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ETCC/IECA Files FERC Complaint Challenging SPP's $3 Billion in Transmission Projects That Should Have Been Competitively Bid to Reduce Ratepayer Electricity Costs

Complaint alleges Southwest Power Pool improperly exempted major transmission projects from competitive bidding, increasing consumers electricity prices and raising questions of how future projects will be treated in 2027.

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *October 28th, 2026,* The Electricity Transmission Competition Coalition (ETCC), alongside the Industrial Energy Consumers of America (IECA), filed a complaint (Docket No. EL27-7) with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) challenging Southwest Power Pool's (SPP) decision to exempt nearly **$3 billion** in transmission projects from competitive bidding, that will result in consumers paying an estimated $750 million in higher electricity bills for decades. Competitively bid transmission projects reduce costs on average by 25 percent.

The complaint alleges that SPP violated its FERC-approved tariff by designating four major transmission projects as Short-Term Reliability Projects, a classification intended for projects that must be placed into service within three years to address immediate reliability needs. However, the four projects are not expected to enter service until 2029 or 2030, well beyond three years.

By applying this designation, SPP bypassed the competitive process required under FERC Order No. 1000, which is designed to encourage competition among transmission developers and to protect electricity customers from excessive costs.

"Electricity customers should not be forced to pay more for transmission infrastructure because utilities are allowed to sidestep competition," **said Paul Cicio, Chairman of the Electricity Transmission Competition Coalition**." SPP is using an exemption intended for urgent reliability projects to award nearly $3 billion in transmission investments without competitive bidding. These projects will affect electricity bills for decades, and consumers deserve assurance that they are being developed at the lowest reasonable cost. FERC must enforce its rules and ensure that competition remains the standard rule, not the exception."

The complaint identifies several concerns with SPP's decision:

- **Projects do not meet the three-year requirement.** All four projects are scheduled to enter service beyond the tariff's three-year window, including two major 765-kilovolt

transmission projects that SPP itself estimates will require approximately five years to complete.

- **SPP failed to adequately justify the exemptions.** The complaint alleges that SPP did not provide sufficient documentation explaining the immediate reliability needs, why those needs were not identified earlier, or what alternative solutions were considered.
- **Competition was bypassed despite stakeholder objections.** Of the 22 stakeholder comments submitted, 16 advocated for competition and raised concerns about the application of the Short-Term Reliability Project exemption and the lack of cost and schedule accountability.
- **The use of exemptions is expanding.** The complaint highlights a growing pattern of SPP classifying increasingly large and expensive transmission projects as short-term reliability needs, limiting opportunities for competitive development and lower ratepayer costs.

ETCC and IECA are asking FERC to find that SPP violated its tariff and require the grid operator to initiate a competitive selection process for the four projects. The complaint requests that FERC direct SPP to reevaluate the projects' short-term reliability designations and ensure future exemptions comply with its tariff and issue all relief necessary to ensure that SPP complies with its Tariff on a going-forward basis.

The organizations have also requested expedited consideration, asking FERC to act before February 2027, when SPP could move forward with directly assigning nearly $3 billion in transmission investments to incumbent utilities.

About the Electricity Transmission Competition Coalition

ETCC is a broad-based, nation-wide coalition committed to increasing competition in America's electricity transmission infrastructure. We advocate for common-sense policies and solutions that result in competitively priced transmission projects, which reduce energy costs for all ratepayers – from large manufacturers to residential consumers. The ETCC represents a diverse group of 95 companies and organizations from all 50 states, including manufacturing groups, retail electric consumers, state consumer advocates, think tanks, and non-incumbent transmission developers.

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