

FrederickNewsPost.com**PATH open house draws many opposed to plan**

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An open house on the proposed electric substation off Bartholow's Road drew a large crowd Monday night.

About 40 representatives from Allegheny Energy and PJM, as well as Truescape and GAI Consultants, talked with those who attended the event at Windsor Knolls Middle School.

One of the main items at the open house was a video that used computer simulation to show how the proposed substation would look from various viewpoints.

The substation is part of the Potomac Appalachian Transmission Highline, a 275-mile electric line from West Virginia to the substation near Mount Airy. The project is a joint venture with American Electric Power.

Allegheny Energy refiled on Monday with Virginia's equivalent of the Maryland Public Service Commission for PATH. The company had withdrawn in Virginia and wanted to refile once it had the latest data, said Todd Meyers, a spokesman for the company. The project awaits a hearing scheduled in Maryland and has been delayed in West Virginia until later in the year.

Visitors could watch the video on two screens, or look at maps and other information on the substation, which will be the largest one ever built by Allegheny Energy. Many of the visitors had buttons or T-shirts saying "No PATH" or similar opposing wordage or artwork.

Doug Kaplan, president of Sugarloaf Conservancy, which is opposed to the project, said he thinks the photos for the video were taken where the roadway is at its lowest point. A hearing before the Frederick County Board of Zoning Appeals is set for Sept. 29, and Kaplan said he wants to have all of the photos taken for the video available, not just the ones used in the presentation. The project was voted against unanimously by the Frederick County Planning Commission, which said the substation did not fit into the county's comprehensive plan.

Kaplan's organization, which initially pushed for alternatives to the transmission line, has joined CAKES ---Citizens Against the Kemptown Electric Substation -- in opposing the substation, saying it is not needed because of a decline in energy usage. CAKES members said the substation, roughly the size of two FSK malls, would not only impact their property values, but create visual, safety, environmental and other negative issues.

It was the first open house devoted to the substation. The utility company held many open houses, with similar arrangements, for the transmission line over the past two years. "We have had as few as seven people and as many as 350," at the open houses, said Vern Estel, a spokesman for the utility company.

Meyers said the target date for the completion of the PATH line and substation is June 2015. Utility company officials said it would probably take a year to go through the public hearing process for the project before any construction could begin, if it is approved.

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