

(Pet. 1.) However, it “believes that alternate transportation service by truck or rail/truck transload is available” for the three remaining customers, all of whom were served a copy of the petition. (*Id.* at 6.)

Midcoast asserts that, because this proceeding would involve the discontinuance of common carrier service and not abandonment of the Line, the question of whether the Line contains any federally granted rights-of-way is inapplicable. (*Id.* at 2.) Midcoast states that any documentation related to federally granted rights-of-way pertaining to this petition in Midcoast’s possession will be made promptly available to those requesting it. (*Id.*)

According to Midcoast, the Line constitutes the entirety of its operations. (*Id.* at 8–9.) Where, as here, a rail carrier is discontinuing service over its entire system, the Board does not normally impose labor protection under 49 U.S.C. 10502(g), unless the evidence indicates the existence of: (1) a corporate affiliate that will continue substantially similar rail operations; or (2) a corporate parent that will realize substantial financial benefits over and above relief from the burden of deficit operations by its subsidiary railroad. See *Honey Creek R.R.—Aban. Exemption—in Henry Cnty., Ind.*, AB 865X (STB served Aug. 20, 2004); *Northampton & Bath R.R.—Aban. near Northampton & Bath Junction in Northampton Cnty., Pa. (Northampton)*, 354 I.C.C. 784, 785–86 (1978); *Wellsville, Addison & Galeton R.R.—Aban. of Entire Line in Potter & Tioga Cntys., Pa.*, 354 I.C.C. 744 (1978). According to Midcoast, it does not have a corporate affiliate that has similar rail operations, and its corporate parent, Finger Lakes Railway Corp., will not benefit from the proposed discontinuance beyond the relief it receives from the burden of deficit operations. (Pet. 9–10.) Therefore, if the Board grants the petition for exemption, in the absence of a showing that one or more of the exceptions articulated in *Northampton* are present, no labor protective conditions would be imposed.

By issuance of this notice, the Board is instituting an exemption proceeding pursuant to 49 U.S.C. 10502(b). A final decision will be issued by December 4, 2024.

Brunswick Terminal Area line were changed at some point.

It does not appear there was a subsequent proceeding authorizing MEC or ST to extinguish their common carrier obligations. MEC and ST have since been acquired by CSX Transportation, Inc. See *CSX Corp.—Control & Merger—Pan Am Sys., Inc.*, FD 36472 et al., slip op. at 2, 50 (STB served Apr. 14, 2022).

Because this is a discontinuance proceeding and not an abandonment, interim trail use/rail banking and public use conditions are not appropriate. Because the majority of the Line (from milepost 33.79 to the end of the line at Rockport) was abandoned before it was acquired by Maine DOT,³ and there will be environmental review during any subsequent abandonment for the remainder of the Line (from milepost 33.79 to milepost 28.03),⁴ this discontinuance does not require an environmental review.

Any offer of financial assistance (OFA) for subsidy under 49 CFR 1152.27(b)(2) will be due no later than 120 days after the filing of the petition for exemption, or 10 days after service of a decision granting the petition for exemption, whichever occurs sooner.⁵ Persons interested in submitting an OFA must first file a formal expression of intent to file an offer by September 16, 2024, indicating the intent to file an OFA for subsidy and demonstrating that they are preliminarily financially responsible. See 49 CFR 1152.27(c)(1)(i).

All pleadings, referring to Docket No. AB 1341X, must be filed with the Surface Transportation Board either via e-filing on the Board’s website or in writing addressed to 395 E Street SW, Washington, DC 20423–0001. In addition, a copy of each pleading must be served on Midcoast’s representative, Justin J. Marks, Clark Hill PLC, 1001 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Suite 1300 South, Washington, DC 20004. Replies to the petition are due on or before September 25, 2024.

Persons seeking further information concerning discontinuance procedures may contact the Board’s Office of Public Assistance, Governmental Affairs, and Compliance at (202) 245–0238 or refer to the full abandonment and discontinuance regulations at 49 CFR part 1152. Questions concerning environmental issues may be directed to

³ See *Me. Cent. R.R.—Pet. for Review of Arbitration Award*, FD 31434 et al., slip op. at 1 (ICC served Apr. 19, 1990) (noting that “MEC abandoned the Rockland Branch,” as authorized for abandonment in AB 83 (Sub-No. 8), “in November 1985”); *Me. Cent. R.R.—Aban.—in Cumberland, Sagadahoc, Lincoln, & Knox Cntys., Me.*, AB 83 (Sub-No. 8) (ICC served Oct. 23, 1985) (approving abandonment of rail line between milepost 33.79 at Brunswick and milepost 85.91 at Rockland); see also *Me. Coast R.R.—Modified Rail Certificate*, FD 31727, slip op. at 1 (ICC served Oct. 5, 1990) (authorizing operations over rail line between milepost 33.79 at Brunswick and milepost 85.91 at Rockland pursuant to a modified certificate).

⁴ *Me. Dep’t of Transp.—Acquis. & Operation Exemption*, 8 I.C.C.2d at 837, 838 n.8 (stating that MEC will need abandonment authority if it wishes to be relieved of its residual common carrier obligation).

⁵ The filing fee for OFAs can be found at 49 CFR 1002.2(f)(25).

the Board’s Office of Environmental Analysis at (202) 245–0294. If you require an accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act, please call (202) 245–0245.

Board decisions and notices are available at www.stb.gov.

Decided: August 30, 2024.

By the Board, Valerie O. Quinn, Acting Director, Office of Proceedings.

Andrea Pope-Matheson,
Clearance Clerk.

[FR Doc. 2024–19963 Filed 9–4–24; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4915–01–P

TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY

Jugfork Solar Project Environmental Impact Statement

AGENCY: Tennessee Valley Authority.
ACTION: Notice of Intent.

SUMMARY: The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) intends to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) for the purchase of electricity generated by the proposed Jugfork Solar Project in Lee and Union Counties, Mississippi. The EIS will assess the potential environmental effects of constructing, operating, and maintaining the proposed 200-megawatt (MW) alternating current (AC) solar facility, along with a 20 MW Battery Energy Storage System (BESS). The proposed 200 MW AC solar panel facility would occupy approximately 1,000 acres of the approximately 1,700-acre Project Study Area. The project would also include the upgrade of 6.4 miles of the Tupelo to Union 161-kV transmission line. Public comments are invited concerning the scope of the EIS, alternatives being considered, and environmental issues that should be addressed as a part of this EIS. TVA is also requesting data, information, and analysis relevant to the proposed action from the public; affected federal, state, tribal, and local governments, agencies, and offices; the scientific community; industry; or any other interested party.

DATES: The public scoping period begins with the publication of this Notice of Intent in the **Federal Register**. To ensure consideration, comments must be postmarked, emailed, or submitted online no later than October 7, 2024.

ADDRESSES: Written comments should be sent to Neil Schock, NEPA Specialist, Tennessee Valley Authority, 400 West Summit Hill Drive, WT 11B, Knoxville, Tennessee 37902. Comments may be submitted online at: www.tva.gov/nepa, or by email to nepa@tva.gov. To ensure comments are correctly dispositioned,

please specify the project when submitting comments. Please note that TVA encourages comments submitted electronically.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Neil Schock by email at ntschock@tva.gov, by phone at (865) 632-3053, or by mail at the address above.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This notice is provided in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality's Regulations (40 CFR parts 1500 to 1508) and TVA's procedures for implementing the NEPA (18 CFR 1318). TVA is an agency and instrumentality of the United States, established by an act of Congress in 1933, to foster the social and economic welfare of the people of the Tennessee Valley region and to promote the proper use and conservation of the region's natural resources. One component of this mission is the generation, transmission, and sale of reliable and affordable electric energy.

Background

In June 2019, TVA completed the final Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) and associated EIS. The 2019 IRP identified the various resources that TVA intends to use to meet the energy needs of the TVA region over the 20-year planning period while achieving TVA's objectives to deliver reliable, low-cost, and cleaner energy with fewer environmental impacts. The 2019 IRP anticipates growth of solar in all scenarios analyzed, with most scenarios anticipating 5,000 to 8,000 MW and one anticipating up to 14,000 MW by 2038 (TVA 2019). The 2019 IRP remains valid and guides future generation planning consistent with least cost planning principles. With the demand for solar energy increasing, TVA has an expansion target of 10,000 MW of solar by 2035 (TVA 2021). Customer demand for cleaner energy prompted TVA to release a Request for Proposal (RFP) for renewable energy resources (2022 Carbon-Free RFP).

TVA has entered into a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with Competitive Power Ventures (CPV) to purchase 200 MW AC of power generated by the proposed Jugfork Solar Project, hereafter referred to as the Project. The proposed 200 MW AC solar facility would occupy approximately 1,000 acres of the approximately 1,700-acre Project Study Area which is located in Lee and Union Counties, in northeast Mississippi. The project site is north of Tupelo, Mississippi, along State Highway 348 east of New Albany, Mississippi. The project site is mostly farmland with areas of woody wetlands,

deciduous forest, and hay/pasture. The land surplus is to accommodate access roads and the potential repositioning of the array if any areas need to be avoided as a result of the NEPA review. A map showing the project site is available at www.tva.gov/nepa.

Preliminary Proposed Action and Alternatives

In addition to a No Action Alternative, TVA will evaluate the action alternative of purchasing power from the proposed Jugfork Solar Project under the terms of a PPA. In evaluating alternatives, TVA considered other solar proposals, prior to selecting the Jugfork Solar site for further evaluation. Part of the screening process included a review of transmission options, including key connection points to TVA's transmission system. The screening process indicated that the Jugfork site is a viable option for connectivity. Environmental and cultural considerations were also included in TVA's screening process. The EIS will evaluate ways to avoid impacts, as well as mitigate impacts that cannot be avoided. The description and analysis of these alternatives in the EIS will inform decision makers, other agencies, and the public about the potential for environmental impacts. TVA solicits comments on whether there are other alternatives that should be assessed in the EIS.

Project Purpose and Need

The Jugfork Solar Project that was submitted as a result of TVA's 2022 Carbon-Free RFP will help TVA meet the need for additional renewable generating capacity in response to customer demands and fulfill the renewable energy goals established in the 2019 IRP which remains valid. This EIS will identify the purpose and need of the project and will contain descriptions of the existing environmental and socioeconomic resources within the area that could be affected by the proposed solar facility, including the documented historical, cultural, and environmental resources. Evaluation of potential environmental impacts to these resources will include, but not be limited to, air quality and greenhouse gas emissions, surface water, groundwater, wetlands, floodplains, vegetation, wildlife, threatened and endangered species, land use, natural areas and parks and recreation, geology, soils, prime farmland, visual resources, noise, cultural resources, socioeconomic and environmental justice, solid and hazardous waste, public and

occupational health and safety, utilities, and transportation.

Based on a preliminary evaluation of these resources, potential impacts to vegetation and wildlife due to the conversion of deciduous forest of various ages to early maintained grass-dominated fields may occur. Impacts to water resources would likely be minor with the use of best management practices and avoidance of siting project components in or near streams, wetlands, and riparian areas to the extent feasible. Land use would be impacted by the conversion of farmland to industrial use and the elimination of current farming operations. This would also result in visual impacts. Beneficial impacts are expected by facilitating the development of renewable energy and thereby increasing local job opportunities. The EIS will analyze measures that would avoid, minimize, or mitigate environmental effects. The final range of issues to be addressed in the environmental review will be determined, in part, from scoping comments received.

Request for Identification of Potential Alternatives, Information, and Analyses Relevant to the Proposed Action

The final range of issues to be addressed in the environmental review will be determined, in part, from scoping comments received. TVA is particularly interested in public input on other reasonable alternatives that should be considered in the EIS. The preliminary identification of reasonable alternatives and environmental issues in this notice is not meant to be exhaustive or final.

Public Participation

The public is invited to submit comments on the scope of this EIS no later than the date identified in the **DATES** section of this notice. Federal, state, and local agencies and Native American Tribes are also invited to provide comments. Information about this project is available on the TVA web page at www.tva.gov/nepa, including a link to an online public comment page. Any comments received, including names and addresses, will become part of the administrative record and will be available for public inspection. After consideration of comments received during the scoping period, TVA will develop and distribute a scoping document that will summarize public and agency comments that were received and identify the schedule for completing the EIS process. Following analysis of the issues, TVA will prepare the draft EIS for public review and

comment; expected to be released summer of 2025. TVA anticipates the final EIS in spring 2026. In finalizing the EIS and in making its final decision, TVA will consider the comments that it receives on the draft. Information regarding the release of the draft EIS, the associated comment period, the final EIS, and the schedule will be posted on TVA's website.

Michael McCall,

Vice President, Environment and Sustainability.

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OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE

[Docket Number USTR-2024-0017]

Request for Comments on the U.S.-EU Trade and Technology Council (TTC) Global Trade Challenges Working Group

AGENCY: Office of the United States Trade Representative.

ACTION: Request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) seeks comments on the U.S.-EU Trade and Technology Council (TTC) Global Trade Challenges Working Group. USTR will use these comments as it considers future TTC-related collaboration it may pursue with the European Commission's Directorate-General for Trade (DG Trade).

DATES: To be assured of consideration, submit written comments by the October 21, 2024, 11:59 p.m. ET deadline.

ADDRESSES: USTR strongly prefers electronic submissions made through the Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov> (*Regulations.gov*). Follow the instructions for submitting comments in section III below, using docket number is USTR-2024-0017. For alternatives to online submissions, please contact Michael Rogers, Deputy Assistant U.S. Trade Representative for Europe, at Michael.A.Rogers@ustr.eop.gov or 202.395.2684, in advance of the deadline.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Michael Rogers, Deputy Assistant U.S. Trade Representative for Europe, at Michael.A.Rogers@ustr.eop.gov or 202.395.2684.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Background

On June 15, 2021, the United States and the European Union (EU)

announced the creation of the TTC with goals to:

- Grow the bilateral trade and investment relationship.
- Avoid new unnecessary technical barriers to trade.
- Coordinate, seek common ground, and strengthen global cooperation on technology, digital issues, and supply chains.
- Support collaborative research and exchanges.
- Cooperate on compatible and international standards development.
- Facilitate regulatory policy and enforcement cooperation and, where possible, convergence.
- Promote innovation and leadership by U.S. and European firms.
- Contribute to the creation of a stronger, more sustainable, and more resilient transatlantic marketplace through the facilitation of environmentally responsible trade in goods and technologies.
- Advance cooperation to benefit workers in the global economy.
- Strengthen other areas of cooperation.

The work undertaken in the TTC is without prejudice to the regulatory autonomy of the U.S. and the EU and respects the different legal systems in both jurisdictions.

The U.S. and the EU established ten working groups to undertake the work of the TTC. USTR and DG Trade serve as the U.S. and EU co-chairs of the Global Trade Challenges Working Group (Trade Working Group). Many of the activities of the Trade Working Group fall within three broad categories of cooperation:

1. To enhance inclusive and sustainable bilateral U.S.-EU trade in goods and services, including through the use of digital technology.
2. To address and counter non-market policies and practices that unfairly undermine the competitiveness of U.S. and EU workers and firms.
3. On trade and labor issues, including through the tripartite transatlantic Trade and Labor Dialogue (TALD), established through the TTC.

Non-market policies and practices of concern include, but are not limited to:

- Targeting of key industries for dominance.
- Creation and maintenance of non-market excess capacity.
- Unfair labor practices including the use of forced labor.
- Forced or pressured technology transfer, including through state-sponsored theft of intellectual property.
- Market-distorting industrial subsidies, including support given to and through state-owned enterprises

(SOEs), and all other types of support offered by governments.

- Discriminatory treatment of foreign companies and their products and services in support of industrial policy objectives.
- Anti-competitive and non-market actions of SOEs.

In April 2024, the U.S. and the EU held the sixth ministerial-level meeting of the TTC in Leuven, Belgium. In the joint statement released at the end of the ministerial, the U.S. and the EU announced their intention to consult with stakeholders on the work of the TTC and potential future work that the TTC may undertake.

II. Public Participation

To help inform USTR as it considers future cooperation within the Trade Working Group, USTR invites comments on the following:

- With specific regard to the Trade Working Group's efforts to enhance inclusive and sustainable bilateral trade in goods and services, including through the use of digital tools, how might USTR and DG Trade further improve or expand cooperation in a manner that is mutually beneficial to U.S. and EU stakeholders.
- With specific regard to the work of the Trade Working Group related to non-market policies and practices of third countries:
 - How might USTR and DG Trade expand or enhance our cooperation and coordination of trade tools available to us or to create new tools.
 - How might USTR and DG Trade, respectively or in coordination, use existing tools more effectively to deter and counter non-market policies and practices.
 - Are there particular sectors that USTR and DG Trade should focus on?
 - Are there particular non-market policies and practices that are of greatest concern to you? Why? How do those non-market policies and practices hinder or harm your interests?
 - With specific regard to the work of the Trade Working Group related to trade and labor, including within the TALD, how might USTR, the U.S. Department of Labor, DG Trade, and the Directorate-General for Employment expand or enhance our cooperation and coordination to better address the needs of U.S. and EU workers and businesses.
 - What steps can USTR take to provide a wide-range of U.S. and EU stakeholders the opportunity to periodically provide suggestions, feedback, and input to the Trade Working Group.

USTR will review these recommendations as it considers