

Burnet County Commissioners Court – Public Comment November 13, 2025

Clare Nelson 117 Impala Lane, Lampasas, TX 76550 (*The Ranches at Blackbuck Ridge, Burnet County, off CR 108*)

Good morning everyone. Thank you for this opportunity and for including my remarks in the official record.

How many of you are landowners? I am. My husband and I built our forever home in The Ranches at Blackbuck Ridge—a slice of Texas Hill Country paradise with clean air, abundant wildlife, and pristine aquifers we all depend on. But the Bell County East to Big Hill 765 kV Transmission Project threatens to destroy it—permanently.

This line cuts straight through delicate aquifers, including ours, the Ellenberger-San Saba aquifer), caves, and well water that serve hundreds of families. Construction will risk contamination, erosion, and depletion—irreversible damage to our precious water source. We are on EPA-classified karst terrain—high risk for sinkholes and groundwater pollution.

Karst terrain is created from the dissolution of soluble rocks, principally limestone and dolomite. Karst areas are characterized by distinctive landforms (like springs, caves, sinkholes) and a unique hydrogeology that results in aquifers that are highly productive but extremely vulnerable to contamination.*

The environmental devastation goes far beyond ugly towers. A 200-foot easement means clearing over a thousand acres of native oak-juniper habitat. Heavy equipment and concrete pads will compact soil, trigger flash flooding, and block aquifer recharge. Wildlife corridors will be severed—deer, turkey, even endangered species displaced. Electromagnetic leakage has been shown to disrupt bee colonies and disorient birds. This isn't progress. It's ecological vandalism.

And why are we paying for it? This 765 kV line runs 200 miles to the Permian Basin for TEBA's data centers and crypto miners. We foot the bill for decades through statewide cost allocation while Oncor and LCRA pocket 10% guaranteed returns. Our environment pays the real price. Follow the money—it's not about need. It's about profit.

House Bill 5066 required ERCOT to produce a demand plan, yet Docket 51788 includes a Samsung paper—paid for by Google—claiming 765 kV is superior. That's not science. That's lobbying. Reroute along existing utility corridors and major roads. Upgrade 345 kV lines first—50% less land, 30% less cost, zero new habitat loss.

We shouldn't have to crowdfund justice. I've contacted 33 attorneys—most declined due to conflicts. We are launching a nonprofit and GoFundMe just to hire and pay for counsel for Segment I1. That's over \$100,000 in legal fees with no guaranteed outcome. Even if the Administrative Law Judge recommends rerouting, PUCT can override it.

This project may be obsolete before it's built. Oracle, OpenAI, and Microsoft are already constructing on-site natural gas plants in the Permian Basin. They're not waiting until 2030 or beyond. Why scar our land—and aquifers—for infrastructure that won't be used?

Real people and real nature are already hurt. One neighbor lost a sale—the buyer walked due to transmission uncertainty. Legacy ranches, rural roads, and our water are all at risk.

I'm a second-generation technologist, I love technology. But this isn't progress. It's overreach.

We ask this Commissioners Court to:

Help us raise \$100K for attorney fees.

1. Further publicize the resolution you passed on Oct 29, opposing the 765 project.
2. Urge PUCT to prioritize existing corridors and 345 kV upgrades.
3. Protect Burnet County's water, wildlife, and property rights.
4. Demand a full Environmental Impact Statement under the NEPA.

*Source: <https://www.usgs.gov/mission-areas/water-resources/science/karst-aquifers>

5. Fund a study to review the ERCOT demand plan. (HB 5066 required ERCOT to forecast Permian Basin demand).

6. Publicize the business model.
Texas consumers will pay for the 765 projects via increased energy bills for years to come. Oncor & LCRH get 10% and large Permian Basin TEBA companies benefit.

7. Fund a geological survey ^{of land & aquifers} to document the fact they ~~how~~ ^{are} fragile and extremely vulnerable to contamination.