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Allegheny Power Expected to File PATH by March

By CARRIE DIETZ

Allegheny Power officials expect to file a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) in Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia by March for the Potomac Appalachian Transmission Highline, according to Todd Meyers, spokesperson for the power company.

Once completed, the Public Service Commissions of Maryland and West Virginia and the Virginia State Corporation Commission will initiate their regulatory review processes, which could take a year or more.

"The process will include public input hearings and evidentiary hearings, which each commission will conduct and schedule," said Meyers.

The line needs to be in service by June 2013 to prevent reliability problems with the grid, including the overloading of several transmission lines that could threaten the regional electric supply and trigger blackouts, Meyers said.

About 70 miles of the project has been eliminated, and the plan now has only one 760-kilovolt line across Frederick County as opposed to two 500-kilovolt lines previously noted.

"Many were relieved to learn that some of the potential routes depicted earlier in the summer are no longer under consideration; other property owners remained understandably concerned that other potential routes near their homes remain viable options," said Meyers after a December 4 open house unveiled new line paths.

The Sugarloaf Conservancy, however, was busy outside the conference center collecting names for a petition wanting an independent review of the PATH plans and selling hats touting the group's mantra: "Bury the Lines." The group was asked by Allegheny Power company to move from the center's lobby outside.

"We were dismayed when they insisted that the hotel ask us to leave the lobby and stand outside the

building because we 'were protesters,'" said Peggy Kaplan with the Sugarloaf Conservancy.

Meyers defended the power company's decision. "The purpose of our meeting was to impart important information about the project to the public and answer their questions, not engage in a debate with members of the Conservancy."

Earlier the group's president, Doug Kaplan, said burying the lines is the "right thing to do."

Kaplan disagrees with the company's findings that burying the lines is cost-prohibitive and inconceivable because the lines would get too hot if underground.

While not speaking specifically to the group's goal to have the project include buried lines, Meyers said, "Our goal is to develop a line route that balances the interests of landowners, neighboring property owners, business owners and regulators so as to minimize environmental and land-use impacts."