

OUR TAKE: Supergrid — Bring It On

By Abby Luby



A barrage of news images of downed electrical towers and power lines from recent climate related hurricanes and tornados are a bleak reminder that our power system is careening towards failure. In an opinion piece by Jennifer M. Granholm for **CNN Business**, the former U.S. Secretary of Energy says modernizing the grid is crucial because “the question will not be whether it [the grid] fails, but when.”

Granholm cites the Biden’s administration “Build Back Better Agenda” which aims to protect and work towards a clean energy economy. Part of Biden’s agenda, a 10-year, \$2 trillion American Jobs Plan is to upgrade roads, bridges and water systems to reduce the impacts of climate change impacts. destruction...on the grid. Of that package \$100 billion is slated to modernize the country’s aging electric grid to produce 100% carbon-free electricity by 2035. Central to the plan are tax incentives for companies who will build new, high voltage transmission lines to increase grid capacity and successfully decarbonize the economy by midcentury.

For years there have been extensive studies and efforts to modernize the grid. The Climate Institute, a prominent climate advocacy agency, has long proposed a North American Supergrid (NAS), a largely underground transmission network extending across the lower 48 states. The NAS plan is to bury high voltage cable along median strips of interstates. Constructing a new electric network will create hundreds of thousands of jobs for several decades. An underground supergrid would also protect against both electronic and physical threats and attacks by terrorists.

Hurricanes, wildfires, floods, heat waves, and drought are the climate change weather disasters that cause our current electrical grid to fail. Along with rebuilding the grid, Granholm is adamant that we slow the “spewing carbon pollution” that greatly contributes to the earth’s greenhouse gases causing extreme weather.

Granholm lists the climbing costs of clean-up after drastic weather events that have disrupted businesses, governments and have endangered the welfare of millions of Americans. “In the 1990s, we spent about \$27 billion annually to clean up. In the 2000s, it cost almost \$52 billion annually. In the 2010s, cleanup costs exploded to \$81 billion. Then in the last five years, we’ve spent a whopping \$121 billion per year to clean up after an angry Mother Nature,” Granholm writes.

A national grid will be able to pull power from a generator thousands of miles away to compensate for power loss during extreme weather in another region. Such a system would have saved millions of Texans from a polar vortex that froze gas production and created rolling black outs last February. A national grid technology can not only transmit massive amounts of electricity over long distances but would use carbon-free wind and solar power that would drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Pressuring congress to pass the infrastructure package should head up every American’s ‘to-do’ list as we await for the next natural disaster that could cause lengthy outages to millions/

It’s all within our reach. The vast renewable energy resources in this country include wind energy from the Great Plains and in the Midwest, solar energy in the Southwest, geothermal energy in the Rocky Mountains and Great Basin, and hydropower in the Northwest and Southeast. Today these resources are poorly utilized.

That has to change. Right now.

Do your part, urge, no demand your federal representative to pass Biden’s Build Back Better plan.