

Routing & siting power lines



DETERMINING THE LOCATION FOR NEW POWER LINES

ATC conducts a thorough analysis to identify viable power line routes that balance landowner and environmental impacts, constructability, current and future land use, project cost and specific electric system needs. We consider options that are appropriate for the locations and issues associated with a particular project.

Anyone is welcome to submit feedback to ATC and/or the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin. With major projects that require a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity, the PSCW will ultimately decide whether the line is needed and where it will be located.

ROUTING CRITERIA

When siting new power lines, ATC follows the power line routing priorities established by Wisconsin law, which favor colocation with existing facilities and infrastructure — like existing power lines and pipelines, highways, and railroads — where it is feasible. Existing power lines and pipeline corridors are considered first, followed by highways and railroads. Recreational trails are a third option. When the first three options are not viable, ATC can recommend establishing new corridors using property lines and/or boundaries, when feasible.

The process typically begins by identifying a broad study area. Then potential corridors are identified that may be suitable for a power line. A final route or routes are developed from the corridors depending on the regulatory requirements for the project.

BALANCING ROUTING CONSIDERATIONS

Developing routes that may be suitable for power lines requires a balanced look at a variety of factors. ATC looks for routes that balance community input with environmental impacts, constructability, current and future land use, project cost and specific electric system needs. Routing power lines may involve trade-offs between a particular set of advantages and disadvantages. We propose routes in our regulatory applications that address electric system needs for all energy consumers and reduce local impacts to the extent possible.

PHASE 1: IDENTIFY ROUTES

Typically, we begin with a study area that identifies end points (substations – new or existing) for the power line. We gather data on environmental sensitivities, roads, railroads, pipelines, utility corridors and environmental areas, and start building a project map.

We identify many potential corridors after reviewing the study area. These corridors can be several hundred feet wide or more between the end points and may be suitable for line routes but have not yet been thoroughly evaluated. These corridors represent opportunities to rule in or rule out possible power line routes that require further evaluation and input.

The preliminary routes are evaluated more thoroughly and are likely to be considered for the project. As part of the route refinement process, new line segments that were not considered in previous phases may be added to the project map.

PHASE 2: SUBMIT ROUTE RECOMMENDATION

In Wisconsin, one or two routes are submitted to the PSCW depending on the regulatory requirements for the project. These are the routes that have been identified as the best solution based on environmental and land use considerations, suitability for construction, community impact, cost and electric system needs. These routes are formally presented in ATC's regulatory application to the PSCW for authorization to construct the project. These routes are thoroughly characterized with supporting environmental, engineering and construction information, all of which is publicly available during this phase.

PHASE 3: NOTIFICATION OF PROJECT APPLICATION

Prior to the application filing, ATC contacts local officials, community organizations and landowners to provide the latest developments of the project. After we file an application, the PSCW will evaluate whether the project is needed and decide where to site the line. For CPCN applications, the PSCW holds technical and public hearings about the project before making a final decision.

The public is encouraged to provide input and ask questions about any case before the PSCW. While many of the comments and questions are taken into consideration, the PSCW ultimately decides whether the line is needed, how it will be designed and where it will be located. If the PSCW approves the project, it issues a written order.



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Energizing Your Future

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