



Department of Energy

Bonneville Power Administration
P.O. Box 3621
Portland, Oregon 97208-3621

March 26, 2001

In reply refer to: KEC-4

To: People Interested in the Schultz - Hanford Area Transmission Line Project

Last December, Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) wrote to tell you about a proposed project that could affect you. We had proposed building a new transmission line in central Washington and were looking at four possible routes. We asked for your comments to help us refine the proposal. Response was great; we received over 1000 comments.

After reviewing your comments, we have made some changes to our proposal. We are no longer considering the option (formerly called Alternative 4) that went south and east from Schultz Substation, by Ellensburg, and around Yakima and Moxee. We estimated that the expenses associated with the needed right-of-way through developed land would be very high and this alternative became too expensive to be considered. We have also added an alternative to try to avoid some of the irrigated farmlands.

This letter briefly describes the alternatives we are still considering, outlines our next steps, and tells where to call if you have questions.

Proposal – BPA is still proposing to construct a transmission line through central Washington. The new 500-kilovolt (kV) line is needed to relieve constraints on several transmission paths (lines) across the state. It would add more transmission capability to move power from generation facilities in the northern Columbia River basin through central Washington. It would also provide more operational flexibility so BPA can meet its obligations to endangered salmon and maintain power transfer capabilities.

Alternatives – Possible transmission routes are in Kittitas, Yakima, Grant, and Benton Counties (See attached map). The proposed line would be constructed from Schultz Substation (near Ellensburg) to either a substation on the Hanford Reach National Monument within the Hanford Nuclear Reservation or a new substation just southwest of the Hanford Nuclear Reservation. Four alternative routes are being considered. All would require the purchase of new right-of-way.

- **Alternative 1** would parallel the existing 500-kV line that runs from Schultz Substation to Vantage Substation and on to Hanford Substation (called the Schultz-Vantage-Hanford line). The new line would be up to 1200 feet from the existing line. (BPA must separate major lines by as much as 1200 feet to meet electric reliability standards.) We have not yet decided which side of the existing right-of-way would be better, north or south.
- **Alternative 1A**, (just like Alternative 1), would parallel the existing 500-kV line from Schultz Substation to Vantage Substation. But a different route would be studied between Vantage and Hanford to avoid irrigated agricultural land. Instead, it would follow the southern edge of the Saddle Mountains and then parallel, at a distance of up to 1200 feet, the existing 500-kV Grand Coulee-Hanford line into Hanford.
- **Alternative 2** would also parallel the existing Schultz–Vantage 500-kV line at a distance of up to 1200 feet. It would turn south, parallel next to the existing 230-kV line to Midway Substation, then following another 230-kV line to a new Blackrock Substation near Benton Rural Electric Association's existing Blackrock Substation. We

are looking at the possibility of tearing down the existing 230-kV line in places, and rebuilding it with a double-circuit line that would hold both the 230-kV line and the new 500-kV line.

- **Alternative 3** would parallel, at a distance of up to 1200 feet, the existing Schultz–Vantage 500-kV line to the west side of the Columbia River. Before crossing the River, the line would head south on new right-of-way mainly across the Yakima Training Center to a new Blackrock Substation.

We are also considering not building a new line.

Public Comment Summary – In December and January, BPA received 1031 comments on this proposed project. Most (63 percent) were given at public meetings we had in January. We also received comments by mail, phone, and e-mail.

Most comments (71 percent) focused on the alternatives (316) or expected environmental impacts (415). Most people commented on impacts of a new transmission line to agricultural land and developed areas.

The project team reviewed all the comments and used them in refining the proposal. The comments will also be used in preparing the environmental impact statement.

Next Steps – We are starting work on the environmental analysis. The information we gather will be published in a Draft Environmental Impact Statement that will be available for review and comment late this year. To complete the environmental work, BPA needs to conduct on-the-ground environmental surveys. BPA also needs to begin preliminary mapping and design work to refine the possible routes.

To conduct the analysis we may need to access property along the proposed routes. If so, we will contact those property owners for permission.

Once we have completed the environmental review, BPA will decide whether and how to proceed with the project. If BPA decides to proceed, construction would likely begin in 2004.

For More Information – If you have any questions about this proposal, please call me toll-free at 1-800-282-3713; at my direct number, (503) 230-5525; or send an e-mail to lcdriessen@bpa.gov. Information on the project will be posted on BPA's web site at www.efw.bpa.gov under *environmental planning/analysis*.

Thank you for your interest in our work.

Sincerely,

/S/

Lou Driessen
Project Manager

Enclosure:
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