

## If Transmission is for Renewables, Yes-in-My-Backyard: Poll

While a majority of Americans oppose new high-voltage transmission lines in their communities, opposition drops precipitously to 17% if those lines are delivering clean, renewable energy from wind, according to a just-released survey from the Saint Consulting Group.

Support for new transmission lines leaps from just 46% to 83% when respondents are asked specifically about high-voltage transmission lines delivering wind power.

Ben Kelahan, energy practice leader at Saint Consulting, said the new results are a clear sign that Americans support cleaner, renewable power to the level that their support has carried over to the distribution of that power through their own backyard.

“High-voltage transmission lines generate some of the most adamant NIMBY (Not in My Back Yard) opposition in the country,” said Ben Kelahan, energy practice leader at Saint Consulting. “That such a large percentage of people are willing to allow green lines in their community says a lot about the awareness and importance of renewable energy and climate change issues in addition to the education efforts undertaken by the renewable energy industry.”

The wind power industry is advocating for Congress to enact legislation that would allow the federal government to serve as a backstop in the area of transmission siting and approvals. The industry supports a model similar to the federal government’s role in the siting of interstate natural gas pipelines; the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission would be the lead agency to provide approval and permitting under such a model. According to the Saint Consulting Group’s study, Americans generally oppose federal siting authority of transmission by a margin of 57% to 43%.

The transmission poll come on the heels of recent results from the firm’s 2009 “Saint Index,” which showed that Americans generally support not only wind farms in general but projects located in their communities. According to the study, 82% of Americans say they would support a wind farm going into their own community—an increase from 76% a year earlier.

Transmission, siting, and NIMBYism, in fact, have been touched on at WINDPOWER 2009. Billionaire Texas oil man T. Boone Pickens told reporters at a media event that he favors federal siting authority similar to the interstate pipeline model—in spite of his general dislike for federal-authority policies. And at the WINDPOWER plenary session in which he participated, he remarked that if an entity wanted to build wind power-carrying transmission lines across his ranch land, he would welcome it because it is good for the country. He also told of how he discussed the issue with Ted Turner, who expressed the same sentiment: it’s good for the country, so he’d welcome it.