

# SunZia Southwest Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement



NEWSLETTER 1

June 2021

## Project Description

The proposed SunZia Southwest Transmission Project (Project) comprises two planned 500 kilovolt (kV) transmission lines located across approximately 520 miles of Federal, State, and private lands between central New Mexico (NM) and central Arizona (AZ). The purpose of the Project is to transport up to 4,500 megawatts of primarily renewable energy from NM to markets in AZ and California. The Project was evaluated through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process from 2009 to 2015 when and Record of Decision was issued for a Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), authorizing a right-of-way (ROW) grant for the Project on federal lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

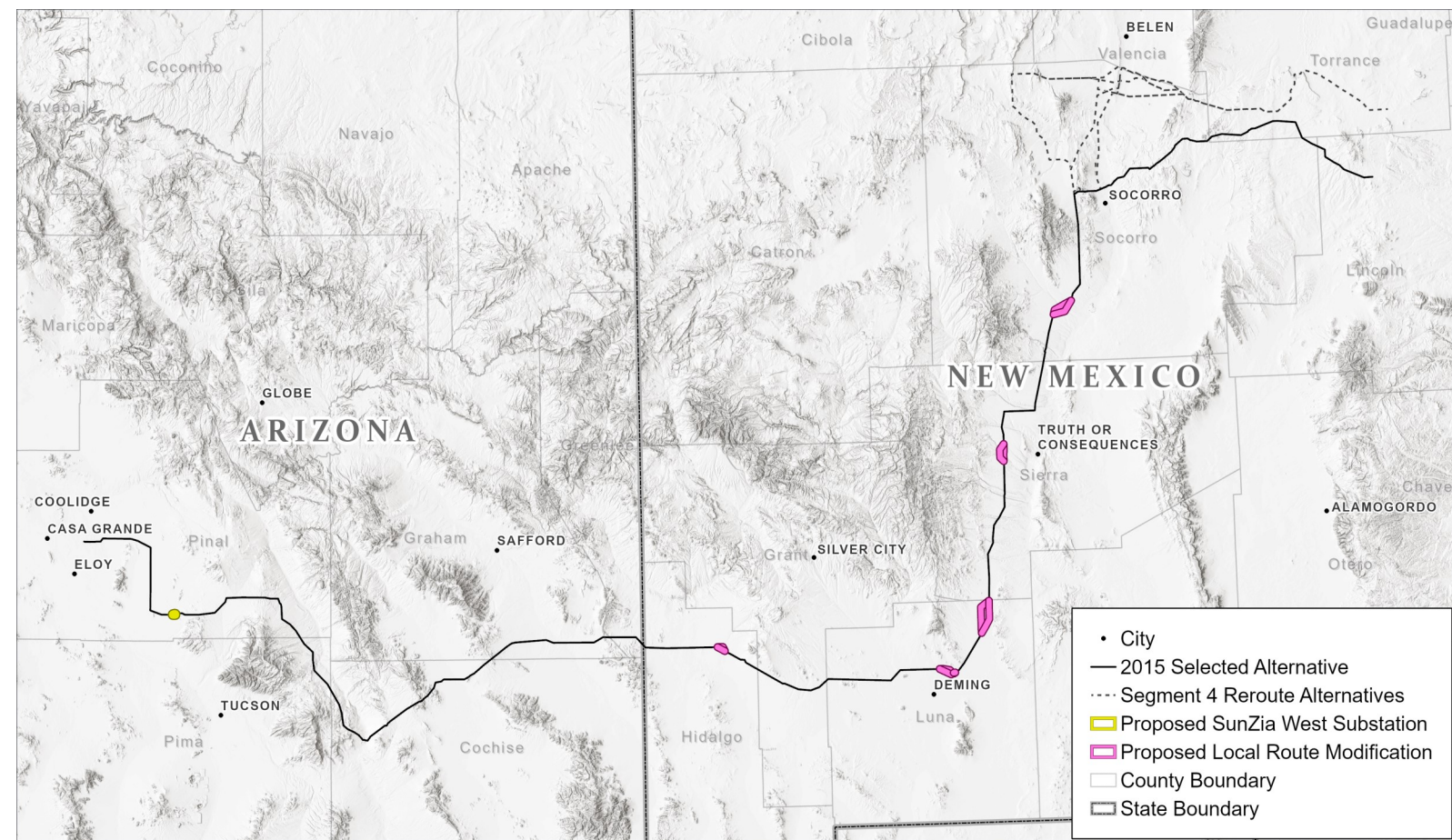
SunZia has submitted a new application to amend their existing BLM ROW grant. The proposed amendments are comprised of the following four components:

- Changes to access roads and temporary work areas on Federal lands;
- Localized route modifications in five areas along the selected route;
- Three reroute alternatives near Socorro, NM, proposed to address DoD concerns about WSMR, parallel another proposed transmission line, and move the east substation closer to proposed wind generation projects; and
- The addition of a substation (SunZia West) on private land in AZ.

## Virtual Public Scoping Meetings have been scheduled!

<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>June 22</b>	<b>1-3 PM MST</b>
<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>June 23</b>	<b>6-8 PM MST</b>
<b>Thursday</b>	<b>June 24</b>	<b>6-8 PM MST</b>

Register to attend a virtual scoping meeting via the BLM's ePlanning site: [eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2011785/510project/2011785/510](https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2011785/510project/2011785/510)



## Want to know more about the Project?

- Visit the Project ePlanning page at <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2011785/510>
  - ◊ to view project materials; and
  - ◊ add your contact information to our project mailing list.
- Contact Adrian Garcia, BLM Project Manager at (505) 954-2199 or [agarcia@blm.gov](mailto:agarcia@blm.gov).

## How to Submit Formal Scoping Comments

Opportunities to submit public comments during the 30-day public scoping period:

- Submit comments on ePlanning at <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2011785/510>
- Mail or hand deliver comments to: BLM NMSO; Attn: SunZia Southwest Transmission Project, Project Manager Adrian Garcia; 301 Dinosaur Trail; Santa Fe, NM 87508
- Record a telephone message at 1-888-959-2510

**All scoping comments are due July 6, 2021**

## NEPA Process

The BLM will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) for the SunZia Project. The EIS will provide a detailed analysis of the potential environmental impacts of the proposed action and a range of reasonable alternatives, including any necessary mitigation. Amendments to BLM land use plans may also be required. Preparing an EIS has a number of steps (see diagram, right). The process begins with publishing a Federal Register Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS, which begins a 30-day public scoping period. During this period, the BLM will conduct public scoping meetings to help identify possible issues and concerns that may result from the SunZia Project.

In coordination with the cooperating agencies, the BLM will assess the impacts that the Project may have on each of the resources and their uses and apply measures to mitigate the impacts. Alternatives will be compared, and a preferred alternative(s) will be identified. The process will be documented, and the impacts disclosed in the Draft EIS. Then a public comment period will be held. Comments will be analyzed and responses to the comments will be included in a Final EIS and proposed plan amendments.

### Agency Decisions to be Made

- Whether to grant, grant with conditions, or deny the application for an amended ROW.
- Whether or not to amend any of the existing land use plans.



### Resources to be Considered in the EIS

EIS analysis will tier to 2013 Final EIS analysis, augmenting as needed to address changed circumstances or new analysis areas. Anticipated topics include:

- Climate and Air Quality
- Earth Resources (Minerals, Geology/ Geological Hazards, and Soils)
- Paleontological Resources
- Water Resources
- Biological Resources (Wildlife, Vegetation, Invasive Weeds, Special-Status Species)

## Tips for providing effective scoping comments

Your participation is an important part of the decision-making process!

- Review the BLM ePlanning website, monitor local newspapers, attend public meetings, and become familiar with the proposed project development.
- Learn about the NEPA process and when in the process agencies will accept comments.
- Provide substantive and concise written or oral comments. The most effective comments identify resources to be evaluated, issues that may require environmental review, reasonable alternatives to consider, or potential mitigation (ways to reduce or avoid environmental impacts).
- Keep your comments focused on the proposed project being analyzed.
- Submit your comments within the timeframes announced. This helps the agencies include all concerns in the NEPA document.
- Make sure that you are on the EIS mailing list to receive notification of public meetings or project information, or both.

- Wildland Fire Ecology and Management
- Cultural Resources and Tribal Concerns
- Visual Resources
- Land Use and Recreation
- Special Designations
- Wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas, and Lands with Wilderness Characteristics
- Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice
- Health and Safety and Hazardous Materials

## Cooperating Agencies Participating in the EIS Process

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)</li> <li>• United States Forest Service (USFS)</li> <li>• United States Department of the Army, Fort Huachuca</li> <li>• DoD, White Sands Missile Range</li> <li>• Arizona Game and Fish Department</li> <li>• Arizona State Land Department</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Mexico Department of Game and Fish</li> <li>• New Mexico Office of Military Base Planning and Support</li> <li>• New Mexico State Land Office</li> <li>• Graham and Pinal counties, AZ</li> <li>• Grant, Lincoln Luna, Socorro counties, NM</li> <li>• Belen, NM</li> </ul> |
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