

Susquehanna-Roseland Line Receives Final Federal Approval

Construction Under Way; Key Grid Reinforcement to Be In Service By June 2015

The Susquehanna-Roseland power line, a major grid upgrade that will improve electric service for millions of people in the Northeast, received final approval from the National Park Service when the agency issued a Record of Decision late Monday (10/1) affirming the utility-chosen route.

In addition to boosting electric service reliability, the new line will create jobs, reduce electric bills for some customers and provide a significant economic stimulus to the region. The project was one of seven priority grid upgrades nationwide named to the federal Rapid Response Team for Transmission.

The companies building the project, PPL Electric Utilities in Pennsylvania and Public Service Electric and Gas Co. in New Jersey, have started construction activities along some areas of the 145-mile route. The line is expected to be in service before the summer peak electricity demand period of 2015.

"This new line will reinforce our nation's critical energy infrastructure for future generations," said Ralph LaRossa, president and chief operating officer of PSE&G, and Gregory N. Dudkin, president of PPL Electric Utilities, in a joint statement. "It will ensure that homes and businesses in a multistate region continue to enjoy safe and reliable electric service long into the future."

The new, 500-kilovolt power line will run from Berwick, Pa., to Roseland, N.J. The independent regional power grid operator, PJM Interconnection, ordered the new line to prevent overloads on other existing power lines. PJM recently reconfirmed the need for the line to correct grid reliability concerns.

It is estimated that the project will save consumers more than \$200 million per year by relieving congestion that currently exists on the power grid.

The utilities' chosen route has already been approved by both the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission and the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities. About 95 percent of the route will follow the path of an existing 85-year-old power line that must be replaced because it is approaching the end of its useful life and is undersized for today's electricity demands. Following an existing power line route significantly reduces the project's overall impact on people and the environment.

The route crosses about four miles of the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, the Middle Delaware National Scenic and Recreational River, and the Appalachian National Scenic Trail on the path of an existing power line. The utilities already have an existing property easement through the park service units, and the existing line had been in place for decades before the park units were established.

To mitigate for unavoidable impacts of the power line on federal lands, as required by the National Park Service, PPL Electric Utilities and PSE&G will contribute to a fund administered by a nonprofit group. As directed by the National Park Service, the money will be used to purchase or preserve land for public use, compensate for wetlands impacts, and fund cultural and historic preservation activities.

The size of the fund, at least \$56 million, was determined by the National Park Service assessment of project impacts. Mitigation is a routine part of the environmental impact review process when there are impacts on federal lands from power lines or other infrastructure improvements needed by society. Mitigation typically is required by federal agencies for impacts that cannot be avoided.

The Susquehanna-Roseland project does not require significant widening of the existing right of way on federal land: The current utility corridor through the National Park Service has cleared widths of up to 200 feet. The only additional right of way and clearing needed by the utilities is 50 additional feet of right of way for seven-tenths of a mile in Pennsylvania where the existing corridor is 100 feet wide. Several miles of the companies' easements are wider than the 200 feet needed for the project, and the excess easement areas will be transferred to the NPS as part of the mitigation plan.

The Obama administration selected the Susquehanna-Roseland line in October 2011 for fast-track treatment by the administration's Rapid Response Team for Transmission. The team was formed to streamline the review and permitting of transmission line projects to increase reliability and save consumers money by modernizing the grid, while ensuring careful federal review. The Susquehanna-Roseland project will create about 2,000 jobs during its 2 1/2-year construction period.

The two utilities have many of the permits required for construction along the route, and have pending applications with federal, state and local authorities to obtain the balance of the permits that are needed. The National Park Service has said it intends to issue the required federal construction permits soon.

SOURCE PPL Electric Utilities

For further information: Paul Wirth, PPL Electric Utilities, +1-610-774-5997

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