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# PATH Derailed for Now

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The Maryland Public Service Commission voted 3-1 September 10 to deny the Potomac Edison Company the right to submit an application in Maryland to build the Potomac-Apalachian Transmission Highline (PATH) on behalf of the PATH Allegheny Transmission Company. The move derailed, at least temporarily, the Maryland portion of the 300-mile project.

Commission Chairman Douglas Nazarian and Commissioners Harold Williams and Susanne Brogan voted against the application, noting the requirement of the applicant to be the electric company as defined by Maryland state law.

Commissioner Lawrence Brenner was the dissenting vote and said he believed the PSC had the authority to approve the application with the PATH Allegheny name.

Allegheny Power spokesperson Todd Meyers said the day after the ruling that it's "just too soon

## ■ PATH

from page A1

to detail the steps because they won't be determined until after we meet and deliberate with our PATH partner, American Electric Power."

The company has 30 days to refile the application.

"This much remains clear — PATH is a vital project necessary to strengthen the regional transmission grid and preserve the reliability of the existing system," Meyers added. "We remain fully committed to the project and continue to move ahead with approval proceedings in West Virginia and Virginia even as we consider our options for the Maryland segment of the proposed line."

The Commission noted in its order that the decision "should not be read to foreshadow any views on the merits of the proposed transmission line project," said Meyers.

Sugarloaf Conservancy, a group organized to oppose the construction of the

overhead line, has watched the process closely. Urbana resident Doug Kaplan, the group's president, said he was not surprised by the ruling even if he was a bit surprised by the one dissenting vote.

In an e-mail Kaplan said, "the only negative is that they do say that if the application is refilled, the substation is under their review if it is an integral part of the transmission line. They will decide whether it is an integral part if and when the application is refilled but are not taking a position now. They do say they will be listening to Frederick County's views on the subject."

Kaplan hopes the denial will encourage both Allegheny Power and PJM to reconsider the necessity of the project before choosing to refile. "When you look at PJM's owner numbers [energy usage], down 2.7 percent last year and 4.4 percent the first half of this year, I think it's an important consideration," he said. "I hope they take a very hard look at the need factor."

Sugarloaf Conservancy will continue its efforts moving forward and will conduct its next meeting October 10, 10 a.m. at the Urbana Library.