transmission projects are smaller-scale and the study should be relevant for them as well. The stakeholder noted the value of thinking about the discrete benefits of those projects in terms of reliability. The stakeholder emphasized the need for better communication around those benefits to communities.
- A stakeholder raised cost allocation and capacity allocation as related issues for further discussion, noting that transmission lines are configured differently depending on whether they bring generators to load, and that this capacity could be constrained.

Other Interested Parties Input & Questions

Other interested parties' questions and comments are summarized below.

- A participant noted that ISO-NE is conducting the LTTP project review and compared it to what the PUC is doing with respect to Northern Maine. The participant observed that ISO-NE has published a summary of what the different bids look like, but this level of transparency is not present at this stage in the Northern Maine process, and suggested that this kind of transparency could be helpful if done at the PUC level. The participant also raised concerns about the first round of Northern Maine bids and community benefits, specifically the impact on school funding for host communities. When a transmission project goes through a town, the increase in total value can be detrimental to the local school funding and revenue sharing, and the participant urged the state to look at ways to address this issue.
    - *PUC: It has been a long-standing practice not to reveal the identity of the bidders, and while the ongoing procurement will adhere to that practice, the PUC is happy to take this feedback back.*
- A participant asked for clarification regarding whether a project falls to DEP or BEP for approval if it is a high-impact transmission line that has been previously authorized.

Stakeholder Group Participants

Tanya Blanchard
Susan Chamberlin
Dwayne Conley
Celina Cunningham
Michael Duguay
Jeffrey Fenn
Mike Haskell
Anna Henderson
Megan Lamb
Melanie Loyzim
Craig Nale
David Norman
John Perry
Amalia Siegel

State Legislators in Attendance

Rep. Christopher Kessler