

Kangley-Echo Lake Transmission Line Project Comment Summary

In summer 2002, Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) opened up a 60-day scoping period to take public comments on the scope of the Kangley-Echo Lake Transmission Line Project supplemental draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS). BPA hosted a series of six public meetings during the scoping period; over 500 people attended.

BPA received more than 1,600 comments during this scoping period. These comments were subsequently entered into a database and catalogued according to subject, to identify key themes and major trends.

Major Trends

For the most part, comments fall into one of two categories: those concerned about a new transmission line *outside* the Cedar River Watershed, and those concerned about a new transmission line *inside* the Cedar River Watershed. The context and details of these comments vary greatly.

Commenters in the first category above usually point to what they feel is the special nature of rural communities in King County as the cornerstone of their concern over alternatives outside the Cedar River Watershed.

Commenters in the second category mentioned above point to the Cedar River Municipal Watershed Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) as evidence of a commitment to protect the ecology of the Cedar River Watershed and add concerns about potential impacts to the municipal water supply.

Top Ten Areas of Frequent Comment

Of the subcategories that appear most prominently in the database, the following top ten were cited over 1,500 times and cover a wide range.

1. Property Values

Property values far outweighed any other concern in the minds of commenters, and was the single most significant driver behind opposition to alternatives outside the Cedar River Watershed. Subjects coded under this heading included not only decreased property values due to proximity to transmission lines, but also the impacts to property owners of BPA taking land for transmission line rights-of-way, and BPA's compensation to property owners for damage, resources taken, and loss of property value.

2. Costs of Alternatives

A distant second to property values is another economic issue: the costs of alternatives, including overall project construction costs and the costs associated with acquiring land and compensating homeowners. Many commenters want BPA to look carefully at all of these costs when weighing alternatives.

3. Line Characteristics

Most of the comments included requests for clarification of BPA's plans for the new transmission line. Tower heights (especially increasing heights of existing towers) in residential areas were mentioned most often as a concern. Many commenters noted, however, that alternatives upgrading existing lines seem to offer fewer impacts than constructing new lines.

4. Resource Protection

Resource protection as a community value was used for comments ranging from those expressing concerns about environmental impacts to those articulating the desire to preserve lifestyles that may be threatened by the various alternatives.

5. Public Health and Safety – General

Commenters in this category often expressed the opinion that too little is known about the health effects of proximity to transmission lines. Since one of the alternatives (Alternative A) passes very close to an elementary school, children and their safety are on commenters' minds. General safety concerns include vandalism as a result of access to towers, and potential dangers from weather effects on towers close to residential areas.

6. Cedar River Watershed – General

Questions about the true impacts of Alternative 1 (i.e., BPA's preferred route which crosses the Cedar River Watershed) arose both from those commenters in support of it and those opposed.

*7. Rural vs. Urban and People vs. Nature**

Closely following Resource Protection in the Community Values category are perhaps the two most sensitive issues, defined simply as Rural vs. Urban and People vs. Nature. Rural vs. Urban is one of the most contentious issues identified in the comments and stirred the most passion: equity between who pays for and who benefits from BPA's choice of alternatives. Rural residents express concern that they should not be made to shoulder the costs for a project they see as benefitting primarily urban areas.

Equity in considering people and nature is also an emotional topic. Those who say they are on the side of people feel the negative impacts of uprooting communities are far more devastating than any potential environmental damage. Those who feel that potential damage from environmental impacts outweighs potential impacts to people directly affected by the proposed alternatives usually refer to the Cedar River Watershed and the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) that guides its recovery and protection. They also express concern that impacts to the watershed could have broad consequences for large portions of the population located outside the immediate project area but who benefit from the environmental quality of the watershed the the water supply it provides.

9. Cedar River Watershed – Current Condition

The current condition of the Watershed found its way into many comments as an argument both for and against particular alternatives. Many argued that years of logging has left the Watershed impervious to the small amount of damage that will be incurred by Alternative 1. These commenters challenged the perception of the Watershed as a "pristine" environment. In addition, some commenters suggested the presence of an existing line means less work will have to be done to upgrade what is already there. Conversely, there are those who commented that more than enough damage has been done and the HCP's commitment to the protection and restoration of the Watershed precludes allowing any further negative impacts.

10. Land Use – Right-of-Way

Right-of-way issues include concerns about the impacts of new right-of-way on existing land uses, the costs associated with buying easements for new right-of-way versus using existing rights-of-way, and statements about allowing or obstructing BPA access to private property and how these actions could impede project progress.

BPA received many other comments as well. The full report and database are available on the Transmission Business Line Web site at www.transmission.bpa.gov/projects, select infrastructure and scroll down to the Kangley-Echo Lake project. If you would a copy of the summary report and database sent to you, please call BPA toll free at 1-888-276-7790.

*Equal numbers of comments were received for each of these two categories.