



Proposed Policy Resolution 3.2021

Adopted Unanimously on September 28, 2021

Project Advancing Grid Modernization Technologies

Sponsors

Representative Mark McBride, Oklahoma
Richard Lee, Jr., South Carolina, Governor's Alternate

WHEREAS, at its 59th Annual Meeting in Louisville, Kentucky, the Southern States Energy Board on September 24, 2019, unanimously adopted Policy Resolution 4.2019 entitled "Modernization of the Electric Grid" in which the Board recognized that "intelligent and communicative energy infrastructure is a critical part of today's modern households, businesses, communities and the 21st century economy" and that "investments by companies to deploy new technologies and smarter energy infrastructure contribute to maintaining the reliability of the electric grid and improved operations by electricity providers to the benefit of all consumers"; and

WHEREAS, the Southern States Energy Board resolved in Resolution 4.2019 that it "supports utility investments in advanced energy infrastructure, energy storage, and other non-wires alternatives to help ensure all citizens have access to, and may take part in the benefits of, a smarter electric grid, as well as spur innovation and technology deployment" and "encourages its member states and region's utilities to prioritize energy storage and other smart energy infrastructure investments based on the benefits to electricity consumers"; and

WHEREAS, at its 60th Annual Meeting, held online during the coronavirus pandemic, the Southern States Energy Board on September 29, 2020, unanimously adopted Policy Resolution 1.2020 entitled "Broadband for Grid Modernization" in which the Board recognized:

- "electric utilities will require both wired and wireless broadband connectivity to serve the communications needs of their modernized grids";
- "electric utilities that build broadband networks for grid operations in rural areas could leverage the infrastructure that is deployed as part of this intelligent integrated smart grid evolution, including the wireless towers and backhaul, to support broadband service for consumers in unserved and underserved rural communities, thereby fostering economic development"; and
- "by broadly selecting the same spectrum and the same technology for private wireless broadband networks, utilities across the region would also enjoy cost savings driven by economies of scale and scope in the deployment and operation of such networks"; and

WHEREAS, the Southern States Energy Board resolved in Resolution 1.2020 that it:

- “encourages the region’s utilities to deploy private, cyber-secure broadband communications networks to support the ‘new technologies and smarter energy infrastructure’ of the modern electric grid envisioned in Resolution 4.2019”;
- “urges the region’s utilities and Public Utility Commissions to encourage the use of infrastructure deployed for grid-management communications to also support consumer broadband services to rural homes and businesses”; and
- “encourages the region’s utilities that deploy private wireless broadband networks for grid-management communications to coordinate their planning, and Public Utility Commissions to facilitate such planning, to adopt a common spectrum band and technology for such networks to enable wireless network interoperability, increased functionality, and cost savings across the region”; and

WHEREAS, the Southern States Energy Board “was created by states’ laws and consented to by Congress with a broad mandate to contribute to the economic and community well-being of the southern region. The Board exercises this mandate through the creation of programs in the fields of energy and environmental policy research, development and implementation, science and technology exploration, and related areas of concern”;

WHEREAS, the long-term goals of the Southern States Energy Board are to “[p]rovide technical assistance to executive and legislative policymakers and the private sector in order to achieve synthesis of energy, environment and economic issues that ensure energy security and supply” and “[f]acilitate the implementation of energy and environmental policies between federal, state, and local governments and the private sector,” among others; and

WHEREAS, on behalf of its member states and their citizens, the Southern States Energy Board “obtains funding for state and regional projects at the request of its membership, committees and working task forces,” including those “that support energy and environmental research, education and training, technology development, regulatory reform and other key issue areas”; and

WHEREAS, in the 2020 Energy Act, Congress authorized \$323,500,000 to fund Fiscal Year 2021 activities under Title VIII, entitled “Grid Modernization,” which includes grant programs to develop, demonstrate, and implement grid modernization technologies, including communications networks; and

WHEREAS, the economic and community well-being of the southern region would benefit substantially from a project demonstrating the value to utilities and their customers of the technologies and capabilities described in Policy Resolutions 4.2019 and 1.2020, entitled “Modernization of the Electric Grid” and “Broadband for Grid Modernization,” respectively.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Southern States Energy Board directs its staff to develop a project proposal demonstrating the value to utilities and their customers of:

- grid modernization applications enabled by utility private broadband communications networks,
- utilities sharing such wired and wireless communications infrastructure to support broadband internet access for underserved rural communities, and

- interoperability among disparate utility private broadband networks through adoption of a common spectrum band and technology; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Southern States Energy Board directs its staff to seek federal grant or cooperative agreement opportunities to fund the project, undertake to obtain such funds, and if successful, proceed to manage and implement the funded project.