



Editor's Opinion

Public comments will be vital to getting power line approval

American Transmission Co. (ATC) has come up with a viable plan for upgrading the electrical facilities that serve Vilas, Oneida and other counties across the North Woods, but the final decision will rest with the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC).

They are recommending that PSC not only approve the estimated \$104 million project, but more specifically, the western route option for a new transmission line between the Cranberry Substation in Eagle River and the slightly relocated Lakota Substation west of Conover.

While more expensive, the western route includes two miles of underground transmission line around the Eagle River Airport, then north on old railroad grade to Conover and west on Highway K. Project costs will be spread equally to all of the ratepayers in the company's jurisdiction.

One of the three options calls for going east on Highway 70 to Rangeline Road, and then north along Highway 17 to Monheim Road. It would include all overhead lines, which are less expensive, yet development of a wider utility corridor in the road right of way would impact more residential area. Another alternative would impact Monheim Road but not Rangeline Road.

That means there still exists a chance that PSC will opt for an upgrade but select a less expensive route. That is why residents of those rural roads need to get involved in the public comment portion of the process every step of the way, to ensure that ATC's preferred plan wins approval.

It is clear from the massive application that by not establishing a new 138-kilovolt transmission line from Eagle River to Conover, the entire area stretching south to Wausau and northern to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan will be increasingly susceptible to overloads, low voltages and even voltage collapse.

The improvements include the replacement of about 73 miles of existing 69-kilovolt transmission line from Conover to the Plains Substation in Quinnesec, Mich., with a new 138-kilovolt line. ATC said the entire project will help meet a transmission service request from the Upper Peninsula Power Co., including the expenditure of \$18 million on substation upgrades.

We support the project as very important to serving the future electrical needs of a growing North Woods region, and we encourage others to make their views known to the PSC.

Editorials that appear here weekly are composed by Editor Kurt Krueger, and include input from Publisher Byron McNutt and Assistant Editor Gary Ridderbusch.