



Nebraska Public Power District

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June 2014

R-Project 345,000 volt



Transmission Line PROJECT

Public comment continues on R-Project

Public comment continues on the proposed routing of the R-Project, an approximate 220-mile 345,000 volt transmission line project that will run north from Nebraska Public Power District's (NPPD) Gerald Gentleman Station near Sutherland to a new substation to be sited adjacent to NPPD's existing substation east of Thedford. The new line will then proceed east and connect to a second substation to be sited in the Holt/Antelope/Wheeler County area. NPPD has been accepting comments on this project for more than a year.

Third round of open houses well attended

NPPD recently hosted a third round of open houses at six different locations within the corridors—Stapleton, Sutherland, Thedford, Bartlett, Dunning and Burwell. A combined 398 people registered at the open houses.



Here, an NPPD representative discusses the need and benefits of the R-Project at the Bartlett open house on May 5.

"I'd like to thank those who attended an open house," said Senior Project Manager **Craig Holthe**. "The information we receive from landowners about their property is critical. The feedback about current land use, as well as future plans for the land, will help determine the most suitable line route."

Holthe emphasized that no final line route has been chosen and that all comments will be considered before a route is chosen.

"More than 2,000 comments were received from all three rounds of open houses," he said. "The project team is reviewing those comments as well as the feedback that continues to come in through the mail, our website, email address and hotline. Feedback from other agencies, such as the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission for example, is also being evaluated." A proposed line route will be communicated prior to the public hearing, which is tentatively set for the fall/winter time frame.

What we heard

Combined exit poll data from the three rounds of open houses shows that the most important issue to landowners is how close the transmission line will be to residences, followed by minimizing impact to farm and ranch operations. "The top two items were rated nearly identical by attendees," said Holthe. "We will work with individual landowners on a case-by-case basis to address these issues as well as any others they may have."

The third most important issue was 'Stabilization and restoration of disturbed areas.' "We currently own and maintain lines in the sandhills and have experience restoring damages," Holthe said, "however we continue to look for better ways to reduce the impact of structures." Using helical pier foundations for the lattice structures is a new construction method for NPPD. Recent projects by other utilities show these piers work well in sensitive areas and eliminate the need for concrete foundations.

"We consulted with various agencies and have restoration experts on hand to help guide us on ways to restore the land," continued Holthe. "Landowners know their land the best and are also a valuable resource. We want this restoration effort to be a partnership where we monitor and take care of any damages that might result from line construction."



American Burying Beetle surveying to occur June 13-18

American Burying Beetle (ABB) surveys will be conducted June 13-18 along portions of the preferred and alternate line

routes for the R-Project. ABB are listed as an endangered species that may be present in some area of the R-Project. The areas where surveys will take place can generally be described as follows:

- Along Highway 83 from approximately one mile north of Stapleton to approximately one mile south of the Thedford Airport

- Along portions of Sandhills/Ringold/Seneca Road from the Lincoln/McPherson County Line (approximately eight miles south of Ringold) north to approximately eight miles south of Seneca

The purpose of the surveys is to determine if ABB are present in these areas, and if so, to what extent. Information for these surveys will be used for further project planning and permitting efforts. Any captured ABB will be released at the location where they were captured.

Coordinated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, the surveys will be conducted by trained biologists working as two-person teams. All ABB survey efforts will be conducted on public right-of-way.

The Southwest Power Pool, NPPD's Regional Transmission Organization, conducted studies that show three main benefits of the R-Project.

Enhance reliability – All Nebraskans will benefit from the R-Project. Senior Project Manager **Craig Holthe** noted that the electrical grid will be less vulnerable to disruptions by having another power line in place. “By adding this line and separating it from existing lines, our transmission system will be in a stronger position to maintain electric service to customers during storms and other challenges to the system.” Past history of ice storms across Nebraska shows the value this line can provide in continuing service to customers while other lines may be damaged.

Relieve congestion – “Electricity usage has grown significantly over the years” explained Holthe. “As our energy demands continue to grow, we need our infrastructure to grow with it to keep up with those demands.” The R-Project will provide an additional avenue for power to get to where it is needed, thereby reducing congestion on other transmission lines and providing more efficient use of the entire electric system, including maximizing the use of the most efficient generation facilities connected to NPPD's system. “This efficiency in operation will help NPPD and your electric utility deliver to you the lowest priced energy available on the system,” said Holthe.

Renewable generation opportunities – Studies indicate the area considered for the transmission line project contains quality wind resource potential. This project will provide access to the transmission system for wind projects by electric utilities if they are determined necessary in the future, as well as access for projects that may be pursued by private developers. At this time, no specific wind projects have been identified.

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

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