Hudson Valley Smart Energy Coalition

Town of Clinton
Clinton Concerned Citizens
Columbia Land Conservancy
Dutchess County Government
Dutchess Land Conservancy
Farmers and Families for Claverack
Farmers and Families for Livingston
Town of Milan
The Olana Partnership
Omega Institute
Pleasant Valley Concerned Citizens
Preservation League of New York State
Scenic Hudson
Town of Pleasant Valley
Walnut Grove Farm
Winnakee Land Trust

See our Supporting Organizations at www.hvsec.org/supporting-organizations

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Regional Coalition Files Document with PSC: New Analysis Reinforces Lack of Need for Proposed Power Lines

Coalition of community groups, farmers, businesses and municipalities says evidence points to no need for project—not for reliability, consumer rates, economics or public policy

HUDSON VALLEY—The Hudson Valley Smart Energy Coalition (HVSEC), a broad-based collaboration of community groups and officials partnered with Scenic Hudson, has filed official comments with the New York State Public Service Commission (PSC) in its review of proposed high-voltage power lines. Those lines could reach a height of 120 feet and cut through 25 communities in seven Hudson Valley counties. In the technical comments, the 16 members of the HVSEC highlighted that developers still have failed to demonstrate a need for the project and that new information and analysis shows that there is no basis for the project in terms of electric system reliability, consumer rates, economics or public policy. Not only is the project unnecessary, it is likely to increase electricity costs, not decrease them.

Proposed towering power lines not a good deal if they are not needed
Citing recently released information, the HVSEC pointed out that the New York Independent System Operator (NYISO) in its new draft Comprehensive Reliability Plan, issued March 30, determined by its own analysis that new electricity transmission capacity is not necessary for the reliability of New York's electric system. This is significant because NYISO is the independent entity that operates New York's bulk electricity grid, administers the state's electricity markets and provides comprehensive and objective reliability planning for the state's electric grid. In the report, NYISO considered new electricity resources as well as those returning to operation and reduced its projections for future electricity demand, even at peak loads.

Additionally, new research by Bard College Professor of Environmental Science and Physics Dr. Gidon Eshel has bolstered the findings of his late-2014 report on this subject. The earlier study demonstrated that New York has sufficient transmission and generation capacity to handle future peak demand, even if only half the projects NYISO lists as under development ever get built, and even if the Indian Point Energy Center is taken off line.

Cost for projects would fall unfairly on valley ratepayers
HVSEC again asserted concerns about the project costs, which could exceed $1 billion. The coalition continued its objection to the PSC's plan that ratepayers would pay all project costs (90 percent paid by Hudson Valley, New York City and Long Island ratepayers and 10 percent by upstate ratepayers) as well as 80 percent of cost overruns—while there is no evidence ratepayers statewide would benefit from reduced electricity bills. In fact, it is more likely New Yorkers' rates would increase.

If need is proven, criteria for making project as minimally damaging as possible
The HVSEC comments further stated that if the PSC should rule that one or more of the project proposals should go forward, the coalition has criteria it believes must be met. Projects that require acquisition of additional rights-of-way should not be selected to move forward, the coalition argued. The coalition believes consideration only should be given to projects that have no new visual impacts, or that would improve views, and that have the least impact on environmental resources. Each of the 20 different proposals submitted by the four developers has potential impacts to unique and sensitive Hudson Valley resources.

(more)

"There is no need to pursue this hugely expensive project, which threatens the beauty and farmland of the Hudson Valley," said **Scenic Hudson President Ned Sullivan**. "Governor Cuomo has launched another initiative, Reforming the Energy Vision, which would upgrade the state's power grid through innovation and ongoing energy conservation. We should be pursuing that more enlightened path to providing New York with a 21st-century energy system. This approach would put our state in the national vanguard while building on, rather than degrading, the beauty and economy of the Hudson Valley."

"The ratepayers of New York State cannot be asked to put up more than a billion dollars when neither the state nor utilities can demonstrate that these new projects would lead to better service or cheaper rates," said **Town of Livingston Deputy Supervisor Will Yandik**. "New York families and small businesses are already struggling with some of the highest rates in the country."

Omega Institute for Holistic Studies CEO Skip Backus stated, "As CEO of Omega Institute I often find myself in conversation with other business owners in the Hudson Valley. Without exception the conversation goes to the cost of electricity in the valley and the fact that the proposed plan will do nothing to lower our rates and in fact will actually increase them and compromise the environment. The proposed project makes no sense given there has been no proven need. My hope is we can come together and find a way to better serve the citizens and businesses of the Hudson Valley."

Dan Duthie, an attorney representing four towns, two citizens groups and one farm in the HVSEC, observed, "According to analysis by the New York Independent System Operator, the cost for this transmission project would likely exceed any savings ratepayers would get from the project. Simply put, this means that the 'solution' is more expensive than the problem."

Coalition seeks modern solutions and a forward-looking state energy plan

The HVSEC is interested in innovative energy systems and supports creation of a modern, comprehensive energy plan for New York State. The HVSEC is concerned about major negative impacts the proposed towering, high-voltage power lines could have and is working to protect communities from these impacts. The proposed project could stretch for 150 miles, and the coalition is focused on portions of the power lines that would pass through a large swath of the Hudson Valley, ultimately reaching their destination in Dutchess County. The coalition asserts that the proposed power lines threaten prime agricultural lands, critical environmental areas and the Hudson River, economic health, scenic beauty, public parks, and cultural and historic sites. The project is not needed and will likely cause electricity rates to go up.

The HVSEC—which includes municipal officials; environmental, cultural, historic and land preservation organizations; businesses; and residents—calls on the PSC to either provide a robust review on the issue of need now or suspend the process until need can be conclusively demonstrated using the most up-to-date and comprehensive information. Additionally, the coalition believes no project that has a negative benefit-to-cost ratio should move forward.

About the Hudson Valley Smart Energy Coalition

The Hudson Valley Smart Energy Coalition includes municipal officials; environmental, cultural, historic and land preservation organizations; businesses; and residents who support creation of a modern, comprehensive energy plan for the Hudson Valley and New York State. More information available at www.hvsec.org.

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