



BONNEVILLE POWER ADMINISTRATION I-5 Corridor Reinforcement Project Draft EIS Public Meeting Summary January - February 2013

Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) released its I-5 Corridor Reinforcement Project draft environmental impact statement (EIS) for public review and comment on November 13, 2012. BPA identified its preferred alternative as the Central Alternative using Central Option 1. The draft EIS evaluates how people and the environment could be affected by the project under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). BPA hosted six public meetings throughout Southwest Washington in January and February 2013 to engage the public in the environmental review process.

Purpose

The purpose of the public meetings was to provide an opportunity for the public to do the following:

- speak with BPA project staff about the draft EIS and preferred alternative proposal
- submit written and verbal comments on the draft EIS
- request help in finding their property online and receive property maps
- review the draft EIS
- obtain project documents and maps and sign up for the mailing list
- ask questions about the environmental review process and the project schedule
- learn about the public comment period and how to comment

Format

The public meetings were staffed by BPA and project contractors. The meetings were structured to include two parts: an open house format and a verbal comment session. Separate areas were designated at each venue to accommodate the open house and verbal comment session.

Open House

The open house included several stations staffed by BPA employees where people could gather project information from display boards and handouts, and speak directly with BPA project staff. The open house was available for the entire duration of the meeting (four hours). All materials on display at the open house are listed in the appendix and available on the project website under the "Library" tab.

The open house included the following stations:

- Welcome and speaker sign-up: Upon arrival, attendees were asked to sign in at the entrance and encouraged to sign up to provide verbal comments. BPA staff explained the room layout and format of the meeting, and guided attendees to different stations in the room, depending on their specific needs or interests. A comment box was provided, along with comment forms and pre-paid reply envelopes.
- Large introductory project maps: Large boards of the Preferred Alternative map (November 2012), Alternatives and Options map (May 2011) and BPA's Existing Regional System map were displayed near the welcome table. BPA staff were available to provide an introduction to the project, discuss the four project alternatives and their options, the preferred alternative and existing transmission lines located in the broader region.
- Map request and printing station: This station was near the welcome table and staff were available with laptop computers to help attendees locate their property in relation to proposed project components using BPA's interactive, online mapping system. Staff were available to show attendees the interactive map, print property maps from the interactive map, show attendees how to navigate the draft EIS on CD, and show attendees resources on the project website. Materials available at this station included the "Guide to finding your property online" and "Reading the EIS on Compact Disc" handouts.



- Project design: Design and engineering staff were available at this station to discuss design related questions (i.e., tower and access road locations, tower configurations, centerline locations). Four large aerial maps showing the preferred alternative were displayed on boards. These maps identified the preferred alternative route, including the proposed centerline, tower and access road locations, potentially affected parcels and streams and rivers in the project area. Right-of-way tower configurations were also displayed here. These configurations identifying tower design and size were extracted from Appendix B in the draft EIS. This station also included several photomap books (11"x17") showing the preferred alternative including all potentially affected parcels, parcel numbers and registered ownership. Schematics and aerials of the two preferred substation sites, Casey Road and Sundial, were also displayed at this station.
- Environment: Print copies of the draft EIS were available at this station for people to review and ask environmental staff about the document. Large maps (18"x24") from the draft EIS of recreation, land use, land ownership, soil erosion, landslides, wildlife and vegetation were displayed. Copies of the preferred alternative photomap book (11"x17") were available, including locations of wetlands identified in addition to parcel information. Two boards on easels were displayed: "*Topics evaluated in the draft EIS*" and the current "*Project schedule.*"
- Electric and Magnetic fields (EMF): Materials on display at this station included "*EMF questions & answers*" booklet, "*How BPA addresses EMF*" handout and "*Electric and magnetic fields & transmission lines*" handout. A dedicated EMF staff member was available to answer questions. A print copy of the draft EIS was also available for viewing.
- Army Corps of Engineers: A large map identifying wetland locations in the project area was displayed on a board at this station. An Army Corps of Engineers representative was available to answer questions about the agency's role in the permitting process for the project. Copies of the preferred alternative photomap book (11"x17") were available, with the wetlands identified. One copy of the draft EIS was also on display.
- Land and property: A board displaying right-of-way clearance guidelines was set up at this station. Hard copies of the draft EIS and preferred alternative photomap books indicating parcel information were also displayed here. Other materials included BPA brochures on "*Living & Working Safely around High-Voltage Power Lines,*" a "*Landowner's guide to BPA transmission projects,*" a danger tree and clearance guide and "*Answers to landowner questions.*" Land and property specialists were available to guide people through the documents and answer property related questions.
- Comment table: This station was set up to provide an area where attendees could write and submit their comments on the draft EIS and project. Comment forms, pre-paid reply envelopes, a comment box, pens and a board on "*Where to view the draft EIS and how to provide a comment*" were displayed at this station. Children's coloring books and crayons also were available.
- Resource table: The project's traveling display board and all project materials were available on this table. All resource materials are listed in the appendix and available on the project website under the "Library" tab.
- Refreshment table: Attendees were provided cookies and beverages including cold and hot water for tea, coffee and hot chocolate.

Every station at the open house had comment forms, pre-paid reply envelopes, project business cards, pens, the preferred alternative (November 2012) map and alternatives and options (May 2011) map.

By request, BPA provided a space for the citizen group, A Better Way for BPA, to set up a station with the group's materials at each meeting.



Verbal Comment Session

Ninety minutes of each meeting were dedicated to having attendees provide verbal comments to a panel of BPA representatives from the project team. Each verbal comment session was held in a separate area one hour after the public meeting started. All comments were recorded by a court reporter and considered draft EIS comments.

The room was set up theatre style. A table for the panel of BPA staff faced the audience. A speaker table was stationed directly in front of the audience, facing the BPA panel. A court reporter and time keeper also were stationed on either side of the BPA panel.

A moderator welcomed attendees, introduced the BPA panel and set the ground rules for the verbal comment session. Attendees who signed up to provide a verbal comment spoke in the order they signed up. Speakers were given three minutes to speak. A time keeper managed the time using a timing system. BPA's project manager provided a brief welcome and overview of the project. The project manager also provided closing statements at the end of the verbal comment session, encouraging attendees to continue to speak with project and technical staff, gather information at the open house and submit comments on the draft EIS.

Attendance

A total of 371 people signed in at the six meetings; about 405 are estimated to have attended. Attendees included property owners, residents, local business representatives, tree farmers, representatives of homeowners' associations, neighborhood groups, forestry associations and others. Members of the citizen groups A Better Way for BPA, Another Way BPA, and Citizens against the Towers attended. Staff from the City of Castle Rock, the City of Washougal and the City of Camas also attended. Elected officials included the Mayor of Camas, Scott Higgins, City of Camas Council Member, Steve Hogan and the Mayor of Castle Rock, Paul Helenberg.

Location	Date	Signed in	Approximate attendance	Provided verbal comment	Comment forms completed	Maps printed (per address)	Draft EIS print copy requests
Camas	1/10	107	120	16	12	20	1
Amboy	1/12	65	70	11	6	21	0
Battle Ground	1/23	47	50	5	7	13	0
Longview	2/2	40	45	4	4	9	0
Castle Rock	2/4	75	80	9	5	15	1
Vancouver	2/6	37	40	5	1	6	0
Total		371	405	50	35	84	2

Draft EIS comments

Meeting attendees shared their comments, questions and concerns about the I-5 Corridor Reinforcement Project with staff. Because the meetings were held during the formal NEPA comment period for the draft EIS, all staff encouraged attendees to provide their comments on the project using the formal comment methods, which included writing to BPA, calling the toll-free comment and information voice messaging system, submitting comments by fax, providing a verbal comment during the meeting's comment session, or submitting comments electronically using the project email address or web comment form on the project website.

Fifty attendees provided verbal comments. Thirty-five attendees provided written comments or requests at the meetings (including site visit or informational requests). Two attendees requested print copies of the draft EIS. Others took the comment forms and pre-paid reply envelopes with them as they left the meetings.



Eighty-four attendees requested printed copies of their properties or specific locations in the project area from the online interactive map. Most were interested in finding out where their properties are located in relation to BPA's preferred alternative.

All comments, including names of submitters, will be processed and posted on BPA's project website at www.bpa.gov/goto/i5.

Comment themes

Themes and topics raised in the verbal (50) and written (35) comments submitted at the six public meetings included the following:

- **Visual:** Several commenters raised concerns about potential effects the project may have on visual amenities. Some commenters requested more detail in the final EIS on the project's visual impacts and questioned the quality of the study in Chapter 7 of the draft EIS. One commenter requested more visual simulations of the preferred alternative.
- **Recreation:** Some commenters raised concerns about impacts to recreational areas and stated the draft EIS did not include the location of a recreational fishing spot and picnic area near Segment F on the Cowlitz River.
- **Wildlife:** Some commenters raised concerns about the impact to wildlife and wildlife buffers established in the project area by the Washington State Forest Practices Act. One commenter stated there were additional species that were not included in Chapter 18 of the draft EIS that exist near Segment F. This commenter also noted that the list of special-status species included in Chapter 18 of the draft EIS was mistakenly referenced as Appendix N.
- **Wetlands and water:** Several commenters raised concerns about impacts to fish-bearing streams, waterways and riparian zones in the project area. Commenters expressed concern about clearcutting along riverbeds in the project area. Some commenters stated that wetlands are already impacted on the existing right-of-way, in preference for choosing the West Alternative. One commenter questioned how BPA mitigates impacts to wetlands. One commenter stated that impacts to the river banks along the Cowlitz River are not addressed in the draft EIS.
- **Geology and soils:** Commenters raised concern about potential landslides and soil erosion along the preferred alternative.
- **Land use and timber production:** Several property and business owners who own timber production land that could be directly affected by the preferred alternative expressed concern about the negative effects to their timber production and forestry practices in Clark and Cowlitz counties. One commenter stated that private tree farmers would be more willing to work with BPA if they shared the burden of the project by placing lines along state-owned land or along property boundaries instead of through parcels.
- **Electric and magnetic field effects and public health:** A few commenters had concerns about electric and magnetic fields (EMF) and the potential effects of living or working near high-voltage transmission lines. This included perceived health effects to children associated with EMF and increased exposure to EMF levels in urban and populated areas. Commenters questioned what the long-term impact on human health would be. One comment raised concern about potential effects the project may have on pre-existing health conditions (asthma and pacemakers) during construction and maintenance activities.
- **Noise:** Commenters shared concerns about the noise, hissing and buzzing associated with high-voltage transmission lines. One comment questioned the effect the noise may have on a local rehabilitation and recovery center in Kelso. Some commenters requested that the EIS address potential effects noise may have on high-performance horse training activities.



- Cumulative impacts: One commenter questioned the cumulative impact associated with placing a high-voltage transmission line near the existing Williams gas pipeline in Cowlitz County.
- Quality of life: Several commenters expressed concern for the project's long-term cost to the quality of life for landowners, the community and future generations. A few commented on how the project may affect their lifestyle by negatively affecting property values, visual amenity and potential exposure to EMF. One commenter stated they moved away from the city for the scenic value and to be closer to the natural environment. Some commenters questioned what value BPA places on the potential harm done to affected property owners.
- Mitigation: Commenters requested further mitigation measures and options be studied for Segment 52 in the Camas/Washougal area. One commenter questioned the effectiveness of mitigation when the project is negatively affecting the environment.
- Project schedule: Some commenters were frustrated with the length of time the process is taking to get to a decision.
- Design – transmission line and towers: Many commenters suggested centerline and tower location adjustments that would reduce impacts to their properties. A few commenters requested that BPA locate the new transmission line outside of the City of Castle Rock's service area. Commenters provided information specific to their affected properties including locations of wells, houses, gates and private driveways.
- Design – access roads: Some commenters expressed concern about the proposed locations of access roads in the draft EIS, particularly the proposed use of private roads that would be needed for access during construction and maintenance of the project. Commenters suggested adjustments to access road design or using alternative roads they thought would be more appropriate.
- Undergrounding the line: Several commenters requested further study be included in the final EIS on undergrounding Segment 52 for 1.1 miles in the Camas-Washougal urban areas. Many commenters stated BPA should adhere to the City of Camas ordinance for undergrounding power lines in urban areas. Some commenters questioned the decision process for undergrounding, stating it was solely based on cost.
- Project cost: One commenter stated that project cost would be more than what is estimated in the draft EIS as there will be increased maintenance associated with the preferred alternative.
- Routes considered but eliminated: Several commenters questioned why routes previously considered by BPA had been eliminated for further study in the draft EIS. Some commenters questioned the quality of the data used to make the decisions not to pursue the northeastern route proposed by citizen groups (known as the 'grey line') and routes through Oregon to the Pearl substation ('the Pearl route'). One commenter requested further study on the number of homes that would need to be removed on the Pearl route. One commenter suggested relocating the Columbia River crossing to Bonneville Dam. One commenter requested that BPA study in more detail a route across northern Cowlitz County and away from the populated area of Castle Rock.
- Purpose and need for the project: Some commenters questioned why the project was needed, where the power it would transmit is being generated, and if it will primarily serve Oregon and California. A few commenters suggested that the money that would be spent on the project should be spent on energy efficiency, conservation, use of solar panels or local co-generation facilities to prevent the need of building a new transmission line. One commenter agreed with the need to build the transmission line and encouraged BPA to pursue construction.



- Identifying the preferred alternative: Commenters expressed support for the alternative that affects the least number of homes and people. Some comments were in favor of the preferred alternative. Others were in favor of selecting the West Alternative. One comment was in favor of not selecting Segment 50 as part of the preferred alternative. A few commenters suggested routing the line behind Tum Tum Mountain to avoid visual impacts. Some comments stated that government projects should be conducted on government land or that the route should stay along property lines instead of being sited through private parcels. Another commenter suggested exploring the option to double-circuit the line on the existing right-of-way along the West Alternative, and at river/stream crossings, and questioned why this was not included in the draft EIS.
- NEPA process: Commenters requested that BPA extend the NEPA public comment period beyond March 1, 2013. One comment requested that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers send notification of its comment period to BPA's full distribution list of landowners instead of limiting it to landowners on the preferred alternative. A few commenters requested that if the preferred alternative is altered, the people affected should have the same opportunity and time to comment on the decision, and that the comments be given the same weight as before. One comment questioned the amount of time people in Rose Valley have had to respond to the project.
- Public involvement process: Several commenters thanked BPA for communicating with the public, providing an opportunity to accept verbal comments and for holding public meetings. Some commenters submitted informational requests for GIS maps, data or property maps. Others requested site visits from BPA staff to discuss potential tower locations and impacts to their specific properties. One commenter raised concern about the number of BPA and contracted staff available at each informational meeting relative to attendees.
- Property values: Many commenters expressed concern about the project negatively affecting property values on and near the preferred alternative. A few commenters requested further detail and consideration in the final EIS on costs to property owners and effects to property values. Some commenters raised concern about the potential for the project to negatively affect property values, thereby decreasing property tax revenue used to fund services in the Castle Rock and Camas-Washougal areas. One commenter asked questions about potential effects to an historic ranch house.
- Easement and acquisition process: Some commenters asked about the easement acquisition process, landowner compensation and contract negotiation. One commenter said that access to maintenance roads should be limited to keep recreationalists off of private property. A few commenters questioned whether homeowners will be compensated when selling a home that may be impacted by views of the transmission line. One comment discussed cost to landowners and the environment, particularly requesting BPA provide the same resources to landowners on this project as they have on previous projects. A commenter requested more information in the final EIS on how property owners may be affected from a liability standpoint associated with unauthorized access and potential accidents.

Project next steps

Public review and comment on the draft EIS will continue until noon on March 25, 2013. BPA staff will review all comments received and respond to them in the final EIS, expected in 2014.

Following the final EIS, the BPA Administrator will issue a record of decision (ROD) announcing BPA's final decision on the project. The ROD will identify decision factors and describe commitments for mitigating unavoidable environmental impacts documented in the EIS, if the decision is to move forward with building the project.





Bonneville Power Administration I-5 Corridor Reinforcement Project Draft EIS Public Meeting Summary

Appendix

The informational materials available at the I-5 Corridor Reinforcement Project draft EIS public meetings are listed below:

- May 2011 alternatives and options map
- November 2012 preferred alternative map
- Regional transmission system map
- Central alternative photomap book
- Preferred alternative aerial maps
- Right-of-way tower configurations
- Project update – November 2012
- Issue brief – Why BPA prefers Central Alternative using Option 1 – November 2012
- Guide to finding your property online
- Map request form
- Draft EIS comment form
- I-5 Corridor Reinforcement Project schedule
- A guide to being heard during the NEPA process
- Print copies of the draft EIS
- Copies of the draft EIS on Compact Disc
- Summaries of the draft EIS
- Reading the EIS on Compact Disc
- List of locations for viewing the draft EIS in hard copy
- Notes to reader (from the draft EIS)
- Draft EIS Table of Contents
- Frequently Asked Questions (printed from the project website on January 3, 2013)
- Comment extension postcard – February 2013
- Evaluation of Northeastern I-5 route – January 2012
- Issue Brief – How power from the I-5 project will get to you – August 2010
- Landowner's guide to BPA transmission projects – January 2013
- Answers to landowner questions – January 2013
- Danger tree and clearance guide
- Living and working safely around high-voltage power lines
- Electric and magnetic fields and transmission lines
- EMF questions and answers – June 2002
- How BPA addresses EMF

All materials can be found on the project website at www.bpa.gov/goto/i5.