

# Concerns Aired In Legislature Over \$2 Billion Cross-State Transmission Line

BY JACOB KAUFFMAN KUAR NOVEMBER 10, 2014

Members of the state legislature on Monday reviewed the potential impact of a proposed \$2 billion, 750 mile interstate transmission line that would cross Arkansas from west to east from just north of Fort Smith to West Memphis.

Outgoing Republican State Representative John Hutchison (R-Harrisburg) has typically been against regulating the energy sector. However, Hutchison believes the Plains and Eastern Clean Line Transmission Project will bring problems to waterfowl, such as ducks, in the areas it crosses. That includes an area nearby his own property in northeast Arkansas.

“Like where we live ducks come and feed and basically stay within a 100 mile radius of the rest area, depending on the weather, is how they go out. When it comes to duck hunting you have to have a place of rest. You can’t have a gun barrel, you know, on them at all times,” said Hutchison.

Testifying at a sparsely attended, and increasingly thinned out, meeting of both the joint State Agencies and Governmental Affairs committees and joint Agriculture, Forestry, and Economic Development committees Hutchison said the harm is not just to the birds themselves but to the culture and economy built up around the animals.

Hutchinson also expressed concern the power lines would cause harm to humans and said he doubted studies finding otherwise. He suggested energy companies have had too much influence in studies finding the transmission project safe to wildlife and humans.

[The hearing](#) did not include any remarks from representatives of the project. In a statement Clean Line Energy Partners dismissed such concerns.

Human health:

*“The strength of the electric and magnetic fields when standing directly under the transmission lines would be similar, or much less, than those that are already naturally occurring and which people encounter every day. As you step out of the right-of-way the electrical and magnetic fields very quickly diminish.”*

Waterfowl:

*“The project has sought to minimize adverse effects on sensitive natural resources and wildlife habitat. An Environmental Impact Statement for the project is being prepared by the Department of Energy. A Draft EIS is expected before the end of 2014 and will be available for public comment.”*

#### Property Rights:

*“Clean Line seeks to negotiate all easement agreements on a voluntary basis and has developed a market-leading compensation package for landowners.”*

Clean Line Partners unsuccessfully sought utility status from the Arkansas Public Service Commission in 2011 for the Plains and Eastern Transmission Line which would grant it eminent domain authority to route the line.

The company also contends the benefits of “hundreds of construction and manufacturing jobs”, electricity for 160,000 homes, a prediction of lower rates, and the deliverance of energy generated from wind power make the so-called Clean Line an asset to the state. The use of wind-generated power could also help the state meet carbon emission reduction targets set by the EPA.

The project has a multi-stage approval process at different levels of government. In recent months [the company has said](#) it could be operational by 2018.

There has [also been discussion](#) from both government officials and industry about circumventing state concerns through federal rules that some interpret to allow high voltage interstate transmission projects to move forward without certain state approvals.