

# Knox County Connector Project

October 2024

## Improving energy reliability and connecting to diverse energy sources

Ameren Illinois is proposing the Knox County Connector Project located in Knox County, Illinois. The Project includes approximately 11 miles of new and upgraded energy lines with a vast majority to be rebuilt along existing corridors and co-located with existing Ameren Illinois facilities. It will strengthen our energy system by creating a more reliable grid, upgrading aging infrastructure, and building a connection to diverse energy sources for Illinois communities.

The Knox County Connector Project includes rebuilding an existing 69 kV power line from the existing Sandburg Substation, located near Galesburg, to a future collector station near Oneida. A majority of the line will be rebuilt on new structures and will include a second power line, referred to as a "double circuit," which will carry both 138/69 kV transmission lines. A portion of the double circuit will need to be routed around the west side of Wataga. Modifications to the existing Sandburg Substation are also included in the project. Our goal is to have this project in service and providing benefits to the local communities by spring 2026.

## Project Benefits



The Knox County Connector Project will benefit the local area by:

- Strengthening our energy system by creating a more reliable grid
- Upgrading aging infrastructure
- Building a connection to diverse energy sources for Illinois communities

## SCHEDULE

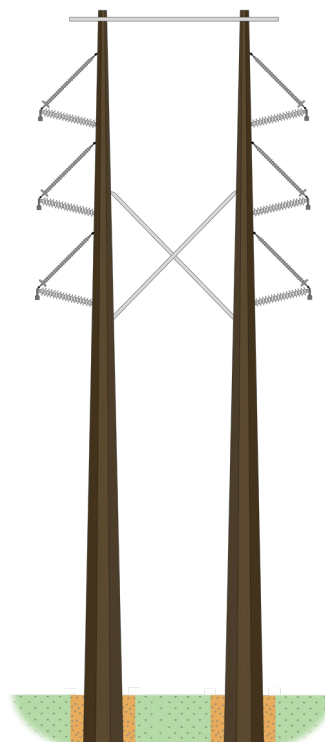
### 2024

- Gather public and agency input
- Route siting studies
- Engineering and permitting
- Primary and alternate routes identified
- File routes with ICC

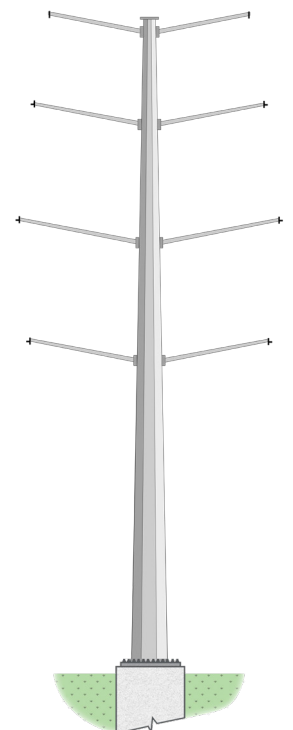
### 2025-2026

- Certificate of Public Convenience & Necessity (CPCN) decision
- Environmental surveys and permitting
- Easement acquisition process
- Construction begins spring 2025
- Project in service in spring 2026

Typical 69/138 kV Wood H-Frame Structures



Typical 69/138 kV Steel Monopole Structures



Specs for Typical Wood H-Frame and Steel Monopole Structures

Height  
80 - 120 ft

Span  
500 - 900 ft

Structures/mile  
6 - 9

Conductor ground clearance  
21 ft (minimum)

At this time, we anticipate using wood H-Frame structures as well as steel monopoles. Note, this graphic is not to scale and the number of arms on structures may vary depending on the final design.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## **Why is the Knox County Connector Project needed?**

Ameren is always looking to improve energy reliability by strengthening the grid. The Knox County Connector Project is an example of that, as we will be replacing aging infrastructure, and building a connection to diverse energy sources for Illinois communities. The project will replace and upgrade approximately 11 miles of new energy lines. A majority of the line will be rebuilt on new structures and will include a second power line, known as a double circuit. Lines will carry both 138/69 kV transmission lines. There will also be a portion of the double circuit that will be routed around the west side of Wataga. Modifications will also be made at the Sandburg Substation.

## **Where is the energy going that will be carried on the line?**

Transmission lines are similar to the interstate highway system in the way they allow energy from generators to travel short or long distances, as needed, at any given moment. Ultimately, the energy carried on the line will be used to support electric customers in the project area, as well as throughout the regional grid.

## **How does electricity arrive at my home?**

As communities grow and new sources of energy are developed, substations are built or upgraded to meet the energy demand and expand the system's ability to handle more energy from various points of generation. After the energy is generated, it is sent to substations via transmission lines. The substations then convert the energy to a lower voltage and send the electricity to area homes and businesses through distribution lines.

## **What is energy reliability?**

Energy reliability requires routine maintenance and equipment upgrades to operate efficiently. There can be events when part of the system becomes weak or is damaged due to weather, a vehicle accident or other factors. If you think of the energy system, specifically our transmission system, as an interstate highway of energy, the Knox County Connector Project will contribute to

the strengthening of the grid super-highway in the region. The project will also enhance reliability by building a connection to diverse energy sources for Illinois communities.

## **What is an easement?**

An easement is an interest or right to use the land of another for a specific purpose. Ameren and our partners will be seeking easement rights from affected landowners for the construction, operation and maintenance of the electric transmission line. About 10 miles of new energy lines will be rebuilt along existing corridors and co-located with existing Ameren Illinois facilities. In this area, there may be an existing easement that would need to be expanded for the construction of this project.

## **How will I know if you need an easement from me?**

After collecting data and input from the community through our public outreach and planning phases, a "primary route" and an "alternate route" for the new line will be filed with the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) as a part of Ameren's request for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN). After that application is filed, Ameren representatives will begin contacting landowners for the purpose of conducting good faith negotiations for an easement for the new line on the west side of Wataga. Easement negotiations will begin sooner for those properties along the existing line.

## **Can transmission lines be installed underground rather than carried on poles?**

We do not plan to build these lines underground. Costs associated with building underground transmission lines are significantly higher than the construction of an overhead transmission line. There would also be significant costs associated with maintaining an underground line. In terms of longevity, the anticipated service life of an underground transmission line is roughly half of an overhead line and not easily maintained. To meet our customers' energy needs now and in the future, we have an obligation to pursue infrastructure projects that are technically and financially prudent and in the long-term best interest of our customers.

## **How is compensation for an easement calculated?**

Details of the Project, what property rights are needed, location of the easement, and compensation will be discussed with each landowner. Landowners will receive a one-time easement payment. Payment is made in the form of a check shortly after the time that each landowner provides an executed easement to Ameren. In most cases, landowners will be offered an advance payment (by Ameren at the time of easement payment) for property restoration and for anticipated crop loss on agricultural land (if applicable).

## **Can I farm under the line?**

An easement allows Ameren to use another person's property to construct, operate and maintain a transmission line. Landowners can generally continue to use their property as long as it is compatible with the purpose of the easement (i.e., the transmission of electricity). Ameren is requesting 100 ft. of easement for the Project. In some cases, additional access easements for construction and maintenance may be required. All uses that do not conflict with the transmission line rights remain with the landowner.

## **Can you decrease the structure height?**

The structure height is based on the distance between poles (span) and clearances needed. If we decrease the span, we may have shorter structures, but more poles would be required. If no obstructions are present and the area spanned is flat, such as a field, the structure heights could be on the lower end of the 80-120 ft. range. The typical pole height for crossing roads, bridges and distribution lines is around 120 ft.

## **What will the structures look like?**

We anticipate constructing the majority of the project using wooden H-Frame structures. The structures will range between 80-120 ft. tall, depending on terrain. We estimate 6-9 structures per mile with an average span range of 500-900 ft. between structures. The conductor wires will be at least 21 ft. above ground/grade to meet or exceed the minimum clearance required by the National Electrical Safety Code (NESC).

## **Can you add lines to existing poles?**

This project involves replacing aging infrastructure which will not enable the new lines to be hung on existing Ameren facilities.

## **How close can you get to a building?**

We don't allow any buildings or sheds in the easement area. Outside of our easement, Ameren cannot restrict future development. Avoiding residences is always a sensitivity we take into consideration.

## **How close can you get to a road?**

This is dependent upon the specific road, the jurisdiction and their permitting requirements. Ideally, our structures are set outside of road corridors to avoid future road expansion and comply with traffic safety standards. An easement can sometimes start in the center of the road, which means our structure would be 50 ft. from the road center. This could put the pole far enough away to avoid traffic and potential road expansion, and the wires would not be directly over the road.

## **When will a primary route be selected?**

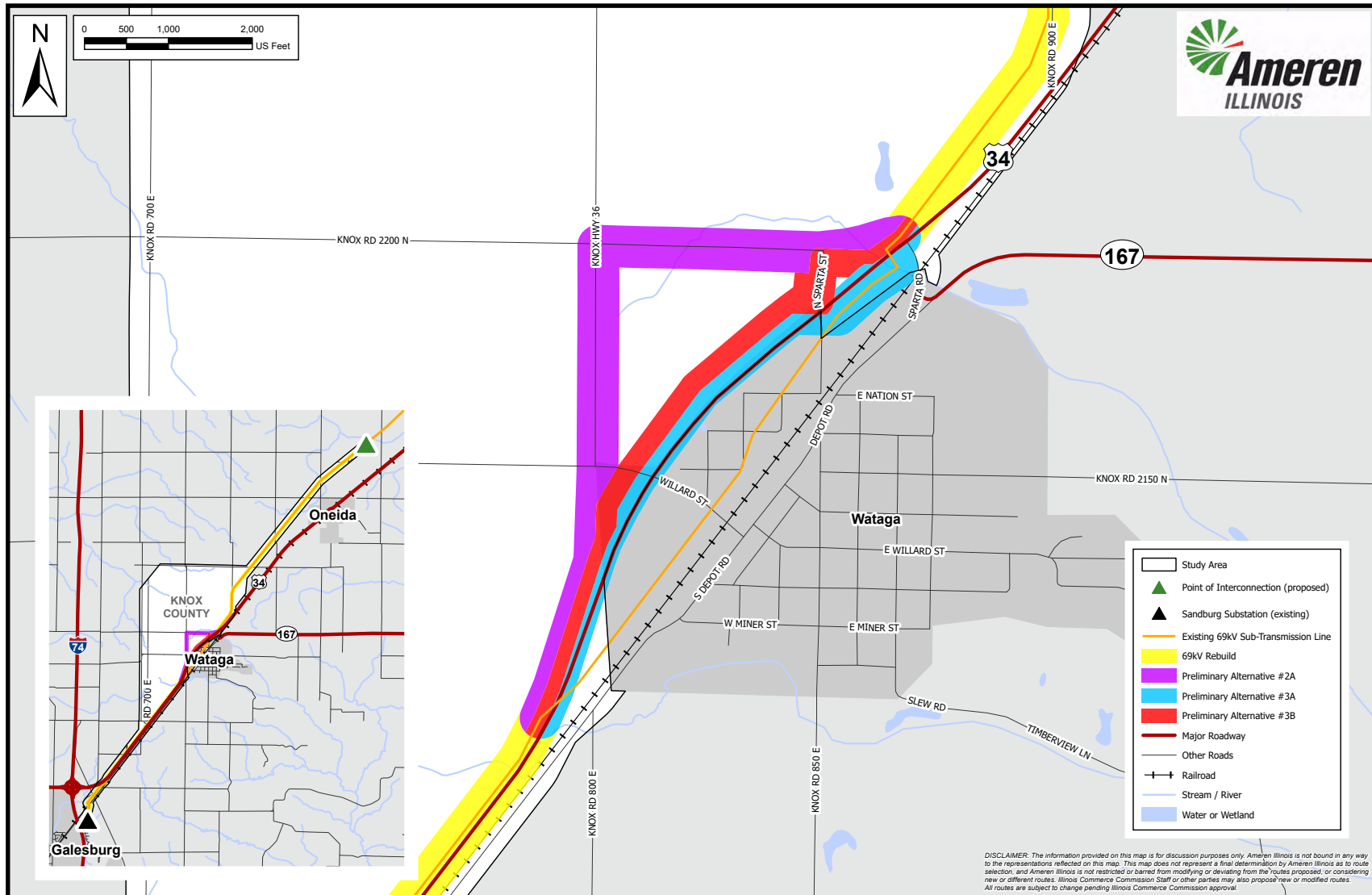
There will be several routes considered for the portion of the new line on the west side of Wataga. After receiving input from the public during the third open house in October, Ameren will select a "primary route" and an "alternate route" to submit to the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) in its application later this fall. The ICC will review the routes and could make revisions before approving and determining the final route. (See project schedule on page 1.)

## **When will the new substations and power lines be built?**

Once the final route has been approved by the ICC, we will begin construction in 2025. We anticipate having the facilities in service in spring 2026.

# MAP OF PREFERRED ROUTE ALTERNATIVES

The map below shows Preferred Route Alternatives for the portion of the line that is planned to be routed around the west side of Wataga. These routes will be presented in detail to the public at our third round of public open houses. Using routing criteria and comments collected from the community, our team will select a “primary route” and an “alternate route” from the Preferred Route Alternatives, for the Knox County Connector Project to present in the application to the ICC. Please visit the interactive map on the project website to view the maps in more detail.

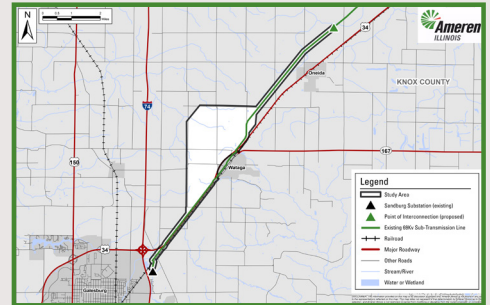


# OVERVIEW OF THE ROUTING PROCESS

Routing a transmission line is a phased process that involves collaboration with agencies, community members and landowners to collect information that helps our team understand and identify opportunities and sensitivities within Knox County and the surrounding region. Please review the steps below to see how we came up with our Preferred Route Alternatives.

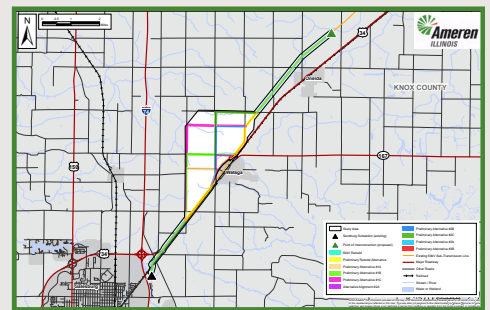
## ✓ STEP 1: DEFINE STUDY AREA

Our team started by using data from publicly available data sources to create our Study Area. We considered existing utility corridors, existing land use, resource areas, natural environment data and field survey data to help minimize impacts while providing feasible route opportunities.



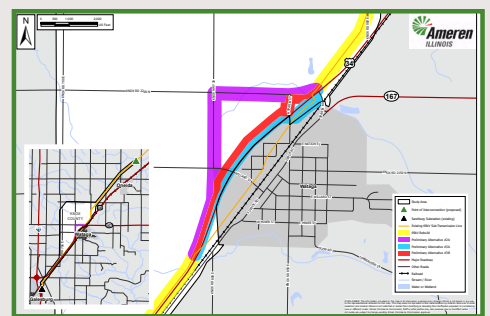
## ✓ STEP 2: DEVELOP PRELIMINARY ROUTE ALTERNATIVES

Our team developed Preliminary Route Alternatives using the routing criteria, as well as input received from stakeholders and community members during our first round of public engagement. See map insert for more details.



## 📌 STEP 3: DEVELOP PREFERRED ROUTE ALTERNATIVES, NAME A PRIMARY AND ALTERNATE ROUTE

Using routing criteria and comments collected from the community during the second round of open houses, our team narrowed down the number of Preliminary Route Alternatives to three remaining routes, called the Preferred Route Alternatives. After we collect data and input on the Preferred Route Alternatives, our team will select a “primary route” and an “alternate route” to present in the application to the ICC.



**WE ARE HERE!**

## PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT AND FEEDBACK

Since we first communicated this project in summer 2024, community leaders and members of the public have provided feedback using various methods, including meetings with community stakeholders, in-person public open houses, virtual open houses, a project website with an interactive map and comment form, a toll-free hotline and a designated project email address. The feedback leading up to the third round of open houses (October 2024) has been reviewed and considered in the development of the Preferred Route Alternatives. The project team will continue to engage the community as the project progresses.