

Town Courier

PATH No Longer Leads to Kemptown

March 30, 2011

By [Krista Brick](#)

The Potomac-Appalachian Transmission Highline (PATH) may not be needed to solve a once-thought looming electric deficiency.

American Electric Power and FirstEnergy Corp. have withdrawn the application for state regulatory approval of the PATH project following an announcement by regional grid operator PJM Interconnection that the project has been suspended.

That includes the planned 750-kilovolt substation planned for Kemptown.

In a press release from FirstEnergy Corp. and American Electric Power, both entities have agreed to suspend further development of the PATH project while PJM conducts more rigorous analysis of the potential need for PATH as part of its continuing Regional Transmission Expansion Plan.

PJM directed the construction of PATH in 2007 to resolve violations of national and local standards for reliable operation of the region's transmission system. Since then, annual studies reaffirmed the need for PATH as the recommended solution for resolving these issues. However, PJM's latest analyses indicate that the projected need for the project has moved well into the future, according to the release.

"We rely on PJM to determine when additions and upgrades to the regional grid are necessary. Need is determined by a thorough and dynamic planning process that considers a myriad of electrical and economic conditions, including the forecasted growth of demand, the addition or retirement of generating facilities, and more. We'll remain flexible and adjust our plans accordingly to any decision PJM ultimately makes regarding the future of the PATH Project," said Todd Myers, spokesperson for FirstEnergy Corp.

Locally, there has been a grassroots fight against PATH and particularly its substation location in Kemptown.

"There can be no doubt that substantial investment in the region's transmission infrastructure will be needed to address underlying weaknesses in the system and to support expected long-term growth in demand as the economy recovers and marches forward. Connecting the grid to renewable resources and enhancing it with smart grid applications will also demand investment. It's too early to know what form that might take," Myers said.

If the past effort is any indication, those who fought against PATH will be keeping a close eye on those future plans.

The Sugarloaf Conservancy is already requesting any future application for the PATH project be analyzed by a third party and include alternatives to the project. The group is also calling for a third-party analysis of the energy forecast.