BEFORE THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION,
BUILD AMERICA BUREAU

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION REGARDING THE AMERICA'S GREAT CORRIDORS OF COMMERCE INITIATIVE

COMMENTS OF THE NEXTGEN HIGHWAYS INITIATIVE AND UNDERSIGNED MEMBERS OF ITS NATIONAL COALITION

NextGen Highways (NGH), a collaborative initiative working to accelerate the deployment of new electric transmission infrastructure by enabling co-location within highway rights-of-way (ROW), hereby submits the following comments in response to the August 18, 2026, Request for Information (RFI) concerning the America's Great Corridors of Commerce (AGCC) initiative.

Co-locating transmission lines along highways can help deliver more effective and efficient transmission projects by speeding the permitting process and impacting fewer private landowners, all of which can help keep project costs in check and on time. Simply put, the quicker projects can get permitted and developed, the sooner they can deliver the economic and policy benefits they promise. By making efficient use of our interstate corridors, where appropriate, we can accelerate grid modernization while safeguarding communities and the environment. Co-location is an important tool that transmission planners should have in their toolbox.

Unfortunately, many states retain longstanding and outdated restrictions and/or prohibitions on co-location of transmission in interstate and other controlled access highway ROW. Since 2023, NGH has been working to encourage states to lift these barriers. We are pursuing statutory reforms in states across the country, including having built advocacy coalitions in 10 states in addition to a national coalition. Once barriers are lifted, we continue to work with utilities, regulators, transportation policy makers, and other stakeholders to ensure that highway ROW receive the fullest possible consideration in transmission siting, whether overhead or underground lines.

We are encouraged by the launch of AGCC, as it presents an opportunity for the federal government to elevate this work, providing crucial resources and guidance so that state departments of transportation (DOTs), transmission developers, and private-sector partners can develop effective working relationships to build the infrastructure we need.

We know that the United States needs significant additional transmission capacity to ensure grid reliability, serve new sources of energy supply, address spiking demand growth, and make electricity more affordable for consumers. But the traditional ways of siting and permitting transmission pose multiple challenges. The process can be time-consuming, and organized opposition to new lines can introduce significant regulatory risk, slowing projects or even stopping them altogether. Meanwhile, we are seeing the fatigue from many of our fellow citizens who are being asked to host this infrastructure in their communities, back yards, or farms. This fatigue can lead to frustration, which can significantly impact the ability of developers to get transmission projects deployed. By contrast, building infrastructure where there is already infrastructure can help create goodwill in affected communities while streamlining land acquisition and permitting. That means savings in the longer term for American consumers and protection of their private property.

With the help of NGH and our coalition partners over the past three years, the states of Minnesota, Colorado, Iowa, and Virginia have passed laws prioritizing highway corridors for transmission deployment and/or lifting previous prohibitions on transmission co-location in highway ROW. As these states work to implement reforms, similar initiatives are making their way through legislatures in multiple other states. Incentives and assistance at the federal level will help provide policy certainty as states move toward adding co-location to their toolbox, speeding up the process of building our future power grid.

The September 1, 2026, memo issued by the Federal Highway Administration in conjunction with AGCC is an important step in providing policy clarity to states that wish to pursue co-location of transmission and other infrastructure in highway ROW. It has the potential to help open the lines of communication between state DOTs, utilities, regulators, and other stakeholders, for much-needed conversations about how to make the fullest possible use of existing ROW to site infrastructure.

This is in line with NGH's mission, which is not just about building transmission, but also transforming the policy, regulatory, and industry culture to embrace the integration of infrastructure along our transportation networks. We advocate for policy reforms that incentivize integrated infrastructure planning and development, such as tax credits, grants, and streamlined permitting processes.

Likewise, we aim to optimize the processes that facilitate infrastructure development. This involves introducing frameworks for coordination between energy developers, utilities, and regulators, encouraging public-private partnerships to finance and build infrastructure

projects, and leveraging our network to support new projects and policy reform efforts. By fostering a culture of collaboration and innovation, we aim to create an environment where integrated infrastructure projects are not just possible but preferred. This is a vision very much in line with the goals of AGCC.

Who bears the cost of future utility relocation has proven to be an important issue in NGH's conversations with state DOTs and utilities. In short, neither party is interested in wearing this perceived risk. While these positions are understandable, it should not stand in the way of what otherwise makes common sense and minimizes public impact: the co-location of infrastructure within existing highway ROW.

One way to address this issue would be for U.S. DOT to backstop the risk by creating a fund to pay for future relocations should the need arise. The exact mechanism for funding such a fund (e.g., an allocation of dollars at the start of a project into a future relocation fund; annual "relocation insurance" payments; etc.) and for administering it (e.g., a U.S. DOT review board to ensure that relocation is truly needed) would be important questions to answer. Having said that, NGH is fully confident that U.S. DOT staff could arrive at several reasonable options for implementing such a fund.

We highlight that this is a perceived risk, because in the almost 20 years of experience that Wisconsin has with transmission placed in highway ROW (across almost 30 projects), there has not been a single instance where the need for relocation has occurred thanks to thoughtful and serious planning efforts during the project design phase and during later highway expansion projects.

It is also worth noting that to the degree that transmission is built in highway ROW, electric utilities will likely prefer to build overhead transmission to minimize costs, unless within/near an urban core. Within/near an urban core, utilities will have a greater willingness to underground if DOT can bear the cost of duct fabrication (utilities can reasonably be expected to cover the additional cost of the cables).

Similarly, AGCC may want to consider the funding model already used by the U.S. Department of Energy with its Transmission Facilitation Program: the government guaranteed a certain amount of financial repayment to the corridor builder to enable the creation of the corridor prior to the arrival of all future corridor users; as new users arrived, they took over responsibility from DOE for remaining financial obligations.

Opening up highway ROW to co-location of infrastructure means unlocking the full potential of our transportation corridors, and we look forward to contributing to the ongoing discussions about how to make this initiative a success.

Respectfully submitted,

NextGen Highways (Randy Satterfield, Executive Director)

and NGH national coalition members:

National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA)

Center for Rural Affairs (CFRA)