

FrederickNewsPost.com**PATH files motion for delay in Md.**

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Potomac Edison has asked for an extension in the proceedings for the Potomac-Appalachian Transmission Highline project in Maryland.

The motion, filed Tuesday, follows a similar action in West Virginia on Monday. A filing in Virginia is expected this week as well, according to Todd Meyers, a spokesman for Allegheny Energy.

The filing asks the Maryland Public Service Commission to give the utilities behind the project until March 31 to provide additional testimony on their application for the PATH project. It also would promise the utility company won't seek "backstop authority" for a decision by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission until March 31, 2012. If the state panel fails to make a decision by March 31, 2012, the future of PATH could move to the hands of FERC.

The reason for the filing, Potomac Edison states in its motion, is to incorporate the latest information on power demands from PJM Interconnection, which oversees electric needs in the region. Under the new schedule requested, the utility company would file its testimony by March 31. Non-applicant parties would have until Aug. 11 to file testimony.

Rebuttal and response to rebuttal would come in September and November and evidentiary hearings would be held through December. The target date for PATH to go into service is June 1, 2015.

"It seems every time comes out, they want a delay," said Doug Kaplan, president of Sugarloaf Conservancy, a local group opposed to PATH, a \$2.1 billion, 275-mile transmission line project through three states. "How many years are people's lives going to be on hold? We can't sell our homes, we don't know what it will end."

Kaplan said the utility company had initially claimed "the lights will go out in 2014" due to too little energy for the region's needs.

"If it takes four years to build PATH and under the new motion it would be 2012 before a decision, it would be 2016 to be completed," Kaplan said.

The extended time means more burden on residents trying to fight PATH, Kaplan said.

"We don't have unlimited funds, the utility company does," he said. "And the ratepayers are paying for all of this. (The utility companies) are drawing down our ability to fight."

Brigitte Fortin, spokeswoman for the Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club said the request for an extension indicates that energy demands are not increasing as expected. The utility company should be looking at energy efficiency and conservation "instead of building to a demand that doesn't currently exist."

Kaplan argued that PJM, which has authorized Allegheny Energy and American Electric Power to go forward with PATH, "is not an independent body, as it is supposed to be. PJM hasn't studied alternatives. I don't know of any business that doesn't look at alternatives before making a judgment. They (PJM) are just pushing ahead with PATH."

The staff of the West Virginia Public Service Commission agrees. On Dec. 10, they made a motion to that state's PSC to dismiss or delay PATH's application because of an "incomplete" application that did not investigate alternatives to PATH.

In Virginia, two members of the No To PATH organization filed a motion Tuesday with the Virginia State Corporation Commission to deny the application for the project in that state. The motion, filed by Alfred and Irene Ghorzi, claims a bias by PJM in favor of PATH and ignoring viable alternatives.

One alternative would upgrade the line from Mount Storm, W.Va., to Doubs, in Frederick County, at an estimated cost of about \$400 million. Another is the Liberty Project, which would cost about \$2.5 billion and cross Pennsylvania and the south into Maryland.

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