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### Commissioners have different views on PATH substation plan

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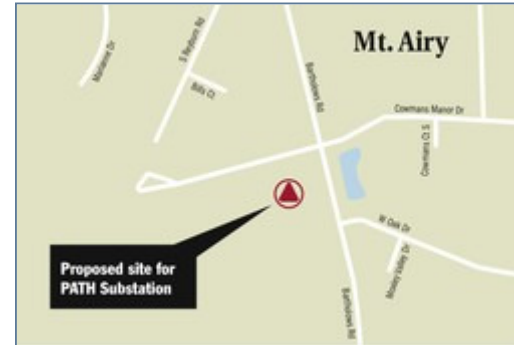
By [Ed Waters Jr.](#)

The Potomac Appalachian Transmission Highline (PATH) project will include many hearings and requirements.

If the project is approved by the Maryland Public Service Commission, one of the steps will be filing for a special exception zoning approval for the site of its substation off Bartholows Road near Mount Airy.

Frederick County Commissioners have differing views on the project.

"Zoning is significant when the structure is this big," said Commissioner David Gray. "I wouldn't want it to be in the wrong place. I will say that (the proposed site) is out of the way." That view is shared by residents in the immediate area around the proposed site off Bartholows Road and Cowmans Manor Drive.



Commission president Jan Gardner said Allegheny Energy should apply for a special exemption for the site. That would be considered by the county's Board of Appeals, she said.

"The Frederick County Planning Commission will make a finding to determine if the transmission lines are consistent with the county comprehensive plan and report that finding to the PSC," Gardner said. "The determination will not be binding, however." Transmission lines come under the ultimate approval of the state.

Commissioner John "Lennie" Thompson said the county needs to consider offers from the utility company to avoid a preemptive decision by the federal government.

"The county's position is that substations should not be exempt from local planning and zoning reviews," Thompson said. "The state preempts local review for power generating stations and transmission lines, but does not address substations."

But Thompson said the county should consider offers from Allegheny to mitigate the impact of the substation in exchange for dropping any legal cases. If the county is granted authority, he urged considering compromises or face the possibility of the federal government taking over.

"We have a choice to make. Go down with the ship or get the best for the community," Thompson said.

For instance, Thompson said, the county could ask for more trees, flexibility on location or building a lower substation.

If the county stands in the way, Thompson said, Congress could direct the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to take control of the project under its authority of interstate commerce.

"In the end, if Congress wants there to be a transmission line there or a substation there that's going to provide energy for three states, it will be there," Thompson said.

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