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Synchronizing the Surge: Leveraging SAP IS-U to Architect Grid-Aware Billing for the AI Era

Vikas Reddy Vallakonda

Independent Researcher, USA. ORCID ID: 0009-0001-5324-4047

Abstract
Artificial intelligence (AI) infrastructure and electric vehicle (EV) charging networks are changing electricity demand patterns faster than the billing systems built to invoice them. Utility revenue-management platforms, including SAP Industry Solution for Utilities (IS-U) and the Convergent Charging and Convergent Invoicing components delivered through SAP Billing and Revenue Innovation Management (BRIM), were architected for predictable consumption and monthly settlement, not for grid conditions that shift within minutes. This article argues that the binding constraint on coordinating AI-era demand with grid conditions is not primarily the availability of Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) or Advanced Distribution Management System (ADMS) data, but the capacity of the rating and settlement layer to consume that data operationally. Drawing on SAP revenue-management architecture together with the demand-response and dynamic-pricing literature, the discussion maps rate determination, invoicing, and Financial Contract Accounting (FI-CA) settlement functions onto the specific responsibilities grid-aware billing requires: tiered signal delivery, dynamic security deposits for high-value accounts, and curtailment-aware dunning. The analysis also identifies where this repositioning is contestable and where progress depends on regulatory and organizational change rather than software configuration alone.

Keywords: SAP IS-U; Convergent Charging; FI-CA; grid-aware billing; demand response; real-time pricing; revenue management systems

1. Introduction

Global electricity demand from data centers reached approximately 415 terawatt-hours in 2024, near 1.5% of global electricity consumption, after expanding at roughly 12% annually over the preceding five years [1]. The same assessment projects consumption approaching 945 terawatt-hours by 2030, with electricity use in accelerated servers built for AI workloads growing at approximately 30% per year against roughly 9% per year for conventional servers [1]. Demand accelerated further in 2025, when data-center electricity use climbed 17% against 3% growth in global electricity demand overall [2]. Electric vehicle charging compounds this shift with load that concentrates geographically and temporally rather than distributing evenly across a service territory.

Both categories of load share a property that matters more to a utility's revenue-management architecture than to its generation planners: substantial flexibility. Demand response research has long established that a meaningful share of electricity consumption can be rescheduled, deferred, or curtailed in response to price or reliability signals, provided the incentive structure and communication channel exist to make rescheduling worthwhile [3], [4], [5]. AI training clusters can frequently delay non-urgent jobs by hours; EV fleet depots can often shift charging windows without disrupting vehicle availability. This flexibility is the resource demand-response programs were designed to unlock.

What has received comparatively little attention is the software layer responsible for translating a grid condition into a price the customer actually sees and pays. Utility billing platforms, including SAP Industry Solution for Utilities (IS-U) and the Convergent Charging and Convergent Invoicing components delivered through SAP Billing and Revenue Innovation Management (BRIM), were built around a Meter-to-Cash model: metered consumption is read, rated against a tariff, and invoiced on a periodic cycle measured in weeks. That architecture served industrial and residential customers whose consumption patterns changed slowly. It is a poor match for a data-center account whose load can shift by tens of megawatts within an hour, or an EV depot whose charging pattern is itself the variable a demand-response program is trying to influence.

This article treats that mismatch as an architectural problem rather than a purely technical one. It argues that redesigning the rating and settlement layer, not merely deploying more Advanced Metering Infrastructure or Advanced Distribution Management System capability, is the more binding constraint on whether grid-aware pricing reaches AI and EV operators in a form they can act on. The discussion makes four contributions: it maps existing SAP revenue-management constructs, contract accounts, rate determination, Convergent Charging, and Financial Contract Accounting, onto the specific responsibilities grid-aware billing requires; it identifies where latency and settlement-cadence requirements diverge from the platform's historical defaults; it extends the platform's existing credit-management capability to the volatility that high-value AI and EV accounts introduce; and it distinguishes which parts of this redesign are software-configuration questions from which depend on regulatory or organizational change. Section 2 reviews the demand-response and dynamic-pricing literature that motivates the argument. Section 3 describes the review methodology. Sections 4 through 7 present the architectural mapping. Section 8 discusses limitations and implementation patterns, and Section 9 concludes.

2. Background: Demand Flexibility, Real-Time Pricing, and the Limits of Meter-to-Cash

Demand response has been studied as a coordination mechanism between utilities and consumers for over a decade, with surveys categorizing programs by incentive structure, mathematical formulation, and market design [3]. Game-theoretic treatments model the interaction between multiple providers and a large population of consumers as a Stackelberg game, in which providers set prices to maximize profit and consumers respond by adjusting consumption, with equilibrium outcomes that depend on the number of competing providers [4]. These models generally assume that a pricing signal, once set, reaches the consumer and is acted upon. That assumption is where the literature's coverage thins. Foundational smart-grid surveys describe the sensing, communication, and protection layers required to modernize the grid in detail, positioning Advanced Metering Infrastructure as a core enabling technology [5], but they treat the customer-facing settlement system mostly as a downstream consumer of grid data rather than as an active participant whose own architecture shapes the outcome.

Empirical evidence on AMI deployment suggests the gap is not merely theoretical. In the United States, AMI penetration rose from roughly 1.7% of customers in 2007 to 47% by the end of 2016 [7], yet a ten-percentage-point increase in smart-meter penetration was associated with only a 0.56 percentage-point increase in customer participation in dynamic-pricing programs over the same period [7]. Metering coverage did not translate proportionally into pricing participation. A separate analysis of grid charge design found that the choice of tariff and charge structure, rather than metering availability alone, had a first-order effect on adoption: a capacity-subscription grid charge design increased the share of households opting into a dynamic tariff to as much as 74%, compared with 67% under a conventional volumetric charge, while also reducing grid reinforcement costs by roughly 37% in modeled rural low-voltage networks [8]. Table 1 summarizes these findings.

Table 1: Selected demand-response and dynamic-pricing findings relevant to billing-platform design [7, 8]

Finding	Value	Source
U.S. AMI penetration, 2007	~1.7% of customers	[7]
U.S. AMI penetration, 2016	~47% of customers	[7]
Dynamic-pricing participation increase per 10-point AMI increase	~0.56 percentage points	[7]
Dynamic-tariff adoption under capacity-subscription grid charge	up to 74% of households	[8]
Dynamic-tariff adoption under volumetric grid charge	~67% of households	[8]
Grid reinforcement cost reduction, rural low-voltage networks	~37%	[8]

Interoperability standards developed under the U.S. Energy Independence and Security Act direct that demand-response signals remain consistent as they flow from grid management, through aggregators, to customer premises, because inconsistent signal formats undermine the kind of automated response this article is concerned with [6]. Read together, this body of work suggests that a utility's ability to generate a correct price is not the scarce resource; its ability to deliver that price through a settlement architecture capable of acting on it, consistently and at the cadence the underlying flexibility requires, is.

3. Methodology

This article applies an architectural-review method rather than a controlled empirical study. The objective is to characterize how an existing class of enterprise software, utility revenue-management platforms built on SAP IS-U, Convergent Charging, Convergent Invoicing, and Financial Contract Accounting, would need to be reconfigured to support grid-aware billing, drawing on published demand-response and metering research to establish what grid-aware operation requires in practice.

The review proceeded in two stages. First, peer-reviewed literature on demand response, dynamic pricing, Advanced Metering Infrastructure, and electric-vehicle grid integration was reviewed to establish the empirical and theoretical requirements a billing platform would need to satisfy. Second, these requirements were mapped against the functional components of SAP revenue-management architecture, drawing on the author's implementation experience across multiple SAP IS-U, Convergent Charging, Convergent Invoicing, and Financial Contract Accounting programs, to identify where existing constructs already support grid-aware behavior and where redesign is required.

The method has a clear limitation: it does not include a deployed implementation or measured production data from a grid-aware billing rollout, because no such deployment has been publicly documented at the level of specificity this article addresses. The architectural mapping therefore represents a design synthesis rather than a validated result, and Section 8 returns to this limitation in more detail.

4. From Meter-to-Cash to Grid-to-Compute: Repositioning the Billing Platform

SAP IS-U has historically functioned as a Meter-to-Cash platform: it manages customer contracts, records meter readings, calculates bills against a tariff, and drives invoicing and collections through Financial Contract Accounting. Each of these functions assumes that the interval between a consumption event and its financial consequence can be measured in days or weeks. Grid-aware billing does not eliminate any of these functions; it compresses the interval between them and adds a new input, a grid-condition signal, to the rating calculation itself.

Reframed this way, the contract account remains the anchor for a customer's commercial relationship, but the rate determination step must accept a price component that changes more often than the billing cycle it eventually settles into. Convergent Charging, the BRIM component responsible for calculating charges against configurable rate plans and price plans, already supports usage-based and event-driven charging models for telecommunications and subscription businesses; the same billable-item and consumption-item class structures that price a data overage or an API call can price a kilowatt-hour against a real-time signal rather than a flat tariff. Convergent Invoicing then aggregates these charges into a customer-facing bill, and Financial Contract Accounting settles the resulting receivable. Table 2 maps this restated responsibility set against the platform components involved.

Table 2: SAP revenue-management components mapped to grid-aware billing responsibilities

SAP Component	Traditional Meter-to-Cash Role	Grid-Aware Billing Responsibility
SAP IS-U / CCS	Meter reading, billing master data, periodic invoicing	Contract and device master data source feeding real-time rating
Convergent Charging (BRIM CC)	Usage-based charge calculation for subscription products	Real-time tariff rating against grid-condition price signals
Convergent Invoicing (BRIM CI)	Aggregation of charges into periodic invoices	Aggregation of variable-rate charges with auditable rate provenance
Financial Contract	Receivables, collections, dunning	Dynamic credit exposure management and

SAP Component	Traditional Meter-to-Cash Role	Grid-Aware Billing Responsibility
Accounting (FI-CA)		curtailment-aware dunning
SAP Energy Data Management (EDM)	Interval-data storage for billing determinants	Real-time profiling and anomaly detection feeding Convergent Charging

Figure 1: Grid-to-Compute signal path (AMI/SCADA → EDM → Convergent Charging → Convergent Invoicing → FI-CA → AI/EV operator API)

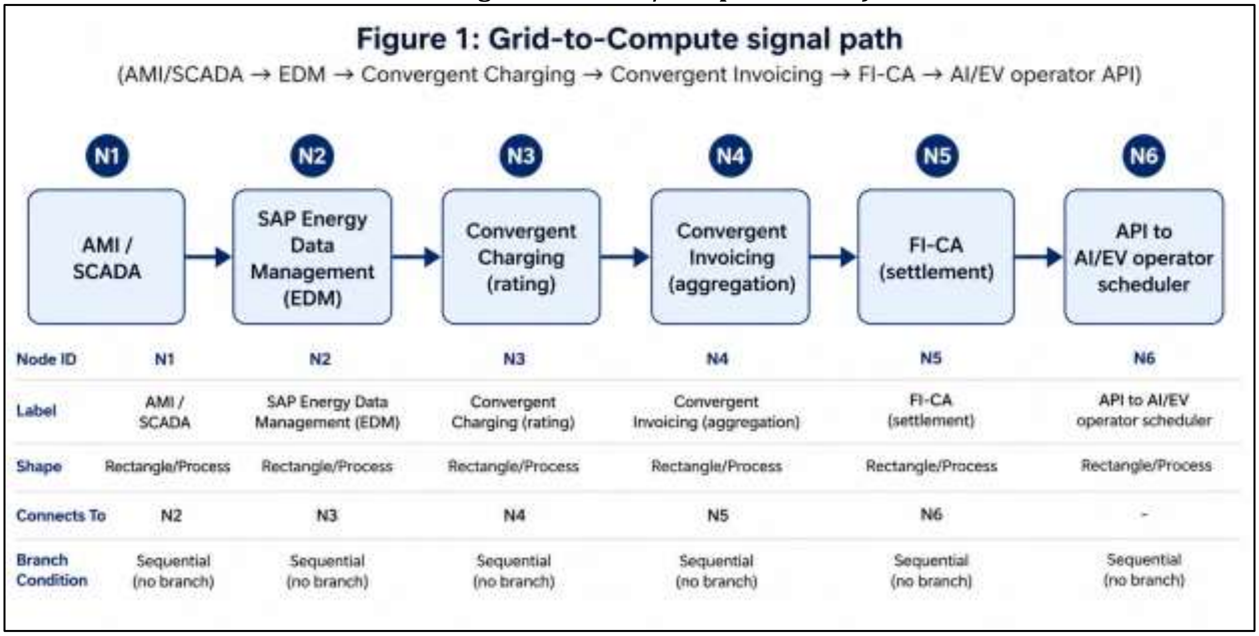

Figure 1 traces the resulting signal path: grid-condition data originates in AMI and Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) systems, is aggregated and profiled in SAP Energy Data Management, is converted into a chargeable rate by Convergent Charging, is aggregated into an invoice by Convergent Invoicing, and is settled through Financial Contract Accounting, with an application programming interface exposing the resulting price forward to AI operator workload schedulers. None of these components is new to SAP's revenue-management suite; what changes is the frequency at which they must operate and the fact that a subset of their output must be exposed outward as a machine-readable signal rather than only downward into an invoice.

5. Convergent Charging as the Real-Time Rating Engine for Grid-Aware Tariffs

Convergent Charging's rate plan and price plan constructs were designed to support pricing models that vary by time of day, usage tier, and product bundle, characteristics shared with the recurring and usage-based charging problems Convergent Charging already solves for telecommunications and subscription operators. Cross-catalog mapping and billable-item classes allow a single consumption event to be priced differently depending on the customer segment, contract terms, and, in a grid-aware configuration, the prevailing grid-condition indicator. Extending this structure to grid-aware tariffs mainly requires defining new rate-plan inputs, a real-time price feed and a grid-status flag, rather than replacing the rating engine itself.

Latency, however, is not uniform across the signals a grid-aware tariff must consume. Ancillary and frequency-control services are explicitly valued in electricity markets according to how quickly a resource can respond, with faster-responding technologies commanding distinct market treatment from slower ones [9]. A rating engine designed only around invoice-cycle latency cannot support a pricing product tied to this class of signal; it can, however, support day-ahead and hour-ahead pricing products, which tolerate settlement on a slower cadence closer to the platform's historical defaults. Table 3 proposes a latency tiering appropriate to Convergent Charging configuration, distinguishing signal types by how quickly the rating engine must ingest and act on them rather than asserting a single universal requirement.

Table 3: Proposed latency tiers for grid-aware Convergent Charging configuration

Signal Type	Rating Engine Requirement	Settlement Cadence	Convergent Charging Fit
Emergency curtailment / fast frequency response	Sub-minute ingestion	Real-time flag, settled retrospectively	Requires event-driven extension beyond default batch rating
Real-time / spot price update	Minutes	Same-day aggregation	Achievable with existing usage-based rating, tuned polling interval
Day-ahead price schedule	Hours	Standard billing-cycle aggregation	Native fit with existing rate-plan scheduling
Off-peak / time-of-use tariff	Static, pre-published	Standard billing-cycle aggregation	Native fit, no architectural change required

This tiering matters because it prevents a common implementation error: routing every grid signal through the same rating pathway regardless of how quickly it changes. Day-ahead and time-of-use products, which cover a substantial share of the dynamic-pricing programs actually deployed to households and small commercial accounts, require no departure from Convergent Charging's existing batch-oriented rating cycle. Real-time and emergency-tier signals, the ones most relevant to AI training-job scheduling and EV fleet curtailment, require an event-driven extension layered onto the existing rating engine rather than a wholesale platform replacement. Framed this way, the redesign effort concentrates where the signal actually demands it, rather than across the entire tariff catalog.

6. Integration Architecture: AMI, EDM, and the API Surface Exposed to AI and EV Operators

The volume of data a grid-aware billing platform must ingest changes by orders of magnitude relative to a traditional monthly-read Meter-to-Cash configuration. SAP Energy Data Management is the component historically responsible for absorbing interval-metering data at this scale, and big-data frameworks applied specifically to Advanced Metering Infrastructure data have demonstrated forecasting accuracy with a mean absolute percentage error below 5% for some retail electricity markets [10], suggesting that the analytical capability to profile consumption at the granularity grid-aware billing requires is already available. What has been comparatively underused is feeding that profiling directly into the rating engine rather than only into offline forecasting.

A systematic review of electric-vehicle integration into the smart grid identifies power-grid, power-system, and smart-grid reliability as the dominant research concerns in this literature [11], concerns a billing-layer architecture can only partially address but should not ignore when defining the signals it consumes from grid operators.Recent findings from studies using the application of AI and blockchain technologies on EV charging demand response show a decrease of 20% in grid overload when there is high demand, along with improvements in data protection and transparency of more than 96% [12].These results are specific to the study's simulated environment, but they indicate that AI-assisted demand-response coordination for EV fleets is maturing quickly enough that the billing platform receiving its signals should be designed for near-term rather than speculative integration. Complementary optimization studies targeting EV charging and discharging scheduling in distribution networks report qualitative reductions in average load demand and improved voltage profiles without displacing the underlying distribution infrastructure [13], [14], reinforcing that the flexibility this article treats as a billing-layer input is being actively engineered on the grid side as well. Internet of Things-enabled smart-metering architectures paired with cloud-based time-series prediction have been proposed to extend AMI data pipelines beyond simple interval collection toward continuous consumption forecasting [15], a pattern consistent with feeding Convergent Charging's rating calculations from a forward-looking profile rather than only a historical read. A broader review of EV grid integration highlights power-quality, voltage, and thermal-loading impacts that intensify as charger penetration increases [16], impacts that are properly the concern of ADMS and SCADA systems but that the billing platform should surface as grid-status flags within the API described in Section 4, so that pricing and curtailment signals stay consistent with what the grid operator is actually observing.

A second, less visible integration task concerns anomaly detection rather than price calculation. SAP Energy Data Management can construct a synthetic consumption profile that represents an account's expected load under ordinary conditions, then compare real-time measurements against that baseline. For an AI data-center account, a deviation between the synthetic and measured profile is informative regardless of whether pricing is involved: it can indicate an unscheduled training run, a cooling-system fault, or capacity added without a corresponding contract amendment. Routing this deviation signal to the same API surface that carries pricing information lets an operator distinguish a price-driven load change, one it requested by responding to a signal, from an unexplained one, which is a distinction the rating engine alone cannot make from consumption data.

7. FI-CA and Financial Risk Management for High-Value, Volatile Accounts

AI data centers and EV fleet depots can generate monthly electricity bills in the millions of dollars, and their consumption volatility complicates the credit-risk assumptions Financial Contract Accounting was configured around. Financial Contract Accounting already supports configurable security-deposit calculation, exposure monitoring, and dunning workflows; the open question for grid-aware billing is which inputs those workflows should consume. Research on electricity-retailer credit risk in a liberalized power market proposes an evaluation framework spanning eighteen indicators across market-transaction, profitability, and debt-paying-ability dimensions, tested against a small sample of retailers to demonstrate feasibility [17]. That structure translates reasonably well to the customer side of a utility's book: a data-center or EV-fleet account's consumption volatility, contracted capacity, and participation in curtailment programs are the analogous indicators a dynamic security-deposit calculation in Financial Contract Accounting would need to weigh, rather than the static annual-consumption estimate the deposit calculation traditionally uses.

Curtailment-aware dunning extends this logic to collections. Traditional dunning procedures in Financial Contract Accounting escalate based on overdue balance and payment history. A grid-aware configuration would additionally recognize operational risk events, a declined curtailment request, a repeated failure to shift load during a declared emergency, as inputs to account-level risk scoring, without conflating those events with payment default. This distinction matters because the two risk categories, financial and operational, call for different remediation: a payment-risk escalation properly leads toward collections, while an operational-risk escalation more properly leads toward contract renegotiation or capacity reallocation.

Consider a concrete configuration. A dynamic-deposit calculation in Financial Contract Accounting might weigh three inputs: a rolling measure of consumption volatility drawn from Energy Data Management, the account's contracted curtailable capacity, and its recent history of honoring curtailment requests. An account with high volatility but a strong curtailment-compliance record would carry a lower deposit requirement than one with the same volatility and a poor compliance record, because the latter represents greater exposure to the utility during exactly the conditions a dynamic tariff is meant to manage. None of these inputs require new source systems; they require Financial Contract Accounting's existing deposit-calculation configuration to reference fields that Convergent Charging and Energy Data Management already populate.

Any redesign of dynamic pricing must also account for who bears its distributional consequences. Evidence from U.S. households finds that dynamic tariffs, with the exception of critical-peak pricing, did not reduce energy poverty as consistently as time-of-use tariffs did [18], a finding drawn from the residential segment rather than the commercial and industrial accounts this article centers on, but one that cautions against assuming every dynamic-pricing structure improves outcomes for the customers who adopt it. A billing architecture built primarily around large, sophisticated AI and EV-fleet accounts should not be extended to residential tariff design without separately validating that the same rate structures serve smaller customers as well.

8. Discussion: Implementation Patterns, Governance, and Limitations

The argument developed here is contestable in a specific way: it treats the rating and settlement layer as the more binding constraint on grid-AI coordination, when a reasonable alternative view holds that grid-side investment, additional ADMS capability, more granular SCADA telemetry, more responsive distribution automation, matters more, and that billing-platform redesign is a secondary consequence rather than a precondition. Both views are probably partly correct. Interoperability standards developed for the smart grid already specify that demand-response signals should remain consistent as they move from grid management through aggregators to end customers [6], which implies that the standardization problem spans both sides of the meter; a well-designed billing platform cannot compensate for grid telemetry that is itself unreliable, and grid telemetry investment delivers limited customer-facing value if the billing platform cannot translate it into an actionable price.

A practical implementation pattern follows from the latency tiering proposed in Section 5: utilities pursuing grid-aware billing should sequence day-ahead and time-of-use products first, since these require no departure from Convergent Charging's existing rating cadence, before attempting real-time or emergency-tier products that require event-driven extensions. Carbon-aware workload-scheduling research for data centers illustrates the corresponding demand-side counterpart to this sequencing: multi-energy scheduling models built for a hypothetical data-center facility demonstrate that workload timing decisions can be optimized against emissions and cost signals when those signals are available with sufficient lead time [19], which is the product a day-ahead grid-aware tariff is positioned to supply.

Several limitations bound this analysis. First, the architectural mapping is a design synthesis rather than a validated deployment; no publicly documented grid-aware billing rollout exists at the level of specificity this article addresses, so the proposed component mapping should be treated as a starting configuration to be tested rather than a proven result. Second, the analysis is written from a single vendor's revenue-management architecture; utilities running other Customer Information Systems would need an analogous mapping specific to their own platform, and the underlying principles, though probably transferable, have not been verified against those platforms here. Third, regulatory treatment of dynamic pricing, security deposits, and curtailment obligations varies substantially across jurisdictions, and the credit-risk and dunning redesign proposed in Section 7 would require jurisdiction-specific validation before implementation. Finally, the residential energy-poverty findings cited in Section 7 caution that distributional effects deserve separate study before any of this architecture is extended beyond large commercial and industrial accounts.

9. Conclusion

The challenge utilities face from AI and EV-driven load growth is often framed as a grid-engineering problem: more sensing, more automation, more responsive distribution infrastructure. That framing is not wrong, but it is incomplete. A grid that can sense a congestion event in real time still depends on a billing platform capable of turning that event into a price the affected customer can act on, and SAP's revenue-management architecture, built around Meter-to-Cash assumptions that predate this demand pattern, was not designed for that translation. Repositioning Convergent Charging as a real-time rating engine, extending Financial Contract Accounting's credit-management logic to volatile high-value accounts, and exposing the resulting signals through a latency-tiered API are changes that fit within the platform's existing component boundaries rather than requiring its replacement.

This repositioning does not resolve the coordination problem on its own. Grid telemetry must be reliable enough to feed the rating engine something worth pricing, and regulatory frameworks must accommodate the credit and dunning practices a genuinely dynamic account requires. What the architectural mapping proposed here does establish is that the billing platform is not a passive recipient of grid modernization; it is one of the systems that determines whether modernization reaches the customers whose flexibility utilities most need. Future work validating this mapping against an actual grid-aware billing deployment, and extending the credit-risk framework to jurisdiction-specific regulatory constraints, would sharpen the boundary between what this analysis proposes and what a deployed system would need to confirm.

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