MEETING SUMMARY

Electric Connections Improvement Forum – September 15, 2026

General: The forum began at 1:10 p.m.

Executive Director Lavinson began with opening remarks regarding the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs' (EEA) work on improving the electric connections process, and emphasized the cross-collaboration with agencies such as the Department of Energy and Resources (DOER), Department of Public Utilities (DPU), Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (MassCEC), and electric distribution companies. She thanked everyone for their commitment and openness to feedback since the first forum convening in March 2026.

Lavinson then shared the agenda for the afternoon, which included:

- Reviewing goals and objectives.
- Report out on EEA's Load Connection Initiative.
- Brief presentation on Power Forward.
- Utility updates- including joint takeaways from the last forum, National Grid's presentation on passive house design and grid connection
- Flexible Interconnection (IX)- Presentations from both Eversource and National Grid regarding approaches to IX, and a Flex IX success story from the partnership between Heywood Hospital and National Grid.

Meeting Notes:

Lavinson reminded the forum that goals include: (1) Sharing information, (2) Providing transparency, and (3) Identify collective pain points with the grid connection process and develop solution(s).

Lavinson then provided a brief update on the EEA Load Connection Initiative – aimed at addressing interconnection challenges through: (1) Targeted engagement with stakeholders, (2) Monthly meetings with EDCs, and (3) Developing projections of anticipated transportation and building electrification load in the next 10 years.

- Outcomes from this initiative include Construction in Aid Construction (CIAC) Explainers- or concise documents that explain Eversource and National Grid's policies (e.g., what customers need to pay to move forward with a project).
- EEA launched the 101 Website – with interconnection process summaries and relevant utility links.
- Eversource and National Grid launched their capacity maps, an interactive tool to determine overhead load and capacity for all service territories in Massachusetts.
- All EDCs publicized their Step 0 process – aligning on providing detailed information ahead of formal new service requests.

- Power Forward – Launched this new program in partnership with Eversource and National Grid to accelerate engineering studies for eligible municipalities with affordable housing expansion goals and needs.

Lavinson then shared updates on the Enabling Sustainable Economic Development Focus Area Working Group (ESED FAWG), which is designed to create economic development zones that have grid capacity and are clean-energy ready; enabling "speed to power".

Lavinson then shared highlights from the last forum and items that need further work. These include:

- Project communication, timelines, and customer communication dashboards.
- Grid upgrade cost transparency.
- Integrated load connection and distributed generation (DG) interconnection requests.
- Incorporating passive house and/or specialized code(s) into the utility process.

Office of Energy Transformation (OET) Fellow, Deanna Kenyon, then provided a brief update and presentation on Power Forward. She highlighted that housing demand is outpacing supply in Massachusetts and that there's greater need for increased affordable housing coupled with increasing grid capacity needs.

Power Forward was thus designed to alleviate and address these needs. By partnering with Eversource and National Grid, municipalities serviced by these EDCs may apply for an engineering study that allow up to three sites to be evaluated at one time, for the cost of one. For eligible municipalities, DOER will subsidize up to $100,000 of the initial engineering study costs as part of a wider $3 million fund. More details may be found on the Connecting New Buildings to the Electric Grid website.

Utility Presentation #1 – Project Communications & Connections

Utility representatives from Eversource, National Grid, and Unitil gave a brief presentation on actions since the last forum, reporting out on: (1) Project communications, (2) Integrating load connections and DER interconnection requests, and (3) CIAC definitions (as part of the wider EEA Interconnection Initiative).

The first presentation focused on the electric service process and opportunities to improve communication and predictability for customers. Utilities outlined the major phases of service (initiation, engineering and design, pre-construction, and construction) and emphasized that project timelines are influenced by both utility-controlled factors and external requirements such as municipal permitting, environmental review, site access, and project complexity.

A central takeaway was the value of engaging utilities earlier in project development, ideally during site design. Early coordination can help identify capacity constraints, permitting requirements, equipment needs, and potential costs before projects are too far advanced.

National Grid also highlighted customer-facing resources, including Connections 101 materials, electric and gas job aids, and guidance on environmental permitting.

Participants discussed the usefulness of providing earlier, non-binding cost information so developers can make more informed go/no-go decisions. Discussion also focused on grid-capacity maps, the 75% planning threshold, and the project queue. Participants expressed interest in greater clarity around how capacity is allocated, how projects move through the queue, and whether additional transparency could support coordination among applicants.

A related issue was long-term development planning. Participants noted that capacity available today may not still be available when a project comes online several years later. Utilities emphasized that formal work requests, studies, and design deposits can help establish a project in the queue, while acknowledging the challenge of balancing longer-term projects with customers that are ready to proceed sooner.

Utility Presentation #2- Integrating Load Connections and DER Interconnection Requests

The second presentation focused on improving coordination between electric load requests and DER interconnection applications.

Utilities noted that load and DER components are often developed by different firms and on different timelines, which can lead to inconsistent assumptions about a project's final load and operating profile. Participants generally agreed that earlier coordination among utilities, developers, and DER providers would help clarify project goals and improve planning.

The discussion highlighted the importance of understanding the project's intended operation early, including anticipated load, solar or storage resources, and whether the project is targeting net-zero or another performance goal.

Participants also discussed the potential to more formally link DER applications with associated load requests or work orders. Better integration could allow utilities to evaluate the combined or net project impact and potentially reduce unnecessary grid upgrades or additional study requirements.

Eversource also highlighted the use of PowerClerk, Account Executives, and automated review processes to help customers identify existing work orders, coordinate project phasing, and accelerate early-stage review.

A Verizon representative mentioned discrepancies between cable sizing and communication between devices for interconnection of DER.

Utility Presentation #3 and #4 – CIAC and Cost Transparency

The third and fourth presentations focused on CIAC terminology/definitions and improving customers' understanding of connection costs.

Utilities are developing clearer customer-facing materials that explain CIAC by customer and connection type. Cost components discussed included labor, materials, outside services, vehicles, revenue credits, carrying charges, private-property work, and previously paid design deposits.

Participants also asked how revenue credits are calculated and the utilities clarified that the underlying methodology is approved through the Department of Public Utilities, although implementation may differ by utility.

A broader theme was the need for earlier and more predictable cost information. Utilities are developing typical cost tables for common system expansions, with the longer-term goal of incorporating this information into automated estimating tools and capacity maps.

Participants also raised questions about whether upgrade costs can be allocated more proportionately when an infrastructure investment creates substantially more capacity than an individual customer requires.

Utility Presentation #5 – Passive House Case Studies

National Grid led a discussion around two passive house case studies in their service territories and how high-performance buildings should be represented in utility load forecasting and system planning.

Utilities like National Grid are seeing more Passive House projects enter the queue and are evaluating whether traditional load assumptions may overstate infrastructure needs.

Initial analysis suggests that fully electrified Passive House buildings can still experience winter peaks but generally have flatter and more energy-efficient load profiles than conventional gas-powered buildings.

Participants discussed the importance of improving load-estimation practices so utilities can adequately serve these projects without unnecessarily oversizing infrastructure. Tenant behavior and energy education were also identified as factors affecting actual building performance.

Utility Presentation #6 – Grid Capacity Tools and Load Forecasting

The sixth presentation focused on a new capacity-planning tool being developed with National Grid & Envelio, which is expected to provide information on both available load headroom and DER hosting capacity.

Participants discussed how customers should interpret available capacity and what happens when proposed projects exceed displayed thresholds. Utilities noted that the tools can support early planning, but projects exceeding certain limits may still require additional study or upgrades.

The conversation also returned to the challenge of securing capacity for multi-year development (across three, four, to even five years in the future). Utilities emphasized the importance of formalizing anticipated load and phasing through work requests, studies, or design deposits.

Participants noted that this creates a tension between developers seeking greater certainty for future projects and utilities needing to manage limited capacity fairly across a large volume of requests.

Presentation #7-8 – Flexible Interconnection (IX) & Heywood Hospital Case Study

The final presentations focused on Flexible Interconnection (IX) as an alternative pathway for DER projects that might otherwise face significant grid-upgrade requirements.

Utilities described flexible interconnection as moving away from a simple on/off model toward more dynamic operating limits, where charging or generation can be reduced only during periods of grid constraint.

Examples included dispatch-limiting schedules, DER gateways, “Standard Flex” for larger resources, and local power-control approaches for smaller projects.

Participants discussed the potential benefits of these approaches but also raised questions about the duration and predictability of operating restrictions. Particular interest centered on how customer operational risk is managed when projects may be curtailed in response to wider grid conditions.

Heywood Hospital was then brought forward to discuss their unique use-case, and how flexible interconnection enabled them to start their project years in advance of the anticipated start date, due to National Grid’s flexibility and transparency within the IX process.

Overall, the discussion reflected that flexible interconnection is still evolving, with some approaches that began as project-specific solutions now becoming more standardized utility offerings.

Final Takeaways

Across the presentations, participants generally aligned around the need for earlier utility engagement, clearer capacity and cost information, stronger coordination between load and DER processes, and continued development of customer-facing tools.

Key areas for continued discussion include queue transparency, long-term capacity certainty, cost allocation, integration of DER and load applications, and the allocation of operational risk under flexible interconnection.