

REA Energy Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



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OUTAGES & EMERGENCIES
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OFFICE HOURS
Indiana Office: 7 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
Ebensburg Office: 7 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
Monday, Wednesday and Friday
Closed Tuesday and Thursday

Guest Column

Building a Broadband Network: The Backbone of a Smart Grid



**STACY
HILLIARD**

IN THE 88 YEARS SINCE REA Energy Cooperative was founded, the energy landscape has evolved dramatically. Electric utilities, including cooperatives, are under increasing pressure to modernize their infrastructure. A critical part of this modernization involves implementing a robust broadband network to support a smart grid. A reliable broadband network serves as the backbone for real-time monitoring, enhanced efficiency and improved member service.

REA Energy's smart grid initiative — referred to as the “fiber ring” — will integrate digital technology into the power infrastructure, enabling two-way communication between the cooperative and members' electric service. With the fiber ring, the cooperative aims to improve outage response times, enhance grid reliability and streamline service delivery.

Building the network

Over the past several years, REA Energy explored multiple options for building a fiber ring. One involved constructing a full network to reach all members; however, the high costs associated with that approach made it unfeasible.

In search of a more practical solution, REA Energy made the strategic decision to acquire In the Stix Broadband, LLC (ITX), an independent internet service provider founded in 2008 that primarily served Cambria County. In June 2022, ITX officially became a subsidiary of REA Energy.

Supporting the vision for internet availability and infrastructure, the Indiana County Board of Commissioners awarded REA Energy and ITX a grant toward the construction of approximately 131 miles of fiber-optic cabling throughout the county. This investment marks a significant step in building the comprehensive fiber infrastructure. This specific project is complete and began serving subscribers in May of this year. Two additional projects, currently underway in parts of Cambria and Indiana counties, will expand the fiber network by an additional 524 miles. REA Energy would like to thank our local commissioners for their vision for the future of Indiana County.

Once complete, the fiber ring will enable seamless communication with substations during outages, significantly improving the cooperative's ability to backfeed power and restore service more efficiently and reliably. It will also allow our subsidiary to provide retail broadband to local residents and businesses.

Key components

To successfully build a broadband network that supports a smart grid, electric cooperatives must consider these key components:

- ▶ Fiber-optic infrastructure
- ▶ Cybersecurity protocols
- ▶ Supervisory control and data acquisition systems
- ▶ Reliable substation connectivity
- ▶ Response to electric demand

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Wander & Wonder: Exploring Western Pennsylvania's Stunning Trails

KAYLA KING, CCC, MARKETING AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST

WITH THE WARM SUMMER MONTHS upon us, it is the perfect time to go outside and explore the beauty of nature. Our region holds several hidden gems — stunning walking and hiking trails in Indiana and Cambria counties. With rolling hills, peaceful forests and historical landmarks, these trails provide a fantastic escape into the great outdoors. Many of the trails are perfect for a leisurely afternoon stroll. The following are some of the more popular local trails to explore:

Ghost Town Trail

The Ghost Town Trail is a 46-mile route that follows old railroad beds from Blairsville to Ebensburg. Along the way, you will see historical markers, coal-mining structures and the well-preserved Eliza Furnace. The trail runs alongside Blacklick Creek, offering magnificent views and a unique mixture of both history and nature. With access points throughout the trail, you can tailor the mileage to fit your energy level.

Hoodlebug Trail

A shorter, easier alternative, the Hoodlebug Trail is a 10-mile route between the towns of Blacklick and Indiana. Following an old Pennsylvania Railroad line, its flat terrain is perfect for walkers, runners and cyclists. This well-maintained path passes through rural landscapes, wooded areas, and small towns, offering a peaceful escape with

numerous rest areas and benches along the way.

Buttermilk Falls and the McFeely Trail

A must-see for waterfall lovers, this short but rewarding trail leads to an impressive 45-foot waterfall. The McFeely Trail is less than a mile long, making it perfect for young children and those who may not want to walk as far. The trail was named after Fred Roger's grandfather, Fred McFeely, who once owned the land. Fred Rogers (of "Mr. Roger's Neighborhood") spent a lot of time at Buttermilk Falls as a child. The stone foundations and retaining walls from the former McFeely residence can be seen and explored.

Yellow Creek State Park

This 3,000-acre park in Indiana County boasts a variety of trails through forests, wetlands and along Yellow Creek Lake. With six trails totaling more than 13 miles, Yellow Creek State Park provides a variety of options for every activity level, from gentle strolls to adventurous hikes. The three main trails in Yellow Creek are the Damsite Loop, Ridge Top Trail and Laurel Run.

Damsite Loop is right along the western shoreline, across the lake from Camp Seph Mack. Ridge Top Trail is a challenging 2-mile trail that begins in the beach/day-use area and winds through a variety of nature

habitats. Laurel Run, the shortest of the three main trails, is perfect for family hikes. This trail is a half-mile loop that starts and ends at the park office and has parking and picnic tables nearby, making it an excellent spot for a fun-filled day of exploration.

Path of the Flood Trail

The 14-mile Path of the Flood Trail in Cambria County follows the route of the historic 1889 Johnstown Flood. The trail begins at the remains of South Fork Dam, follows the Little Conemaugh River Valley and ends at Stone Bridge in the City of Johnstown. This trail offers a unique combination of nature views and history. Along the trail, markers provide information about the flood, giving insights into the events that led to the disaster.

Prince Gallitzin State Park

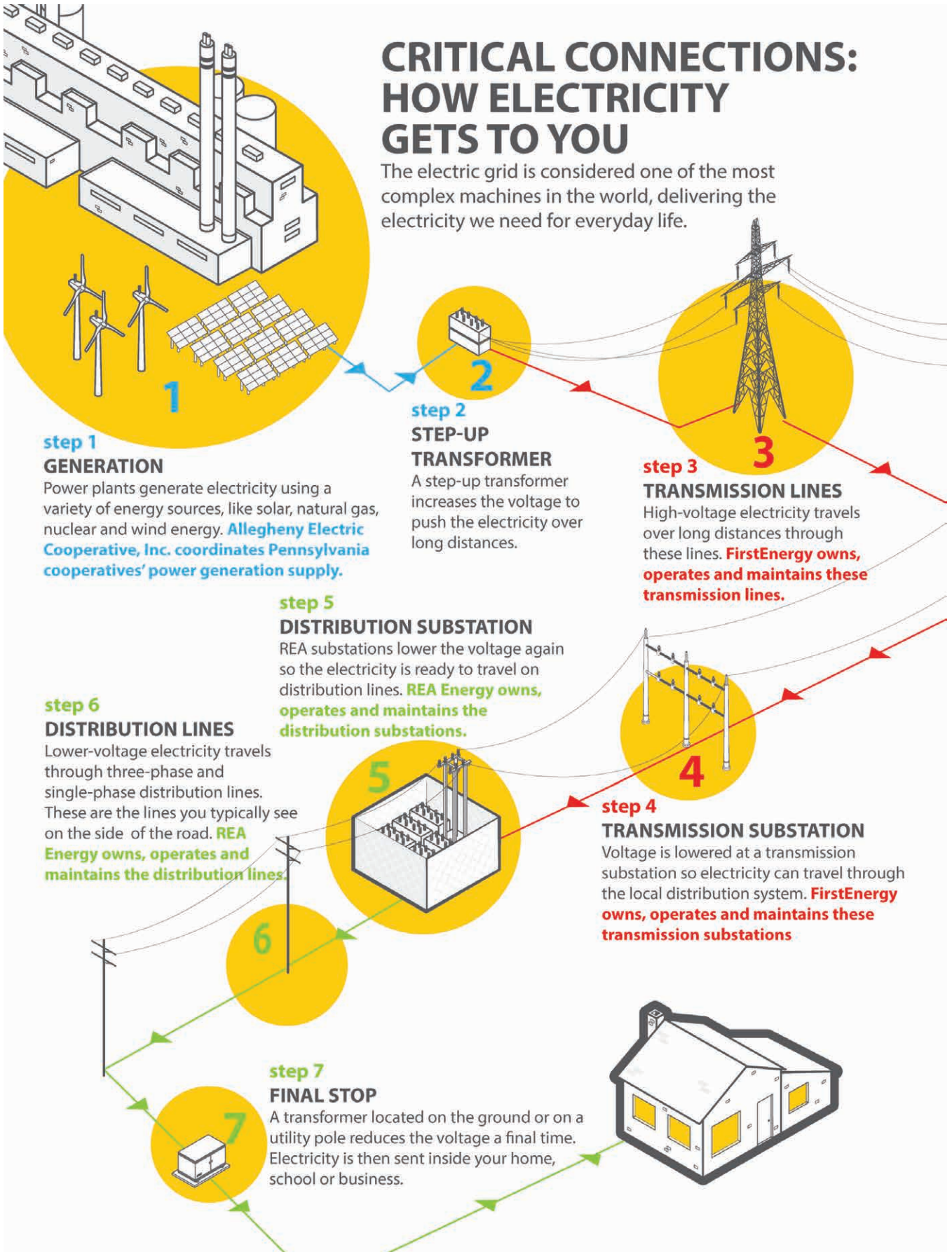
As one of Cambria County's largest parks, Prince Gallitzin State Park offers more than 30 miles of trails, ranging from easy to moderate difficulty. The Lakeshore Trail provides stunning views, while the Crooked Run Trail highlights diverse plant and animal life. With its extensive trail system, this park is a top destination for hikers of all levels.

Indiana and Cambria counties are home to some of Pennsylvania's best hiking and walking trails. From rail trails to stunning waterfalls and serene lakeside paths, there is something for every interest and skill level. Whether you are looking for a challenging hike or a relaxing stroll, these trails offer the perfect way to connect with nature. So, lace up your shoes, pack a water bottle, and set out on an adventure through the incredible trails of Indiana and Cambria counties! 📍



CRITICAL CONNECTIONS: HOW ELECTRICITY GETS TO YOU

The electric grid is considered one of the most complex machines in the world, delivering the electricity we need for everyday life.



Benefits of broadband-enabled infrastructure

Deploying a broadband network provides REA Energy with several potential benefits, including enhanced grid reliability, faster outage detection and restoration, improved energy efficiency, and more effective outage management.

For our members, the benefits extend even further. High-speed internet access will reach areas previously unserved or underserved, increasing engagement with REA Energy and unlocking opportunities in online education, telehealth, business development, and

community growth. This broadband expansion plays a vital role in bridging the digital divide in rural areas.

REA Energy believes investing in broadband infrastructure is a strategic step toward modernizing our operations and delivering improved service to our members and the community as a whole. The long-term benefits — greater efficiency, reliability and member satisfaction — make broadband deployment essential to the cooperative's future in electric distribution. 📶

STACY HILLIARD, CCC, CKAE
COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING MANAGER

REA Energy and In The Stix Broadband Connect First Fiber Subscriber in Indiana County

REA Energy would like to thank the Indiana County Commissioners for their support in expanding the In The Stix Broadband fiber infrastructure to provide retail broadband to Indiana County residents.



HAPPY FOURTH OF JULY!

REA Energy offices will be closed Friday, July 4, in observance of Independence Day.

If you need to report an outage or to make a payment, please call 844-920-3395.



Right-of-Way Management News

REA Energy contractors from Penn Line Tree Service will be trimming the rights of way near the Livermore and Georgeville substation and emergency maintenance areas in July.

Members in the affected areas will be notified. Contractors will perform all right-of-way work per REA Energy specifications. All contractors will carry employee identification cards, and their vehicles will display their company name. If you have any questions, call 724-349-4800 or view the specifications at reaenergy.com.

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REA Energy is an equal opportunity provider and employer.