

# County resisting AltaLink line

By [Megan Voss](#), Sherwood Park News

Thursday, October 23, 2014 11:00:00 MDT PM

Strathcona County will be registering as an intervener with the Alberta Utilities Commission (AUC) in hopes that a proposed AltaLink power line will not run through the county.

A portion of the 25-kilometre-long AltaLink Cooking Lake 138-kV transmission line and substation upgrade project is proposed to run parallel to Highway 14, but has many rural residents opposed to the project, as the line would be nearby their homes.

The alternate route would run through Leduc County, and according to Responsible Electricity Transmission for Albertans, the line would be 1.3 kilometres shorter and require 10 fewer towers.

As a part of the south and west of Edmonton area transmission development, AltaLink said the area has had significant growth over the past few years, resulting in a higher demand for electricity.

According to AltaLink, reinforcements to the transmissions system ensure that residents, businesses and the industry have a dependable electricity supply for future years.

"It's anticipated that AltaLink will be filing their proposed project with the Alberta Utilities Commission sometime this month," energy exploration liaison Lori Mills said during a council meeting held on Tuesday, Oct. 21.

"The AUC will be providing notice to all directly and adversely affected landowners about the project, and that will include Strathcona County. Strathcona County can then file a statement of intent to participate with the AUC, which is essentially registering as an intervener."

Mills said it is administration's advice to go forward with the registration process once the project is filed.

"It's our intent to have two main concerns addressed. First, justification of any route selection, as many factors seem to support the alternate route. Second, if the route is approved in Strathcona County, inclusion of conditions that address Strathcona County concerns," she explained.

"As a specialized municipality, Strathcona County has both title, direction, control and management over the roads within the county boundaries... and this situation differs somewhat from the past Heartland Transmission Project. With this latest project, the transmission lines are proposed to be located within county road right-of-ways, including Range Road 220 and the service roads adjacent to Highway 21 and Highway 14. Additionally, this project would route through the heart of the Beaver Hills Moraine."

The Beaver Hills area, located east of Sherwood Park, covers more than 1,500 square kilometres and includes many provincial and federal parks, such as Elk Island National Park, the Cooking Lake-Blackfoot Provincial Recreation Area, Miquelon Lake Provincial Park and several other smaller parks.

Mills said legal representation is recommended for processes such as the AUC hearing, with costs estimated at \$125,000 (the amount would be taken from existing budgets).

"Supporting this recommendation is not a 'Not in my backyard' reaction," Coun. Paul Smith clarified.

"(It's) just a real formalized way of going through and pointing out that there is a better route that has less affect on people, that is probably more efficient, and in the long-term will impact Highway 14 and future growth of the area less than using the Highway 14 route."

Other councillors agreed with him.

"One of the big advantages we have as far as our intervener status is the fact that I believe they completely ignored the Beaver Hills Moraine area and they have not taken into consideration the costs that might be borne by them if they have to go all the way around that, instead of running through Strathcona County," said Coun. Vic Bidzinski.

"I looked at all the routes, and I think this is one of the worst routes they could have picked."

He admitted he could understand the reasoning, with the proximity to the highway.

"That's a short-sighted response to what they are trying to get accomplished," Bidzinski said, adding he felt the county has a better chance to avoid the line than in the situation of the Heartland line that runs along Highway 216, west of Sherwood Park.

If the line is approved, construction is set to begin in the fall of 2015, with an estimated completion date in the winter of 2016.

The vote to approve the county to obtain an intervener status was unanimous.