



## Transmission polices and the growth of wind power and other renewable generation

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### Introduction

Electric generation plants that utilize wind, solar, biomass, and other renewable resources are limited to being constructed at those locations where the renewable energy resource is located and can be utilized consistently over extended periods of time. The location-specific character of renewable resources creates transmission needs that are different from those of other generation resources. For example, in the case of coal-fired generation plants, while some plants are located at the source of the coal, so-called mine mouth plants, in many situations coal is transported long distances by railroad to the location of the generation plant. In these situations the location of the plant is selected based on factors other than the location of the coal source. The location of renewable generation, however, must be at the location of the renewable resource.

In addition, the location of the renewable energy resources is frequently in areas remote from the load centers, the consumers of the electric power, and many times distant from the existing electric transmission grid. Generation plants in such remote locations will require high voltage transmission lines to be constructed over long distances to interconnect with the transmission grid. The necessary investment in interconnection facilities can be much greater than that required for a fossil fueled generation plant that can be located much closer to the existing transmission grid. This can cause the

necessary investment in interconnection transmission facilities to be a major factor in determining the economic viability of renewable generation projects. Under these circumstances, policies with respect to the allocation and recovery of transmission costs have the potential to be a significant barrier to the development of renewable energy generation.

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