

## More proof needed to justify proposed transmission upgrades project

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I am calling on the Public Service Commission (PSC) and Gov. Cuomo to suspend the proposed "Marcy to Pleasant Valley" AC Transmission Upgrades until the need for this project is publicly debated and scientifically proven, and until the PSC's Reforming the Energy Vision (REV) is completed — so we know if and how new high voltage transmission lines will contribute to a 21st-century energy system in New York.

The Town of Pleasant Valley is host to one of New York's largest electrical substations. This visual blight in our community would be the terminus of most of the new transmission lines proposed by the PSC under the governor's Energy Highway initiative to bring upstate power to downstate customers. Con Edison also proposes to build a new transmission line connecting the Cricket Valley power plant in Dover to the substation with towers as high as 180 feet.

Pleasant Valley residents have endured this fenced in no man's land for decades and now face an additional series of uncoordinated and unfair burdens: property values reduced by proposed lines coming from the north and south; electricity rate increases resulting from the new capacity zone; and the assumption (with other valley ratepayers) of most construction costs for the lines. Furthermore, my time and the invaluable resources of fellow community members in the grassroots Pleasant Valley Concerned Citizens are being spent fighting these efforts rather than advancing a positive economic development agenda.

Because of all this, the Town of Pleasant Valley has joined the Hudson Valley Smart Energy Coalition, which has united communities and civic and environmental groups affected by the proposed new transmission lines, which are as technologically outdated as the rotary land-line telephone. The coalition includes highly knowledgeable professionals who have submitted a series of constructive comments through the formal proceedings of the PSC. We've all been shocked and disappointed that Department of Public Service staff has completely ignored our comments — and those submitted by thousands of citizens, elected officials, business owners and civic leaders.

We are dismayed that this \$1 billion ratepayer-supported project is advancing while the PSC has failed to document a need for it. Other generation and transmis-



sion projects, which would provide well over the 1,000 megawatts in capacity expected from the new lines, are gaining their regulatory approvals and would be available for dispatch years before any transmission project under the Energy Highway. The transmission line developers stand to make considerable returns on their investments; yet the staff has proposed ratepayers bear 90 percent of the final project's costs and 80 percent of cost overruns. Even project developers whose proposals are rejected in this competitive process will be able to recover their costs at ratepayers' expense under the staff proposal.

Despite the lack of a documented need, the PSC seeks to justify the project based on as yet undefined "public policy requirements" found in the governor's Energy Highway document. Yet there is no law or regulation establishing such a requirement for any transmission project proposed in this case. The governor's Energy Highway is not a law or regulation; it is merely a policy document. And like many well-intentioned policies, its practical effects, such as bringing real estate markets to a standstill, have not been foreseen.

This proceeding should be suspended until the PSC can analyze all pending alternatives intended to meet future energy needs, including the PSC's own Reforming the Energy Vision. This will enable the PSC to determine whether the new transmission lines are truly needed, allow the real estate market to recover from the damage already caused by this proceeding, and give me time to promote a positive economic agenda for my community and the people of Pleasant Valley.

*The views expressed in this column are not necessarily those of Northern Dutchess News. To submit a column, write to us at [creativeiving@sutchessnews.com](mailto:creativeiving@sutchessnews.com)*