

FrederickNewsPost.com**PATH video presentation draws crowd to protest**

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By [Ed Waters Jr.](#)

Allegheny Energy representatives showed a video to the media Thursday simulating what the Kemptown substation would look like once placed in the community near Mount Airy.

The substation is part of the Potomac Appalachian Transmission Highline project more commonly known as PATH.

Outside the utility company's Frederick office on East Patrick Street, about 20 pickets carried signs opposing the planned substation.

The video, created by Truescape, a New Zealand-based company, uses photography and computer simulation to show the existing neighborhoods off Bartholow's Road and what the visual impact would be with the proposed electric substation in place. The substation site is 140 acres, of which about 42 acres will be fenced in for the substation.

Jim Haney, vice president of Allegheny Energy, said it will be the largest substation built by the utility company.

At a Wednesday meeting of the Frederick County Planning Commission, county planners said the substation would be equal in size to two Francis Scott Key Malls. The planning commission found the proposed substation was not compatible with the county's comprehensive plan. The utility company will go before the county's zoning appeals board next week to seek a special exception for the substation. The video will be used at that meeting.

Haney, at the media conference, said the site chosen on Bartholow's Road was near where several lines come together.

"It doesn't have to be in that exact spot, but we were able to get 140 acres of land at that site," Haney said.

"I know this is a fairly controversial project," Haney said. "The front end will take several years," he said, referring to the approvals and regulatory reviews of the project. "For the most part, the new line will follow existing lines."

The video showed how the substation would appear from locations around it, and with landscaping and trees. The utility company said it will spend an estimated \$700,000 to \$800,000 in screenings -- berms and trees -- on the property.

The company is awaiting decisions by the Maryland PSC and West Virginia officials on schedules for hearings on the \$2.1 billion PATH project. Haney said the company expects to refile the project in Virginia soon and expects to have decisions by all three states by the end of 2011.

Ginny MacColl and Mary Aellen, two who protested outside, said they were worried about the substation's impact from pollution, and on safety and property values.

"I had an appraiser tell me the value of my house dropped 12 percent, that's more than \$70,000, if the substation goes in," MacColl said. "We are on wells and I'm worried about the potential impact to the wells if there was a fire or something at the substation."

Aellen said she did not think the substation was needed, "or if it is needed, that is not the place for it." She noted that a smaller substation, planned in West Virginia as part of the PATH project is in a rural area.

"In West Virginia," MacColl said, "Allegheny Energy states the homes are miles away from the substation. In Maryland, it is in feet."

Allegheny Energy representatives said there were no homes with 500 feet of the fenced area of the substation site, 19 homes within 1,000 feet and 350 homes within one-half mile.

Allegheny Energy says the PATH project is needed to ensure reliable power for the region, to avoid blackouts and other electric shortfalls. Opponents said the project is not needed because of the economic turndown and more conservation efforts by consumers.

IF YOU GO

Utility company representatives will be at Windsor Knolls Middle School from 5:30 to 8 p.m. Monday to talk to the public about the PATH project and the Kemptown substation.

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