

## FrederickNewsPost.com

### Utility company files new application for PATH project

Originally published December 23, 2009

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Allegheny Energy is moving to get its three-state transmission line back on the right path.

The Pennsylvania-based utility company on Monday filed a new application with the Maryland Public Service Commission for its PATH project.

The Potomac Appalachian Transmission Highline, a nearly 300-mile, \$1.8 billion, high-voltage electric power line and substation was initially turned down by the PSC on legal issues. The main point of contention was that the utility company filed its original application as PATH Allegheny, which is not an accepted entity in Maryland to construct the line. The new application is filed as Potomac Edison, the required name for such an application in Maryland.

The project is a joint effort of Allegheny Energy and American Electric Power.

Allegheny Energy also on Monday filed with the Virginia State Corporation Commission, which oversees utilities, asking to withdraw the pending application in that state and suspend the procedural schedule.

Todd Meyers, manager of external communications for Allegheny Energy, said the company plans to file a new application in Virginia in early 2010. He said the move would better coordinate the schedules of the utility commissions in Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia. In West Virginia, the utility company asked for a delay in a decision on the line from June 2010 to Jan. 25, 2011.

The utility company said the line is needed, including a new substation near Mount Airy. The filings are intended to align the three states and enable regulators in each state to consider the electrical need for the project based on the same facts, Meyers said.

"These filings are procedural in nature and are part of an extremely complex case to upgrade to the regional electric transmission grid," Meyers said.

"Both Allegheny and AEP remain fully committed to building the PATH project to meet the June 2014 in-service deadline," Meyers said. He emphasized that the proposed substation, known as the Kemptown substation, is an integral part of the PATH project.

The utility company held numerous open houses on the project around the region, set up a PATH education and awareness team headed by a former Maryland PSC chairman and has been promoting the need for the project in print and TV ads in the region.

But the project has drawn opposition from residents in the line of the proposed project and environmental groups.

The groups say the line will create aesthetic and environmental impacts, as well as safety issues from electromagnetic energy from the lines to the substation as a potential target for terrorists. Some groups are pushing to have the line, if it goes through, be underground. The proposed substation would be the largest in the U.S. and one of the largest in the world.

Some groups, such as the Sugarloaf Conservancy, question the need for more electrical power with a sluggish economy and less growth than anticipated years ago.

Doug Kaplan, president of Sugarloaf Conservancy, said Allegheny Energy is simply trying an "end run" around the PSC with its proposed new application.

"The company is saying that Potomac Edison will construct and maintain the proposed project, but PATH Allegheny will finance it. They are simply trying to get by with changing a few words," Kaplan said. PATH Allegheny is the entity that would get a guaranteed 14.3 percent rate of return on the investment, approved by PJM, the regional overseer of electric power needs. "It is the ratepayers (consumers) who will be paying for that," Kaplan said.

Kaplan's group had been pushing for putting the transmission lines underground, which he argues can be done cheaper than stated by the utility company. But Kaplan said he believes there really is no need for the project, considering the

decline in economic growth. He also emphasized that alternatives such as wind power should be considered.

"Why should we have power sent 300 miles, when it could be made 12 miles offshore in Maryland?" Kaplan said. "And we have the time to do it."

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