



750 1st St, NE
Suite 1100
Washington, DC 20002
202.682.6294 *Main*
202.682.3050 *Fax*
www.cleanskies.org

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Contact: jdeutsch@cleanskies.org

Expanded Role For Natural Gas-Fired Power Plants Key To Efficient Transmission Planning By DOE Says American Clean Skies Foundation

The American Clean Skies Foundation (ACSF) is urging the Department of Energy (DOE) to take into account a growing role for natural gas-fired electric generation when the agency writes its 2012 Electric Transmission Congestion Study.

[In public comments filed Monday](#), the nonprofit group said the DOE's forthcoming transmission study should reflect future increases in gas-fired generation due to the recent decline in natural gas prices and expanded U.S. production of the fuel. "The critical role of natural gas in the electric power sector has often been overlooked in transmission planning. Yet, given the growing economic attraction of gas-fired generation, and the ability of gas-fired units to be located close to load, natural gas can provide a key means of alleviating transmission constraints, thereby avoiding the need for controversial and expensive long-haul transmission," said Gregory C. Staple, CEO of the Foundation.

ACSF's comments say changing dynamics in the electric power sector present the industry with a unique opportunity to invest in natural gas generation because of low gas prices, the growth of renewable power, and enforcement of new clean air requirements for coal units.

Natural gas-fired power plants are operationally flexible and can ramp up and down quickly to mitigate transmission problems associated with the intermittency of renewable generation, or contingencies that may result from the retirement of coal generation. Gas-fired units also are uniquely well-suited for siting close to metropolitan areas due to their low-emissions profile and small physical footprint. For these and other reasons, ACSF urged DOE to give more weight to the role such power plants can play in the transmission planning process.

Every three years, the Energy Department is required to update its review of potential choke points in the interstate transmission network used to deliver electric power. ACSF's comments were filed in anticipation of DOE's next study, which is due to be completed later this year.

The American Clean Skies Foundation is a Washington-based nonprofit founded in 2007 to promote a cleaner environment through the expanded use of natural gas, renewable energy and energy efficiency.