

## FrederickNewsPost.com

### Groups discuss opposition to PATH

Originally published January 22, 2010

By [Ed Waters Jr.](#)

URBANA — Three organizations opposing the PATH project took their presentations to the Urbana Civic Association on Wednesday night.

Members of the Sugarloaf Conservancy, Citizens Against the Kemptown Electric Substation and Sierra Club spoke to about 80 people at the Urbana Fire Hall.

Potomac Appalachian Transmission Highline is a 275-mile, \$1.8 billion project by Allegheny Energy and American Electric Power. It would bring 765-kilovolt transmission lines from West Virginia, through Virginia and Maryland, ending at a proposed substation near Mount Airy.

Allegheny Energy representatives were invited to the event. Chad Baker, a member of CAKES, said the company turned down the offer, saying its application for PATH is under consideration by the Maryland Public Service Commission.

The three organizations have opposed the plan, first approved in 2006 by PJM, which oversees the movement of electrical power in the region. Sugarloaf Conservancy initially was opposed to the huge towers that would be part of the line, recommending the utility company look at underground wiring. CAKES members, predominantly residents of the immediate and surrounding area of the proposed substation, cite visual, safety and environmental impacts of the plan on the community. The Sierra Club's approach has been about the environmental and visual impact of the entire system.

Now, all three organizations claim the project is not needed. Doug Kaplan, president of Sugarloaf Conservancy, said figures from PJM, as well as the U.S. Department of Energy, show demand for such power would not be needed until 2021.

Todd Meyers, spokesman for Allegheny Energy, said while the latest data show PATH is not needed in 2014, when PJM completes a comprehensive study in June, it will give a better idea of when PATH should be in service.

"We believe PATH remains necessary to resolve future reliability issues on the electric transmission system -- it's more a matter of when," Meyers said.

Kaplan and other speakers noted Allegheny Energy has changed the timeline for the project. In December, the utility company sent a letter to Maryland officials citing the need for the project, prior to a hearing for the application. But a week later, Virginia officials were sent a letter saying the project wouldn't be needed until 2016 and asking that state to allow withdraw of the application. In West Virginia, Allegheny has sought a delay in the review of the project.

Utility company representatives said the actions are designed so all three states may come to some conclusion at the same time on PATH. An application was turned down for PATH last year in Maryland.

"Now, Allegheny has set up a shell company with Potomac Edison (the legal entity for a power company in Maryland) at 5 percent and PATH Allegheny Maryland as the other 95 percent," Baker said.

He questioned the liability of such a company and noted that PJM had approved a return on investment of 14.3 percent for PATH to the utility companies.

David O'Leary, Maryland conservation chairman for the Sierra Club, said his organization does not want to see the line "just as an extension cord to Maryland from coal-fired plants in West Virginia."

O'Leary echoed Kaplan's statement that data from PJM shows such a line is not needed until 2021.

"Maybe somewhere in the future, but by then we may have alternatives and better planning. We have time to see what we need and how to site them," O'Leary said.

He said people are embracing energy efficiency, not just for the environment, but to save money. "These things make sense,

whether you believe in global warming or not."

Kaplan and O'Leary noted the U.S. Department of Energy has mapped the offshore area of the East Coast as the best place for potential wind power systems.

"But there is still that traditional view of running lines all the way from the Midwest wind power to the East," O'Leary said.

Other speakers included Peggy Kaplan, secretary of the Sugarloaf Conservancy, who spoke on the impact of extensive rights of way, decline in property values and the possible effects of electro magnetic fields from towers. Dick Ishler, president of CAKES, used slides to show how the proposed substation would be in the middle of 1,300 houses on Bartholow's Road. Ishler said the group is hoping an alternative site could be considered, including the idled Alcoa Eastalco Works land near Buckeystown.

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

Copyright 1997-10 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](#).