

# PSC hears opposition to transmission line

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With no Public Service Commissioners present, an administrative judge listened to and recorded hours of testimony against a proposed transmission line Monday.

The public hearing was the first of several to take input on a proposal for the Badger Coulee Transmission Line, with other hearings to follow throughout the state this week.

It drew about 100 people to the Waunakee Village Center, many of whom applauded testimony against the line.

Many who spoke were from Middleton, where the American Transmission Company and Xcel Energy two options on the table for a segment of the 160- to 180-mile line to run from the LaCrosse area to Dane County.

To a filled community room at the Waunakee Village Center, many expressed concern for the line's potential to decrease property values and mar the aesthetics. Others said as energy demands decrease, new lines should not be needed.

Roman Statz led off the testimony, expressing concerns for health impacts. Statz noted that cancer rates have increased.

"We're doing some stuff here we shouldn't be doing," Statz said. "Since it is about money, I personally would much rather pay more for electricity and don't put up any more power lines."

Debra Newman noted that Segment A of the line crosses her residential neighborhood in Middleton. Her family purchased their house with a nearby 138kV line, but it is much smaller than the 345kV line proposed. "Replacing them with high voltage lines degrades our neighborhood," Newman said, adding that she would be concerned about whether she could ever to resell her home.

Jack Cox said the Environmental Impact Statement's cost-benefit analysis prepared for the PSC fails to take into account the economic and aesthetic impacts of Segment A.

Sean O'Sullivan said he has been fighting the line for the past two years.

"ATC has been ramming this down our throats from the beginning," O'Sullivan said.

O'Sullivan said ATC's argument for the line is weak as energy use is declining. He urged ATC to consider siting the line in nearby open fields.

O'Sullivan and others also expressed concern for the line's impact on nearby Morey Airport.

Karen Upper of the Town of Berry added that the lines will only increase electric costs and any taxes.

"Help us work toward 21st century answers for 21st century questions," Upper said.

Jon Becker of the Capital Region Advocacy Network for Environmental Sustainability (CRANES) said a coalition is currently studying air pollution and is looking at renewable energy opportunities.

Becker said if the lines are needed, ATC should consider burying them. Also, he added that the PSC recently approved electric user rates increases sought by utilities on the basis that revenues are down due to increasing solar power usage.

"The PSC has failed us," Becker said.

Gary Statz added that solar stocks have soared. And, he said, he believed that height restrictions at Morey Field would require ATC to obtain a variance for the lines.

Ralph Jackson lives along segment B, the alternate route for the lines. If the lines are approved for that segment, Jackson urged the placement to be along Hwy. 14.

American Transmission Co. and Xcel Energy say the estimated \$540 million line will improve electric system reliability both locally and regionally. 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," according to a fact sheet from ATC.

Additional hearings are set at 3 p.m. as follows:

- 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 proposed routes in the Waunakee area, visit the website