



## Powering Ohio's Future Part II

Monday, September 28, 2026

### Responses to Q&A Questions

***Beyond behind the meter and data centers, Ohio faces an overall supply shortfall. New generation is being developed in the Southeast and requires lengthy new transmission build out, while several NE Ohio coal plants have closed, leaving high voltage lines underutilized. Why isn't there more emphasis on siting new generation where the grid already exists so power can be delivered faster, costs lowered, and public support broadened beyond data centers?***

[House Bill 15](#) created "Priority Investment Areas" that would give brownfield renovation grants to projects that locate on existing industrial areas that may have access points to the grid for precisely this reason. In addition, the "Behind the Meter" focus of HB 15 encourages developers to find spots on the grid where dense utility networks already exist. If you are building behind the meter, ultimately you will want to plug into the PJM grid to strengthen the connection. That means looking for sites near existing high voltage electric lines. For example, the Lordstown and Trumbull Energy Centers in Trumbull County were located to take advantage of existing 345 kv lines that were in place to supply the Lordstown auto facility that existed in the area.

***As state government continues evolving the way in which it supports data center development, are there any plans to create a "playbook" of sorts that can help shape partnerships with local governments across Ohio who don't have robust staff or economic development sophistication?***

Each project is different. A community should always know what their infrastructure needs and current capacities are. If communities are smart, and they understand what the community needs, like sewer and water infrastructure, they can tailor a deal that works best for them. Community development organizations don't need to be the most sophisticated organization in the world. They just need to know what their community needs and to ask for how data centers can be partners in achieving that.

Sharing best practices, zoning examples and transparency with agreements is encouraged to allow for the best community outcomes.

The Ohio Economic Development Administration, in partnership with JobsOhio and other statewide economic development entities, has recently published a plain-language toolkit to assist communities with navigating data center development opportunities. [Click here to review the website and access the PDF version.](#)

***Are there examples of data centers "getting it right" in communities that can inform local development processes?***

New Albany, OH, a high income, suburban community near Columbus, has one of the largest data center campuses in the country. They regularly host economic development officials from all over the world to look at how they have done it. I would look at New Albany's overall data center efforts, from multiple different developers.

Another great example is Loudoun County, Virginia. Northern Virginia is one of the country's most developed data center hotspots. There's been lots of trial and error in that market, but numerous success stories, particularly in the last few years. Loudoun and Prince William counties have made purposeful changes to their processes, zoning codes, etc., and have benefited greatly from the robust data center ecosystem there.

Data centers have been in use in the US for decades. Many early data centers exist within our larger cities. The prominence of AI has led to new demand and rapid development in areas that were previous industrial sites and farmland. The size and scale of the projects can lead to the need for large plots of land and utilities.

***Is there good data on how data centers have positively impacted energy infrastructure buildout or property tax revenues to the point where communities can be less reliant on tax levies?***

Loudoun County, VA is another community with one of the highest concentrations of data centers. The facilities in the county pay enough property taxes, just by themselves, to fund the county's entire general operations budget. Property taxes in the county have been reduced substantially as a result.

In terms of energy infrastructure, look at the recent study by the Lawrence Livermore National Energy Laboratory titled "Retail Electricity Price Trends and Drivers," from July 2026. According to one of the nation's premier research institutions on the topic; "From 2019 to 2025, states with the highest growth generally saw average retail prices decline in real terms. Those state where load declined often experienced price increases. Cost growth significantly driven by [transmission and distribution] investments – with prevailing rate structures, greater load can lead to fixed costs being spread over more demand, reducing per unit costs."

In Ohio, because we are in the PJM market, this is the transmission grid in the country where this has not occurred, because we retired all the coal plants before we need new power plants built. So, we are seeing substantial increases in the usage portion of bills because of a mismatch between supply and demand. As the behind the meter plants for data centers eventually get plugged into the grid, the mismatch will come into more balance, and the PJM grid show experience a pattern similar to other grids, where larger load growth equates to a decrease in average prices.

***What is "at stake" as it relates to Ohio and our country effectively dealing with data center development?***

The data center buildout is the largest capital expenditure in world history. Think of the communities that got bypassed by previous large capex buildouts, such as railroads or the interstate highway system. Those communities tend to be poorer, have less economic activity, have declining populations, and even worse health outcomes. So, there's a lot at stake. Data centers are more and more being considered as essential infrastructure needed to support modern society.

***There is a growing backlog of projects in queue to gain approval to integrate with the grid with many that are cancelling due to delay. What do you see as the opportunity to improve accelerating this backlog? What's the leading cause of the backlog?***

There are many reasons for the backlog and for cancelation of projects. The process helps qualify the project and the potential and likely upgrades that are needed. There can be many factors that lead to long lead times for projects. Large Load projects that require a regional grid solution take extended and broad coordination. Supply Chain for high voltage equipment has seen extended lead times for critical equipment that have led to delays and cancellation of projects. Working collaboratively as it relates to supporting needed infrastructure will be key. Building critical equipment will help ease timeframes as this is a global concern

***What are data center investors/owners doing to support environmental justice initiatives aimed at protection against facility operations and use?***

Many data centers are increasingly looking at brownfield properties with legacy environmental problems and making the cleanup of these properties as part of their pitch. If communities have challenging properties, working with a data center developer might be the best opportunity for funding to clean up a long-term community environmental health problem.

Technology advances such as liquid and waterless cooling, more efficient generators, and alternative fuel sources continue to minimize the environmental footprint of these projects, and such advances are a natural byproduct of the significant industry growth.

***Are tech companies helping to offset cost related to updating Ohio's infrastructure?***

Yes, there are currently processes in place to address through the State / PUCO. These rules address infrastructure by data centers and the commission has other tariff provisions that support other development of commercial and industrial customers. The state has made this a priority while striking a balance of competitiveness. The other area of electric infrastructure that continues to evolve and is supported by data centers is generation. We are a deregulated state, so the building of generation, behind the meter or baseload is key through [House Bill 15](#).

***Outside of a hostile populace are there reasons that some communities would be a bad fit for a data center project?***

Generally speaking, it depends on the type of data center and the land footprint that is needed. There needs to be thoughtful zoning that supports where centers should be located within a community. There are many advantages to having centers in or near your community and this needs to be contemplated.

When doing so, communities should realistically consider what the needs of these facilities are. Most facilities need a minimum of 100 acres. For power plants, PJM requires 50 acres gigawatt of natural gas capacity. There will be certain types of data center facilities, like edge computing or processing centers for telephony that will be smaller than that, but those have existed without controversy for decades. So, for all these communities that are passing “bans” or moratoriums, do they even have 250 acres or so of contiguous developable land? Many suburban communities do not, and many urban centers only have that for serious brownfield redevelopment efforts. Beyond the actual land acreage, water supply availability is certain a limiting factor for both compute and power gen. Using best available non-evaporative cooling technologies can cut water usage for a data center substantially. But, if the project has a power gen component to it, water needs should be evaluated.

That being said, compare the water use of a data center to your local municipally owned golf course. If you don't like water use for a data center, you should be pressuring your community to sell the golf course too.

***Is there a way to estimate the additional energy requirements from AI expansion versus growth in overall data usage and storage (videos, pictures, etc.)?***

[In a 2025 report from Google](#), they note that in the previous year, they saw power use grow by 27%. However, their environmental report explicitly noted that this is not just AI. Voice processing (like voice notes sent over cellular) and overall cloud processing are also extremely data/power intensive. So, as overall compute needs

continue to escalate exponentially alongside newer needs from AI, making such a determination is extremely difficult.

***With the significant requirement for more infrastructure. How will the costs of that infrastructure cost be spread across customer classes, use, etc. talk about subsidy/cross subsidy issues?***

On both the gas and electric fronts, utilities are implementing large load tariffs. These special rate classes make sure that costs for the power gen/data center customers are not passed on to other customers.

***Is there opportunity for behind the meter generation to create surplus capacity for other customers/needs—or is just offsetting what the current grid has to deliver to other customers?***

Yes, many of the BTM power plants will eventually connect to the PJM grid for precisely this purpose. [House Bill 15](#) promotes behind the meter generation. Over time, as investments sync the transmission and the BTM generation will likely be connected to and support the grid in a greater way.

***What's the role of nuclear in data centers?***

Nuclear is a clean technology that will be very useful with these large load customers and to support our communities in a greater way going forward. Advancements in small modular reactors (SMRs) will make this possible. In addition to the existing plants like Perry and Davis Bessie in Ohio, SMRs will be a key supply source. The nuclear industry has several companies working to deliver these new reactors and technology to make them commercially available to supply these large loads and the greater customer base in general.

***With the massive demand you mentioned in the queue do you expect most will have to come behind the meter? How long would it take to clear the power supply needed without that?***

Going forward, investments in generation will be needed from a baseload and BTM solution. The U.S. has shut down many coal plants over the past number of years with no replacement plans. With the increase in electrification, we need more in the coming years. Electric vehicles, data centers and other technologies drive this. We will also need transmission infrastructure if it's not BTM. Using BTM will help expedite and could possibly be connected to and support the grid in the near future.

***This is around the economics challenges. With high inflation in our economy, how do you dispel the impact on local energy rates due to demand which has a huge impact on residents and businesses in the communities?***

The overall energy community will need to continue to reiterate overall facts:

- Load growth ultimately drives down prices because fixed utility costs are spread across more usage.
- Electric demand was growing prior to the large data center and AI build out over the past three years, due to everything from electric vehicles to electrification of appliances to even the legalization of marijuana, where a single warehouse growing facility can consume 3 MWs on less than 10 acres.
- Ohio had been an electric exporter prior to the retirement of all the coal plants, and for the time being, is now a net electric importer.
- People who care about energy systems need to be vocal about what is truth and what is fiction.

Growth in the system is objectively the only way to quickly mitigate the current challenges that came from lack of supply that has occurred in our local grid operator due to power plant retirements. Investing in the grid,

generation, and pipelines will further open Ohio to being ready and competitive for future opportunities and to supply our communities.