

Harborton Reliability Project FAQ

Updated September 2026



What is the status of the PGE's land use application?

City staff have reviewed PGE's application and will make a report for the City of Portland Hearings Officer. A public hearing is scheduled for Oct. 14 at 1:30 pm. After that, the Hearings Officer will make a written decision. The decision can be appealed to Portland City Council.

How did the mediation agreement come about?

In May 2024, PGE submitted an application for this project. In March 2025, a City of Portland Hearings Officer approved PGE's application. The decision was appealed. The Portland City Council upheld the appeal in May 2025. PGE appealed the Council's decision to the Oregon Land Use Board of Appeals, which led to mediation between PGE, the City of Portland and intervenors both for and against the project.

What happened in mediation?

Dozens of hours of meetings and workshops provided participants the opportunity to test all aspects of PGE's projects, to ask questions and share ideas in search of the best possible outcome.

Who participated in mediation?

The City's legal counsel, various staff from the Planning and Parks bureaus, with some participation from a few City Councilors and Mayor Wilson and their respective staff. PGE's legal representative, the project manager, transmission planning and modeling experts, wildlife biologists and habitat experts participated. The Forest Park Neighborhood Association, Forest Park Conservancy and Oregon Bird Alliance and a group of individuals intervened and participated.

What did PGE share in mediation that informed the new application?

Through mediation, PGE shared new technical, environmental, and regulatory information. PGE also prepared additional analysis on key issues and made topic experts available to answer questions from City staff and mediation participants.

What does PGE's new application include that wasn't in the 2024 application?

In summary, it includes:

- Additional technical information and analysis including information about system reliability, alternatives, environmental considerations, and construction methods.
- A commitment to fund an independent technical consultant to support future planning discussions between the City and PGE concerning future utility infrastructure in Forest Park.
- \$5.5 million for environmental mitigation, ecological enhancement and conservation, and wildfire resilience projects within and adjacent to Forest Park. The City can use these funds to support the Restore Forest Park initiative, which includes removal of noxious weeds, invasive species and wildfire ladder fuels from hundreds of acres of the park. Funding could also be used for forest habitat enhancement and to create wetlands for the northern red-legged frogs to breed in the northern part of the park.
- Revised site restoration plans based on ideas shared during mediation that are reasonable, technically feasible and likely to yield ecological benefits. This includes a reduction in tree removals and several trees being topped instead of removed.
- A revised construction plan intended to reduce construction impacts.

Why is this project needed?

The need for the project was identified in 2015. Since then, some things have changed and become more serious. That includes projections for increased electrical use by homes and businesses, particularly in response to extreme hot and cold weather. For the last several years, projections about how much electricity will be used suggest that the problem is increasingly urgent and may push PGE equipment beyond federally established limits. Exceeding those limits would require PGE to take action to protect the grid and operate in a way that complies with the requirements. PGE's application shows how historic and projected seasonal electricity usage began spiking in 2020 and has risen consistently since then. The problem is likely to worsen with time.

Who will benefit from this project?

This reliability-driven project serves homes and businesses in North and Northwest Portland. It will strengthen the power grid by fixing known reliability issues, creating a more dependable system for tens of thousands of customers who are at risk of power outages when equipment fails or during periods of high demand for electricity.

Is this project being built to serve data centers or semiconductor chip manufacturers?

No.

Is PGE clearcutting a section of Forest Park?

No. PGE plans to selectively remove or trim the tops of about 393 trees in the 5-acre project site. It is in an existing utility corridor where transmission lines have been located since the 1940s. Trees will only be removed if they could grow too close to the power lines or fall into them. This work helps maintain the safe distances required around the lines.

How did PGE determine which trees to remove?

A board-certified master arborist surveyed 1,038 trees inside and near the project site. Of those, 393 trees were selected for removal, including 18 dead trees. 31 trees will be topped, and 3 trees will be girdled to allow them to stay upright providing wildlife habitat as they gradually die.

Is this “old growth” or “ancient forest”?

No. It is mostly made up of second-growth Douglas fir trees and a mix of evergreen and leafy forest habitat that grew back after earlier logging. It is entirely within an established utility corridor and is separated from the rest of the park by long-standing transmission lines and access roads. Similar higher-quality forest habitats in better condition can be found throughout this area in the park, including right next to the project site.

Is the project area prime habitat?

No. This small stand of trees is already surrounded by transmission lines that have been in place for decades. The area is considered lower value “edge” habitat, which is defined in the Forest Park Natural Resources Management Plan.

Is PGE’s project consistent with the City’s conservation goals outlined in the Forest Park Management Plan?

Yes. In fact, the City’s plan addresses the continued use, maintenance, redevelopment and construction of utility infrastructure within easements that existed when the plan was adopted in 1995. The plan anticipated that utility infrastructure could be improved and even expanded in unused parts of existing easements and recognizes the public importance of infrastructure in them. The plan also recognizes that the park has different habitats in different places. For example, high-value interior forest habitat, wildlife movement corridors and ancient forests. The park also has areas with utility corridors, roads, and existing developed features. The plan outlines that different areas should be treated differently.

How is PGE proposing to restore and mitigate the impact of this project in the project area?

The application includes revised plans to restore the site based on ideas shared in mediation. After construction is finished, PGE will plant native shrubs, groundcover and shorter trees like Oregon white oak that can grow safely near transmission lines and provide valuable habitat. It will also plant seed mixes that support pollinators like bees and butterflies, removing harmful weeds, and keeping some downed trees and tree snags that provide wildlife habitat.

These plans enhance wildlife diversity, reduce wildfire risk and provide significant pollinator habitat at the park’s edges. Improvements to utility access roads and service routes within existing corridors will also give hikers more access to the park and avoid the need to create new routes in areas that have more valuable natural resources.

How long would PGE monitor the project area after restoration?

PGE will actively maintain and monitor the proposed plantings, removing noxious weeds, replanting as necessary, and if a particular species does not do well, selecting a different native plant. PGE will maintain and monitor the utility easement for 10 years, reporting conditions yearly to City of Portland staff. After that, PGE will monitor the transmission corridor long-term, as part of our ongoing vegetation management protocols.

How can the City use the \$5.5 million payment?

The City can use the resources to do high-priority and enhancement projects like those outlined in the Restore Forest Park Initiative. These include removing harmful weeds, invasive plants and wildfire fuels from hundreds of acres of the park. The funds could also be used to improve forest habitat, improve wetlands for red-legged frog breeding areas, and help acquire, protect and add over 20 acres of higher-value habitat to the northern part of the park. Funds could also help the city buy property that has higher value habitat, to add to the northern part of Forest Park. For every acre affected by the project, more than 200 acres in the park could be improved. In all, this funding could improve about 1,000 acres of the park.

Who oversees how the \$5.5 million is spent?

The City of Portland provides oversight as to how mitigation money will be spent through public processes. Those processes apply to all money paid under the City Ordinance that allows for the mitigation money that PGE is paying here, and other similar payments.

How does this project address wildfire hazards of electrical equipment in the park?

In addition to bringing equipment to current standards and removing trees that could fall into energized power lines, PGE's application supports the Forest Park Natural Resources Plan for managing fire hazards by reducing ladder fuels and conifers in the utility corridor and creating a more manageable fire break. It will also improve long-term access for maintaining the corridor and emergency response. The additional mitigation resources PGE is providing will make a big impact helping to manage fire hazards for about 1,000 acres of Forest Park.

What about Phases 4 and 5?

Each project within the Harborton Reliability Project involves a specific, independent problem with the grid. Each project will go through its own planning and review process. PGE has not applied for any potential future projects in Forest Park. As part of the mediation agreement, PGE has agreed to provide City of Portland with funds for an independent technical consultant to support future planning discussions between the City and PGE that involve utility infrastructure in Forest Park.

Did PGE analyze alternative projects or pathways for this application?

Yes. A new alternatives analysis report looks at alternatives to see if any would meet the needs to stay compliant with federal and state reliability requirements and keep power flowing to North, Northwest Portland and avoid potential outages that could begin as soon as 2028.

What criteria did PGE apply?

The criteria included analysis of PGE's ability to obtain the property rights needed for the alternative, federal and state land restrictions, permit requirements, constructability, and ability to complete construction by 2028 or soon after.

What alternatives were considered?

Past alternatives analyses considered a broad range of transmission and other project types, like battery energy storage. This land use application includes new analysis of three alternatives that could meet the criteria above, including one out-of-park and two in-park alternatives that were in PGE's first application:

1. Using taller structures spanning from Forest Park ridge to Harborton Substation
2. Building a new line segment along NW Marina Way with connections outside of Forest Park to existing 230 kV transmission lines
3. The proposed project

What did the analysis conclude?

The proposed project is the only one that will meet federal and state regulatory requirements by 2028. It also reduces impact to private property owners. Because it can be built in PGE's existing easement, it also reduces the risks associated with state, federal and local permitting. Lastly, it results in the least amount of tree removal and minimizes impacts to stream and riparian habitat.

How did cost factor into the analysis of alternatives?

Cost wasn't a factor. That said, this project as proposed can be built for approximately \$10 million. That's a reasonable cost for the improvements it will provide. And it will help minimize impacts to the rates that customers pay.

