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GROUP ASKS O'MALLEY TO INTERVENE ON PATH

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A group promoting the use of underground wiring for the PATH project is seeking intervention by the governor.

The Sugarloaf Conservancy has contacted the governor's office on the Potomac Appalachian Transmission Highline, said conservancy President Doug Kaplan. The organization is opposed to partners Allegheny Energy and American Electric Power placing more or larger towers in the area for PATH.

The project is a \$1.8 billion, 244-mile line that would bring additional power to the growing region. The line is planned to begin in West Virginia and end at a proposed substation in Kemp-town.

While many agree more power is needed in the area, some groups have opposed Allegheny's plan to put in larger towers or new routes for the lines.

Kaplan said Sugarloaf Conservancy sent information on High Voltage Direct Current systems that could be used underground. The group is calling for an independent review of the project.

"Allegheny Energy agrees that it is vital to have an independent review of not only the technology proposed for this important infrastructure project, but also the route and electrical need for PATH," the power com-

pany said Monday in a statement.

Company officials think the proper venue for that review is through the "time-proven review process" of the Maryland Public Service Commission. The commission conducts public hearings to examine power projects and can hire third-party experts as necessary, Allegheny's statement said.

The company plans to file a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity with the commission in early April, "setting in motion a long, thorough and exhaustive public process."

Kaplan said his organization has sent information to PJM, the regional authority on electric power needs. With the PATH proposal delayed a year to 2014, Kaplan said his group thinks there is time for an independent review of the project.

Kaplan said his group is frustrated that it has not received a reply from the governor's office.

"It is our belief that if (the governor) would address this matter directly with Allegheny Energy, they would reconsider their position and commission an independent study on the merits of using (High Voltage Direct Current systems) underground for the PATH project before any filing with the Maryland Public Service Commission," Kaplan said.

The governor's press office could not be reached for comment.