



PUBLIC UTILITIES CODE AMENDMENTS

COUNCIL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

MAY 27, 2025

HISTORY

- Ordinance 1990-124

“Except on land where such permits have already been granted or in those districts classified as industrial, no conditional use permit shall be granted for electrical power transmission lines carrying more than 115,000 volts.”

- Ordinance 2004-041

Created stricter requirements for maximum wattage of transmission lines in addition to voltage requirements

CURRENT

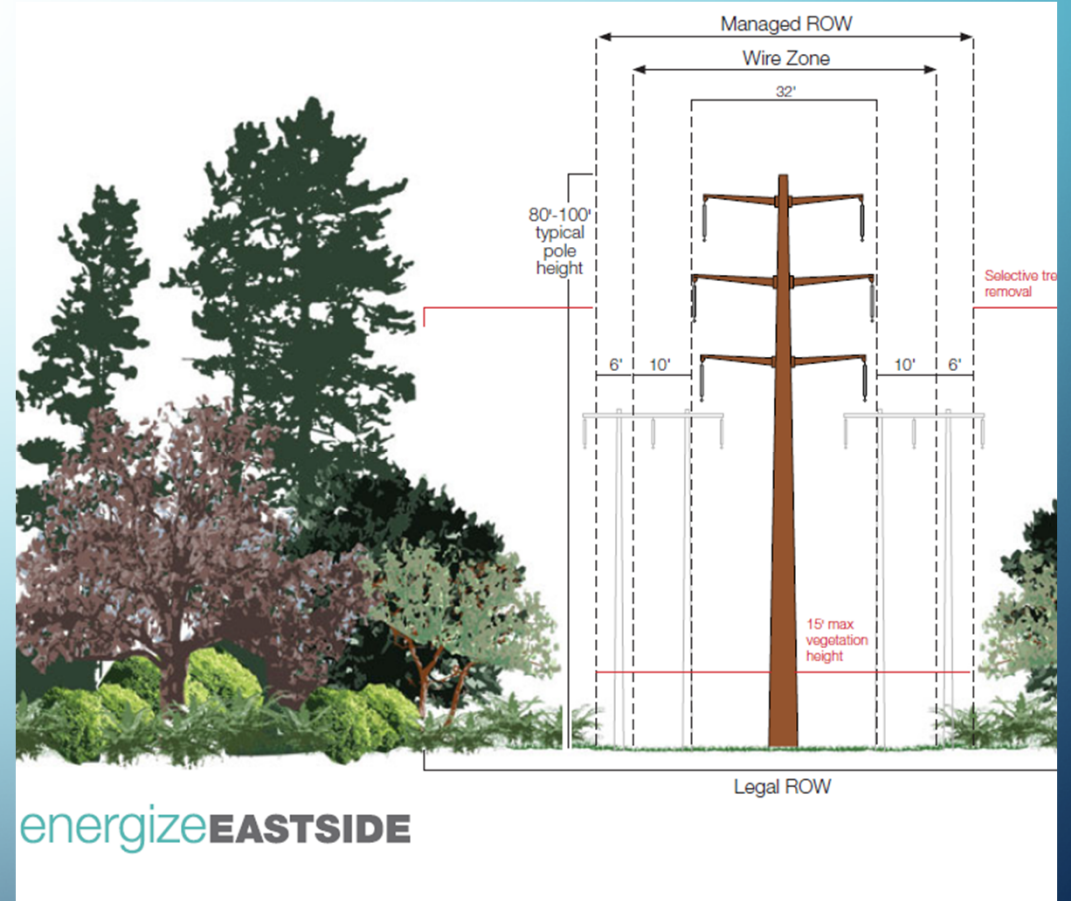
- Clean Energy Transformation
- In 2019, the legislature passed the Clean Energy Transformation Act (CETA)



Example 115 kV pole design

LONG TERM CHOICES

- Increase capacity and efficiency
- Ability to upgrade existing infrastructure
- To comply with CETA, upgraded lines are necessary



CODE CHANGE

- **20.82.030 Conditional uses.**
- The following uses shall require a conditional use permit. However, if such a project meets or exceeds the criteria of WCC 20.88 then it shall require a major project permit (...)

PROPOSED (9) Electrical substations and new electrical power lines operating at voltages greater than 55 kV (55,000 volts), and less than or equal to 230 kV (230,000 volts) except on land where such permits have already been granted or in those districts classified as industrial.

CONDITIONAL USE CRITERIA

- (a) Will be harmonious and in accordance with the general and specific objectives of Whatcom County's Comprehensive Plan, zoning regulations, and any other applicable regulations.
- (b) Will be designed, constructed, operated, and maintained so as to be harmonious and appropriate in appearance with the existing or intended character of the general vicinity, and that such use will not change the essential character of the same area.
- (c) If located in a rural area (as designated in the Comprehensive Plan), will be consistent with rural land use policies as designated in the rural lands element of the Comprehensive Plan.

CONDITIONAL USE CRITERIA, CONT.

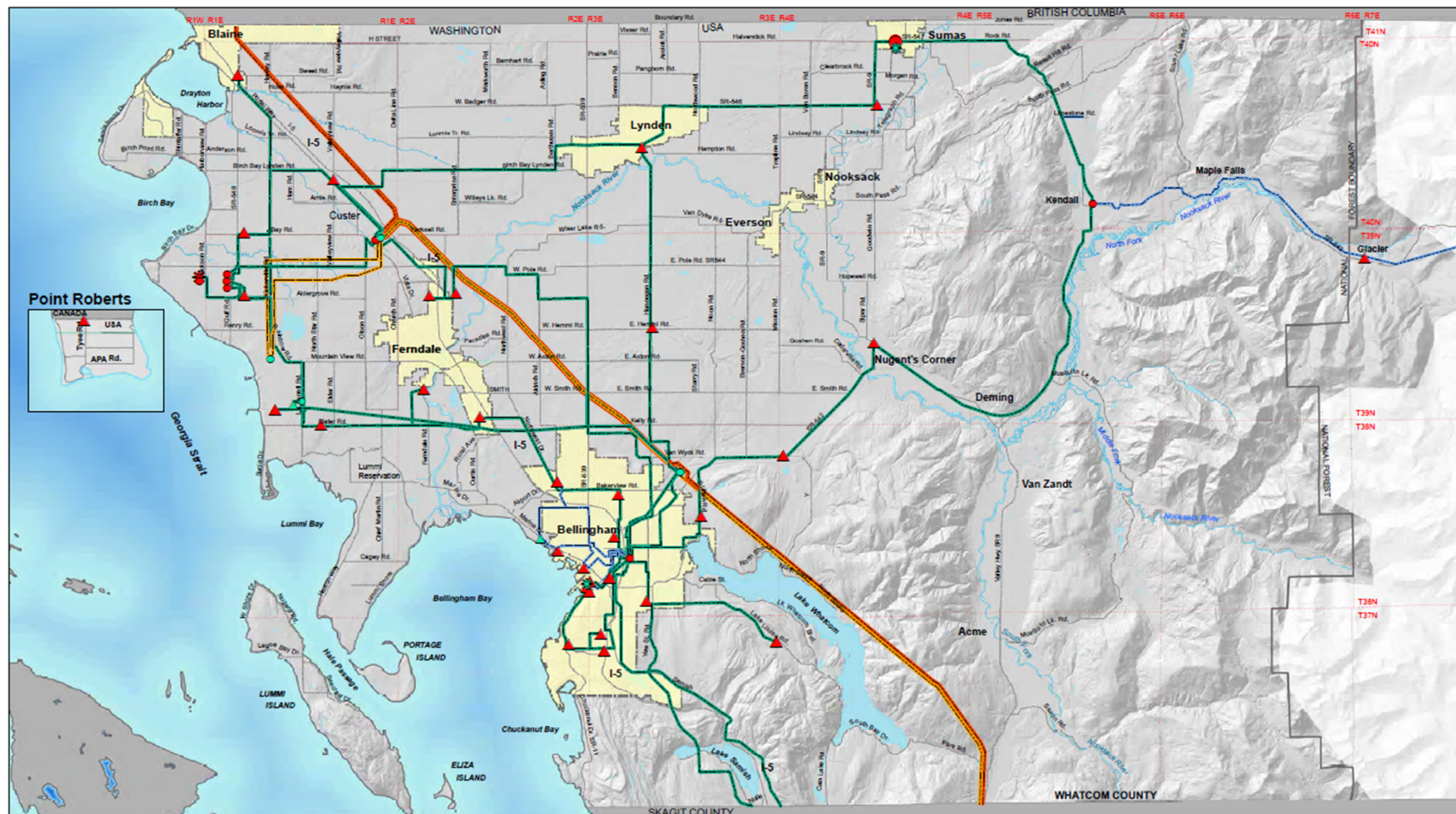
- (d) Will not be hazardous or disturbing to existing or future neighboring uses.
- (e) Will be serviced adequately by necessary public facilities such as highways, streets, police and fire protection, drainage structures, refuse disposal, water, sewers, and schools; or that the persons or agencies responsible for the establishment of the proposed use shall be able to provide adequately any such services.

CONDITIONAL USE CRITERIA, CONT.

- (f) Will not create excessive additional requirements at public cost for public facilities and services, and will not be detrimental to the economic welfare of the community.
- (g) Will not involve uses, activities, processes, materials, equipment, and conditions of operation that will be detrimental to any persons, property, or the general welfare by reasons of excessive production of traffic, noise, smoke, fumes, glare or odors.

Whatcom County | Comprehensive Plan

Map 5-1 Power Transmission & Generation Facilities



Source:
-Whatcom County GIS 2015 (base)
-PSE 2003

USE OF WHATCOM COUNTY'S GIS DATA IMPLIES THE USER'S AGREEMENT WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT:
Whatcom County Disclaims any warranty of merchantability or warranty of fitness of this map for any particular purpose, either express or implied. No representation or warranty is made concerning the accuracy, currency, completeness or quality of data depicted on this map. Any user of this map assumes all responsibility for use thereof, and further agrees to hold Whatcom County harmless from and against any damage, loss, or liability arising from any use of this map.

0 0.75 1.5 3 4.5 6 Miles

Vegetation Management Standards

230 kV transmission lines

Pole Structure Type: C-1B

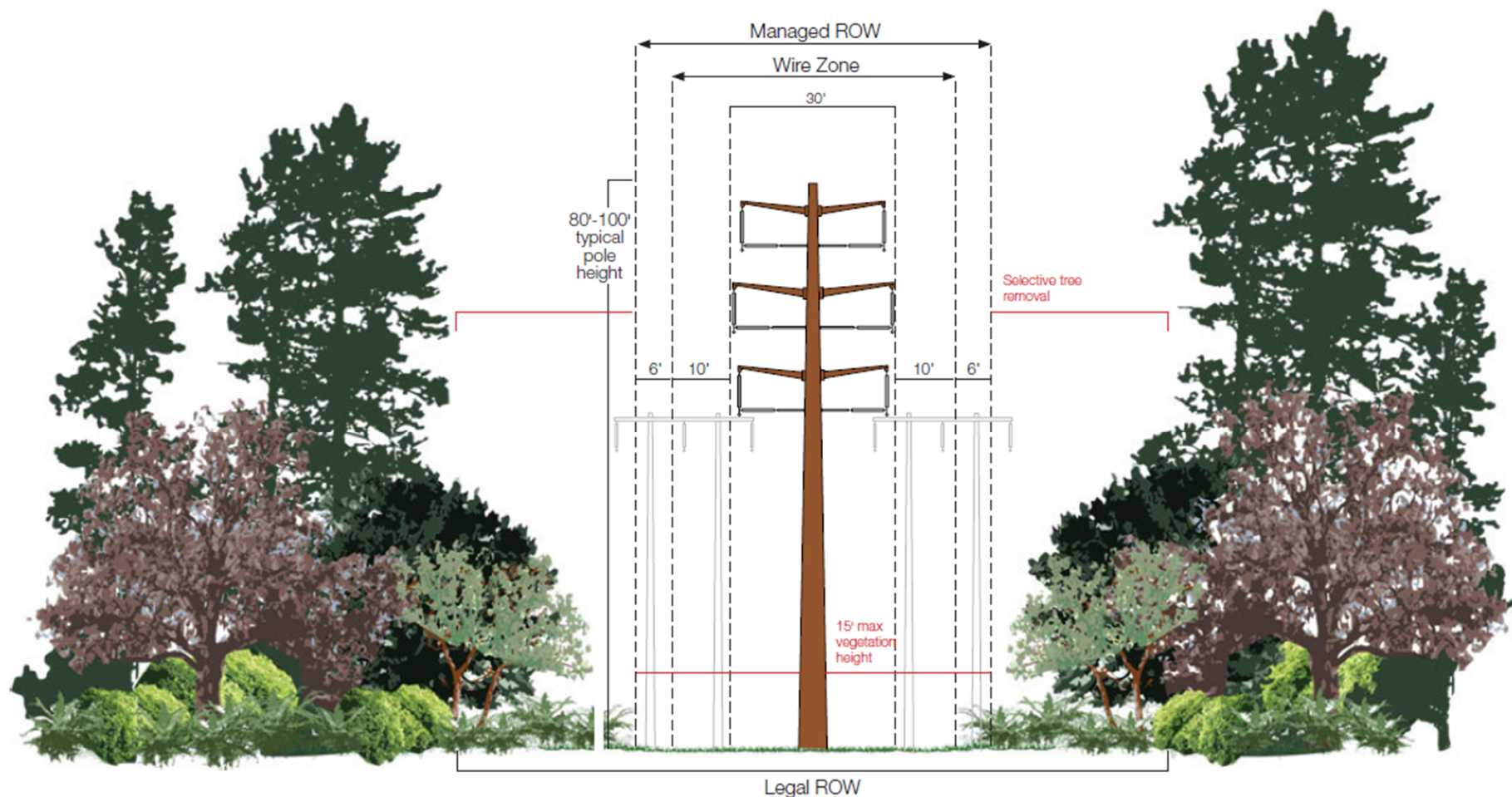
NOTE: Existing poles are shown in gray for reference.

PSE's 230 kV transmission vegetation management standards generally requires removing trees located in the wire zone that have a mature height of more than 15 feet.

Wire Zone: Section of a utility transmission right of way extending to 10 feet from the outside transmission wire(s). Vegetation with a mature height of 15 feet or less is allowed in this zone.

Managed Right of Way (ROW): The section of a transmission right of way that extends roughly 16 feet from the outside transmission wire(s). Vegetation with a mature height of 15 feet or less is allowed in this zone.

Legal Right of Way (ROW): The full width of the easement. Maximum height of mature vegetation between the Managed ROW and Legal ROW is dependent upon tree species, tree health, and distance from the wires.



230 kV transmission lines

Pole Structure Type: C-16

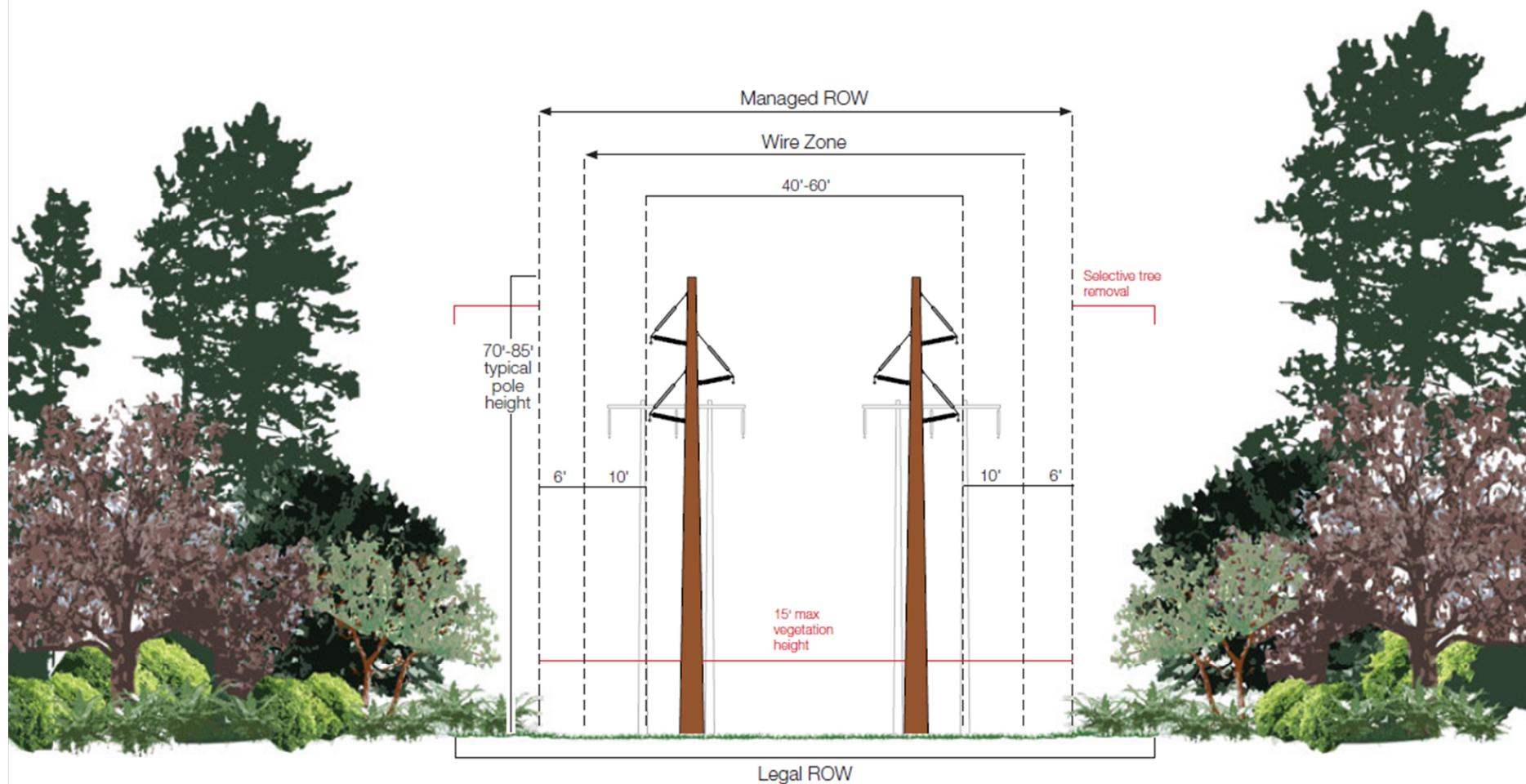
NOTE: Existing poles are shown in gray for reference.

PSE's 230 kV transmission vegetation management standards generally requires removing trees located in the wire zone that have a mature height of more than 15 feet.

Wire Zone: Section of a utility transmission right of way extending to 10 feet from the outside transmission wire(s). Vegetation with a mature height of 15 feet or less is allowed in this zone.

Managed Right of Way (ROW): The section of a transmission right of way that extends roughly 16 feet from the outside transmission wire(s). Vegetation with a mature height of 15 feet or less is allowed in this zone.

Legal Right of Way (ROW): The full width of the easement. Maximum height of mature vegetation between the Managed ROW and Legal ROW is dependent upon tree species, tree health, and distance from the wires.



Vegetation Management Standards

230 kV transmission lines

Pole Structure Type: C-2

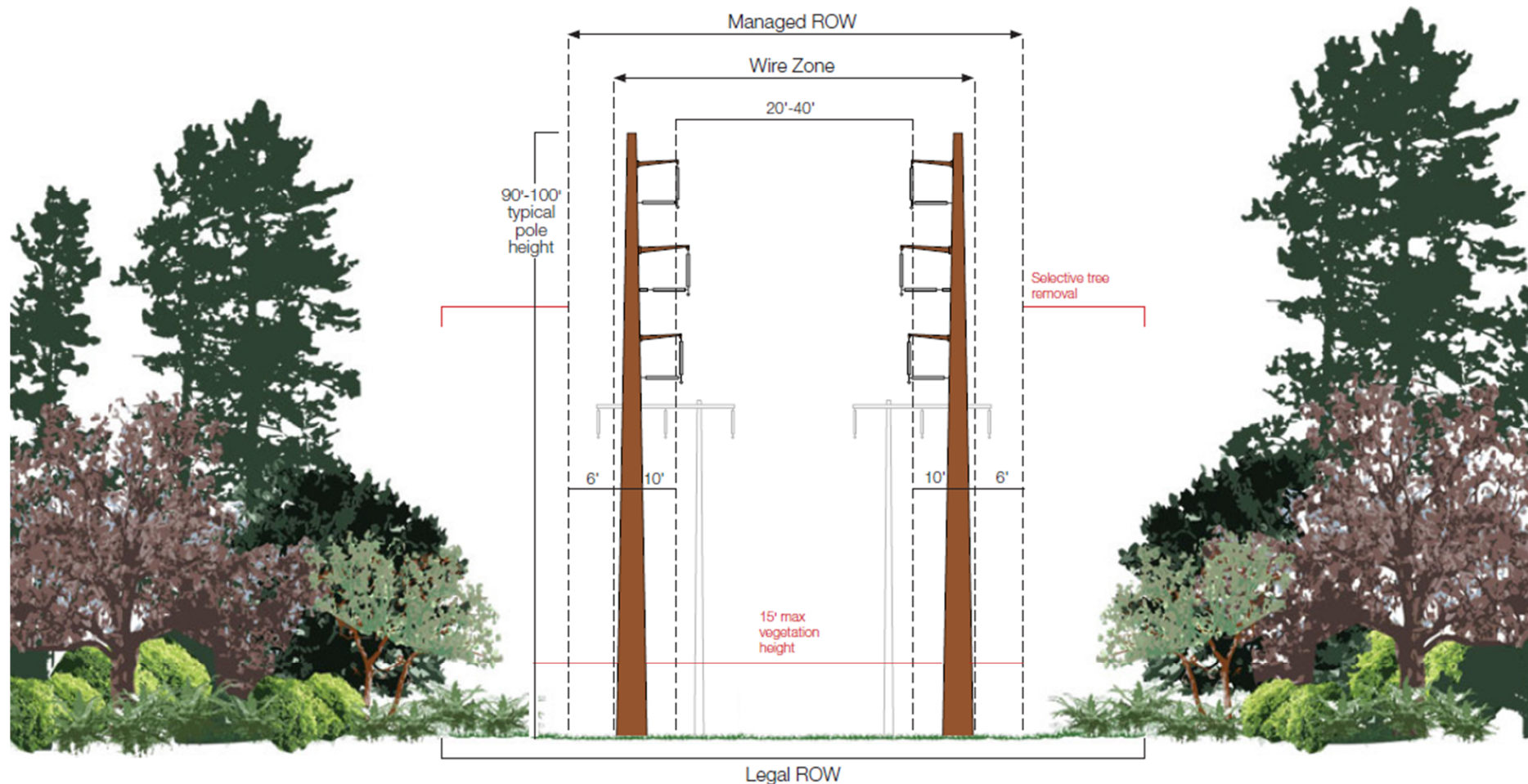
NOTE: Existing poles are shown in gray for reference.

PSE's 230 kV transmission vegetation management standards generally requires removing trees located in the wire zone that have a mature height of more than 15 feet.

Wire Zone: Section of a utility transmission right of way extending to 10 feet from the outside transmission wire(s). Vegetation with a mature height of 15 feet or less is allowed in this zone.

Managed Right of Way (ROW): The section of a transmission right of way that extends roughly 16 feet from the outside transmission wire(s). Vegetation with a mature height of 15 feet or less is allowed in this zone.

Legal Right of Way (ROW): The full width of the easement. Maximum height of mature vegetation between the Managed ROW and Legal ROW is dependent upon tree species, tree health, and distance from the wires.



Vegetation Management Standards

230 kV transmission lines

Pole Structure Type: C-18

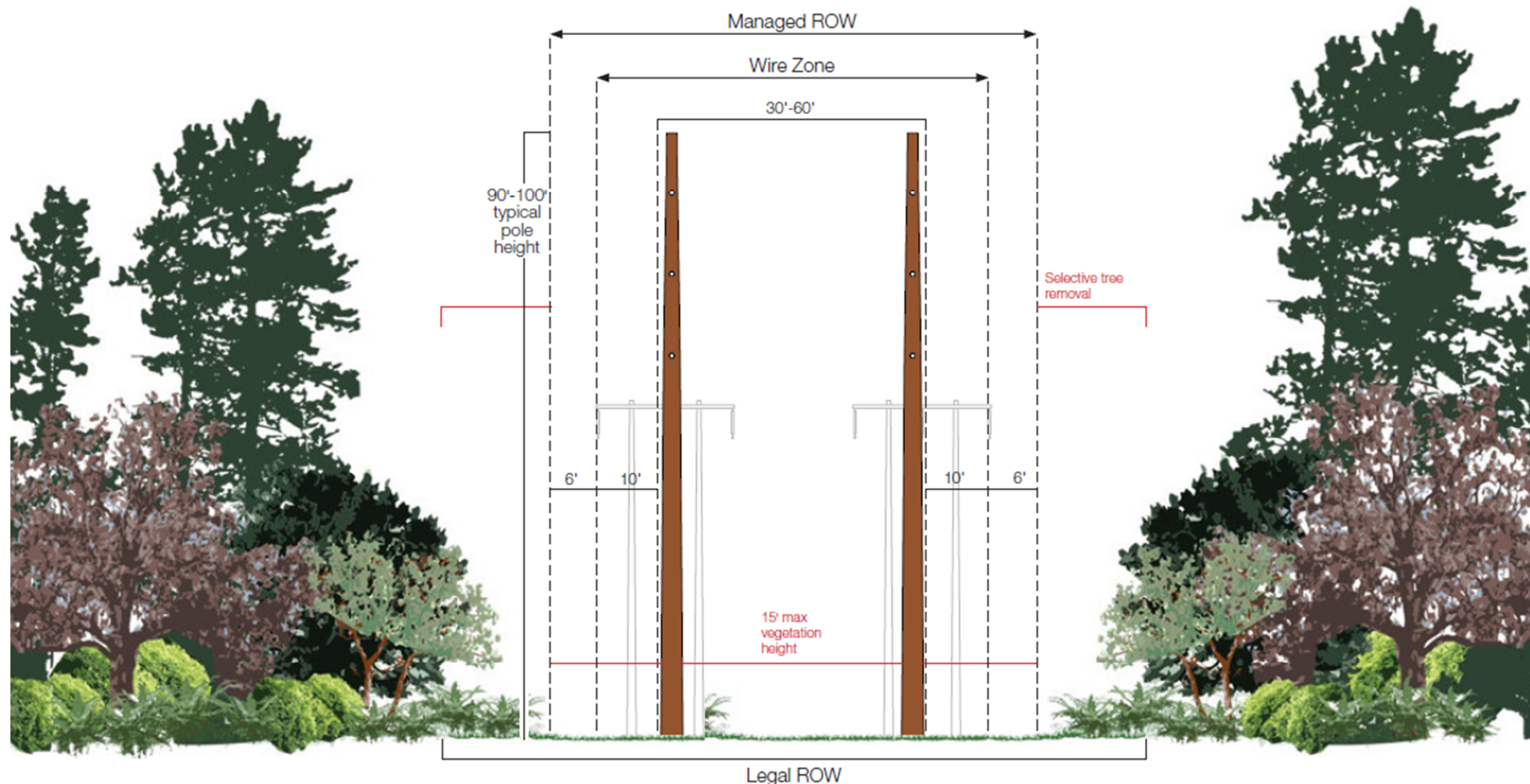
NOTE: Existing poles are shown in gray for reference.

PSE's 230 kV transmission vegetation management standards generally requires removing trees located in the wire zone that have a mature height of more than 15 feet.

Wire Zone: Section of a utility transmission right of way extending to 10 feet from the outside transmission wire(s). Vegetation with a mature height of 15 feet or less is allowed in this zone.

Managed Right of Way (ROW): The section of a transmission right of way that extends roughly 16 feet from the outside transmission wire(s). Vegetation with a mature height of 15 feet or less is allowed in this zone.

Legal Right of Way (ROW): The full width of the easement. Maximum height of mature vegetation between the Managed ROW and Legal ROW is dependent upon tree species, tree health, and distance from the wires.



Vegetation Management Standards

230 kV transmission lines

Pole Structure Type: C-17

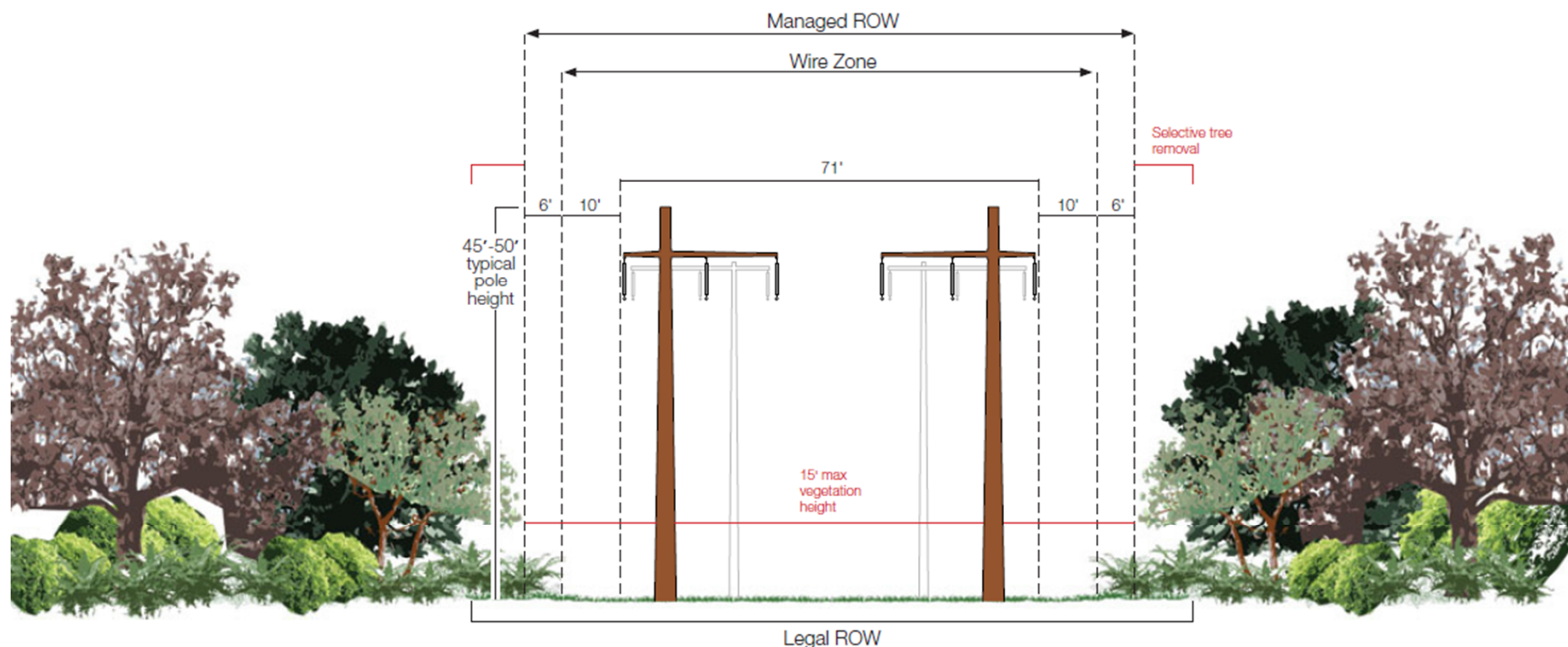
NOTE: Existing poles are shown in gray for reference. If the Managed ROW exceeds the Legal ROW, then vegetation management will be limited to the Legal ROW.

PSE's 230 kV transmission vegetation management standards generally requires removing trees located in the wire zone that have a mature height of more than 15 feet.

Wire Zone: Section of a utility transmission right of way extending to 10 feet from the outside transmission wire(s). Vegetation with a mature height of 15 feet or less is allowed in this zone.

Managed Right of Way (ROW): The section of a transmission right of way that extends roughly 16 feet from the outside transmission wire(s). Vegetation with a mature height of 15 feet or less is allowed in this zone.

Legal Right of Way (ROW): The full width of the easement. Maximum height of mature vegetation between the Managed ROW and Legal ROW is dependent upon tree species, tree health, and distance from the wires.



An abstract graphic on the left side of the slide, consisting of a network of light blue lines and small circles, resembling a circuit board or a neural network, set against a dark blue background.

QUESTIONS

CURRENT

- PSE is a vertically integrated monopoly that is responsible for the generation, transmission, and distribution of energy within its region
- PSE owns and operates the transmission line infrastructure in their region, including all of Whatcom County
- PSE's transmission business operates independently from its generation/distribution business