

NEWSLETTER *Published September 23, 2024 • 5 minute read*

On the Grid: Pragmatic Planning

09/20/24

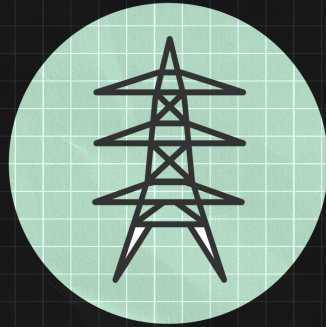


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Click [HERE](#) to subscribe to this bi-weekly newsletter.

Welcome back to *On the Grid*, Third Way's bi-weekly newsletter, where we'll recap how we're working to deploy every clean energy technology as quickly and affordably as possible and cut through the election year noise to parse out what this year means for clean energy.

We're excited to have you join us!



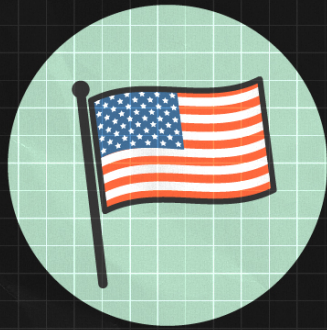
TRANSMISSION

Growing energy demand from data centers is straining existing transmission infrastructure across the US. Substantial transmission upgrades are badly needed – but it's not clear who will pay.

These challenges have come to a head in Ohio, where Amazon, Google, Microsoft, and Meta are fighting a proposal from Ohio's state utility, American Electric Power (AEP), to significantly raise upfront energy costs for these companies to help fund new transmission lines and infrastructure upgrades. AEP argues the fee hike will prevent households and small businesses from bearing the financial burden if data centers don't demand as much energy as anticipated or wind up closing before transmission upgrades are fully paid for, sticking locals with the bill for transmission upgrades they no longer need.

Why This Matters: Right now, transmission gets built when needed, not preemptively or in anticipation of future demand. That makes last-minute squabbles over who pays for transmission improvements more likely – and puts new projects at risk. Reactive planning also leads to higher consumer costs and more uncertain budgets and timelines for developers. With demand growing and many new clean energy projects waiting to come online, transmission planning needs to switch to a proactive model to increase preparedness and improve grid resilience.

What We're Doing: The recently proposed bipartisan Energy Permitting Reform Act (EPRA) can help solve these challenges. Building on FERC Order 1920, the bill would require proactive regional transmission planning, helping relieve some of the tension we're seeing in Ohio. Our team is actively briefing stakeholders on our analysis of the bill to ensure they understand the bill's potential impact and are prepared to make informed decisions.



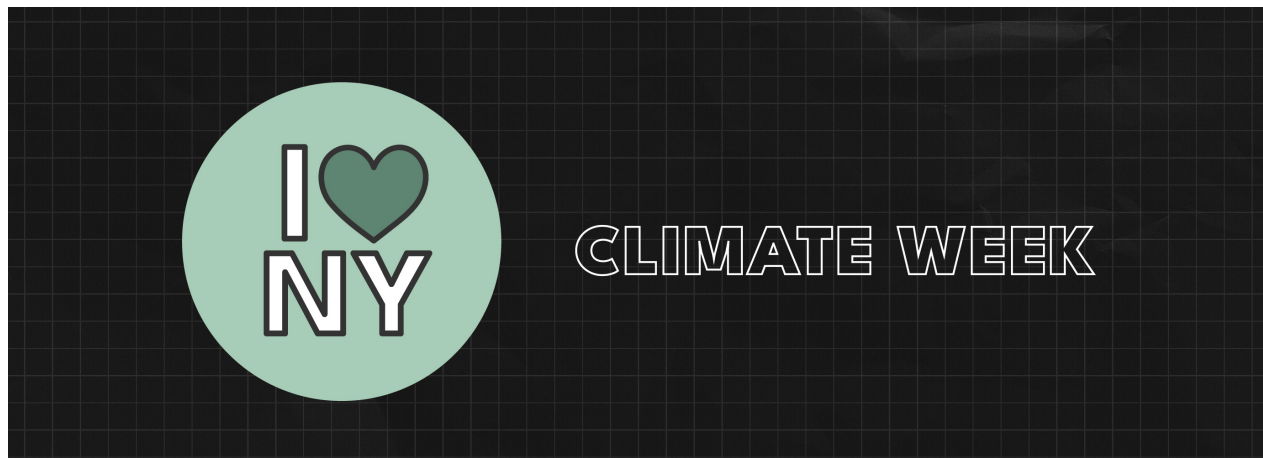
POLITICS

Election Day is fast approaching, and we've got new public opinion research from Michigan to help you understand where key voters land on recent climate and energy policies. We worked with Impact Research to conduct a poll of 800 likely voters in Michigan, plus three focus groups of swing voters, including non-college white women, ages 30-60, Black men, ages 18-34, and white voters from union households, ages 40-60. You can read the details of our focus groups [here](#), but here's a quick breakdown of what we learned:

- In our poll, it's a dead heat between Trump and Harris. But in our focus groups, Harris faces lukewarm enthusiasm from swing voters, with many remaining undecided.
- Many Michiganders remain largely unaware of both federal and state climate policies but supported clean energy siting reforms in Michigan after learning more. Participants were familiar with the administration's work on electric vehicles, but their perceptions were not positive.
- Michiganders' opposition to clean energy, particularly to electric vehicles, fell into two distinct camps: those with more practical reservations (i.e., interested in clean energy but unsure if it's affordable) and those who are categorically opposed (i.e., believe wind turbines are ugly and certain that they don't work). In our focus groups, young black men were far more likely to fall into the former category. Older non-college white women tended to fall into the latter.

Why This Matters: Our research shows clean energy advocates have serious work to do, both to raise awareness of existing policies and to increase their popularity. Our findings on pragmatic vs. categorical objections to clean energy emphasize the importance of understanding your specific audience. As we head into election season, clean energy advocates must consider their audience's openness to clean energy, not simply whether they support it or not in a binary question. Listening to the motivations behind clean energy skepticism and addressing Americans' practical concerns can help chip away at opposition to clean energy. Dismissing Americans' concerns is a losing strategy. For more on this, check out Holly Jean Buck's [essay](#) in *Jacobin*.

What's Next: Keep an eye out for a deeper analysis of Michiganders' attitudes on clean energy in the next few weeks!



Headed to Climate Week NYC next week? Don't miss our event! Join us for *Powering the Future: Decarbonizing Our Economy with 24/7 Clean Energy*, where leaders from Google, Constellation, and the White House will dive into the US path to commercializing advanced clean energy, meeting growing demand, and securing our energy grid.

The event has limited capacity, so please reach out to event@thirdway.org if you are interested in attending and we will do our best to accommodate!



- Tom Steyer, in *Newsweek*, argues that the upcoming US election is crucial for determining America's leadership in the global economy, especially in emerging clean energy markets, and outlines how a Trump victory would hinder American competitiveness and cede market dominance to China.
- Alan Ohnsman, in *Forbes*, highlights Secretary of Energy Jennifer Granholm and her role in rapidly deploying funding for clean energy projects to meet emissions goals and create US jobs.

- Bill Loveless, on Columbia's *Energy Exchange* podcast, talks with Energy and environmental law professor David Spence about how political polarization is blocking commonsense clean energy legislation in Congress and the need for more transparency about the challenges of the clean energy transition to address public concerns.
- ESPN College GameDay is repping for nuclear fans everywhere. The majority of Americans support more nuclear power plants to generate electricity in the US. And what better proof of this public opinion shift than seeing an "I Heart Nuclear Energy" sign front and center on Game Day?