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### Residents rally against proposed PATH substation

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Residents of the area where a proposed electric substation could be located say the site is not only a poor choice, but a dangerous one.

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The substation would be the terminus of a nearly 300-mile electric transmission line project called the Potomac Appalachian Transmission Highline, or PATH, from West Virginia through Maryland to the site off Bartholows Road near Mount Airy. The project, a joint effort of Allegheny Energy and American Electric Power, is estimated to cost \$1.8 billion.

The proposed substation would be 2,400 by 750 square feet, sitting on about 41 acres of a 150-acre site. The substation would have a 180-foot structure for a 750 kilovolt line and a 100-foot structure for a 500 kilovolt line, said Todd Meyers, manager of external communications for Allegheny Energy.

The utility company purchased land for the project in January for \$6.8 million.

Residents in the area have formed a grassroots group, Citizens Against the Kemptown Electric Substation.

Vicki Krivos and Kristin Madden, two active members of CAKES, said the group has numerous concerns beyond the visual impact of the substation and its effect on property values.

One of the major complaints is why the power company has been lax in notifying residents. They questioned why Allegheny Energy didn't let residents know of the proposed substation in its monthly utility bills or through another mailing.

"It may not be a legal requirement," Krivos said, "but simply a courtesy. They (Allegheny) could have put something in our bill. We certainly get that each month."

Meyers said the utility company would notify residents in the area "in the time frame as required by the rules of the Maryland Public Service Commission. Time for notification under the rules is tied to the setting of a procedural schedule for the evidentiary phase of the case which has not commenced."

Meyers said Frederick County's rules also have "precise requirements for notification. The notification is not required until after the application for special exception is filed and PATH-Allegheny has not yet filed an application with Frederick County."

The CAKES representatives said one of the most frustrating aspects of the project is a lack of response from Allegheny. Krivos and Madden said they have repeatedly sent questions to the utility company and were told "those things are still being worked out." In Madden's case, she was sent a 600-page document that failed to answer questions about the size of the substation.

"There have been people on the site, surveying and even putting up balloons to photograph to see the height of the towers. But they won't answer any questions when asked by residents," Krivos said.

Meyers said surveying crews and other utility company contractors have specialized tasks to perform and generally do not know enough about the details of PATH to speak with authority. He said anyone with questions could call 1-888-678-7270.

Krivos said there are three main points that CAKES is emphasizing. She said a lot of elected officials are promoting environmental issues, yet power for the transmission will come from coal-fired plants. Second, she said, the utility company said it prefers to locate in rural areas, yet is proposing the substation in a site surrounded by 1,200 homes.



Photo by Travis Pratt

This aerial photo taken on June 23 shows the site a proposed PATH electric substation off Bartholows Road which runs from the lower right to the upper left. The first intersection from the bottom is Cowmans Manor Drive. Residents in the area have formed a grassroots group against the substation.

"And I think the main goal is simply the 14.3 percent rate of return Allegheny will get once it is in place," Krivos said. "That's going to be paid by the customers."

Residents also question why the structure was called the "Kemptown substation." Krivos said that confused many people who thought the substation was to be located near that small town.

"Allegheny Power already operates an existing substation in Mount Airy," Meyers said, which is designated by that name. "To avoid confusion, Allegheny never labels two substations with the same name. He said Kemptown is in close proximity to the site and that name was chosen.

Meyers also pointed out that the substation location "is clearly marked on maps displayed during 24 well-advertised public open houses along the study area in 2008." Open houses were held in New Market, Middletown and Frederick. "The same maps were posted on the website ([www.pathtransmission.com](http://www.pathtransmission.com)) more than a year ago."

Krivos noted that there are a substantial number of advertisements, both on air and in print, by the utility company about PATH's need to meet the demand for electricity. But for those outside the area impacted immediately by the substation, it is simply seen as a necessary way to keep the lights on.

Using a report from the Sugarloaf Conservancy, a grassroots movement seeking to have Allegheny Energy bury proposed wiring, there are differences in energy use forecast between PJM, the regional transmission authority, and the U.S. Department of Energy.

According to the report, PJM is forecasting a projected energy use increase of 10.71 percent by 2014, while the DOE said the increase will only be 5 percent. That year is when Allegheny Power said it needs to have PATH online to meet demand.

Krivos and Madden said there are also safety issues to worry about with the proposed substation. A fire at the plant could endanger the entire neighborhood. The substation, linked to power through three companies, might be a tempting target for terrorists wanting to take out power for a substantial geographic area.

Meyers said the site was chosen because it is at the junction of two existing 500 kilovolt transmission lines on the property linking Allegheny Power, Baltimore Gas & Electric and Potomac Electric Power Co.

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