**ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY**

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**Resolution No. 2025.12/42**
**Authorization for the Design and Construction of GE Road Facility Solar Energy System**

**Resolution**

Whereas, the Board of Trustees of Illinois State University has the authority to acquire real property for university use; and

Whereas, Illinois State University entered an agreement to purchase such a strategic property located at 1709 and 1711 General Electric Road in Bloomington, Illinois. The purchase of 1709 General Electric Road property in 2024 and the agreement to close the sale on the property on 1711 General Electric Road in December 2026 was approved by the board on October 11, 2024; and

Whereas, the University desires to locate the new College of Engineering and additional office and academic spaces at the property; and

Whereas, the University conducted a competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process in 2024 and selected Siemens Industry, Inc. as its strategic partner in an Energy Service Company (ESCO) engagement; and

Whereas, Siemens conducted a feasibility study for a solar project at the property designed to meet approximately 85% of the electric needs of the entire property; and

Whereas, the University will redirect annual utility expenditures to pay for the project and save an estimated $6.5 million in utility costs over the next 20 years with debt retired through the application of tax credits and utility savings; and

Therefore, be it resolved that the Board of Trustees authorizes the University to enter into an agreement with Siemens Industry, Inc. to design and construct the solar system to generate an estimated annual 3.2 MW of electricity, with a cost not to exceed $16.5 million. Further, the Board authorizes the Vice President for Finance and Planning to borrow the needed funds to complete the project.

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| Board Action on: | | Postpone: | |
| Motion by: | | Amend: | |
| Second by: | | Disapprove: | |
| Vote: | Yeas: ____ Nays: ____ | Approve: | |

ATTEST: Board Action, December 12, 2025

Secretary / Chairperson

**Board of Trustees**
**Illinois State University**
**Authorization for the Design and Construction of GE Road Facility Solar Energy System**

## Executive Summary

The development of Illinois State University's new site on GE Road presents an opportunity to design an academic facility that is innovative, sustainable, and cost-effective. By integrating a large-scale solar energy system into the new campus site, the University can reduce long-term operating costs, provide hands-on learning opportunities for engineering students, and position ISU as a leader in renewable energy and sustainability.

## Background

Illinois State University established the College of Engineering at the GE Road site to expand academic opportunities in mechanical, electrical, and general engineering. This new facility is designed to be a hub for technological advancement, preparing students for careers in high-demand fields that shape Illinois' workforce and economy. In addition to the College of Engineering, other academic areas and administrative functions will be housed at the location.

The new location will include state-of-the-art laboratories, classrooms, and collaborative research spaces. By incorporating a large-scale solar energy project into the GE Road site, Illinois State can:

- Reduce long-term operating costs, protecting future budgets from utility volatility;
- Align the College of Engineering with students' and industry expectations around sustainability, technology integration, and environmental responsibility; and
- Position the new campus as a living laboratory where students can learn directly from on-site renewable energy systems.

Federal and state policy incentives create a favorable environment for renewable energy adoption, thereby improving project economics. The federal Inflation Reduction Act (2022) includes provisions that allow public universities to access a 30% lump sum direct payment of the investment. The Illinois Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (2021) strengthens state support for clean energy with provisions that require Ameren to offer a lump sum rebate for eligible renewable energy projects. The combination of these incentives covers approximately 20% of the total project cost. Solar technology costs have also declined dramatically over the last two decades, making a project of this scale both financially prudent and educationally transformative. The state's incentive through the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act will remain active until at least 2045. However, recent federal legislation mandates that eligibility for federal investment tax credit incentives for solar energy be sunset by July 4, 2026, requiring construction to commence by that date. To receive the maximum incentives, action must be taken immediately.

## Justification

1. Fiscal Responsibility
    - A solar energy system sized to the GE Road location could offset 80-90% of its expected electricity consumption, reducing annual operating costs.
    - Federal and state incentives will minimize upfront costs and improve the long-term return on investment,
    - Lower utility costs free University resources for teaching, research, and student support.

2. Academic Integration
    - The solar array will serve as a living laboratory for engineering students, offering direct experience with renewable energy design, building and grid integration, and performance monitoring.
    - Faculty can incorporate real-time data from the system into research and coursework, strengthening ISU's engineering curriculum and research profile.

3. Sustainability Leadership
    - Embedding renewable energy into the GE Road site demonstrates ISU's leadership in sustainable campus design.
    - This project reinforces ISU's commitment to climate action and positions the College of Engineering as a model of environmentally responsible higher education infrastructure in Illinois and beyond.

4. Community and Industry Impact
    - A highly visible solar array showcases ISU's innovation to prospective students, employers, research partners and the community.
    - Partnerships with local industries and utilities may emerge as the project supports the region's transition to a clean energy economy.

**Project Plan**

*Scope & Scale*
- Develop a solar energy system of approximately 3,265 kW(DC) tailored to meet the electricity demands of the GE Road campus.
- Install on-site solar, utilizing rooftops, open land, and/or parking structures.

*Financing Options*
- Evaluate financing models.
- Implement other internal energy performance measures within the buildings to offset costs.
- Leverage federal tax credits, state renewable energy credits, and utility rebates to offset project costs.

*Current Project Status/Schedule*
Siemens Industry, Inc. was awarded an energy performance contract in 2024 under a public Qualifications-Based Selection (QBS) process. Siemens was hired in accordance with the State of Illinois procurement requirements to perform preliminary investigations of projects that would result in guaranteed energy savings. Siemens' findings indicated the GE Road facility was a suitable site for solar energy system integration, as well as other energy performance items. ISU authorized an investment grade audit in July 2025 for Siemens to develop a complete design including construction documents and a turn-key budget.

**Source of Funding**

General Revenue Funds