

PSC sets hearings on transmission line

Posted: Monday, November 24, 2014 2:51 pm [Roberta Baumann](#) Waunakee Tribune

Wisconsin's Public Service Commission has scheduled a public hearing on a transmission line proposed through the Dane, Vienna and Waunakee areas.

Set for 3 p.m. Dec. 8 at the Waunakee Village Center, the hearing will allow the PSC members to receive public comment on a 160- to 180-mile, 345,000-volt line proposed from north of La Crosse to northern Dane County.

The line's end points would be at the N. Madison Substation in the Town of Vienna continuing to ATC's Cardinal Substation in the Town of Middleton. Another would be at Xcel Energy's new Briggs Road Substation in Holmen.

American Transmission Co. and Xcel Energy have proposed the line, which they say will improve electric system reliability both locally and regionally.

According to a fact sheet from ATC, the line would offset the need for approximately \$160 million lower voltage transmission upgrades in western Wisconsin.

The line is also purported to have economic benefits for utility customers, providing greater access to the wholesale electricity market with a potential savings, according to the ACT fact sheet.

It is also expected to improve the efficiency of the grid and allow a connection to "high quality renewable resources in the nation's western wind alley," the fact sheet notes. That should allow for a greater use of renewable resources.

The line is supported by Renew Wisconsin, an advocacy group for renewable energy.

According to that organization, the line "will help the Midwest capitalize on valuable wind resources, creating jobs and revenue for rural landowners and communities, and continue to build a cleaner and healthier energy future."

According to RENEW, Wisconsin customers will pay for approximately 15 percent of the project cost. The line is estimated at \$540 million to \$580 million, with Wisconsin customers paying between \$81 and \$87 million. Customers outside of Wisconsin will cover the rest.

The organization notes that the line is designed to bring more wind power onto the grid and result in more wind power development.

RENEW estimates the economic impact to generate \$12.2 million in tax revenue and pay \$25 million to local governments.

But two other organizations, Citizens Energy Task Force (CETF) and Save Our Unique Lands (SOUL) are opposing the line.

Those groups say the environmental impact statement filed with the PSC fails to analyze who profits from the line and the economic and environmental costs. They also question the line's impact on tourism.

A press release from the organizations notes, "Without capturing all costs, benefits and risks... an accurate assessment is impossible, and the PSC cannot fulfill this obligation."

Rob Danielson of SOUL notes that several questions remain unanswered.

"More than 2,000 citizens, 90 municipalities and 12 legislators have asked the PSC for complete, unbiased analysis, comparing alternatives to building the high voltage transmission option," Danielson said. "These requests continued to go unanswered despite statutes that recommend description of alternatives in time for ratepayer input in the EIS."

The Waunakee public hearing is the first of five. Other hearings are set for 3 p.m. at the following locations and dates:

- Dec. 9 – Town of Rutland Town Hall, W7937 Hwy, MH, Holmen;
- Dec. 10 – Cashton Community Hall, 811 Main St., Cashton;
- Dec. 11 – Three Bears Lodge, 701 Yogi Circle, Warrens;
- Dec. 15 – Kalahari Resorts, Suite A, 1305 Kalahari Dr., Wisconsin Dells.

The PSC is expected to deliver a decision on the line application in 2015, according to the ATC timeline. If approved, construction would begin in 2016 with the line in service in 2018.

For maps showing the two proposed routes in the Waunakee area, visit the website