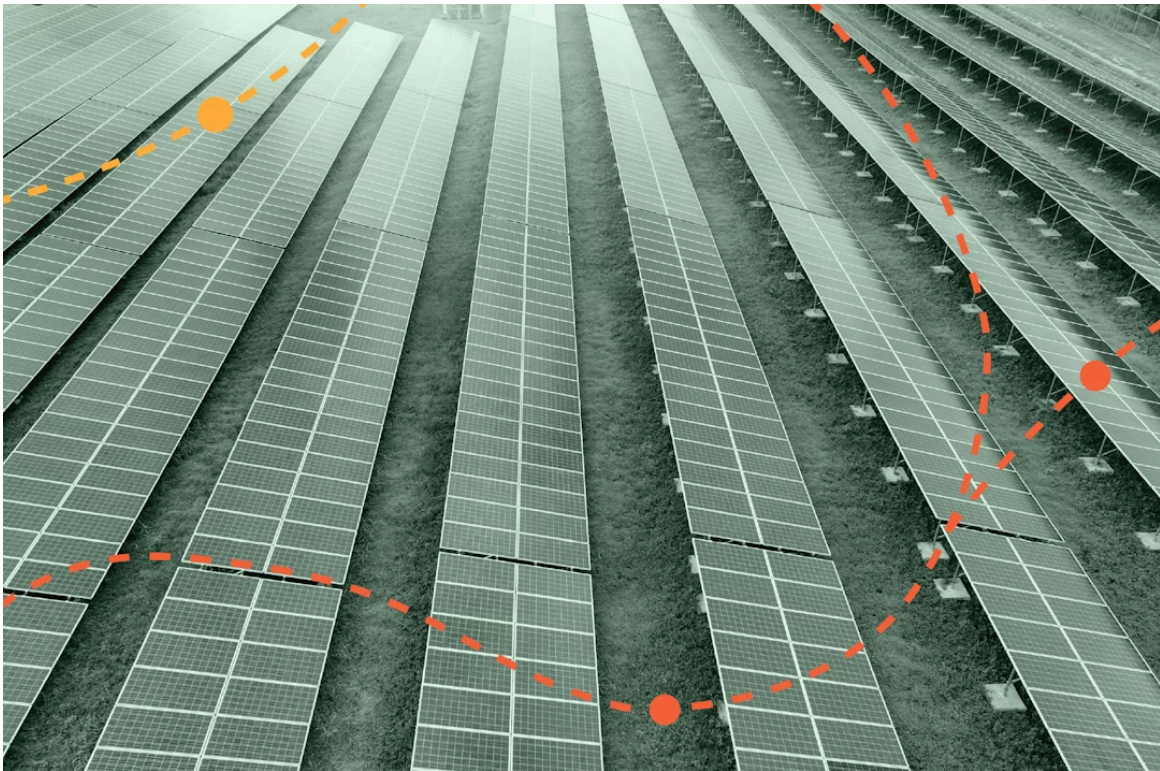


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Full Research Findings: Pathways to Accelerating Clean Energy (PACE) Report

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Executive Summary

Clean energy is cheaper and more readily available than at any other point in US history. Solar and wind are now cost-competitive with oil and gas and, in many cases, less expensive. Other clean technologies aren't far behind. But if costs are no longer the biggest barrier to clean energy deployment in America, what is? Non-financial barriers—from permitting complexity to stakeholder opposition—continue to slow the deployment of utility-scale solar and transmission projects. To better characterize the obstacles blocking further clean energy deployment, Third Way commissioned Environmental Resources Management, Inc. (ERM) to survey more than 200 experienced industry practitioners cumulatively involved in thousands of projects nationwide.

Our research confirms that delays, cancellations, and inefficiencies are widespread across utility-scale solar, and transmission and distribution projects. Though existing literature attributes most of these delays to stakeholder opposition, our research shows the reality is more complex:

- Only a minority of projects face concerted resistance capable of altering or halting development.
- Federal permitting reviews caused the longest delays for new projects, but state and local permitting also slowed deployment significantly.
- Interconnection delays are pervasive, and frequently exacerbated by broader process inefficiencies, rather than isolated technical issues.
- Market design factors—such as capacity markets or renewable portfolio standards—were not the primary drivers of delay.

Our findings point to a clear policy imperative: the United States needs targeted reforms, focused on streamlining permitting, enhancing agency capacity, improving interconnection transparency, and investing in workforce development. The stakes are higher than ever, as electricity demand surges nationwide, energy prices soar, and greenhouse gas emissions continue to climb.

By grounding policy actions in empirical evidence, this report offers actionable pathways to accelerate clean energy deployment and deliver on America's climate and energy goals.

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