

Frequently Asked Questions: The Golden Pacific Powerlink and Anza-Borrego Desert State Park

What is the Golden Pacific Powerlink?

The Golden Pacific Powerlink (GPP) is a proposed 500-kilovolt high-voltage electricity transmission line being developed by San Diego Gas & Electric. It would originate in the Imperial Valley and travel northwest, with a preferred route that passes directly through Anza-Borrego Desert State Park and the community of Borrego Springs.

Why does ABF oppose it?

Anza-Borrego Foundation opposes any route that passes through the Park or Borrego Springs. The Park is one of the most biodiverse state parks in California, holds International Dark Sky and Quiet Parks designations, and contains 471,000 acres of contiguous designated wilderness. Industrial infrastructure of this scale would cause permanent, irreversible harm to the landscape, the wildlife that depends on it, and the community that surrounds it.

Has this been tried before?

Yes. This is the third time a 500kV transmission line has been proposed through Anza-Borrego. In 2008, the CPUC formally rejected this same corridor, finding it environmentally unacceptable and infeasible, with 52 significant, unmitigable environmental impacts. The preferred route for the Golden Pacific Powerlink follows substantially the same path that was rejected then. The Park is measurably more ecologically fragile today than it was in 2008.

What would the towers look like?

Towers for a 500kV transmission line typically reach 150 to 200 feet in height. In certain locations, they would require FAA aviation safety lighting. They would be visible from across the valley and would permanently alter the visual character of one of the most scenic and protected landscapes in the American West.

How would this affect the dark skies?

Both Anza-Borrego Desert State Park and the town of Borrego Springs hold International Dark Sky designations. The preferred route crosses the darkest area in the entire Park, a natural bowl formed by surrounding mountains that creates conditions for night sky viewing found nowhere else in Southern California. Tower lighting required by FAA regulations at those heights would directly threaten

both designations. Losing International Dark Sky status would be a devastating and permanent blow to the Park and to Borrego Springs' tourism economy.

What about the noise?

High-voltage transmission lines produce a continuous, audible hum that extends well beyond the corridor itself. Anza-Borrego is a Designated Quiet Conservation Area recognized by Quiet Parks International, one of only a handful of such designations in the United States. That designation, and the experience of natural silence that draws visitors from around the world, would be permanently compromised along the entire affected corridor.

Would this affect camping in the Park?

Yes, significantly. The Park has only two developed campgrounds of regional significance. The preferred route places at least one of them directly in or immediately adjacent to the transmission corridor. No one camps willingly under a 500kV transmission line. The campground would effectively be unusable, representing both a loss of public access and a serious blow to State Park operating revenue.

Will this line bring clean energy?

There is no binding commitment in any project documentation that this line will carry renewable energy. SDG&E's early materials described the project as essential to California's clean energy future, but that language has since been removed from the company's public fact sheets, replaced with source-neutral terms like "growing demand" and "reliability." A 500kV transmission line carries whatever generation source is connected to it.

Is there actually a need for this line?

The CEC's own record raises serious doubts. California's actual electricity consumption has remained essentially flat, while the California Energy Commission's official demand projections have consistently anticipated growth that has not materialized. The gap between what the CEC projects and what Californians actually use is documented across multiple planning cycles in the CEC's Integrated Energy Policy Reports. (Source: CEC IEPR records; energy.ca.gov)

SDG&E points to the CAISO transmission plan as its mandate to build this line. What that framing omits is that the CAISO transmission plan is built directly on

CEC demand forecasts, meaning the "requirement" SDG&E cites traces directly back to projections that have not been matched by actual electricity use.

The long-term growth that remains in current CEC forecasts rests heavily on anticipated data center demand, which is itself uncertain. The data center industry is moving rapidly toward on-site, off-grid power specifically to avoid dependence on utility transmission, and local opposition to data center development is growing across California. SDG&E is citing projected demand, not actual use, to justify routing a 500kV transmission line through California's most protected desert landscape. Until that need is validated against real consumption data, the urgency SDG&E invokes is not supported by the evidence on the ground.

What is the industrialization cascade?

Once a large transmission corridor is established, it attracts further energy development: solar farms, wind projects, battery storage facilities, and substations locate themselves near the line to access existing grid infrastructure. We saw this happen along the Sunrise Powerlink corridor, completed in 2012, which was followed immediately by large-scale wind and solar development across thousands of acres of desert. The Golden Pacific Powerlink would trigger the same cascade through the heart of the most ecologically significant state park in California.

Why was this route chosen?

At a stakeholder meeting in March 2026, the project team acknowledged that certain alternative routes, including corridors through federally managed military lands, were ruled out not because of their environmental impact but because they would require an act of Congress and the project does not have time for that. In other words, this route was selected for regulatory convenience, not because it causes the least harm. Anza-Borrego Foundation believes the CPUC must not accept that rationale as a substitute for a full alternatives analysis.

Are there alternative routes?

Yes. Northern and southern corridor alternatives have been identified that would avoid large-scale impact on the Park and Borrego Springs. These routes do not carry the same concentration of irreplaceable natural resources, wilderness designations, cultural sites, and community infrastructure. Anza-Borrego

Foundation supports serious technical and environmental analysis of these alternatives.

Will the Golden Pacific Powerlink lower my electricity bill?

No, and it could make things worse, for ratepayers across all of California, not just San Diego.

The Golden Pacific Powerlink is a CAISO statewide grid asset, not a local San Diego line. It is not dedicated to serving any specific community or region. The power it carries goes where the grid directs it. And its costs are recovered the same way, spread across ratepayers throughout California through a charge on every electricity bill called the Transmission Access Charge. All California ratepayers help pay for this line. None are guaranteed to benefit from it.

The project is currently estimated at \$2 billion, a figure that is almost certainly a floor given California's well-documented history of transmission cost overruns. That total includes not just construction, but a guaranteed profit for SDG&E's investors recovered from ratepayers over the life of the asset. SDG&E is guaranteed to profit. California ratepayers are guaranteed to pay.

There is no binding commitment that this line will carry renewable energy, that we know of. It will carry whatever is connected to it. If that turns out to be conventionally generated power, millions of California ratepayers will have paid billions for the infrastructure plus the ongoing cost of the electricity, with no clean energy benefit.

California's actual electricity consumption has remained flat for years, while the demand projections used to justify this project have already been revised downward by the California Energy Commission in consecutive planning cycles. If that demand never materializes, the line still gets built, and California ratepayers still pay for it in full, whether the energy ever reaches their home or not.

The costs of this project are socialized across millions of California ratepayers. The profit flows to one utility and its investors. Before approving a \$2 billion transmission line through one of California's most protected landscapes, Californians deserve answers to three questions SDG&E has not addressed: What guarantee ensures this line will carry renewable energy? What is the true total cost to ratepayers including investor profit over the life of the asset? And what happens to all of us if the projected demand never arrives?

Until those questions are answered, the claim that this line will benefit your electricity bill should be treated with serious skepticism.

What is ABF doing about it?

Anza-Borrego Foundation has submitted formal stakeholder comments to the CPUC for inclusion in the application record and will continue to participate actively in the application and environmental review process at every stage. We are also working with partner organizations and community members to ensure the full ecological, cultural, and economic significance of this landscape is on the record.

What can I do?

Stay informed and stay engaged. Follow ABF's updates at theabf.org, share this information with your networks, and contact your elected representatives to let them know this landscape matters to you.