

## Community Advisory Group Meeting #4a Summary

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7/9/14

### Community Advisory Group Meeting #4a

Wednesday, June 25, 2014

5:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Hilton Bellevue Hotel, 300 112th Ave SE, Bellevue

### Community Advisory Group (in attendance)

- Andy Swayne, Puget Sound Energy
- Barbara Sauerbrey, Woodridge Community Association (residential association alternate)
- Bart Phillips, One Redmond
- Brian Buck, Lake Washington School District
- Darius Richards, Kennydale Neighborhood Association
- David Chicks, Redmond Neighborhoods
- Deirdre Johnson, South Rose Hill Neighborhood Association
- Floyd Rogers, Mountains to Sound Greenway
- Gregg Zimmerman, City of Renton
- Jack McLeod, Bellevue School District
- Lindy Bruce, Sunset Community Association (residential association alternate)
- Marcia Isenberger, Coal Creek Family YMCA
- Nicholas Matz, City of Bellevue
- Nicola Barnes, Hopelink (alternate)
- Norm Hansen, Bridle Trails Community Club
- Pete Sullivan, City of Redmond
- Rob Jammerman, City of Kirkland
- Robert Shay, Wilburton Community Association
- Sam Baxter, Overlake Hospital Medical Center
- Scott Kaseburg, Lake Lanes Community Association (residential association alternate)
- Steve O'Donnell, Somerset Community Association

### Members absent

- Bill Taylor, Liberty Ridge Homeowners Association (residential association alternate)
- David Edmonds, Olympus Neighborhood Association
- David Hoffman, Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties
- David St. John, King County
- Debra Grant, Hopelink
- Lynn Wallace, Renton Chamber of Commerce
- Steven Hanson, Renton Technical College
- Tim McHarg, City of Newcastle

## Other attendees

- Leann Kostek, Puget Sound Energy, Senior Project Manager
- Jens Nedrud, Puget Sound Energy, Deputy Project Manager
- Gretchen Aliabadi, Puget Sound Energy, Communications
- Lindsey Walimaki, Puget Sound Energy, Communications
- Keri Pravitz, Puget Sound Energy, Community Projects Manager
- Jackson Taylor, Puget Sound Energy, Community Projects Manager
- Lowell Rogers, POWER Engineers, Senior Project Manager
- Penny Mabie, EnviroIssues, Facilitator
- Lauren Dennis, EnviroIssues, Public Involvement
- Amira Khablein, EnviroIssues, Public Involvement
- Chelsea Ongaro, EnviroIssues, Notetaker

## Meeting Purpose and Overview

Puget Sound Energy (PSE) hosted the Energize Eastside Community Advisory Group Meeting #4a in Bellevue on June 25, 2014. The meeting agenda included:

1. Community Advisory Group business, including review and approval of the Community Advisory Group Meeting #3 Summary and discussion of the June 16 Bellevue City Council Study Session
2. Review and discuss additional information requests from Community Advisory Group Meeting #3 and photo simulations provided by PSE
3. Review the results a blind evaluation exercise
4. Feedback from advisory group members on constituent concerns
5. Discuss advantages and disadvantages of route options
6. Public comment

## Meeting Summary

### Welcome, introductions and safety moment

Facilitator Penny Mabie welcomed meeting attendees and led a round of introductions of the Community Advisory Group members and alternates. She also introduced PSE staff seated at the table: Leann Kostek, PSE Senior Project Manager and Gretchen Aliabadi, PSE Communications Initiatives Manager. Penny then conducted an overview of the agenda. She mentioned that deciding on evaluation factors for the Multi-Objective Decision Analysis (MODA) process was planned for Community Advisory Group Meeting #4b on July 9. Finally, Penny provided a safety moment about using eye protection, especially in the summer when mowing lawns, and being aware of electrical and gas powered equipment that can throw rocks.

### Community Advisory Group business

#### Community Advisory Group Meeting #3 Summary

Penny asked the advisory group if anyone had any objections to finalizing the Community Advisory Group Meeting #3 Summary. The summary was previously emailed to the group for review and there were no email responses. No objections were raised, and the draft summary was accepted as final.

### **Bellevue City Council Study Session discussion**

Penny mentioned that nine members and alternates of the Community Advisory Group spoke at the Bellevue City Council Study Session on June 16, 2014 about the Energize Eastside project.

### **Request for an independent review on the need for the project and the solutions**

Gretchen addressed the request for an independent review on the need for the project and the solutions being considered. She shared that there are some people in the community that do not believe in the need for the project. She also clarified that independent review of the project will occur during the environmental review process under SEPA (State Environmental Policy Act). This will entail preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement or EIS by the local jurisdictions and other permitting agencies. The City of Bellevue will lead the EIS process and collaborate with the other jurisdictions in the project area, and the project need will be assessed during this process. Public involvement is a built-in part of the EIS process, where there will be an opportunity to review and comment on the project. More information will be provided by the City of Bellevue on the EIS process. A Community Advisory Group member mentioned that the Bellevue City Council will be holding a Study Session on July 7, 2014, where the EIS engagement process will be on the agenda.

In response to Gretchen's comments about the need for the project, two advisory group members stated that they had never heard the community question the need for the project, but that they are hearing concerns about a project of the appropriate scale and would like to see additional alternatives.

### **Response to information requests from Community Advisory Group Meeting #3**

Gretchen provided an overview of the information requested at the previous meeting: construction methods, costs of undergrounding and submerging transmission line projects in other parts of the country, and revenue from wheeling power. Lowell Rogers, POWER Engineers, and Jens Nedrud, PSE Deputy Project Manager, provided presentations in response to these information requests.

1. **Construction methods** – How would PSE build an overhead 230 kV transmission line in a suburban area?

Lowell showed photos of the structure types that will be considered for the Energize Eastside project and shared a video that detailed the construction process. He mentioned that the video showed a more rural area, and that it was not specific to the Energize Eastside project. The information presented includes general construction methods for building a transmission line, as it is not possible to develop specific construction methods for each individual route option for the Eastside project. The video went through the steps of constructing an overhead 230 kV transmission line, which include:

1. Pre-construction activities
  - a. Landowner contact and easement negotiations
  - b. Surveying to determine rights of way, the proposed center line and pole location
  - c. Geotechnical investigation
  - d. Construction access delineation
2. Augering/excavation
3. Foundation installation – typically direct embedded poles or poured concrete with anchor bolts
4. Removing existing lines, if necessary
5. Setting the new poles
6. Stringing the new lines (conductors)
7. Restoring the work site, including repairing anything that has been damaged

Lowell explained that the video will not be available to the public because it is in draft form and without context and explanation, the video could be misleading.

**2. Costs of other undergrounding and submerging projects** – How much do similar undergrounding and submerging projects cost?

Lowell explained that the estimated cost to underground the Energize Eastside project would be \$20 million to \$28 million per mile. This estimate only takes into account engineering and construction, and does not include other costs such as easement acquisition, permitting, materials, taxes and overheads.

Lowell then provided information about two completed undergrounding projects: Bartow-Northeast 230 kV project and Radnor Heights 230 kV project. These projects are generally comparable to the Energize Eastside project in voltage, capacity, setting, and construction methods. The Bartow-Northeast project involved construction of 4 miles of new underground transmission lines at \$24.7 million<sup>1</sup> per mile. About half of the project was built in an open field on undeveloped land where no restoration was needed, which explains the lower cost. The Radnor Heights project involved construction of just under 4 miles of underground lines, costing about \$15.9 million<sup>1</sup> per mile. In this case, 2.5 miles of the line used an existing duct bank, which may have kept the cost low.

At the last Community Advisory Group meeting, there was also a request for specific information about the Embarcadero/Potrero project in San Francisco and the Northeast Grid 230 kV Reliability project in New Jersey. Construction of the Embarcadero/Potrero project has not started, but will entail constructing 2.5 miles of 230 kV submarine cable, 0.4 miles of underground 230 kV line and 0.6 miles of overhead 230 kV line. The approved budget for the project is \$196.8 million – or an average of \$56.2 million/mile. The Northeast Grid project in New Jersey is currently under construction, which will entail constructing 18.5 miles of underground 230 line and 50 miles of overhead 230 kV line. The cost of this project is estimated at \$907 million, but PSE was unable to determine how much of the cost is specific to underground or overhead lines as the information is proprietary.

**3. Revenue from wheeling power** - How much money does PSE make on wheeling power?

Gretchen reminded the group that wheeling power is the transportation of electric power over transmission lines by an entity that does not own or directly use the power it is transmitting, and that 3% - 8% of the power flow through the Energize line will go to the larger region. The 3% - 8% regional power flow is a natural consequence of connecting to an interconnected system and cannot be avoided. Gretchen explained that external entities must pay for the use of PSE's lines, similar to a toll. In 2013, PSE collected \$28 million from wheeling power and 100% of that \$28 million was returned to customers in the form of a rate reduction. PSE makes no profit on wheeling power. PSE believes that because PSE's customers paid for the infrastructure, the customers should receive the monetary benefit of any power transactions that bring money to the utility. Jens clarified that the \$28 million encompassed all of PSE's wheeling revenue; the \$28 million figure is inclusive of wheeling revenue to and from Canada.

Community Advisory Group members provided the following comments and questions, and clarifying answers were given when appropriate:

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<sup>1</sup> In 2014 dollars

- If a community chose to underground or submerge the lines, is there any opportunity to spread the cost over time?
  - Gretchen explained that PSE collects the money from the community up front, and how the community chooses to fund the project is not decided by PSE.
- Is PSE's policy about receiving no profit from wheeling power regulated per tariff or is that a PSE business process?
  - Gretchen noted that it is a PSE policy with their regulators. The public policy states that PSE's customers have paid for the transmission so the customers should get the benefit of that transmission.
- Why did the Northeast Grid project and the Bartow-Northeast project choose to go underground and how did they finance it? The tariff that requires the community to pay for undergrounding is archaic and this tariff would need to be reformed if a community decided to underground. San Diego paid for undergrounding through a surcharge on their bills. The New Jersey firm that is building the Northeast Grid project has rates that are similar to ours. Rate information from the New Jersey firm could be shared at the next meeting.
  - Gretchen said that utility companies may choose to finance undergrounding differently throughout the country (e.g., line item on their bills or rate adjustment). In some cases, bills are twice as high when undergrounding was paid for through rate increases. Communities must decide if undergrounding is more valuable than putting money into other things like roads and schools.
  - Penny suggested that the conversation about underground rates may need to be discussed outside of the Community Advisory Group Meeting in order to keep the group on track for accomplishing their goals.
  - Lowell shared that the Bartow-Northeast project may have chosen underground transmission lines because the lines are connecting to a power plant and must function at all times. The project area is in a hurricane zone, so undergrounding was likely the best option to avoid outages. The Radnor Heights project appeared to be in a highly congested area, so they probably chose to underground because overhead construction was not feasible.
  - Penny suggested that the group may not need further information on undergrounding in order to do their work. She is concerned that the group will not have enough time to complete the work that falls under their purview if these discussions continue.
  - A Community Advisory Group member shared that comparisons with other projects and undergrounding discussions do fall under the purview of the group because the group should be concerned with what kind of city they want to see in the future.
  - Another Community Advisory Group member agreed with Penny and said that he has heard from communities that they do not want to pay for undergrounding, but that if a community wants it, they can pay for it. The Community Advisory Group meetings should be used to discuss the route options on the table.
  - Gretchen noted that it is not PSE's decision to decide what the community will look like, but she reiterated that PSE is willing to talk with any communities that would like to pursue undergrounding.
  - A Community Advisory Group member suggested that an undergrounding sub-committee be formed by volunteers who are interested in learning more about that process, so that they can share that information with their communities. PSE said that they would look into that option.

## Blind evaluation results discussion

Penny explained that the Community Advisory Group completed a blind evaluation of the 18 route options, and that 16 of the 24 (67%) members completed the evaluation. She provided an overview of the results, walking through average scores of route options by evaluation factor (where white indicates a high value and dark blue indicates a low value), the overall route scores (an average of all five factors), and graphs for the route scoring by each factor. Penny reiterated that this evaluation is another tool to inform the narrowing of route options, and is not a selection process. She also noted that there will be no further blind evaluations.

Community Advisory Group members provided the following comments and questions, and clarifying answers were given when appropriate:

- The blind evaluation was not helpful. Without the context of which routes the data are associated with, the evaluation is not based in reality. Empirically, cutting down 50 trees instead of 100 may be considered better, but if those 50 trees are in a park and those 100 trees are in a rural area, the answer may be different.
- The blind evaluation was plain and understandable, and allowed the group to approach the routes without preconditions and predispositions.
- Will we assign weights to these factors?
  - Penny explained that once the group decides on evaluation factors to use in the multi-objective decision analysis (MODA) process, the group will also weight them. These specific factors were for the blind evaluation, but the factors for the MODA process will be chosen by the group.
- A speaker expressed concern that not everyone participated.
  - Another speaker indicated that those who do not vote, do not get a say; it is a choice to participate.
- The blind evaluation had an indirect value. It can't lead this group to a solution, but it gets us used to working with evaluation factors and thinking about the routes in this way.
- Penny asked the group if they thought the blind evaluation was a valuable exercise. Many members commented positively and others indicated agreement non-verbally.

## Advisory Group round robin on constituent feedback

After a short break, Penny led a round robin session during which the advisory group members and residential association alternates shared the following feedback from their constituents:

- Pete Sullivan, Sam Baxter, Floyd Rogers, Rob Jammerman, Scott Kaseburg, Nicola Barnes, and David Chicks said that they were not hearing anything new from their communities.
- Gregg Zimmerman said that the Renton lakeshore should be protected from things that would degrade it.
- Jack McLeod heard from additional people in the Bellevue School District about health concerns regarding proximity to schools.
- Marcia Isenberger indicated that she is hearing concerns about cost and how it will affect power bills.
- Steve O'Donnell noted that 9 of the 18 miles of the transmission lines go through Bellevue, and that is being reflected in turn-out at meetings. Constituents are concerned about right-sizing the project, unnecessary blighting of neighborhoods, and preserving neighborhood character.



- Scott Kaseburg said that the issues are pretty repetitious. Many people are engaging but they are not hearing the answers; they are exasperated with the process.
- Deirdre Johnson thanked PSE for the walk-through in a portion of South Rose Hill in Kirkland and indicated that a lot of the homes along Segment B are brand new and many people have moved in since the plan was announced. As the poles would be built in their front yards, these constituents are concerned about the specific diameter of the poles, the spacing, the swing and sway of the lines over their homes, and the mature trees in their yards.
- Nicola Barnes mentioned that cost remains a big concern, especially what it would mean for residents if cities decide to underground the lines.
- Norm Hansen shared that people in Bridle Trails already live along existing easements for seven 115 kV transmission lines, and that they feel that they are being asked to carry the burden for the entire community.
- Lindy Bruce of the Sunset Community Association is hearing continued concerns about corona discharge noise, health concerns from EMF, and the effects that electromagnetic fields (EMF) would have on the emergency operations of the HAM network. The new taller poles will be visible by a larger portion of the neighborhood, and two poles would need to be used in the areas surrounding the Olympic pipeline. Constituents in the Sunset Community are also concerned about construction impacts and impacts if poles are mounted at the edges of the rights of way.
- Robert Shay shared that the predominant concern in his community is completing the work in a reasonable timeframe and at a reasonable cost.
- Brian Buck noted that he is hearing continued concerns over potential health effects in the Lake Washington School District.
- Darius Richards seconded Gregg Zimmermann's concern about protecting the Renton lakeshore and mentioned that he is hearing a lot of comments about how the rail corridor is unsuitable for this type of activity. He mentioned that neighborhoods want to work together to find a solution that works for everyone, and that many are concerned with being able to pull all of the information together in a reasonable time frame.

Penny thanked the advisory group for their continued interactions with their communities.

### **Additional route options information**

Penny described the additional route options information provided, including the route options key, maps, data table and worksheet.

### **Updated data table information**

Jens Nedrud, PSE Deputy Project Manager, presented additional information in the updated data table about PSE's perspective based on its years of experience building, maintaining and operating transmission lines. He shared information on five factors: cost, constructability, permitability, maintainability and longevity. In addition, Jens shared information about the future flexibility of the route options.

#### Cost

PSE was able to develop high-level cost estimates for each route segment, which include engineering and construction, materials, easement acquisition and permitting. Generally speaking, the existing PSE corridor, Willow, is estimated to be the least expensive route option. All of the route options would involve a rate increase of 1% - 2% for all PSE customers.

### Constructability

All of the route options are constructable, but some are more difficult to construct than others. Jens indicated that there are three types of construction areas: roads, cross-country, and the non-active railroad. Jens noted that roads are easily accessible, but there are limited work hours and working areas involved with construction along roads, and that traffic control is necessary. Roads are considered to be “more difficult” in terms of constructability. Cross-country areas are considered to be “neutral” in terms of constructability because these areas allow for longer work hours and minimal traffic control is needed, but access roads must be built. Finally, Jens shared that the non-active railroad allows for easy access, longer work hours, and minimal traffic control, making it “less difficult” in terms of constructability.

### Permitability

PSE always reviews the permitability of different options. All routes have their unique challenges; however, based on the regulatory requirements, those routes that include Segment L appear to be the most challenging as Segment L parallels a regulated shoreline.

### Maintainability

Steel poles require very little maintenance. Vegetation maintenance will be needed regardless of the route chosen. PSE walks all of the routes every one to three years to assess needed maintenance. All of the routes are walkable and are therefore “neutral” from a maintainability standpoint.

### Longevity

Longevity refers to how long the routes will be able to provide capacity to the region. Regardless of the route chosen, PSE anticipates needing to add capacity to the system again in the mid- to late-2030s based on the current load growth forecast.

### Future flexibility

Based on current projections, the Eastside will have a capacity need in the late 2030s. Using the existing corridor, Willow, would allow additional capacity to be added in the future without building new lines. All of the other routes would require new lines. Using more of the existing corridor as part of the selected route will require less construction for future upgrades. As a result, based on what PSE knows today, the Willow route has more flexibility over other routes.. These projections could change based on technological developments in the future.

There was a question from a Community Advisory Group member and an answer was provided by Jens:

- You stated that Willow provided the best through-put. If this project is for the Eastside and PSE doesn't make money on wheeling power, and doesn't sell interstate power, why did you make a comment about through-put?
  - Jens clarified his comment about through-put. He explained that by through-put he meant that the lines through the existing corridors are direct lines from substation to substation, and do not stop at adjacent substations.

## **Photo simulations**

Lowell presented new photo simulations provided by POWER Engineers and packets of the photo simulations were provided to the Community Advisory Group members. The photo simulations show Key Observation Points (KOPs) across the project area depicting the existing conditions and the conceptual project, i.e., what it could look like with the proposed transmission lines. PSE heard that the initial photo simulations were too far away from the lines, so that was taken into consideration when creating these



new photos. Lowell explained that in many cases, as in KOP North 13, the conductors (wires) hang over the road to minimize the impact to rights of way and vegetation. He also explained that all of the poles will be steel, but there is an option for galvanized steel poles that look silver in color or self-weathering brown poles.

Community Advisory Group members provided the following comments and questions, and clarifying answers were given when appropriate:

- In KOP North 13, the existing 115 kV line is on the bottom of the poles, and the 230 kV lines are the three lines strung along the top.
  - Lowell explained that the other photo simulation of KOP North 13 shows the new 230 kV lines on the right side of the road, with the old 115 kV lines and poles still on the left side.
- Will all of the vegetation within 50 feet of the poles be cut?
  - Lowell noted that the clearance is from the conductor, not the poles. By overhanging the road, less vegetation must be cut. Lowell later clarified that the vegetation clearance is actually 25-30 feet.
- Are these renderings your best representation of what the actual vegetation difference would be?
  - Lowell indicated that these photos were accurate representations.
- In KOP South 10, there are two examples. The poles are much taller in the second example.
  - Lowell noted that in the first example, the poles are shorter, but closer together, and in the second example, the poles are taller, but further apart. There is a trade-off between height and span length. Lowell further explained that some of the clearance is dependent on span length. With longer spans, the easements must be wider because there is more sway. If there is not enough right of way now, PSE may need to purchase more right of way. Longer spans would not be used if it would interfere with a house or a significant structure.

## **Advantages and disadvantages of route options discussion**

Penny explained that the group should start looking at the advantages and disadvantages of each route, using the route options worksheet if desired. Penny asked that the Community Advisory Group members email her any suggestions of routes that they think should not be carried forward. Penny will send out a date by which she needs this information and will share the results at the next meeting. She explained that the group only needs to send which routes they think should come off, but at the July 9 meeting, they should be prepared to provide rationalizations for their suggestions.

Penny asked the advisory group if they had any observations about the information that they had received. Community Advisory Group members provided the following comments and questions, and clarifying answers were given when appropriate:

- There is probably an advantage to using the existing corridor, i.e. it would minimize impacts and could make the corridor "better." This CAG member wants to hear from PSE and the other group members about utilizing the existing corridor.
- If the least expensive route is chosen, would PSE consider using the cost difference between the most expensive and least expensive routes to pay for undergrounding in select areas?
  - Gretchen said that PSE would not consider this option. It is the community's decision whether or not they want to invest in undergrounding. The consequences of allowing that option extend beyond this project. PSE has thousands of miles of transmission lines. If PSE undergrounds the lines here, PSE has to underground them across its service area.

If PSE undergrounded everything, it would cost something like \$13 billion and result in about a 30% rate increase. If there are savings, all of PSE's customers benefit from that; undergrounding is still being paid for by rate payers, just not through PSE.

- Cost savings from selecting a less expensive route are savings to the rate payer. Any community that wants undergrounded lines is welcome to pay for it themselves.
- Citizens are required to do things for the common good. We pay a lot of money to Sound Transit, though we may never use Sound Transit. Low income residents may require a subsidy, but for the long-term benefit and vision of the community, undergrounding should be considered at a cost to all rate payers.
- An advisory group member indicated that she spoke with Seattle City Light about their short term and long term plans for their existing lines and asked if they would be replacing the existing scaffolding towers. SCL said that it has no plans to change their existing lines in the next 20 years.
- The Community Advisory Group is tasked with considering the needs of the entire community, not just their individual neighborhoods.
- The data table pertains only to overhead solutions. When considering the information in the data table, do not think about undergrounding.
- Will the Community Advisory Group do another round of evaluations with the information about the Olympic pipeline?
  - Penny explained that the Community Advisory Group would not be doing another round of blind evaluations with those data, but that the updated data table contains information about the Olympic pipeline by route. In addition, the data tables from the Sub-Area Committee Workshops contain these data broken out by segment, whereas the updated data table presents data by route option.

## Public question and comment period

Members of the public were in the audience and shared their comments for the advisory group. Below is a summary, but not a transcript of these comments:

- Many of you are very protective of power lines being near schools where children are present. I'm assuming that that's an EMF concern. If that's true, why is it safe for homeowners living near the EMF year after year, if it isn't safe for schools? You are committing a sentence for us. I can't imagine big trucks in my backyard, coming and going over the pipeline. If you think that going underground is silly and you are cost conscious, consider what we have been living with and do not receive compensation for.
- I heard a comment that the rate payers would have an incremental cost added to our bills. If it is okay to add to our bills for the cost of this effort in the manner that you choose, then why is it impossible to consider a rate payer increase for alternative solutions?
- It doesn't seem fair to obligate all rate payers to pay for undergrounding for the benefit of one community. If a community wants undergrounding, they should have to pay for it. When people bought their homes, there were fully aware of the easements on the property. It doesn't seem fair to go into communities that don't already have easements. Undergrounding construction is not very green.
- I just wanted to thank the Community Advisory Group for their work and I love Penny's skill at managing this meeting.

## Wrap-up and next steps

Penny reviewed the action items assigned to PSE, EnviroIssues and the group members.

- PSE will discuss the possibility of forming an advisory group sub-committee on undergrounding, where information about how other communities decide to underground projects and how underground projects are financed could be shared
- PSE and Community Advisory Group members will consider the benefits of using the existing corridor
- EnviroIssues will send advisory group members a deadline for sharing which routes they think should be left behind
- EnviroIssues will share information about the upcoming Community Advisory Group and Community Meetings in September and beyond

Penny shared that all of the materials from the meeting would be posted on the Energize Eastside website. Penny reminded the Community Advisory Group about the Question and Answer Session on July 7 from 6 - 9 p.m. at the Redmond Marriott Town Center and the Community Advisory Group Meeting #4b on July 9 from 5:30 - 8:30 p.m. at Renton Technical College.