

Power line jungle to grow again ²



By [Linton Delainey](#), Special to Sherwood Park News
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Each time Strathcona County residents drive under the massive Heartland “power line jungle” planted along the east Anthony Henday Freeway, they are reminded of their disappointment in the Alberta government’s regulating body, the Alberta Utilities Commission (AUC), for approving the Heartland Transmission Project to run in the transportation utility corridor (TUC).

In 2011, the AUC received cost and land efficiency-based evidence which supported building the current Heartland power line in Parkland County to the west where significantly fewer landowners and the environment would be affected.

However, despite logical arguments and tax dollar-supported submissions by Strathcona County, its council and thousands of their residents through RETA (Responsible Electricity Transmission for Albertans), the AUC approved the Strathcona County TUC route instead.

Unfortunately, the perception still persists by many residents in Strathcona County that the AUC was unable to make fair and responsible adjudications of the submissions presented to them due to the overwhelming influence of large power providers.

Sadly, many residents still believe that, prior to the public hearings, the AUC had pre-determined its decision to approve the Heartland power line and all efforts to change it were a waste of time, effort and money.

When Sherwood Park was incorporated in 1954, it was unfortunate that successive potential new residents were often told that the TUC would continue to be a green-belt buffer zone between Refinery Row and the adjacent urban neighbourhoods and rural sub-divisions located along the Anthony Henday freeway.

Unfortunately, over the past 60 years, thousands of unsuspecting potential residents and their real estate agents were unaware that hundreds of properties adjacent to the TUC had, in fact, been bought up in order to make room for things like the Heartland overhead power line towers and Alberta Transportation’s massive Anthony Henday freeway.

Now it’s happening again. Unless 92,000 Strathcona County residents take the opportunity to voice their concern to the AUC and others, there is the potential that a new 25 km overhead “power line jungle” could also be built along Highway 14 from the south Anthony Henday freeway near the abandoned Colchester Elementary School site, to a substation located near South Cooking Lake.

At recent public open houses, AltaLink documents claimed “we have support for the (north route) line to continue along Highway 14 during consultation.”

Regarding a possible south route option east from Beaumont along Highway 625 and Township Road 510, the same document stated, “it (the south route) is estimated to be the most cost effective route” and it “has the second lowest residential impact within 150 metres (490 feet) of the routes considered.”

Although most Strathcona residents would question where AltaLink thinks it has received support for the north route, I think our residents would agree that, this time, Leduc County should step up to do its share to provide electricity to all Albertans and welcome this new power line to be built along its borders.

If Strathcona County residents want to have their concerns registered, they must be filed in writing and submitted to the AUC using the file title The AltaLink Cooking Lake 138-kV Transmission and Substation Upgrade at www.auc.ab.ca before October.

Residents may also choose to send copies of their e-mails and letters to their Strathcona County mayor and ward councillor, as well as to their provincial MLAs.

In addition, residents are encouraged to direct their questions and concerns to:

- The AUC: 780-427-4903 or consumer-relations@auc.ab.ca or utilitiesconcerns@auc.ab.ca.
- AltaLink: 1-877-267-1453 or stakeholderrelations@altalink.ca.
- Alberta Transportation: Hon. MLA Wayne Drysdale, Transportation minister, at 780-427-2080 or transportation.minister@gov.ab.ca.

Finally, I encourage all Strathcona County residents to watch the Sherwood Park News for announcements by AltaLink that a third and possibly final, round of public open houses will be held (and to which I would encourage all concerned residents to attend).

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