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### PATH project price climbs to \$2.1 billion

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The cost of everything is going up -- including a major electric power project proposed for the area.

On Thursday, Allegheny Energy and American Electric Power said the bill for the Potomac Appalachian Transmission Highline is estimated at \$2.1 billion, up from previous estimates of \$1.8 billion.

The utility companies said new local and state requirements, route adjustments and relocation of lines, changes in design criteria and cost increases in labor, materials and services pushed the estimated cost higher.

The new price was revealed in updated testimony presented to the West Virginia Public Service Commission.

Allegheny Energy will bear \$1.4 billion of the cost for PATH, a 275-mile transmission line that will begin in West Virginia, cross Virginia and end in Maryland with a proposed substation near Mount Airy.

Utility company representatives said the planned in-service date for PATH is June 1, 2015. PJM Interconnection, which monitors and forecasts electric power needs for the region, is recommending PATH as the best alternative to avoid electric service problems in the future.

The updated information will be presented to Virginia authorities in the third quarter and to Maryland PSC officials. The PATH application is under review in Maryland and was withdrawn in Virginia and will be re-applied in the third quarter. West Virginia, asked to delay review of PATH by the utility companies, has set evidentiary hearings for January 2011.

Utility company representatives say PATH is needed to avoid potential blackouts of power in the near future.

Opponents say the companies should look at alternative power sources and that the demand for power will not be as high as forecast by the utility companies. Opponents also say there are aesthetic, environmental and safety impacts from the proposed line.

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