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PATH Completion Date Pushed Back

By CARRIE DIETZ

American Electric Power and Allegheny Energy, Inc. announced April 15 that it will push back the completion date for their proposed transmission project by one year.

The Potomac-Appalachian Transmission Highline (PATH), a 765-kilovolt overhead with 130-foot towers and a 200-foot clearance line extending from southwestern West Virginia to central Maryland, now has a June 2014 completion deadline. The one-year schedule change results from a recent reliability analysis by PJM Interconnection (PJM) that considered various factors, including its 2009 load forecast, according to power company officials.

While PJM, the regional grid operator directing the construction of PATH, believes that the project remains critical to addressing regional reliability concerns, Allegheny officials said the latest update of its reliability analysis "confirms that significant

overloads and voltage problems will occur in the region, beginning in 2014, if the PATH project is not completed."

The PATH project team expects to file applications for approval to build the line with the West Virginia, Maryland and Virginia regulatory commissions in the second quarter.

Meanwhile, local opposition group Sugarloaf Conservancy is still pushing for the lines for PATH to be buried to protect historic sites along its route including the Monocacy Battlefield.

"Scenic views, historic properties, and the Monocacy Battlefield are likely to be adversely affected by this line," said Nicholas Carrera, a member of Sugarloaf Conservancy. "The Frederick County Board of Commissioners has already voted its disapproval for this project."

The group would like to see the project completed using voltage direct current (HVDC) technology.

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"Allegheny claims the cost would be too great, but [the group] believes that when all relevant costs are factored in, the cost of a buried line may actually be cheaper, and will certainly have far less adverse impact on our region," Carrera said.

Doug Kaplan, president of the Sugarloaf Conservancy, believes the completion date push back is a sign of the times and said the group will work with others to challenge Allegheny Energy and PJM's assertion that there

will be a need for an additional transmission line even in 2014.

Once the application for approval is filed with the Maryland Public Service Commission the process which includes public hearings takes about a year to complete.

More information: SugarloafConservancy.org,

NoMoreTowers.org, pathtransmission.com, or search the Internet for "HVDC" and "HVDC Light." Informative and advocacy videos can be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ws62XQBKc08>, with links to many others.