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### PATH's gift dogs Brunswick railroad fest's tracks

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BRUNSWICK -- As Brunswick gears up for its 27th annual Railroad Days Festival this weekend, local officials and residents are hoping the event will go off without the controversy surrounding its funding.

The city has come under fire for accepting a \$2,500 sponsorship from PATH, a joint project between Allegheny Power and American Electric Power. Potomac Appalachian Transmission Highline is a \$2.1 billion, 275-mile transmission line that crosses three states and has been the focus of opposition from residents throughout the region.

"We reached out to Allegheny, and they came back and said the money would be coming from PATH," City Administrator Dave Dunn said.

At least one group, an organization called No to PATH, has encouraged activists to boycott Railroad Days or display their opposition. The Sugarloaf Conservancy, a Frederick County environmental organization that opposes the project, rented a booth and plans to distribute information at the event.

While PATH -- which includes the power line from Putnam County, W.Va., to the proposed Kemptown substation near Mount Airy -- will not directly affect Brunswick, some are worried that accepting the money sends the wrong message to neighboring communities such as Lovettsville, Va., where opposition is strong.

Last summer, Brunswick's mayor and City Council drafted a letter in support of the project, written in response to a PATH request sent to area municipalities.

Jerry Knight, owner of Cripple Creek Antiques in Brunswick, said he is worried the controversy will affect the close relationship between Brunswick and Lovettsville. He said residents of Lovettsville frequently attend events in Brunswick and patronize its businesses.

"Then we turn around and do this on an issue they are firmly opposed to," said Knight, who opposes PATH. "We really should be supportive of our neighbors to the south."

Knight, who thinks the city acted out of a need for sponsors for the festival, said he isn't sure if the controversy will affect attendance at the event.

"It's a core group of people who are leading the charge, and whether other people are paying attention, I don't know," he said. "Hopefully, people will come. It's such an important thing for Brunswick, so I hope it goes well."

Mayor Carroll Jones said Brunswick officials were not about to turn down anyone willing to help fund the event.

"We asked for sponsors, and we didn't get that many people who were willing to step up and sponsor us," Jones said.

Yellow Cab has donated a trip to Disney World to be given away at the festival, and the Tourism Council of Frederick County contributed \$11,000.

Ellis Burruss, owner of Bellwether Printing in Brunswick and a candidate for county commissioner, said while he was disappointed by the sponsorship and its potential effect on the city's relationship with Lovettsville, he doesn't blame Brunswick for taking the money.

"The mayor acted innocently," said Burruss, a vocal opponent of PATH. "Any municipality these days is having funding difficulties."

Dunn said he expects Railroad Days to go smoothly. He said Brunswick officials don't want the event to turn into a protest, but don't have a problem with people voicing their opinions on PATH.

"We'll just keep an eye on things," he said. "We don't want our festival to become something it's not meant to be. But we don't



Photo by Staff file photo by Sam Yu

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Dunn also said the city has changed its policy, requiring that any future sponsorship from an organization deemed controversial must be approved by a council vote.

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