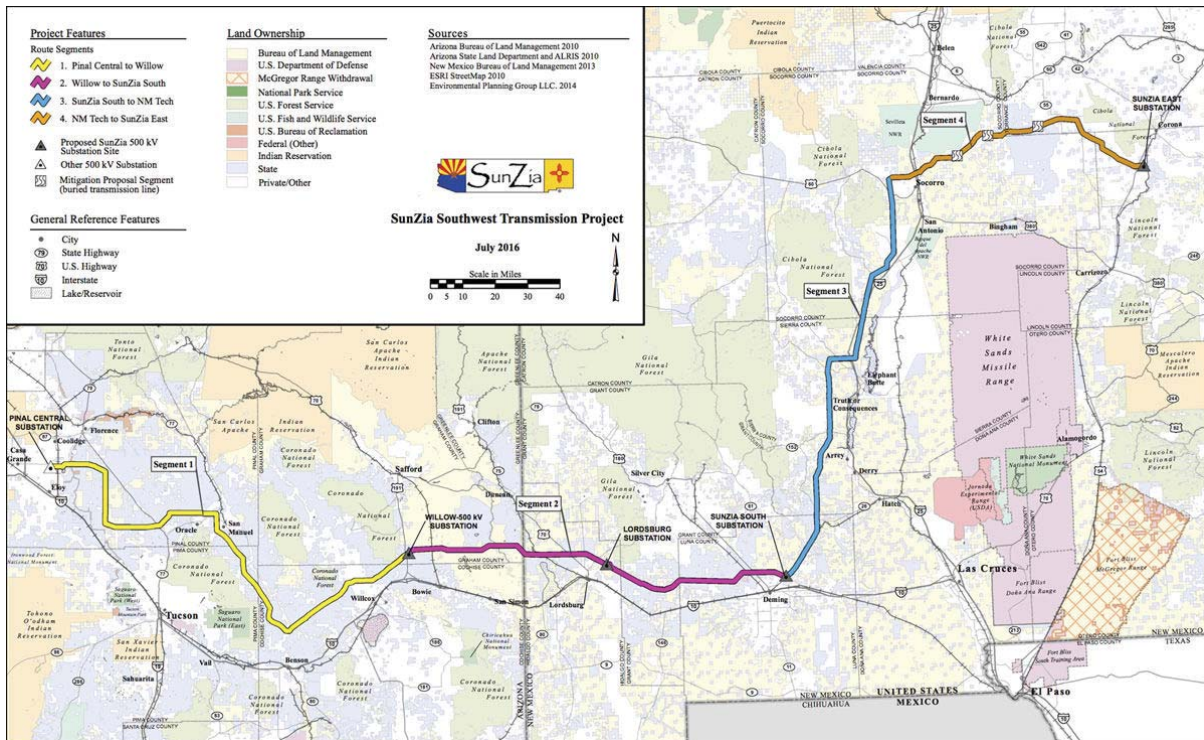


SunZia Transmission project moves to pre-construction phase | Local News Stories

Terri Jo Neff For the News-Sun



The \$850 million line includes 200 miles through Arizona.

The company planning to build two high voltage transmission lines across southeast Arizona that will end near the Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station has begun securing right-of-way leases in Cochise, Graham, and Greenlee counties. When completed, the SunZia Southwest Transmission Project will stretch more than 515 miles, enabling New Mexico wind energy to become electricity in California.

An update about the project was given by David Getts during a Sept. 12 presentation hosted by the Southeast Arizona Economic Development Group. Getts, general manager SouthWestern Power Group, said designs are being finalized for the first of the two lines that will be constructed along with two substations. One of the those -the Willow Substation- will be built in Graham County 15 miles north of Bowie.

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management recently signed agreements allowing SunZia to be built across 50 miles of federal lands in Arizona and 134 miles in New Mexico. The \$850 million line — which includes 200 miles across Arizona — will come within 10 miles of Benson as it passes through northern Cochise County.

Getts explained the company is now negotiating right-of-way leases with 40 private property owners in Arizona for 16 miles of the SunZia line. Access to 93 miles controlled by about 120 landowners across New Mexico is also ongoing. In addition, parent company SouthWestern Power must secure land-use deals with Arizona and New Mexico for 224 miles which cross public state lands.

During the presentation, Getts noted the line will be constructed in four segments due to the enormity of the project. The company is preparing for the pre-construction phase by contacting prospective general contractors and suppliers, after which SunZia officials will reach out to subcontractors and laborers.

“We’re almost there,” explained Getts, adding it will take about 30 months to construct the first line. When asked whether SunZia will “buy American,” Getts replied the company “certainly prefers domestic” vendors, but noted some specialty supplies are only available from foreign markets.

Once the line is built, its transmission capability could be used by other renewable energy sites for delivering electricity to the marketplace.