

PATH Route Announced, Applications Filed

By CARRIE DIETZ

Allegheny Energy and American Electric Power filed the first two of three applications necessary to request permission to build a 300-mile-long power line from West Virginia to

Kempston in May, including a 20-mile section in southern Frederick county from the Potomac River to the Kempston station.

Also, PJM announced it would explore the reality of underground lines at the request of the Frederick County

board of county commissioners (BOCC) through an independent study May 14. In a letter to Jan Gardner, president of the BOCC, Michael Kormos, senior vice president of Operations for PJM stated that the study of the Maryland section of the line will be completed by the end of the

second quarter of 2009.

The PATH line would follow existing transmission lines for 85 percent of the route in Maryland — 79 percent in West Virginia and Virginia — and the only Maryland deviation would

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be south of Urbana to avoid Little Bennett Creek and an historic site, said Michael Gogol, a consulting engineer who sited the route. The line would touch the southern corner of Lilypons Water Gardens in Adamstown as it follows an existing line there.

"It's better environmentally to do it this way," Gogol said.

The deviated line would be 2 miles long. Gogol has spent the past 18 months siting the line using tools such as satellite and comprehensive plans of the region as well as physically driving the route. He said he's worked with the Forestry Service, Maryland Historical Trust and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, as well as gathered feedback from the 24 open houses in three states.

Power officials filed first in West Virginia and planned to file in Maryland and Virginia the week of May 18, according to Allegheny Energy spokesperson Todd Meyers. Each application will contain an alternative route as well.

Meyers said he expects the first public hearings in Maryland to occur in late summer or early fall, but that the Maryland Public Service Commission determines the schedule. Following the public hearings are the evidentiary hearings, which include expert testimony from independent sources and power company officials.

News of the proposed route didn't surprise Urbana resident Doug Kaplan, who is

president of the Sugarloaf Conservancy, but he was not pleased with it. The group has been pushing for the PATH project to go underground.

PJM is a regional transmission organization that coordinates the movement of wholesale electricity in all or parts of 13 states and the District of Columbia.

Kaplan questions PJM's projections of energy needs over the next 10 years and believes, with the 2009 projections down substantially from last year, that Allegheny should hold off on the project. "We have plenty of time," he said. "I think we should put a moratorium on these projects. Let's step back let's and see how we're going to meet our country's energy needs longer-term."

The Sugarloaf Conservancy isn't the only group that wants to come up with a different solution for the region's energy needs. In a May 4 letter to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and House Minority Leader John Boehner, the governors of 10 Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states, including Governor Martin O'Malley, asked the representatives to focus attention on regional solutions.

"While we support the development of wind resources for the United States wherever they exist, this ratepayer-funded revenue guarantee for land-based wind and other generation resources in the Great Plains would have significant, negative consequences for our region: It would hinder our efforts to meet regional renewable energy goals with regional resources and would establish financial conditions in our electricity markets that



Proposed PATH route through Maryland.

would impede development of the vast wind resources onshore and just off our shores for decades to come," the letter states.

Michael Hosier, general manager of transmission project with Allegheny Energy, said the PATH line at Kempton would then interconnect area power companies including PG&E, Baltimore Washington Gas, Pepco and Allegheny Energy. "This line will bring energy to three different companies," said Michael Hosier, general manager of transmission projects for Allegheny Energy.

Hosier said preliminary engineering and

permitting have begun in West Virginia, and similar processes will begin as soon as the filings are complete in Maryland and Virginia. Construction could begin in late 2010 and is expected to "gear up substantially" in 2011 and 2012 for a completion date of 2014. "This five-year schedule is very aggressive," he said.

More information:
www.pathtransmission.com
www.psc.state.md.us
www.nomoretowers.org
www.sugarloafconservancy.org

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