

**FrederickNewsPost.com****Power company deciding on next step in PATH plan**

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On the last day of its deadline, Allegheny Energy has filed a letter of intent with the Maryland Public Service Commission.

The utility company was turned down on Sept. 9 when it filed an application for the Potomac Appalachian Transmission Highline, or PATH, project. The company had 30 days to inform the commission of its future plans.

In its letter, the utility company said it, "continues to consider its filing options, including whether to re-file an application with the commission, and intends to inform the commission of its decision as soon as possible."

The letter was from J. Joseph Curran III, counsel for the utility company.

The initial application -- turned down because the PSC said it should have been filed under "Potomac Edison" -- sought a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity.

That would have authorized the utility company to begin construction on PATH, a nearly 300-mile, \$1.8 billion project that would bring high voltage transmission lines from West Virginia through Virginia and into Maryland, ending at a proposed substation near Mount Airy. The 150-acre site sits off Bartholow's Road and Cowman's Manor Drive

The initial application was denied in a 3-1 vote. The contention of the three commissioners ruling against the application was that the filing, made under PATH Allegheny Transmission Co. LLC, was incorrect as Maryland law requires an application be filed by a power generating company. In the state, that entity for the company is Potomac Edison.

In its ruling, the PSC said its decision "should not be read to foreshadow any views on the merits of the proposed transmission line."

Doug Kaplan, president of the Sugarloaf Conservancy organization, said Friday that he was not surprised at the content of the Allegheny Energy letter.

"We would like to know what (the utility company) plan(s) to do, so we will know what to do," Kaplan said, referring to the organization's questioning of the need for the project.

Sugarloaf Conservancy has pushed for underground wiring, or a delay in the project, saying the need for power is not as urgent as the utility company says.

Planning ahead, however, the utility company has approached property owners along the proposed route and purchased a site for the substation.

Stephen "Buzz" Mackintosh, who has land near where the transmission lines would enter the substation, questioned why Allegheny Energy would pay \$7 million for the substation site without some anticipation of approval in the future.

They might have to re-file or go through the entire process again, including with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which oversees power needs nationwide, Mackintosh said.

"I hope our delegation to Annapolis keeps its eyes open because Allegheny could try to get the state law changed" to not require a power generating firm to be accepted for the application, Macintosh said.

Mackintosh and other residents near the proposed substation site formed CAKES (Citizens Against the Kempton Electric Substation) to fight the structure, which would be the largest in the U.S. Allegheny Energy named the proposed station "Kempton" because it already has a substation in Mount Airy.

The Frederick County Commissioners, four of whom visited properties around the proposed substation, sent a letter to the PSC emphasizing that the county had final say on substation plans, pointing to required zoning and other county regulations.



Photo by Staff file photo by Travis Pratt

Allegheny Energy has filed a letter of intent with the Maryland Public Service Commission.

Allegheny Energy said the PATH project is needed to provide electricity to the growing mid-Atlantic region. The substation is at the site where transmission lines from Allegheny Power, Potomac Electric Power Co. and Baltimore Gas & Electric Co. merge.

The PATH line could become part of a national electric power corridor, raising the possibility that the future of the project could be in federal hands with FERC. That possibility was raised by County Commissioner John L. Thompson.

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