

FrederickNewsPost.com**Allegheny Energy still trying to lead us down the garden PATH**

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The time has come for PATH to accept that the proposed transmission line is no longer needed. This position is supported by the decline in energy consumption, economic outlook, the governors of Maryland and Virginia and the staff of the Virginia State Corporation Commission.

The decline in the growth for electricity demand occurred prior to the current recession, according to the regional authority, PJM. Power usage in 2008 declined by 2.7 percent in 2008 and 4.4 percent for the first half of this year. In a typical recession, the economy and thus the need for electricity normally snap back quickly after the recession has ended. Experts including those in the U.S. government have stated that the return to normal economic conditions from this recession could take five to six years.

Allegheny Energy continues to frighten the public with predictions that if PATH is not constructed, lights will go out. These claims include inaccurate statements that energy consumption will grow rapidly, due in part to the increase in the number of electronic devices people own. They fail to mention that part of the slowdown and recent decline in energy consumption is due to appliances becoming more efficient. Compared with 10 years ago, refrigerators and air conditioners are, respectively, 74 percent and 40 percent more efficient today.

In 2004 they claimed that if Urbana Loop were not constructed there would be brownouts and blackouts. This year before the Maryland Public Service Commission they admitted they were wrong, and with minor upgrades there would not be a need for an additional transmission line to service Urbana for at least 10 years.

Another example of Allegheny's questionable veracity is their claim that the cost for burying PATH using HVDC technology would be 10 to 20 times more expensive. A study commissioned by PJM found that the cost would be two times and did not take into account additional relevant factors, which could lower the cost considerably. Whatever the final cost would be, Allegheny spokesmen purposely provided misleading statements in order to avoid looking at alternatives.

They also claim the purpose of this line is to bring renewable power from the Midwest to the East Coast. This position conflicts with statements from Gov. Martin O'Malley. He signed a letter this past May with nine other East Coast governors addressed to congressional leaders and stated: "We must express our concern about the significant risks posed by recent proposals regarding transmission that we believe could jeopardize our states' efforts to develop wind resources ... "

A Department of Energy map shows the best source for wind power is off the Eastern Shore. It is for this reason that O'Malley, Virginia Gov. Tim Kaine and Delaware Gov. Jack Markell on Nov. 10 agreed on a tri-state partnership for the deployment of off-shore wind energy in the mid-Atlantic coastal region.-- The economics of using wind power has changed. The regional authority for power in New England says that not only is wind power possible, but that "annual wholesale electric prices would be generally lower."

Finally, the testimony by experts in Virginia on the PATH transmission line contradicts Allegheny's claims. The staff of the Virginia State Corporation Commission on Dec. 8 filed testimony and stated that there is no need or justification for PATH. One of the conclusions in the report stated: "An adequate transmission reliability/needs justification has not been established for the PATH É the electrical needs analysis falls short as a result of: 1) unrealistic, overly-stressed 2013 and 2014 base cases due to flawed data and modeling assumptions; 2) insufficient, missing and inconclusive studies; and 3) inadequate alternatives analysis."

Sugarloaf Conservancy asks PATH to revisit their filings with an open mind and look beyond the guaranteed rate of return on their investment of 14.3 percent. Why should we be forced to pay for their advertisements, the purchase of land and the continuing legal costs?

The time has come for Allegheny Energy and AEP to accept that these lines are not needed and withdraw their applications in Virginia and West Virginia and notify the Maryland Public Service Commission that they will not be refiling.

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