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Utility giants advance $1.2B transmission project as Central Ohio power demand surges

A $1.2 billion transmission project in Central Ohio is moving forward.
MATT CARDY

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A more than $1 billion transmission project in Central Ohio is moving forward to address the region's growing infrastructure needs as more manufacturing facilities, data centers and electric vehicles come online.

The project will be jointly developed by Akron-based FirstEnergy's transmission arm and Transource Energy LLC – a partnership between American Electric Power Co. and Evergy Inc. – through the recently formed Grid Growth Ventures LLC. AEP owns 86.5% of Transource.

FirstEnergy said the transmission company is investing approximately $490 million in the project, which is estimated to cost $1.2 billion.

The proposed project, which includes approximately 200 miles of new "extra-high-voltage" lines and upgrades to several substations, is expected to "significantly increase service reliability and economic growth opportunities," the companies said. One of the lines is able to deliver power for as many as 2 million homes.

"The project we're undertaking with FirstEnergy addresses the rapidly evolving energy demand we are seeing across the region and will enable us to continue providing reliable service to our customers and facilitate economic growth by making sure access to power is available," AEP Transmission President Doug Cannon said in a statement.

The AEP Building at 1 Riverside Plaza in Columbus.

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Central Ohio's emergence as a data center hub has been cited by many as a reason for the region's growing power constraints. A recent JLL data center report noted that though Central Ohio has cemented itself as a destination for data centers, new cloud markets could emerge this year in other parts of the state as the facilities look for "faster deployment timelines."

Regional grid operator PJM Interconnection selected the project in February after it was proposed in August. PJM manages the grid across a 13-state region that includes Ohio.

"Through Grid Growth, we're building the kind of energy infrastructure that powers future generations of new businesses, good jobs and vibrant communities," said Mark Mroczynski, president of FirstEnergy Transmission, which is jointly owned by FirstEnergy and Brookfield Super-Core Infrastructure Partners.