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Coalition of concerned municipalities questions PSE&G on electric transmission line expansion project.

Andover, Byram, East Hanover, Fredon, Montville and Parsippany-Troy Hills Townships seek BPU intervention on major expansion of capacity.

Montville Township, NJ – Representatives of a newly formed coalition of municipalities today joined with state and local environmental groups in questioning the need, process and procedures for a massive expansion of power line capacity along PSE&G's Susquehanna – Roseland transmission.

On August 5, 2008, PSE&G announced the choice of "Route B" for this proposed expansion project. At that time, PSE&G promised additional information and answers to public questions would be provided when they appeared before municipal planning boards for approvals. Faced now with growing resident opposition, PSE&G has chosen to bypass local approvals and on October 14, 2008 initiated an application with the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (NJBPU) seeking direct state approval for the project. By law, if NJBPU approves the proposal, PSE&G would no longer need approvals from local authorities, many of whom desire to give concerned residents input, and play a role in the decision making process.

"Our municipalities have been frustrated with PSE&G, and their inability to present clear and concise information to us regarding this project," **stated Deborah Nielson, Mayor of Montville Township.** "We are asking the NJ BPU to require that PSE&G return to the municipalities for approvals, and to address the concerns of our residents through proper hearings and public input." Montville has been at the forefront of activity regarding the project, passing a resolution of non-support on September 23, 2008 based on lack of information from PSE&G.

Today's press briefing was held in conjunction with seven state and local environmental groups, some whose members are residents of the fourteen towns along the 45-mile route. "We believe that the points raised by these groups bear further consideration before any decision is made on this proposal. We cannot support or oppose this project without answers to our concerns," **stated Scott Olson, a Byram Township councilman.** "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."

PSE&G's proposal for the Susquehanna–Roseland project is to add a 500-kv line to the existing 230-kv line, with 190-foot or taller towers on the New Jersey portion of the transmission line replacing the current 82-foot towers. A Pennsylvania utility, PP&L, seeks approval for a similar expansion in that state. After crossing the Delaware Water Gap, the lines carry electricity through Warren, Sussex and Morris counties to Roseland in Essex County. >From a sub-station at the terminus in Roseland, electricity would then be converted to several 230-kv lines and delivered to New York and other parts of New Jersey.

At an earlier meeting in East Hanover, a PSE&G representative acknowledged that this 230-kv/500-kv configuration does not currently exist within their system.

“Our residents – especially those with children – are concerned about the potential health hazards from increased EMF’s,” **stated Joseph Pannullo, Mayor of East Hanover Township.** “This line crosses over schoolyards, parks and playgrounds in our municipalities. While PSE&G claims the health effects of EMF’s are ‘inconclusive,’ that is not very reassuring to our residents. We do not want our children to be guinea pigs for a new and untested line configuration.”

By choosing to bypass municipal approvals and take the application directly to NJBPU for review, the municipalities believe that discussion of local concerns, including loss of public parkland and other publicly preserved lands, damage to forests and wildlife habitat, health and safety issues and devaluation of homes on or adjacent to the proposed line expansion is being sidestepped. The coalition’s six municipalities – Andover Township, Byram Township, East Hanover Township, Fredon Township, Montville Township and Parsippany-Troy Hills Township – are looking to engage the remaining municipalities along the route, as well as county and state officials, in their effort to protect residents from the harmful effects this could have on their communities.

For additional information on this “Coalition of Concerned Municipalities,” contact Byram Township councilman Scott Olson at 973.726.8867, or by email at solson@byramtwp.org.

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