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January 2017

R-Project 345,000 Volt

Transmission Line PROJECT

NPPD Executives Host Meetings For Landowners Along R-Project Footprint

In mid-November, NPPD President and CEO **Pat Pope** and Vice President and Chief Operating Officer **Tom Kent** met with landowners along the R-Project line route. Eighty-nine interested parties attended at least one of the 12 meetings held in the communities of Chambers, Burwell, Brewster, Thedford, Stapleton and North Platte. Other attendees included NPPD Board Directors **Tom Hoff**, **Barry DeKay** and incoming Director **Bill Hoyt**, as well as representatives of NPPD's wholesale partners Elkhorn Rural Public Power District, Custer Public Power District and Loup Valleys Public Power District.

Dubbed as "Community Conversations," the meetings provided an opportunity for an open discussion about the project with NPPD's top executives. "We are here to listen to your concerns, answer questions and correct misinformation," said Pope.

"Changing the line route is not the intent of these meetings," stressed Kent. "However, as we work with landowners on easement acquisition we may make minor changes to the route across a landowner's property if it makes sense."

Pope kicked off the meetings explaining the need for the line.

1. Enhance reliability of NPPD's electric transmission system

"Even if no renewable energy projects ever connect to this line, it is still needed for reliability and to relieve congestion."

*Pat Pope
President and CEO*

2. Relieve congestion from existing lines within the transmission system
3. Provide additional opportunities for development of renewable energy projects.

Clearly, the top two reasons take precedence over the third. "Even if no renewable energy projects ever connect to this line, it is still needed for reliability and to relieve congestion," Pope explained.

Pope recalled the summer of 2012 when NPPD's transmission system reached operational limits. In some areas, customers were asked to cut back on their electric usage to prevent overloading transmission lines.

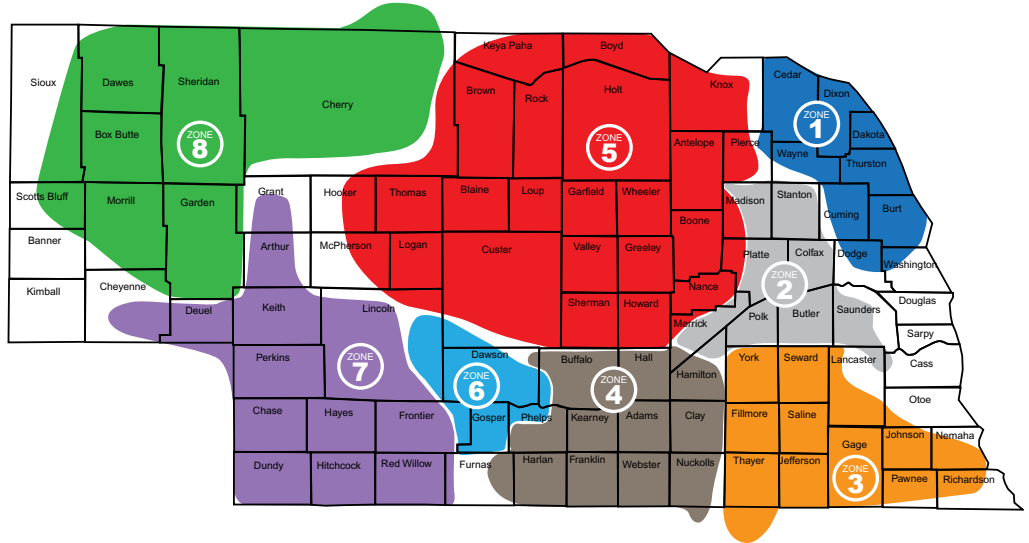
Why Thedford?

NPPD's Hoskins-Neligh transmission line went live in July of this year. "The Hoskins-Neligh line will help with the issues we had in Zone 5 in the summer of

(continued on page 2)

TERM Program Zones

During the summer of 2012, temperatures soared and little, if any, rain fell. Impacted by extreme drought and heat, a region identified by NPPD as Zone 5 (all or parts of about 20 counties in north central Nebraska) experienced difficulties meeting the energy requirements for area electric customers. It wasn't a matter of not having enough power available, Tom Kent explained at the time, but rather a lack of transmission that constrained NPPD's ability to transmit energy to where it was needed.



2012,” explained Kent. “However, we need to reinforce that ring on the western part of the state. Our planning engineers studied the transmission system in terms of where the best connection would be for the R-Project and determined that a future connection at the existing Thedford substation would be the most feasible and provide the greatest benefits to all Nebraskans.”

Working Together

Pope stressed the importance of working together and keeping the lines of communication open. He explained that while some initial work on structure staking had taken place, NPPD was more than willing to work with the landowners to place the structures in locations that were suitable to both NPPD and the landowner, as long as those changes made sense.

If a landowner and NPPD cannot reach an agreement on an easement voluntarily, then NPPD is forced to obtain the easement by condemnation. “We much prefer to work with the landowner voluntarily to further minimize impacts to their property if possible,” stated Pope. “Condemnation is a last resort.”

Pope wants landowners to feel comfortable calling NPPD to discuss potential changes. “We are in this for the long haul,” stated Pope. “This line will serve Nebraskans for many decades and we want to maintain a positive working relationship between landowners and NPPD.”

Pope also indicated he plans to hire or contract with an individual who will be dedicated to right-of-way restoration.

“This resource will monitor the restoration and will have a relationship with every landowner,” he said.

Construction and Foundations



Examples of a steel pole and lattice tower to be used on the R-Project transmission line. Construction is set to begin in October 2017 with an October 2019 in-service date.

NPPD will use a combination of steel poles and lattice towers for the R-Project. The steel poles will typically be used on sections of the project that have relatively good access or are near established roads and cultivated fields.

Lattice towers will be installed on sections of the project that have limited access. Lattice towers minimize impacts to fragile soils due to construction options. For example, lattice towers can be erected with helicopters, which negate the need to have a large crane at each site, and helical pier foundations can be used instead of foundations which require the use of concrete.



Drilled Pier Foundations.
Materials: Concrete, Steel Rebar, Anchor Bolts / Stub Angle
Equipment: Digger, Concrete and Dump trucks, Crane



Helical Pier Foundation.
Materials: Prefabricated Steel Piers and Base Plates
Equipment: Modified Excavator, Small Crane

In Conclusion

“From my perspective, the meetings were very educational,” said Pope. “At the end of each meeting, we didn’t always agree with each other, but I believe we had a better understanding of each other’s point of view. We listened. We gathered information and we have a list of action items to follow up on.”

In conclusion, the entire transmission grid will benefit from the R-Project.

“Transmission lines are not easy to build,” said Pope, “and they cost a lot of money. If it didn’t have to be built, if there was another way to ensure reliability, I’d be all over it.”

“We aren’t going to get zero impact,” said Kent. “People will be impacted, but we want to minimize that impact as much as we can. We are Nebraskans building this line for Nebraskans. We truly care.”

Q&A

Q. Why not build the R-Project transmission line underground?

A. Even though the technology exists to build a 345,000 volt line underground, NPPD does not currently have the infrastructure in place to support or maintain buried 345,000 volt transmission lines. Also, the cost is approximately 20-25 times more expensive to build an underground transmission line versus an overhead transmission line. If there is a failure, the time to repair is much longer. Land restoration associated with burying a transmission line can be quite extensive, especially in sensitive areas.

Q. What will you do to restore the Sand Hills after line construction?

A. One of NPPD’s goals throughout the entire R-Project is to minimize impacts to landowners’ property. We chose construction methods that are less invasive and are suitable for the various terrain. Where damages occur that need to be repaired, we will seek landowner input on their respective restoration experiences. We have consulted with a variety of agencies who have restoration experts on staff. After line construction, it is one of our priorities to restore the property to as close to the original state as possible. To do so will require NPPD and landowners to work together closely. In addition, NPPD plans to hire or contract with an individual who will be dedicated to right-of-way restoration.

Q. Is the easement permanent?

A. Yes, NPPD will acquire a perpetual easement for as long as the line exists. NPPD or its successor would be bound by that easement.

(More Q&A on page 4)

Q. Why is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) involved with the R-Project?

A. The R-Project will go through the habitat of the American Burying Beetle (ABB), which is listed as an endangered species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Under the ESA, a project proponent may apply to the Service for an incidental take permit (ITP) that will allow for the “take” of an endangered species, in this case ABB. Thus, the Service is involved with the R-Project because NPPD has applied for an ITP.

Q. What are the steps to apply for an incidental take permit?

A. An application for an ITP must also include submittal of a habitat conservation plan (HCP). The HCP, among other things, will describe the steps the applicant will take to monitor, minimize, and mitigate such impacts; the funding that will be available to implement such steps; and alternative actions that the applicant considered and the reasons why such alternatives are not proposed to be used. In coordination with the Service, NPPD has prepared a draft HCP.

Q. What process does the Service have to go through to issue NPPD the take permit?

A. The Service’s consideration of NPPD’s permit application requires compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Under NEPA, the Service must analyze the impacts of the proposed action and the impacts of reasonable alternatives to that action. The analysis of the potential impacts are discussed and documented in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The NEPA process also has a public-participation component. The public will be able to review and comment on the Service’s draft EIS, as well as NPPD’s draft HCP.

Q. Is it appropriate for NPPD to acquire easements prior to completion of the Service’s review of the potential environmental impacts of the R-Project?

A. The process of acquiring easements does not result in environmental impacts, and acquiring easements now helps keep the project on schedule. Actual construction cannot begin until the NEPA process is completed and an ITP is issued.

The R-Project 345 kV Transmission Line Newsletter is published by NPPD’s transmission project team. It is intended to provide a project overview and communicate project developments.

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