

Routing and siting power lines



LOCATING NEW POWER LINES

ATC conducts a thorough analysis to identify viable power line routes that balance landowner interests and environmental impacts, constructability, current and future land use, project cost and electric system needs. ATC evaluates route options based on each project's location and characteristics.

Members of the public are encouraged to submit feedback to ATC and/or the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin. For major projects that require a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity, the PSCW ultimately decides whether the project is needed and where the power line will be located.

ROUTING PRIORITIES

When siting new power lines, ATC initially follows the routing priorities established by Wisconsin law (Wis. Stat. § 1.12(6)). Wisconsin law favors locating new power lines alongside existing infrastructure, where feasible, to reduce the need for new corridors. This includes existing utility corridors (such as power lines), state and federal highways, railroads and recreational trails. When these opportunities are not available or appropriate, ATC may identify new corridors where feasible.

BALANCING KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Developing routes for power lines requires balancing a variety of factors. ATC evaluates route options based on community input, environmental impacts, constructability, landowner impacts, current and future land use, project cost and electric system needs. Because no route is impact-free, routing often involves trade-offs between a particular set of advantages and disadvantages.

PHASE 1: IDENTIFY ROUTES

The process begins by identifying the project endpoints, such as new or existing substations, and establishing a study area. ATC then gathers information about the area, including environmental and cultural resources, roads, railroads, utility corridors and other features to identify potential route opportunities and constraints.

Potential corridors are identified after reviewing the study area. These corridors are broad areas between the project endpoints that may be suitable for a power line but have not yet been fully evaluated. These corridors help identify preliminary route options for further evaluation and public input.

Preliminary route options are then evaluated in greater detail and refined through additional study and feedback from landowners, communities and regulatory agencies. As part of the route refinement process, route options may be modified, added, or reconsidered based on new information.

PHASE 2: SUBMIT PROPOSED ROUTES

In Wisconsin, one or two routes are submitted to the PSCW depending on the regulatory requirements for the project. For CPCN applications, two routes are required. These routes are identified by ATC after evaluating environmental and land use considerations, suitability for construction, community impact, cost and electric system needs. ATC submits the proposed routes and supporting project information to the PSCW for review. The application includes environmental, engineering, real estate and construction information about the project and the proposed routes.

PHASE 3: PSCW REVIEW AND DECISION

Prior to the application filing, ATC contacts local officials, community organizations and landowners to provide information about the project and its status. After an application is filed, the PSCW reviews the proposed project, supporting information and public input. The PSCW holds technical and public hearings before making a final decision in certain proceedings.

Members of the public can review project information and participate in the review process through the PSCW. The public is encouraged to ask questions and provide input during the review process. The PSCW evaluates the proposed routes, supporting information, public comments and other relevant information before making a final decision on whether the project is needed and where the power line will be located. If the PSCW approves the project, it issues a written order. ATC then moves forward with final engineering, permitting, easement acquisition and construction.