



New york electric grid luxembourg city

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The New York Power Authority quietly has a heavy footprint on New York's electrical grid, with projects stretching from Long Island to the Canadian border. With the state itching for ways to meet its latest climate goals, NYPA and its network of power generators, transmission lines and projects is seen as a solution, although there is some disagreement from activists about size and scale.

NYPA CEO Justin Driscoll has been operating on shifting tides since taking on the job last year. Between inflationary pressures and a long-growing push for renewable energy in New York, energy policy is now at something of a tipping point, and with the NYPA's latest Renewables Draft Strategic Plan, Driscoll has designs on addressing the latter.

Driscoll, even if he's looking ahead to the countless projects that will bring megawatts of renewable energy to the market, is still concerned about the overall health of the grid, which he monitors from the authority's White Plains control room. It's getting old and with the specter of natural disasters looming, will need close attention. Private industry also is interested in investing in the country's grid, so outfits like NYPA won't need to go it alone both with maintaining New York's electric grid and updating it for a greener future.

Driscoll, who is to deliver keynote remarks at City & State's Clean Energy Summit at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in Lower Manhattan on Thursday, sat down with us to discuss NYPA's mission, the future of renewable energy and public concerns.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

So with this new draft strategic plan, how did you balance ambition versus the practicality of getting all this new renewable energy online?

With the governor's new focus on nuclear possibilities does that factor into long-term planning for NYPA?

She just held an energy summit up in Syracuse back in September and essentially signaled that we're going to need to explore all different types of energy production and energy resources, and obviously a lot of debate in the industry is around the role that these small modular nuclear reactors can play. And so I think it's very early in that in the technologies haven't really been fully developed yet, but everybody's looking at it and seeing whether it might be part of the solution, but I think it's too early to tell whether that will be part of the plan here in New York, and we as a utility, like all the utilities in the U.S., are trying to try to keep track of and stay up to speed with the developing technologies.

How do you see or view possibilities for NYPA's expansion beyond government institutions?



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Does it sort of feel tricky to see the collective furor that a lot of ratepayers have towards these private or public-private utility providers, as opposed to NYPA?

I think to the extent that we want to achieve these goals as fast as possible, you would want as many participants in that effort so that you can get as much built as quickly as possible. So we see partnership opportunities with the private sector as a way to get more built faster. Plus, in some ways, it's de-risking projects as you take on partners. You can spread the risk of project development over more parties, which is the typical financing approach to projects. So the idea would be to get more built and so we're looking to partner with the private sector where we can. We're also looking to take over projects from the private sector where they may want to recycle their capital and move on to another project, or we're happy to consider those types of projects.

A lot of the grid is old. We're the largest owner and operator of the high-voltage grid in the state, and we're doing a lot of work to upgrade our existing lines and also build new lines. So some of our facilities are over 60 years old, and so those need upgrades. We've tackled the oldest and the most need of upgrade already, and we're going to continue with that, but there's not only the need to upgrade these older assets, but also with more electrification and with more projects getting developed, there's going to be the need for new transmission as well. We feel like we're playing a significant role in that build-out.

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