

Clean Tomorrow's Response to Third Way's Pathways to Accelerating Clean Energy (PACE) Report

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Third Way's Pathways to Accelerating Clean Energy (PACE) report further confirms the challenges solar and transmission developers face when permitting projects at all levels of government—local, state, and federal. Restrictive local government siting and permitting policies, in particular, are increasingly delaying and blocking renewable energy deployment, exacerbating issues of energy affordability and demand. The PACE report, which surveys renewable energy developers and environmental permitting consultants, arrives at conclusions that are similar to [a recent survey and report](#) commissioned by Clean Tomorrow, and conducted by Data For Progress (DFP), which focused on state policymaker and agency staff experiences with renewable energy siting and permitting policy. The PACE report findings, when compared to the DFP report, demonstrate that many of the issues with permitting and siting projects are shared between these stakeholder groups, though there are also meaningful differences.

In the PACE report, the high ranking of "Lack of clarity or increased ambiguity in requirements" for solar projects at the local government level may be responding to the issue of a restrictive patchwork of local policies. The DFP report identified "restrictive local renewable energy ordinances or moratoria" as the top institutional barrier among policymakers. The second most significant institutional barrier in the DFP survey was interconnection delays, which is further confirmed by the PACE survey finding that lengthy interconnection timelines are a frequent cause of delays for solar developers. Both the DFP survey and PACE report found stakeholder opposition to be a significant challenge, with the DFP report concluding that community opposition and mis- and disinformation were the most significant social barriers to renewable energy siting.

When considering suggested solutions to improve permitting systems for solar projects, there is also some agreement between the DFP report and the PACE report:

- Both surveys found that standardized permitting requirements across jurisdictions would be a useful solution: 82% (DFP) and ~57% (PACE)
- Increased staffing and training ranked third in the PACE report at ~53%, while "creating state/local government siting partnerships" scored highly in the DFP report at 77%

- Both surveys also identified centralized permitting for multiple jurisdictions ("one-stop shop") as a useful solution: 59% (DFP) and ~62% (PACE)
- Fast track permitting was also viewed positively in both surveys: 82% of DFP respondents agreed that siting on degraded land was helpful, while ~47% of PACE respondents suggested fast-track permitting for low-impact projects as a solution
- The survey findings also agreed that enforceable timelines on permit decisions were one of the least helpful solutions, with only ~36% (PACE) and 59% (DFP) respondents ranking it as a suggested solution

All in all, the PACE report surfaces the challenges related to solar and transmission project permitting at the local, state, and federal levels of government. The solutions identified in the report through surveys of energy developers align closely with those suggested by state policymakers in the DFP report. Taken together, these solutions may reduce permitting timelines and address delays to help bring projects to ground more quickly, thereby addressing the affordability and demand crises that communities across the US are experiencing on a daily basis.