

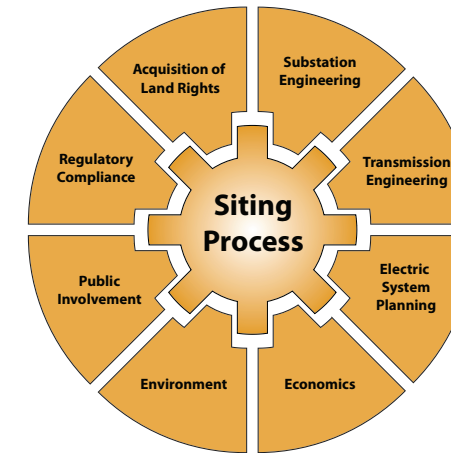
## Permitting

Information from the public siting process and environmental assessment will be used as Tri-State seeks land-use permits from the local county and municipal authorities. Pre-application meetings will be held with each permitting authority to identify specific concerns and issues relevant to that particular county or municipality. Those concerns and issues will be addressed through land-use application and permitting processes.

State and/or federal permitting also may be required, for example, stormwater management and/or Section 404 Clean Water Act permit.

# SITING, NEPA, AND PERMITTING

## Understanding the Process



### Common Siting Terms

**Corridor:** A strip of land at least one-mile wide to be evaluated for possible transmission routes.

**Route:** A specific alignment of the transmission line within a defined right-of-way.

**Segment:** Portions of a route that can be pieced together in various ways to form the optimal alignment.

**Opportunity:** A favorable location for siting a transmission line. While opportunity areas are preferred for siting, they are rarely present along an entire proposed route.

**Constraint:** A location that should be avoided, to the extent possible, when siting a transmission line. Because of the complex nature of siting, constraint areas may be crossed by portions of proposed routes.

Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association is a not-for-profit wholesale electric power supplier owned by the 44 electric cooperatives that it serves. As part of its operations and maintenance activities, as well as in planning and implementing new projects, Tri-State is committed to minimizing impacts to land use and natural and cultural resources.

When planning new transmission facilities, Tri-State undertakes a thorough siting and environmental process that meets or exceeds local, state and federal compliance requirements.

### Siting Process

#### Siting Goals

The goal of the siting process is to:

- maximize the use of opportunity areas and
- minimize the use of constraint areas.

#### Siting Considerations

Tri-State uses an open and comprehensive siting process that considers electric system planning, economic, environmental, public involvement, regulatory, land rights and engineering considerations.

#### Preliminary Corridor Identification Phase

*Step 1.* Define the project study area by its beginning and end points.

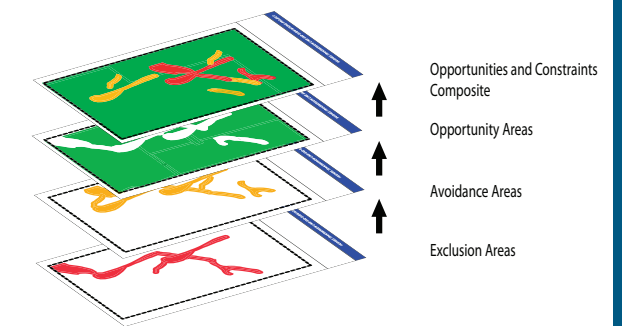
*Step 2.* Conduct an opportunity and constraint analysis using mapped resource data of land use, environmental and engineering factors.

Primary opportunities:

- Existing utility line easements
- Transportation corridors
- Rangeland
- Edges of fields

Primary constraints:

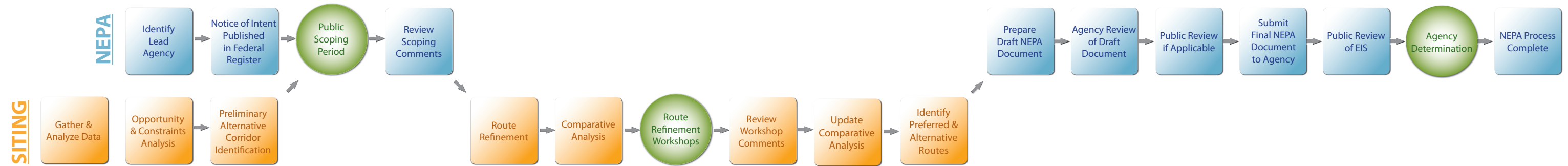
- Residential areas
- Open waterbodies
- Irrigated agriculture
- Conservation areas
- Critical plant or wildlife habitats



*Step 3.* Identify preliminary alternative corridors from the analysis above.

### Contact Information

Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association  
Permitting and Land Rights Department  
1100 W. 116th Ave., Westminster, Colo. 80234  
Phone: 800-332-0498  
For more information, visit [www.tristategt.org/transmission](http://www.tristategt.org/transmission)



### What is NEPA?

- The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is a federal law that requires all federal agencies to consider the potential effects of their proposed actions to the human and natural environments.
- NEPA promotes better agency decision-making by ensuring that high quality information is available to officials and the public before the agency decides whether and how to undertake a major federal action.
- Through the NEPA process, the public has an opportunity to learn about the proposed action and to provide information and comments.
- Many projects are required to prepare either an environmental assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) under NEPA.

**Step 4.** Seek public input and feedback on the preliminary alternative corridors to balance the need for reliable electric service with potential environmental impacts, public acceptance, engineering, economics and legal and regulatory requirements.

#### Route Refinement Phase

**Step 1.** Address specific concerns identified by the public, such as new resource information, and refine the preliminary alternative corridors into alternative routes.

**Step 2.** Conduct a comparative analysis of the alternative routes.

- Identify comparative criteria
- Rank the alternatives based on the criteria

**Step 3.** Present the comparative analysis and alternative routes at public route refinement workshops for review and comment.

#### Alternative Identification Phase

**Step 1.** Use public comments and stakeholder concerns from the route refinement workshops to make final adjustments to the alternative routes.

**Step 2.** Update the comparative analysis to reflect the refined routes.

**Step 3.** Identify a preferred route and any feasible alternatives based on the comparative analysis.

**Step 4.** Carry the preferred and alternative routes forward for NEPA analysis.

#### Public Involvement

On new transmission projects, Tri-State will hold a series of public scoping workshops where the information gathered from the siting process is presented to the public and local, state, and federal agencies.

Comments from the public and agency representatives will be collected and used to revise and refine the alternative corridors and routes. The public involvement process will continue throughout the formal environmental process that will include preparation of an environmental document under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), required by the Rural Utilities Service, a federal agency that assists with funding for Tri-State's capital construction costs. The result will be the selection of a preferred and final route that meets the need for reliable electric service.

### The NEPA Process

#### Prepare a Notice of Intent

- Publish a Notice of Intent to prepare the appropriate level of NEPA documentation in the Federal Register
- Make local announcements of the Notice of Intent

#### Conduct public scoping and solicit public comments

- Discover alternatives to the proposed action
- Identify potential significant effects associated with the project
- Identify issues for further analysis in the environmental study
- Communicate information to the public
- Consult with agencies and organizations
- Document public comments

#### Prepare a draft NEPA document

NEPA documents compiled by Tri-State fully disclose potential effects of the proposed action and alternative project routes. Issues for consideration typically include:

- Land use, recreation and transportation
- Human health and safety
- Soils
- Floodplains and wetlands
- Agricultural operations
- Water resources
- Protected, threatened, endangered or sensitive wildlife and plant species
- Air quality
- Visual resources
- Cultural, historic and tribal resources
- Socioeconomic resources

The public will have an opportunity to comment on the study.

### Levels of NEPA Analysis

*Determined by scope and budget*

#### Categorical Exclusion

None or minor impacts. No public involvement required. In some cases, an Environmental Report may be needed to document the lack of impacts.

#### Environmental Assessment (EA)

Appropriate when impacts are not significant. Public scoping may or may not be required. Results in a Finding of No Significant Impacts. If FONSI not appropriate and significant impacts are expected, then an EIS is prepared.

#### Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

Includes public scoping and public document review. Intensive evaluation of impacts and mitigation.