

*Byram CARES • Environment New Jersey • Delaware Riverkeeper Network
New Jersey Environmental Federation • New Jersey Sierra Club
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LOCAL AND STATE GROUPS OPPOSE PSE&G'S MEGA POWER LINE EXPANSION

Montville, NJ – A coalition of state and local environmental groups today called on the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (NJBPU) to reject a request for approval by PSE&G that would massively expand its North Jersey Susquehanna–Roseland transmission line – a proposal which would more than triple the line's current size and capacity.

“This power line is the Line in the Sand for us. We will fight to stop this line because it is bad for the environment, climate change, pollution, open spaces and consumers – it is just bad,” **stated Jeff Tittel, Director of the Sierra Club's NJ Chapter.**

PSE&G plans to charge its New Jersey ratepayers \$650 million to pay for the line expansion, but the groups gathered want the NJBPU to instead require that PSE&G invest the same amount on a region-wide energy efficiency and renewable energy program to shore up reliability.

“No one disputes that North Jersey's electricity highways are congested and need relief to avoid price spikes and blackouts in the future. But New Jersey's energy future should not be tied to dirty coal plants in Ohio and Pennsylvania, when home grown renewable energy and energy efficiency can provide the solution,” **said Dena Mottola Jaborska, Executive Director, Environment New Jersey.**

An analysis by Environment New Jersey finds that the proposed line expansion has the potential to move at least 3,000 MW of energy from coal states into or through New Jersey. That is enough electricity to power 800,000 or more homes. Growth in the state's electric demand does not warrant such a large increase in transmission capacity. Even conservative projections from the grid operator, PJM, show peak demand in PSE&G's entire service area will rise by only 2000 MW by 2020.

Environment New Jersey estimates that a \$650 million investment by PSE&G could buy at least 2000 MW of energy savings through energy efficiency measures, reducing all of the expected growth in PSE&G customers' peak demand. Beyond this step to address reliability in North Jersey through energy efficiency, Governor Corzine has set a strategy to cut energy usage statewide and to build more clean energy generation capacity.

Last Thursday, Governor Corzine announced plans to build a substantial amount of renewable

energy generation – more than 6,000 MW – from wind, solar, biomass and emerging renewable technologies by 2020, and to reduce the state’s overall energy use by 20% by 2020, ensuring no increase in energy demand between now and 2020.

“PSE&G’s proposed line expansion is in direct conflict with the state of New Jersey’s plan to put New Jersey on the path to a more sustainable energy future,” **stated David Pringle, Campaign Director of the New Jersey Environmental Federation.** “The BPU and Governor Corzine have made major commitments to clean energy solutions, and their decision on PSE&G’s request to expand this line will be a test of those commitments.”

Faced with local opposition this past summer, PSE&G bypassed local approvals and on October 14, initiated discussions with the NJBPU seeking State approval for the line expansion. Under state law, if the NJBPU approves the line, PSE&G would not need approvals from local authorities, although most of the municipalities through which the lines run would like to play a role in the decision.

“We cannot support or oppose this project without answers to our concerns,” **stated Byram Township councilman Scott Olson, speaking on behalf of six municipalities who have formed a coalition to address this proposal.** “We do not feel that PSE&G has shown a proven need for this expansion, or that all other options have been exhausted and this is the only viable alternative to address their needs. And they have yet to prove the potential for health effects are lessened or that the economic impact to our municipalities and our residents will be addressed.”

Specifically, PSE&G’s proposal is to add a 500-kilovolt line to the existing 230-kilovolt line on its portion of the Susquehanna–Roseland corridor. A Pennsylvania utility, PP&L, is seeking a similar expansion in that state, sending electricity from the Delaware Water Gap, across three New Jersey counties to Roseland in Essex County, New Jersey. From there, electricity would be converted to several 230 kilovolt lines and delivered to New York and other parts of New Jersey.

As part of the NJBPU review process, the groups say the agency must consider all the costs of line expansion, including loss of hundreds of acres of public parkland and other publicly preserved lands, damage to forests and wildlife habitat and devaluation of homes adjacent to the proposed expansion.

"The high-voltage power line proposed by PSE&G will have an enormous impact on the Highlands Region. 200-foot high towers will destroy its beauty and character, and cause considerable environmental degradation during the construction process," **said Julia M. Somers, Executive Director of the Highlands Coalition.** "PSE&G has tried to exempt this project from the Highlands Act, which is almost as inappropriate as their claim that this expansion is needed. It's not, given the State's repeated commitment to renewable energy and conservation."

The expansion would require a minimum of 80 diversions of publicly preserved Green Acres land in the Highlands region. It would cross at least 15 wetlands, seven areas with known state and federally protected animal or plant species, 10 Natural Heritage Priority Areas, several known pre-historic (National Register listed or eligible) resources and four heavily used visitor areas in the Delaware National Recreation Area alone, including campsites, a picnic area and

river launch.

“As local residents, we are concerned the line expansion will harm our health, devalue our property, and despoil the environment. PSE&G’s plan to deal with an estimated 1.5% increase in peak demand with a more than 300% increase in transmission capacity is unnecessary, irresponsible, and profit motivated. Peak energy demand is only 50 hours out of the year, and should be addressed through conservation and other available alternatives,” **said David Slaperud of Stop The Lines**, a grassroots group formed to address concerns in towns throughout North Jersey.