Update of the Texas PUC Actions on the Howard-Solstice 765-kV Transmission Line

The PUC approved construction of the line on September 18. In May the State Office of Administrative Hearings (SOAH) conducted a public hearing for the PUC and issued a report recommending approval using a route south of the Texas Hill Country, which appears to have reduced opposition to the line by many. RLAT is continuing opposition because our mission is to protect the interests of landowners throughout Texas, not only a specific region. The decision simply changes the location of the burden of property condemnation and impairment for a line that provides no benefit to the region, will be paid for by increased costs to ratepayers statewide, and discourage power generation that could keep gas and power flowing during the next major winter storm event.

The only justification offered for construction of the Howard Solstice line (Docket 59336) is the Permian Basin Reliability Plan (PBRP) authorized by the legislature and approved by the PUC in 2024 despite being deeply flawed and out of date. It was also used to justify two other similar lines; Dinosaur-Longhorn-Drill Hole and Bell East-Big Hill-Sand Lake. The former was recommended by SOAH and approved by the PUC, but the SOAH judges for the latter agreed with intervenors, including American Stewards for Liberty, that the PBRP was flawed, did not provide sufficient justification of need, and therefore recommended disapproval. The deadline for decision was September 22, 2026, but the PUC has remanded the issue to SOAH for further consideration of certain issues (necessary for reliability or reduce congestion costs) that will be addressed in October.

Despite unfavorable actions by the PUC, RLAT believes that the issue is not fully resolved. Dozens of Texas legislators from all parts of the state have expressed concern about the matter urging the PUC to place

common sense over legalism and disapprove or defer approval until the legislature can act in the upcoming session. RLAT has made strong arguments against the lines in comments to the PUC, Governor Abbott, Lt. Governor Patrick, Speaker of the House Burrows, Senator Flores, Representative Virdell, and the appropriate House and Senate committees.

In addition, ERCOT has developed the Strategic Transmission Expansion Plan (STEP) which includes hundreds of miles of additional 765 kv lines to form a loop in Central Texas. These lines could be built with or without the Permian Basin lines. We believe that they will impose the same burdens on landowners and ratepayers. They are also unnecessary. Customers can be better served by using the statewide robust natural gas transmission pipeline system to strategically locate natural gas power generators near the load, which was the practice for decades. The pipelines are still there; we need to use them. Transporting energy as natural gas is much more efficient than using electric transmission lines.

We believe that the fight is not over and plan to continue advocating for the landowners and citizens of Texas.