

# SIERRA CLUB

## WEST VIRGINIA CHAPTER

For more info or to get active:

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## PATH Issues and Answers (Potomac-Appalachian Transmission Highline)

### Background

The Potomac-Appalachian Transmission Highline (PATH) is a joint venture of American Electric Power (AEP) and Allegheny Energy to build a new high-voltage interstate transmission line. The PATH project includes: 244 miles of 765-kilovolt (kV) transmission from AEP's Amos substation near St. Albans, W.Va., to Allegheny's Bedington substation, northeast of Martinsburg, WV and 46 miles of twin-circuit 500-kV transmission from Bedington to a new substation near Kemptown, southeast of Frederick, MD. An application will likely be filed soon with the WV Public Service Commission (PSC) for approval to construct the transmission line. The line is intended to provide additional transmission capacity to allow Allegheny Energy and AEP to transmit power from their plants in WV, PA and OH, to East Coast customers.

PATH is the second new transmission line proposed as part of the National Interest Electric Transmission Corridor (NIETC) recently approved by the US Department of Energy. The NIETC allows the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to authorize a transmission corridor if the state agency does not approve one within one year of the application. However, the US DOE designation does NOT direct anyone to build a line, instead it encourages consideration of a full range of alternatives, including local generation or energy conservation measures, to meet electricity demands. The first line, TrAIL, (Trans Allegheny Interstate Line) was proposed by Allegheny Energy in March 2007, and their application is currently pending before the WV Public Service Commission. Opposition to TrAIL has been expressed by the Hampshire, Hardy, Preston and Monongalia County Commissions, several watershed organizations, and various individuals and homeowners.

Adverse direct impacts from the proposed transmission line include, but are not limited to:

- ◆ permanent compromise of an extended swath of virgin land across the state
- ◆ loss of use of private property along the path of the line,
- ◆ noise and disturbance during construction,
- ◆ aesthetic impacts and loss of scenic values forever,
- ◆ water quality impacts from herbicides used to maintain the line right-of-way,
- ◆ electrical interference with appliances near the line,
- ◆ loss of wildlife habitat and threat to biodiversity.

Indirect adverse effects of the line will stem from increased sales of power, including:

- ◆ increased coal mining, mine subsidence, acid mine drainage, or mountaintop removal,
- ◆ increased air pollution, including acid rain, ozone, mercury and particulate pollution, especially as power from old dirty coal plants displaces cleaner natural gas plants,
- ◆ increased emissions of greenhouse gases for the life of the line (30-50 years+),
- ◆ increased electricity costs to local customers who will pay higher electric rates.

*"Not blind opposition to progress, but opposition to blind progress."*

## Alternatives

1. Invest in energy conservation and "demand-side management" to reduce the need for new capacity. This would be the cheapest for consumers, avoid adverse environmental impacts, and would occur more quickly than any construction option. The only adverse effect is that Allegheny Energy and AEP do not currently make any money by investing in conservation.

2. Improve existing transmission networks. This would avoid many costs, certainly more than the temporary cost associated with any shut down of the existing corridor during construction.

3. Build additional transmission lines on existing rights-of-way. This would avoid the any incremental impact on new land owners, even if indirect environmental impacts would remain.

4. Re-locate the proposed line to other locations where necessary to preserve unique pristine areas, and avoid imposing those impacts elsewhere.

## For more information, visit these web sites:

West Virginia Sierra Club: <http://westvirginia.sierraclub.org/> Contacts for local activists, newsletters, etc.

West Virginia Public Service Commission: [www.psc.state.wv.us](http://www.psc.state.wv.us) Search for case number 07-0508-E-CN

PATH <http://pathtransmission.com>

## Send Comments to:

WV Public Service Commission,  
Sandra Squire, Secretary,  
201 Brooks Street,  
Charleston, WV 25323

Write "Letter of Protest" at the top, or "Petition to Intervene".

## Donations Needed for Legal Expenses

The West Virginia Chapter of Sierra Club plans to intervene before the WV Public Service Commission to oppose the PATH. **PSC proceedings are expensive, but this is a fight we cannot afford to lose!** Funds for legal expenses, technical experts, travel, printing, education, and lobbying efforts are needed. Lots of small individual contributions add up, so please do your share to help.

Make checks payable to: **The Sierra Club Foundation**, and put: **West Virginia Chapter** in the memo line. Mail contributions to: Sierra Club, P. O. Box 4142, Morgantown, WV 26504-4142. Be sure to include your return address so we can send you a tax-deductible receipt. IRS regulations require that you retain a written acknowledgement from The Foundation to support your claim of a tax deduction. A receipt of your gift will be mailed to you shortly. The Foundation confirms that you received no goods or services in return for your gift.

## Be on the Lookout for Public Hearings

The WV Public Service Commission is expected to hold public hearings later this fall to take public comments on the proposed transmission line. At this time, it appears that several hearings will be held in counties through the transmission line route, including Monongalia, Preston, Tucker, and Hardy. An alternative route that includes Marion and Taylor County is also being considered, so watch for opportunities there as well.

Come to the hearings near you. Tell the PSC "West Virginia Is Ours, No More Towers!"