

# Final Engagement Summary Report

## Date: September 2024

### Central-West Bulk Planning

#### Engagement Initiated: August 2023

#### Engagement Description

The Central-West Bulk Planning engagement was launched by the Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) to assess and develop a transmission plan that will support the growing electricity needs between Hamilton and Windsor. This study became particularly urgent following the announcement of the Volkswagen EV plant in St. Thomas, which increased projected demand in the region. Originally scoped to assess the bulk transmission system from Hamilton to London, the study was expanded to include Windsor, given the anticipated economic growth across Southwestern Ontario. The engagement was part of the IESO's formalized Bulk System Planning Process, which aimed to incorporate broad stakeholder input and enhance transparency in shaping regional transmission solutions. Stakeholders from various sectors, including municipalities, energy developers, industry representatives, and government agencies, were invited to contribute their insights into the study's needs and objectives.

#### Engagement Objective

The primary objective of the Central-West Bulk Planning engagement was to involve stakeholders in shaping the bulk transmission plan that will support the region's future economic and electricity needs. Key objectives include:

- Gathering feedback on how to reinforce the transmission system to support anticipated economic developments like the Volkswagen EV plant and other large-scale projects.
- Ensuring stakeholders are informed about potential new demand growth while maintaining confidentiality about sensitive information, particularly when commercial or security considerations are involved.
- Involving stakeholders early in the planning process to allow meaningful input on issues such as economic development opportunities, system constraints, and the feasibility of various infrastructure reinforcements or upgrades.

- Aligning the transmission plan with broader regional and provincial energy objectives to foster economic growth, system reliability, and sustainability.

## Engagement Approach

This stakeholder engagement was a public engagement process and was conducted in accordance with the IESO's approved [engagement principles](#). The approach for this engagement initiative included opportunities to provide input through various channels such as webinars and written feedback. All materials, public feedback and commentary from stakeholders, and IESO responses to feedback were posted on the dedicated IESO engagement [webpage](#) for this initiative.

The engagement was designed in a three-phase approach to ensure continuous and meaningful stakeholder participation:

### Phase 1: Study Need and Scope

- This phase began in July 2023 with targeted outreach to key stakeholders, including municipalities, industrial stakeholders, and government agencies. The IESO conducted public webinars to provide an overview of the study's purpose and the anticipated impacts of demand growth. During this phase, the IESO sought input on the study's scope and key considerations to address growing electricity demand in the region. Stakeholders were also engaged through the Regional Electricity Newsletter and separate meetings with relevant agencies to align the scope and timeline of the study.

### Phase 2: Near-term Recommendations and Long-term Options

- In this phase, the IESO focused on presenting near-term recommendations to address the immediate electricity needs of the Volkswagen EV plant in St. Thomas, while laying out long-term transmission options for the region. Stakeholder engagement during this phase was conducted through a combination of public webinars, Bulletin notices, and direct outreach. Given the urgent nature of the Volkswagen project, stakeholder feedback on near-term recommendations was limited, but discussions on long-term transmission strategies were prioritized. The IESO also engaged relevant governmental bodies to support the study's recommendations and ensure alignment with broader policy objectives.

### Phase 3: Full Set of Recommendations

- In the final phase, the IESO shared the study recommendations with stakeholders. The outcomes included detailed transmission infrastructure solutions to address both short-term industrial needs and long-term regional growth. The Central-West Bulk Plan Report was published on the engagement webpage and stakeholders were notified by direct email communication.

## Conclusion

The Central-West Bulk Planning engagement and the final report and recommendations were published in April 2024. Stakeholders were notified via email, and the report was posted on the

Central-West Bulk Planning engagement webpage for public access. This final report outlined transmission plans to ensure reliable electricity supply for both near-term industrial projects like the Volkswagen EV plant and long-term growth in Southwestern Ontario.

Throughout the engagement process, stakeholders emphasized the need for coordination between bulk and regional transmission plans, as well as transparent communication on key decision points. The IESO responded to these concerns by providing regular updates and opportunities for stakeholders to offer input on key planning decisions.

Following the conclusion of the Central-West Bulk Plan, related planning activities and engagement continue through the on-going South and Central Bulk Plan. Consideration of economic development in the other planning regions of interest identified in the Central-West Plan was integrated with the South and Central bulk plan to better integrate potential linkages between electricity growth, changes to the supply mix and their cumulative impact across southwestern Ontario. More information on the engagement is available on the South and Central bulk plan [engagement webpage](#).

The final recommendations, now publicly available, represent a strategic and collaborative approach to reinforcing the transmission system in the region. They support Ontario's economic development goals while ensuring that the grid is capable of meeting future energy demands. This engagement not only fostered stakeholder participation but also strengthened the planning process, ensuring that the Central-West Bulk Plan aligns with the broader energy objectives of the province.