

FrederickNewsPost.com

R-I-P-ath?

Originally published March 05, 2011

By ed

PATH is done, at least for 2011. Whether we'll see the \$2.1 billion, 275-mile Potomac-Appalachian Transmission Highline resurrected depends on the region's energy needs next year.

Earlier this week, economic forecasts reversed predictions that PATH had to be built to meet the region's future demand for electricity. PATH, proponents argued, would prevent blackouts and brownouts in the Mid-Atlantic area. PJM Interconnection, which oversees the grid's operation in 13 states, removed PATH from its 2011 Regional Transmission Expansion Plan.

PJM President Terry Boston said it was the economy, and also "evolving public policies, particularly with respect to renewable energy," that made the agency's planning studies uncertain.

Should PATH ever be considered again, however, we're strongly recommending that FirstEnergy (the new name for Allegheny Energy) and American Electric Power use this time to go back to the drawing board.

Among areas they should revisit are burying power lines and finding alternative means to generate electricity, such as wind farms.

Rather than building PATH, we believe upgrading existing lines from Mount Storm, in West Virginia, to Doubs, in Frederick County, holds some promise.

And both utilities should reflect on how heavy-handed they appeared in trying to override the authority of local jurisdictions, such as Frederick County, when it comes to land use.

Nowhere was this more apparent than with the inflexibility shown toward a massive substation on Bartholows Road that would have been the end point for the PATH line.

The substation's proposed location, on 150 acres of agricultural land amid 1,350 houses, drew nearly universal criticism. PATH officials dismissed out of hand sites that seemed more suitable. The utilities sought to end-run the county commissioners with appeals to the Maryland Public Service Commission, arguing that the PSC, not local government, should be able to decide where the substation would be placed.

Opponents were given short shrift -- although many public hearings were held, the plan never seemed to change much in response to public criticism. Important questions raised by opponents went, in the main, unanswered.

Finally, we'd urge opponents to continue their vigilance. Depending on future projections for the region's power needs, PATH could be back.

Please send comments to [webmaster](#) or contact us at 301-662-1177.

Copyright 1997-11 Randall Family, LLC. All rights reserved. Do not duplicate or redistribute in any form. The Frederick News-Post [Privacy Policy](#). Use of this site indicates your agreement to our [Terms of Service](#).