

# Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives  
serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

## Somerset REC

223 Industrial Park Road  
Somerset, PA 15501  
814-445-4106  
800-443-4255

Email: [e-mail@somersetrec.com](mailto:e-mail@somersetrec.com)  
Website: [www.somersetrec.com](http://www.somersetrec.com)

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### Office Hours

Monday through Friday  
7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

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814-445-4106  
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## From the General Manager



# Congestion on the electric grid

By Ruston Ogburn

LAST month I started a series of articles to provide an update on the rapid changes in the electric industry in the past several years surrounding the retirement of electric generators and the effects new generation will have on the electric grid. This article looks more closely at congestion on the electric grid.

Congestion is similar to a traffic jam. Traffic depends on where people are, where they want to go, and the size of the roads to get them there. Congestion on the electric grid depends on where the generators are, where the electricity needs to go (to the high demand areas), and the size of the electric lines to get it there.

A major portion of the generation retirements occurred in the “coal country” of western Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia and Kentucky. These rural areas had a small portion of electric demand, so large transmission lines connected these generators to load centers across the eastern U.S. These lines have limits to how much power can flow through them. When those limits are reached, we say the lines are congested — it’s similar to a traffic jam. Historically, congestion on these lines would limit the amount of low-cost, coal-fired power that could be transferred during peak electricity use. When this happens, more expensive generation closer to the load centers needs to be used, raising the cost to the consumer.

However, with the retirement of these coal generators and the addition of new, low-cost, natural gas generators, many of which are closer to load centers, much of this congestion has

been reduced. This ultimately benefits the end consumer by lowering the generation costs associated with your electric bill.

Not all transmission congestion has gone away. Electricity markets encourage the lowest cost generation to meet the demands of consumers by using the transmission system in the most efficient way. By design, this often leads to congestion. However, the “bottle-necks” in the system are less limiting, so low-cost generation can be run a larger percentage of time.

In addition, most wind units are located in the rural areas in the center of the country. Moving wind from the Midwest to eastern cities requires transmission through many potential bottlenecks leading to congestion and the related costs.

The bottom line is that the shifting generator patterns that have unfolded over the past few years significantly changed congestion on the transmission system — especially in the eastern U.S. As the end consumer of electricity, you will benefit from most, but not all, of these changes. I feel it is important to help you understand these costs and benefits and how we will all be impacted by our changing electric grid.

My upcoming articles will focus on the flexibility of generators to respond to system changes and the availability of generators to meet system demands. I hope this series of articles provides some insight for you but, as always, if you have thoughts or question on this or anything else, please stop by or give me a call. 

# Youth Tour – what a week!

By Kristi Smith, *Director of Marketing and Member Services*

THE WEEK of the Rural Electric Youth Tour is a fully encompassing week that provides students and chaperones an opportunity to take in all that Washington, D.C., has to offer.

The trip provides so many unique educational opportunities. Students learn respect at sites like the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and memorials such as Arlington National Cemetery and the Pentagon Memorial. Stops at the Newseum, Washington National Zoo, Madame Tussauds Wax Museum and the dinner cruise give students an opportunity to have fun. On Capitol Hill, there's a unique opportunity for students to meet with lawmakers and get a taste of democracy.

Just attending a trip away from home in D.C. requires many of these teenagers to step out of their comfort zones, meet new people and experience new things. It was a privilege to go on this trip and experience D.C. firsthand with such a great group of students from our area.

Here's what some of our students had to say about the trip:



**NEWSEUM:** Somerset students take pause while checking out one of the 20 photographs from the "The Marines and Tet" exhibit at the Newseum. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Tet Offensive, a major turning point in the Vietnam War.



**SUNSET PARADE:** Somerset students along with hundreds of other spectators enjoy the Marine Barracks Washington, D.C., Sunset Parade, held this year in front of the Lincoln Memorial due to ongoing construction at the Marine Corps War Memorial.

**Antonio Campitell –**

"Youth Tour was one of the most moving experiences of my entire life. Each and every day featured handfuls of fun places to visit, as well as tons of wonderful food. However, my favorite part of the trip was waking up every day and meeting so many new people from all over my county, the state of Pennsylvania, and even the nation. I would highly encourage anybody eligible to attend this trip to do so as you will have so much fun and vastly expand your horizons. Trust me, if you had as much fun as I did, you will never want to go back home."

**Morgan Weaver –**

"My favorite parts of the week were the Iwo Jima Sunset Parade, seeing the monuments at dusk and the dinner cruise. I had never experienced those things before, and I'm very glad I had the opportunity to do so. I'm also very thankful to have made some of the most amazing friends during the trip."

**Brady Doyle –**

"The tour gave me an incredible amount of insight and personal connection to U.S. history, while at the same time allowing me to make friends (and trade pins) with peo-

ple from across the country. My favorite exhibit was the Udvar-Hazy Center, but I think that meeting a ton of new people from all over the country beats even the space center by miles.”

**MaKayla Morocco –**

“It was one of the best experiences of my life. I left that trip with brand new friends that I will have forever. These people are some of the greatest I’ve ever met, and I can’t wait to see them again with one of our plans for a get-together.”

**Ashley Byer –**

“Youth Tour truly was an experience I’ll never forget. I couldn’t be more grateful for it. Not only was I able to become friends with so many incredible people, but I really enjoyed all that the city had to offer. I’ve always had an interest in history so seeing all the monuments was fascinating, but my favorite part was visiting the Newseum due to my



**HOLOCAUST MUSEUM:** Students pose for a group photo before entering the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. From left, front row: Madison Trent, Madison Shroyer, Allison Fidler, Natalie King, MaKayla Morocco, Ashley Byer, Morgan Weaver and Mattison Lyons. Back row from left: Eric Marker, Gabe Hay, Brody Hillegas, Antonio Campitell, Chris Koontz and Brady Doyle.

passion for history and journalism.”

**Brody Hillegas –**

“My favorite part of the trip was probably when we went to the zoo. I liked seeing the pandas and watching the gorillas run around. One gorilla came up and banged on the glass right in front of me. I also really enjoyed the space museum and getting to see the planes and space shuttle. I had a great time on the trip!”

of fun.”

**Natalie King –**

“My favorite part of the trip was the second full day, Tuesday. Seeing the changing of the guard at Arlington National Cemetery was amazing, as was the Newseum and the Sunset Parade. We got to finish it all up with a nighttime tour of the monuments, which also was awesome. The whole trip was one of the best experiences of my life.” ☀

**Allison Fidler –**

“Attending the Rural Electric Youth Tour has been an experience of a lifetime; seeing all that Washington, D.C., has to offer was great, and the people on the trip made it even better.”

**Madison Trent –**

“The Rural Electric Youth Tour was an experience I will never forget. I enjoyed touring Washington, D.C., while making new friends, seeing new sights and having a blast

**UTILITY POLES ARE NOT BULLETIN BOARDS**

**Think before you post that sign!**

Staples, nails and tacks used to hang signs and fliers create dangerous obstacles for electric lineworkers.

*Their jobs are dangerous enough – help us keep them safe!*

## Summer interns



**INTERNS AT SREC:** Somerset REC is a strong supporter of local students. Every summer, Somerset REC hires office interns. This past summer, the college students assisted with painting, information technology support, data entry and general tasks. Recent interns are, from left: Ryan Miller, Marissa Schrock and Creed Smith.



**OPERATIONS SUMMER HELP:** Students working in outside operations at Somerset REC during the summer were, from left: Russell Countryman, Drew Boyer, Sam Marker and Carter Engleka. Students have been hired for decades to assist with outside operations. They assist with right-of-way maintenance, chipping brush, flagging and helping line crews.



**UPJ STEM CAMP:** Somerset REC General Manager Rus Ogburn presents "Electric City" to students at a summer STEM camp at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown in July. The students were educated about the dangers of electricity and how to be safe around downed power lines.