

Get the Facts

Harborton Reliability Project

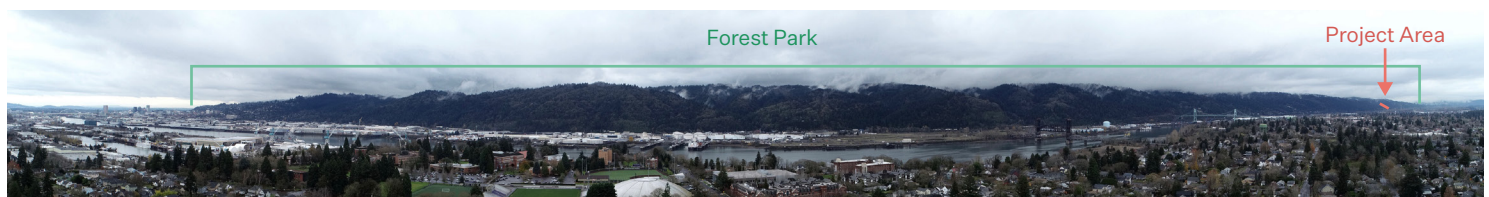


PGE has seen questions and commentary about the Harborton Reliability Project that include misconceptions. Here are the facts.

Will the Harborton Reliability Project include a clearcut in Forest Park?

The Facts: No, this project does not involve clearcutting. Clearcutting implies large-scale indiscriminate logging of a complete forest with all of its ecological benefits. In contrast, this project involves selectively removing 376 trees and leaving several hundred trees in place within a 5-acre project area that is within a 5,200-acre forest that remains ecologically rich. The trees selected must be removed to prevent safety hazards.

PGE retained a board-certified master arborist to review a tree inventory and to assess the conditions of over 700 trees in the project area, in order to protect the maximum number of trees and to remove or top the minimum number of trees to only those necessary.



Is PGE cutting down an “ancient forest”?

The Facts: No. Although the project would affect mature trees, the forest in the proposed project area is not ancient and it does not contain old growth habitat. It includes typical mixed-age forest dominated by Douglas fir and big-leaf maple, which together comprise the most common and abundant type of habitat throughout all of Forest Park.

The proposed project would remove a mix of young and mature trees in an area completely surrounded by existing power lines. As such, it would not fragment habitat beyond the existing utility right-of-way. As part of a multi-faceted restoration plan, PGE is proposing planting 398 Oregon white oaks in the utility easement and 418 other short stature trees in the park. Oak habitat was once common, though is now highly vulnerable and considered an “Oregon Conservation Strategy Habitat.”

Will there be a potential future phase of the project (Phase 5) the Harborton Reliability Project remove additional trees?

The Facts: The Harborton Reliability Project is potentially a multi-stage project. Phase 1 is complete, and Phase 2 is currently underway. The current Phase 3 project is the only project that is planned and proposed within Forest Park. For transparency’s sake, PGE shared that at some future point, two additional projects could be necessary, involving existing transmission lines within existing right-of-ways. PGE is in the very earliest stages of analysis and planning, which will include evaluating ways to maximize the capacity of existing equipment, and assessing the needs, options and potential impacts of any future possible project and alternatives. PGE would put any future proposed project through the same rigorous analysis as it has for Phase 3, in anticipation that it would go through the same scrutiny and review by land use and potentially City of Portland officials.

Is this project urgent, as PGE claims?

The Facts: Yes, this project is urgently needed. We first identified the need for this project in 2015 as part of our longer-term system planning. Everyday electric usage is rising, as well as in periods of peak demand, such as high heat and extreme cold. This additional transmission capacity is essential as the system is projected to reach capacity limits that threaten the reliability of power in Portland, and could cause outages that experts say will occur in 2028 without these improvements.

Is the project important to Portland, or is it intended for large customers?

The Facts: The Harborton Reliability Project will serve residential and commercial customers in North and Northwest Portland by increasing voltage and capacity of a part of our system that was built in the 1970’s. Demand for electricity has risen since then and is continuing to rise due to building and vehicle electrification, and economic development.

Is this project needed specifically to power semiconductor chip manufacturing expansion and data centers, to the west?

The Facts: Since 2015, PGE has identified the Harborton Reliability Project as a necessary grid improvement to meet anticipated demand for electricity and capacity constraints. That predates the planned growth of major customers and the more recent and rapid expansion of data centers. This project will primarily serve homes and businesses in North and Northwest Portland. Though improvements in any part of the grid are beneficial, additional transmission capacity will be needed in the future to serve major customers and data centers.

Is it impossible to mitigate the environmental impact of this project?

The Facts: It is true that a one-for-one mitigation effort is difficult in the project area, but this is an extreme reading of the Forest Park Resource Management Plan. In 2023, the City of Portland and Portland Parks & Recreation enacted an ordinance that prescribes how to fund mitigation, monitoring and maintenance activities for needed utility projects in the park’s complex ecosystem. PGE proposed a suite of restoration actions that comply with this ordinance and compensate for the area impacted within this transmission corridor. These contributions include removing wildfire ladder fuels from dozens of acres, creating new breeding habitat for red-legged frogs, and planting Oregon white oak. These restoration actions depend on the city utilizing the ordinance it passed for exactly these circumstances.

Did PGE really look at all alternatives?

The Facts: Yes. Together with all Portlanders, PGE views Forest Park as a treasure for our city. PGE studied more than 20 possible alternatives in and out of Forest Park to meet the needs of this phase while avoiding or lessening the impact on Forest Park. Each option was evaluated using the same criteria to determine feasible options for further analysis. Every other option was disqualified because of environmental and/or community impact, failure to deliver a second source 230 kV source to Harborton, resolve transmission outage vulnerabilities or support projected energy needs, involved additional costs that would be borne by customers, or involved delays that would put Portland at risk of power outages. That is why, after PGE's pre-application was reviewed by the city in 2022, PGE sought to avoid impacting Forest Park by exploring alternatives that appeared even marginally possible. When these proved infeasible, PGE worked to reduce the project area and the number of trees that needed to be removed.

Is it true that a report PGE commissioned - the Toth Report - found two viable alternative routes that are fully outside of Forest Park?

The Facts: No. All alternatives analyzed in that report involve impact within Forest Park. Moreover, the Toth Report made clear that the two alternative projects on NW Marina Way each have a 'severe impediment' that makes them infeasible. Suggesting either or both of these alternatives are 'available' or 'viable' is a gross misreading of the materials PGE filed with the city and posted on the project website for the public.

Even though they were determined to be infeasible. PGE took action to explore if the severe impediments could be resolved. The outcome is summarized in Section 2.4.3 of the [April 2024 Alternatives Analysis](#), which determined that the impediments to these two alternatives are significant. PGE does not own the property or have easement rights and would need to acquire the property to build either of the alternative projects. PGE's exploration revealed that some property owners – a mix of homes and businesses - are not inclined to sell their property to PGE. Acquiring the property over opposition from owners would require pursuing a regulatory process to obtain a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity. If granted, that certificate could then be used in subsequent state court proceedings to condemn property for utility purposes.

PGE analyzed the regulatory pathway and determined a low likelihood of succeeding with that in [PGE's Land Use Narrative](#) (page 26) because the two impeded projects pose significant impacts to more property owners than the current project proposed, have environmental impacts that involve Forest Park and extend beyond it, impacting a negligibly smaller amount of vegetation, and because of the significant increased cost that could impact customers. Most importantly, these two severely impeded alternatives would not be operational in time to avoid the possibility of outages projected to occur in 2028. The risk of outages in Portland is real and must be taken seriously.

Could this project be avoided through conservation and energy efficiency?

The Facts: No. Meeting forecasted energy needs will take more than energy efficiency and other strategies such as distributed energy resources and battery storage, which are important approaches. Even still, as we made clear in our 2023 Clean Energy and Integrated Resource Plans, transmission capacity is also needed in addition to important customer-sited resources like these, to maintain reliable electricity and deliver clean energy.

Could PGE achieve its goals by upgrading only the existing power lines using advanced conductors, or reconductoring?

The Facts: No. PGE proposes replacing the existing power line with advanced conductor that can carry more electric current using the existing equipment, to minimize impact. Even still, that would not resolve the transmission bottleneck. Additional transmission capacity is crucial to reliably meet growing and projected electricity demand and to deliver clean energy to North and Northwest Portland.

Is PGE hiding information about the Harborton Reliability Project and avoiding public engagement?

The Facts: Not at all. PGE has been transparent throughout the planning process that began in 2022, even including the possibility of future phases. PGE held six virtual and in-person meetings open to the public over the past year, providing information and access to subject matter experts to address all questions. Throughout this process, PGE has worked collaboratively with City officials to make sure they have the information they need to make informed decisions. PGE has provided the entire land use application - including exhibits and appendices - on the project website. Lastly, PGE has invited and addressed questions via a dedicated email address (PGEPProjects@pgn.com).

Is this project at odds with Portland's climate goals?

The Facts: Just the opposite. PGE's 2023 Clean Energy and Integrated Resource Plans lay out a comprehensive roadmap for how we will meet the energy needs of our customers and greenhouse gas emissions targets while maintaining reliability, safety and serving customers at the lowest possible cost. Those plans make clear that additional transmission capacity is essential to integrate renewable energy and meet electrification demands, in addition to demand response, energy efficiency and other community-based renewable resources.

Will the Harborton Reliability Project increase the risk of wildfires in Forest Park?

The Facts: The project will mitigate and reduce wildfire risk by: replacing old equipment that has a higher risk of failure; selectively removing trees where they are near to becoming hazards for existing lines; and creating resources for Portland Parks & Recreation to remove dozens of acres of noxious weeds that create ladder fuels for ground fire to rise into the forest canopy.

Would blocking the Harborton Reliability Project be a win for climate justice?

The Facts: No. Decarbonizing the energy Portlanders require can only be achieved with additional transmission capacity. There is no way to electrify and deliver clean energy without it. Delivering reliable electricity, especially during extreme summer and winter weather, is critical for climate justice.

Could PGE use Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) power lines in the park instead of building a new line?

The Facts: No. While the BPA has announced critical projects that will enhance and strengthen the regional grid for the benefit of PGE customers, the BPA lines in Forest Park won't do what we need them to do to ensure reliable power to homes and businesses in North and Northwest Portland.

PortlandGeneralProjects.com/Harborton