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## Expanded Electricity Market Options Would Open New Opportunities for South Carolina

South Carolina's growing economy, with a gross domestic product of \$320.7 billion in 2023 and an annual growth rate of 5.7%, requires a dependable and affordable energy supply to sustain its progress. With industries like retail trade growing at 27.5% and manufacturing and professional services also contributing significantly, a reliable grid is critical to maintaining this momentum. Electricity is especially vital for South Carolina's manufacturing sector that includes power-intensive industries like automotive and textiles. Likewise, affordable power is crucial for agriculture, supporting operations from irrigation to food processing across the state. As South Carolina continues to attract investments and grow sectors like real estate, ensuring a stable and cost-effective energy market is essential for long-term success.

**Advances in energy technology and proven energy market options open a path to a historic opportunity for South Carolina to realize tens of millions of dollars in savings for energy customers, increase grid reliability, and enable expanded economic opportunity and business investment in the state.** [Energy Future Carolinas](#) represents a broad group of [large commercial and industrial customers](#) in the Carolinas, working with key decision-makers and stakeholders to promote the benefits of a more affordable, reliable, and cleaner energy future made possible through expanded energy market options. These companies' ability to continue to grow and innovate is directly tied to their ability to access affordable, reliable, and clean energy to power their operations.



**South Carolina's current monopoly-driven electricity system is inadequate to meet the rising demands of new technologies and high energy consumption businesses.** By exploring market reform options, South Carolina can achieve substantial savings, improve grid reliability, and increase access to cost-effective energy. Broader regional coordination for competitive

wholesale electricity trading could deliver cost savings and system efficiencies:

- [Brattle Group analysts](#) last year told the South Carolina General Assembly's Electricity Market Reform Measures Committee that South Carolina utility customers could save \$285 million to \$362 million a year if the Carolinas together joined a regional transmission organization.
- A [2020 study](#) by Vibrant Clean Energy and Energy Innovation found that with a regional transmission organization, the Southeast region could save \$384 billion by 2040, create 285,000 full-time jobs, and reduce emissions by 37%.

**Load growth in South Carolina and across the nation is being driven by the industries and areas of economic expansion of the future:** reshoring/onshoring of manufacturing, data centers, vehicle and building electrification, and clean energy manufacturing. That also means we're at a moment of incredible opportunity. We need much more electricity to enable economic growth. **Opening the energy market in the South Carolina to more regional competition translates to more options to meet customer preferences and, in turn, supports economic development prospects in South Carolina.**

Historically in the United States, state and company leaders were locating new economic development for large load growth based on favorable economics, real estate availability, and electricity access. Today, electricity access has become the top factor: The states that can supply very large amounts of clean power will own the future economic opportunity.

Expanding electricity market options in South Carolina would help drive innovation and cost savings for all energy customers and improve grid reliability and resilience. Organized wholesale markets are centrally managed markets that provide a platform for transparent and competitive wholesale electricity trading. All but eight states (North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Alaska, and Hawaii) have at least part of their state area served by a utility participating in an organized wholesale electricity market. Customers — and utilities — in states with competitive wholesale markets have realized huge cost savings and benefits. With the Southwest Power Pool's [Western Energy Imbalance Service \(WEIS\)](#), for example, market participants have received a cumulative [net benefit of \\$61.2 million](#) since the market's inception in 2021.

**Regional coordination on an electricity market and transmission planning would help South Carolina realize efficiencies of exchange and economies of scale that come from expanded market access. Energy customers urge South Carolina regulators and lawmakers to consider taking steps toward expanded market options such as an energy imbalance market, to enable future economic growth and grid reliability across the state and region.**

[www.energyfuturecarolinas.org](http://www.energyfuturecarolinas.org)