

July 7, 2011

The Honorable Dr. Steven Chu
Secretary of Energy
1000 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20585

Secretary Chu,

We write to encourage DOE to expeditiously move forward with its initiative to find partnerships under Section 1222 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 to develop transmission lines that will promote new renewable energy facilities. In particular, we have reviewed the application of Clean Line Energy Partners, and request that DOE ensure that sufficient resources are allocated to its review and that decisions are made expeditiously.

As an organization that advocates for clean energy solutions throughout the Southeast, we are intimately familiar with the need for additional renewable energy opportunities for southeastern utilities. Using DOE's existing authority under Section 1222 to advance high-voltage, direct current (HVDC) transmission projects that will make distant renewable energy resources cost-effectively available in the Southeast could significantly accelerate the Southeast's transition away from coal-fired generation.

In particular, if sited properly, we believe the Plains & Eastern project proposed by Clean Line Energy Partners would bring significant economic and environmental benefits at both ends of the proposed transmission project. Siting of this project will require particularly rigorous scrutiny regardless of how it is developed because it is anticipated that the Tennessee Valley Authority would need to purchase power delivered by this transmission, thus likely making its development a federal action requiring comprehensive environmental review.

Necessarily, these projects are complex and many important aspects of the project have not yet been studied. Numerous agencies will review these projects before construction begins. It is our understanding that DOE action is needed before Clean Line Energy Partners can begin investing in required environmental studies in preparation for full review.

Advancing this and other similar projects is entirely consistent with DOE's encouragement of consideration of HVDC transmission options in the Eastern Interconnection Planning Initiative (EIPC). Thank you for your leadership in this regard.

In addition to ensuring timely review of HVDC project proposals, we would also encourage DOE to continue to encourage the EIPC to include HVDC transmission options in the Phase 2 transmission scenarios. As you will recall, DOE funded EIPC with the intent of "pushing the envelope" to achieve a clean energy future. With well-financed developers offering to use market-ready technology, the only "envelopes" pushed by HVDC are conventional thinking and decision making. Surely we can overcome these barriers.

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It is becoming increasingly clear that HVDC transmission can play a significant role in advancing the nation's clean energy future. We support the use of DOE's existing authority under Section 1222 to help advance responsibly sited HVDC projects for the transmission of renewable energy.

Sincerely,

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Cc: Lauren Azar, Senior Advisor, Office of the Secretary of Energy