

## The Faster the Better - MISO's Improved Interconnection Process Saves Precious Time

Kelley Welf, Communications Director • Sep. 13, 2021



For an economy and a culture that thrives on fast cars, fast food, and instant gratification for virtually everything, the very lengthy process for interconnecting renewable energy resources into the electric grid is frustrating, to say the least.

In order to connect new generation resources, like wind or solar, to the transmission grid, a developer must work through the Generator Interconnection Process (GIP). During this process, projects are studied to determine if any upgrades are needed to the transmission system in order to add that resource reliably. Fortunately, the [Midcontinent Independent System Operator \(MISO\)](#) has consistently led the charge nationally to make improvements to its [Generator Interconnection Process](#) and is currently working to shorten the overall timeline.

With more than [64,000 megawatts of wind and solar](#) in the MISO interconnection queue, and a current timeline that tops 505 calendar days when there are no delays, addressing ways to shorten the timeline to provide new resources with the information they need to move their projects forward is urgently needed. After all, corporate and industrial purchasers, utilities, and consumers alike are clamoring for renewable energy, and they want it now!

In August, MISO presented a proposal to its Planning Advisory Committee that many renewable energy developers believe would help bring their projects to market quicker. Through an extensive and collaborative process, with many stakeholders at the table, MISO has outlined a proposal that has two key benefits: 1) a shorter timeline for developers to get interconnection cost information for their projects

and 2) potential alignment with other MISO planning processes.

## Proposed Timeline Reduction Plan (Overall)

DPP I → GIA	Current Timeline	Proposed Timeline		Timeline Duration Change	
		Path #1	Path #2	Path #1	Path #2
DPP I	~140 Calendar Days	~100 Calendar Days		↓ ~40 Calendar Days	
DPP II	~80 Calendar Days	~105 Calendar Days		↑ ~25 Calendar Days	
DPP III	~135 Calendar Days (90 Day NUFs Included)	~60 Calendar Days (NUFS <u>Not</u> Required)	~150 Calendar Days (NUFS Required)	↓ ~75 Calendar Days	↑ ~15 Calendar Days
GIA	~150 Calendar Days	~108 Calendar Days	~108 Calendar Days	↓ ~42 Calendar Days	
<b>Totals</b>	~505 Calendar Days	~373 Calendar Days	~463 Calendar Days	↓ ~132 Calendar Days	↓ ~42 Calendar Days



MISO - "Reducing GIP Timeline" August 11, 2021

In addition, MISO is proposing process improvements that include, coordinating with SPP and PJM on queue priority; providing more information, earlier in the process, giving stakeholders more time to review models, plan for mitigations, and review results; automate manual processes during the DPP study process; allow for more concurrent tasks, among other things.

### Time is money

The benefits of the shorter timeline include projects moving through the queue faster. This protects developers from having their capital tied up longer than necessary. It also protects projects from having to wait over a year to enter the next queue cycle. For example, the most recent queue window closed in July 2021. The next opportunity will not be until Fall 2022 under the current timeline. Under the new proposal, developers would potentially be able to enter the queue annually around the same date each year. This would help developers better plan project timing through the queue. Currently, with a timeline that takes over a year, the queue entry deadline changes year to year with a wait of over a year, until the next cycle starts.

But, compromise is a two-way street. In this proposal, all parties are making concessions. Because shortening the timeline is so important, Interconnection Customers (ICs) have made sacrifices as well. They are willing to accept a shorter contract review window, and take more risk with less information up front, to finish the process faster.

MISO's [proposed Timeline Reduction Plan](#) also allows developers to choose one of two paths that have different timelines and different levels of risk. Path #1 saves about 132 calendar days, and Path #2 saves approximately 42 calendar days from the current process timeline.

## Streamlining processes offers benefits

*Streamlining these processes is a benefit to consumers as well because if MISO can identify transmission upgrades that can do double-duty, consumers get more bang for their buck.*

Aligning the interconnection process with MTEP and other planning processes allows MISO to do more comprehensive and cost-effective planning by considering multiple needs on the transmission system at the same time. MISO could then evaluate the economic benefits that interconnection upgrades may bring to other electricity users. We urge MISO to work toward enacting transmission planning process changes that will reap the benefits of this alignment. Streamlining these processes is a benefit to consumers as well because if MISO can identify transmission upgrades that can do double-duty, consumers get more bang for their buck.

Many renewable energy developers and advocates of renewable energy have played an important role in making the process better. But there is still a need for even more improvement. Several issues remain that must be addressed within the interconnection process. In particular, there are complications and risks associated with Affected Systems studies that occur when a proposed project is close to a neighboring transmission system. Moreover, it is vitally important to make sure MISO has time to find the least cost Network Upgrade solutions in each study cycle and to accept and review the least-cost solutions submitted by ICs.

Nevertheless, developers, stakeholders, and renewable energy advocates deeply appreciate the effort MISO is taking to continually improve its Generator Interconnection Process, including its latest proposal to shorten the GIP timeline. The pressure to meet carbon reduction goals established by corporations, utilities, and states requires a significant increase of clean, low-cost renewable energy on the electric grid. And, faster is always better!

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