

Fall 2014 Open House and Feedback Summary

12/4/14

Overview

Puget Sound Energy (PSE) hosted an online open house from Nov. 3 to Nov. 21, 2014 and two in-person open houses on Nov. 12 and 13. At these open houses, the public had the opportunity to learn about the project, view results from the Community Advisory Group's Multi-Objective Decision Analysis (MODA) evaluation, and review the advisory group's preliminary route recommendation. The same information was shared online and in-person.

Attendees were able to provide feedback on the Community Advisory Group's preliminary route recommendation via a feedback form.

Executive summary

- **Online open house attendance:** 432 unique visitors
- **Approximate in-person open house attendance:** 50
- **Preliminary route recommendation feedback forms completed:** 143
- **Comment forms:** 6

Key feedback

- Respondents shared 385 total comments about each of the four route options included in the preliminary route recommendation.
 - Ash (87 responses)
 - Oak (93 responses)
 - Redwood (93 responses)
 - Willow (112 responses)
- The following key concerns were mentioned most frequently by feedback form respondents about the preliminary route recommendation as a whole (120 total responses):
 - Community character
 - Visual effects and aesthetics
 - Alternative technology
 - Project need
 - Underground transmission lines
- A majority of respondents indicated that online tools will be the most useful for staying informed during the next steps of the project (115 responses).

Next steps

Feedback gathered at the meetings will be shared with the Community Advisory Group at their final meeting on Dec. 10, 2014. The advisory group will review this feedback as they finalize their route recommendation for PSE's consideration.

Detailed open house summary

The following summary includes more detailed information about open house attendance and participation, results from the feedback form, and a summary of comments shared at the meetings.

Open house attendance and participation

Online open house

Nov. 3 – Nov. 21, 2014

Archive site: energizeeastside-nov-2014.publicmeeting.info



- Unique visitors: 432
- Feedback forms completed: 130

Recommendation

Next

On Oct. 8, the Community Advisory Group agreed to include routes Ash, Oak, Redwood and Willow in their **preliminary route recommendation**.

In December 2014, the advisory group will review community input on the preliminary recommendation, discuss any new information, and finalize the route recommendation for PSE to consider.

Click on the maps below for a larger map and information about what the advisory group said about each route option. Route options are configured to go from Segment A to Segment N and connect with a potential substation site. For more detailed maps, check out the **Interactive map**.



Next station

Renton open house

Wednesday, Nov. 12, 2014

6 - 8 p.m.

Renton Technical College, 3000 NE Fourth St., Renton



- Approximate attendance: 30
- Feedback forms completed: 10
- Comment forms: 2

Redmond open house

Thursday, Nov. 13, 2014

6 - 8 p.m.

Redmond Marriott Town Center, 7401 164th Ave. NE, Redmond



- Approximate attendance: 20
- Feedback forms completed: 3
- Comment forms: 4

Feedback form summary

Overview and distribution

PSE developed a form to gather feedback about the Community Advisory Group's preliminary route recommendation. The feedback form was available online from Nov. 3 to Nov. 21 and at both in-person open houses.

Respondents

- Feedback forms completed: 143
 - 130 through the online open house
 - 13 at the two in-person open houses

Note: *The content of verbatim excerpts throughout this summary below are input from individuals who have completed the feedback form. The inclusion of the excerpts is to maintain a record of the feedback received by PSE and is not a reflection of PSE's concurrence or disagreement with the content of the comments in whole or in part. The open houses, including the feedback form, reflect PSE's public outreach process to assist the Community Advisory Group in gathering input that will be used to inform a recommendation for PSE's consideration about route selection.*

Please note that this summary includes representative excerpts from the most commonly mentioned themes. Not all themes mentioned are included in this summary. In addition, many comments referenced more than one theme. As a result, totaling the number of comments under each theme may produce results unequal to the total number of responses received.

Feedback form responses

Question 1: Preliminary route recommendation

What are your comments about the Community Advisory Group's preliminary route recommendation of Ash, Oak, Redwood and Willow? (120 responses)

For the first question on the feedback form, respondents were shown maps of the four route options included in the Community Advisory Group's preliminary route recommendation and asked if they had any comments about the overall recommendation.

In Question 1, respondents provided comments with the following key themes. Each comment can relate to more than one theme.

Community character (45 comments)

Many respondents thought that the route options included in the preliminary route recommendation do not avoid residential areas. Others indicated that using as much of the existing transmission line corridor as possible will reduce the effect on residential areas.

Excerpts:

- *Looks like they maximized the existing 115KV route to minimize disruption.*
- *PSE should focus on using existing right of way instead of destroying more neighborhoods and views.*
- *The weight of residential area impact was too small. Avoiding residential area need to have >50% weight.*
- *They do look like the best four alternatives, taking advantage of the existing PSE right-of-way land, thereby less intrusive than striking out into new areas and neighborhoods.*
- *Unfortunately the routes remaining still will encroach on too many residential areas.*

Visual effects and aesthetics (26 comments)

Comments were made about the visual effects of transmission lines, specifically in relation to the Somerset hillside along Segment J.

Excerpts:

- *I disagree with placing additional power lines along any of the route recommendations due to the unsightliness of the lines.*
- *In order to minimize the visibility of the towers from throughout the region, I would recommend that only the low elevation routes be considered.*
- *It [Willow] also crosses through an exposed hillside, which will be visible for miles from other communities, and severely impact outward facing views from the affected community.*
- *The main trouble with all of the Community Advisory Group's four recommended routes is that they pass through an area that has nice views; both distant and territorial views.*

Alternative technology (21 comments)

Comments were made about utilizing alternative technology, such as conservation, solar power and energy management, to avoid the need for building transmission lines.

Excerpts:

- *I beg you to set in place energy management plans such as higher rates at traditionally peak times (over a certain average usage) so we can eliminate getting close to peak usage for many years to come.*
- *I believe we can do MUCH more to conserve electricity in this region.*
- *PSE needs to utilize other means than overhead wires to meet the needs and engage in a honest process that considers all options.*
- *The four routes selected are the best of the options proposed by PSE, but PSE has only provided limited overhead options.*
- *We have solar power, which we love and I would love to see PSE be more involved with solar as it is a great way to increase energy.*

Additional themes include:

- Project need (19 comments)
- Underground transmission lines (18 comments)
- Cost (16 comments)
- Environmental considerations or concerns (13 comments)
- Safety (12 comments)

Question 2: Route options included

If PSE selects this route, what are your comments?

For the second question on the feedback form, respondents were asked to provide comments about each individual route options included in the preliminary route recommendation. A summary of the responses for each route option is included below, as well as representative excerpts of key themes. Each comment may relate to more than one theme.

2a: ASH (Segments A-C-D-F-G1-I-K2-M-N)

Respondents provided 87 comments about the Ash route. Overall, many respondents commented that Ash was longer and more expensive than the other options. Some were in support of Ash utilizing Segment I through Factoria. In addition, many respondents expressed concerns about the effects to recreational areas and cultural landmarks (specifically the Wilburton Trestle), as well as concerns about building new power lines where there is currently no infrastructure. Excerpts regarding the predominant themes are included below.

Community character (24 comments)

Comments were submitted about building new power lines where no infrastructure currently exists along Segments D and F, the effect of overhead powerlines on unique community characteristics, and the benefits of utilizing commercial areas along Segments I and K2.

Excerpts:

- *[Segments] D and F lack existing infrastructure and cut through populated areas.*
- *Ash is an extremely poor route choice and would impact all sorts of neighborhoods not previously impacted by high voltage transmission lines.*
- *Don't mar the beauty of the region with power lines across (or near) the Wilburton Trestle.*
- *I am for this route option because it utilizes the commercially zoned Factoria corridor of I instead of the solely residential corridor of J. I also am for this route option because it utilizes K2 that follows Coal Creek Parkway and thereby avoids the most residential areas since it has the least amount residences fronting it.*
- *Overhead power lines do not belong in residential areas because they destroy our quality of life.*
- *This route being largely in a commercialized areas will soften the "blow" to the Eastside Character.*



Visual effects and aesthetics (14 comments)

Respondents expressed concerns about effects on views, specifically in the Woodridge neighborhood. However, respondents also indicated that Segment I does not have as great of a visual effect as the other route options.

Excerpts:

- *A poor choice. Ruins Seattle views for a host of Woodridge residents.*
- *Ash also has the potential to affect some views in our neighborhood. Woodridge is known for its beautiful unobstructed views.*
- *Degradation of aesthetics with up to twelve story poles that would be introduced into areas of the City of Bellevue that did not exist previously on the Ash route options.*
- *Don't choose this route. Preserve our views, natural areas and historic landmarks (Woodridge/Wilburton Train Trestle).*
- *If you must have an overhead solution, it is one of the better solutions as it uses segment I which is a business area that avoids having the lines run across a major elevation where they are visible everywhere.*

Cost (13 comments)

Respondents expressed concern that Ash is the most expensive of the four route options included in the preliminary route recommendation. Some respondents indicated that building new power lines in areas where no infrastructure currently exists increases the cost.

Excerpts:

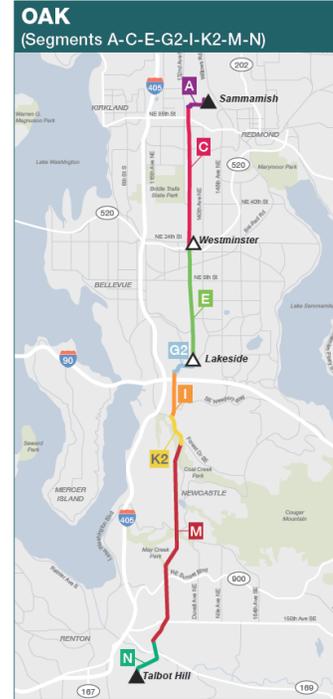
- *About 50% more expensive than the other options.*
- *Fewest homes. Most expensive.*
- *Looks like this route would cost the most and require more construction.*
- *Section F and D don't make sense, since there's no need to veer the line to the west, and it costs more.*

Additional themes include:

- Business impacts (12 comments)
- Project need (10 comments)
- Underground transmission lines (8 comments)
- Visual effects and aesthetics (8 comments)
- Recreation (7 comments)

2b: OAK (Segments A-C-E-G2-I-K2-M-N)

Respondents provided 93 comments about the Oak route. Overall, many respondents indicated support for the Oak route because it avoids Somerset along Segment J, while others were concerned about using Segment I along Factoria Blvd. Respondents also commented Oak was the shortest and most direct route option included in the preliminary route recommendation. Excerpts regarding the predominant themes are included below.



Community character (17 comments)

Comments expressed a preference for the Oak route because of its use of Segment I along Factoria Blvd, rather than Segment J through Somerset. Many respondents indicated that using Segment I avoids the most residential areas, while some respondents expressed concerns that the residential interests in Factoria were not being considered.

Excerpts:

- *Disappointing that this line runs close to residential areas with high rise condos on the same property as the high voltage power lines.*
- *For \$22M additional, Oak seems to be the best choice of the four and largely mitigates the impact to Somerset.*
- *Good choice. Between these options, this route best leverages segment I, which is primarily a business corridor with few if any single family homes.*
- *It avoids well-established, beautiful neighborhoods which are keys to a vital community and one of the elements that makes Bellevue unique and desirable...This route has the least negative impact on Bellevue residential areas.*
- *This route sacrifices Factoria which has no representation on the CAG. Who is speaking up for residential interests in Factoria?*
- *Very much impacts the residents around K2, I and G2.*

Business impacts (17 comments)

Many respondents commented about Segment I along Factoria Blvd, indicating a preference for using commercial areas rather than residential areas.

Excerpts:

- *By most (>25 ft) measure of residential impact, the commercial area of Factoria would seem a better place than most actual residential areas for these huge high power towers.*
- *Oak gets my vote as the simplest alternative making use of industrial corridors to the greatest degree possible.*
- *Oak is another one of the most "commercialized" routes within the remaining options. This has the least impact on the major concerns of the community.*

Visual effects and aesthetics (12 comments)

Some comments indicated that the Oak route, specifically in reference to Segment I along Factoria Blvd, mitigates many concerns about visual effects in the Somerset neighborhood. Respondents also mentioned that the hill in Somerset along Segment J is an Eastside landmark that can be seen from many communities.

Excerpts:

- *Avoids major view impact on Somerset.*
- *Factoria is commercial and very urban and so less aesthetically impacted by the lines.*
- *It follows some existing power routes and traverses industrial areas where the aesthetic impact is not a major concern or issue.*
- *This route option also is better than Willow because it does not have J and thereby avoids the biggest impact imaginable to the aesthetics of the eastside as a whole by not putting the lines high up diagonally cutting through its landmark hillside, in the view of the greatest number of eastside communities and all those that come to the eastside over the main portal of i-90.*

Additional themes include:

- Cost (9 comments)
- Project need (7 comments)
- Health (6 comments)
- Underground transmission lines (6 comments)
- Construction effects (5 comments)

2c: REDWOOD (Segments A-C-E-G1-G2-H-K1-K2-M-N)

Respondents provided 93 comments about the Redwood route. Overall, respondents were concerned that Redwood is longer and more expensive than other options. Respondents also expressed concerns about the effects to recreational and environmental areas (specifically Mercer Slough), and cultural landmarks (specifically the Wilburton Trestle). Comments were also made about building new power lines where no infrastructure currently exists, especially along Segment H, where there are concerns about slope stability and safety. Excerpts regarding the predominant themes are included below.

Vegetation (24 comments) and **Geology/soils/steep slopes** (20 comments)

Many comments expressed concern about removing trees along Segment H, which may cause slope instability along the hillside.

Excerpts:

- *Greatest number of trees removed, second longest length, otherwise, a reasonable option but perhaps not the best.*
- *It cuts through sensitive slope areas, removing a lot of trees and contributing to erosion concerns (Segment H).*
- *Removal of the necessary trees and vegetation along the rail right of way would also destabilize the hill side and create unsafe conditions for the residents above and below the rail corridor.*



- *The process of clear cutting the right of way to establish the necessary setbacks from the proposed power lines will significantly destabilize the hillside and greatly increase the risk of land slide. Not only will this jeopardize the lives and homes of the people living above the rail bed, but there is also significant risk to the homes that lie east of the rail bed, along Lake Washington Blvd.*
- *Tree removal is a lower priority than avoiding residential neighborhoods, so H seems a better option than some others.*

Community character (19 comments)

Respondents shared a variety of comments about the effects on residential neighborhoods along Segments K1, K2, and H. Some respondents expressed concerns with building new power lines where no infrastructure currently exists, while others indicated that this route option avoids residential areas.

Excerpts:

- *I am for this route option because it utilizes K2 that follows Coal Creek Parkway and thereby avoids the most residential areas since it has the least amount residences fronting it.*
- *I don't like the loss of trees and the added disruptions to neighborhoods that have not known high power transmission corridors.*
- *K1 is too near a high school and residential neighborhood which already are suffering from large power lines nearby. Many people pass through this area going to school, work, shopping/errands.*
- *Redwood also seems to unnecessarily go into existing neighborhood similar to Ash and therefore is less desirable.*

Environmental (15 comments)

Comments were made about the effects of power lines on environmentally sensitive areas, specifically Mercer Slough. Respondents expressed concerns that Mercer Slough contains many unique environmental characteristics and is a popular recreational area, which would be negatively affected by the project.

Excerpts:

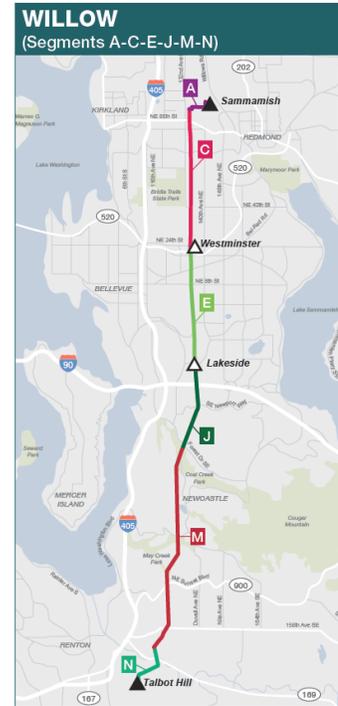
- *It includes spreading the environmental pollution along the sensitive mercer slough and highly traveled bicycle corridors.*
- *Most damaging to wetlands.*
- *Segment H is near the Mercer Slough, a wetland and environmentally important area for all of Bellevue.*
- *The Redwood route section H includes steep slopes, sensitive areas, wetlands, and an adverse impact to neighborhood aesthetics. The reason why the CAG eliminated all options with Section L was due to the sensitive areas, lake exposure, etc.... Section H is an extension of Section L with additional adverse impacts such as previously mentioned (steep slopes, wetlands, sensitive areas) and should be eliminated from the recommended routes.*
- *This is by far the worse route, given its impact on trails, environment through the mercer slough...and the number of trees and other environmental impact.*

Additional themes include:

- Visual effects and aesthetics (11 comments)
- Safety (10 comments)
- Recreation (9 comments)
- Cost (8 comments)
- Project need (7 comments)

2d: Willow (Segments A-C-E-J-M-N)

Respondents provided 112 comments about Willow. Overall, respondents commented that Willow is the most direct and least expensive route and utilizes the highest percentage of the existing corridor, which limits the effect on new areas. However, many respondents expressed concerns about the visual effects in Somerset along Segment J. Questions were also posed about the safety of siting power lines along the Olympic Pipeline. Excerpts regarding the predominant themes are included below.



Visual effects and aesthetics (31 comments) and **Community character** (28 comments)

Many respondents articulated concern with the visual and residential effects along Segment J. Several respondents commented about the visual effect to the entire region. Some respondents indicated that using the existing corridor limits the number of new areas that are affected by the power lines.

Excerpts:

- *If you must have an overhead solution, it is not a good solution as the lines are visible everywhere in Bellevue, Mercer Island, and beyond.*
- *Their homes were sited to take advantage of the view and it brings the residents all much joy daily. If the 100 foot poles and lines were installed in segment J it would significantly impact the view and the aesthetics of the whole area. It is not about property values.*
- *This is a reasonable route on the existing line route, but Oak is preferred over Willow as this route would damage the views of Sommerset Hill and could devalue homeowner properties.*
- *This is the existing route today and goes through heavily populated residential areas. Putting 100 - 160 foot poles along this route is an eyesore*
- *This seems like the best choice from the standpoint of...avoids spreading the visual pollution to new areas.*

Cost (19 comments)

Comments were made about Willow being the shortest and most direct route, therefore resulting in the lowest cost.

Excerpts:

- *I strongly support Willow -- following the existing right-of-way seems to me to be the least intrusive and least costly way to add the new capacity.*
- *Most direct, cheapest, quickest, fastest....*
- *Probably makes the most sense to use this existing route. It is the least expensive, and is predicted to last the longest before the need for the next upgrade*

Underground transmission lines (12 comments)

Suggestions were made to underground the lines, especially through view neighborhoods such as Somerset along Segment J.

Excerpts:

- *I hope that lines can be put underground to minimize impacts on the neighborhoods but using an existing corridor makes the most sense to me rather than going through other neighborhoods.*
- *If the only objection to it is blocking the view in section J, I suggest undergrounding the lines for that section.*
- *Perhaps it would be better to spend the money up front, and pursue underground transmission lines through sensitive areas.*

Additional themes include:

- Safety (9 comments)
- Schools (9 comments)
- Property value effects (9 comments)
- Design structure type or appearance (8 comments)
- Health (7 comments)

Additional comments about the Energize Eastside project

In both Questions 1 and 2, some respondents provided comments that were not specific to any one route or referenced specific route segments instead of full routes. Below are key themes from the comments as well as the most frequently mentioned route segments. Each comment can relate to more than one theme.

1. Community character (133 comments)

Respondents commented about the overall effect of transmission lines to communities on the Eastside. Some respondents indicated that using the existing corridor may be the best way to reduce the overall effect.

- *Avoiding residential areas is supposed to be the highest priority, but the counting only various property tax units within 25 feet of proposed lines seems a much too narrow measure of the overall impact on a residential neighborhood.*
- *I think this project should reduce the impact on the existing route, it should improve the area.*
- *PSE should focus on using existing right of way instead of destroying more neighborhoods and views.*
- *These outcomes [route options] will impact multiple cities, neighborhoods, and ultimately change the landscape and character of the Eastside.*

2. Project need (58 comments)

Some comments questioned the need for the project and suggested alternatives.

- *After reviewing the information presented by PSE and others, I doubt this project is necessary or desirable (for the Eastside customers and communities PSE serves).*
- *Energize Eastside is just about transmitting power from Canada to California. Why are we going to use prime residential real-estate when this could be built out in the middle of nowhere east of Puget Sound?*
- *I do not think it is necessary. It is a waste of money and time and energy.*
- *PSE has not sufficiently...justified the timing of the need. WHEN will be power really be needed?*

3. Underground transmission lines (50 comments)

Some respondents commented about undergrounding the transmission lines, including undergrounding specific sections of the route.

- *I strongly oppose PSE's overall project proposal and feel other options, such as underground lines, should be explored.*
- *New route corridors should be avoided, unless they are underground.*
- *We are not thrilled with any options above ground but could live with this if required because of cost considerations.*

Top segments mentioned

The following five segments were the most frequently mentioned in comments.

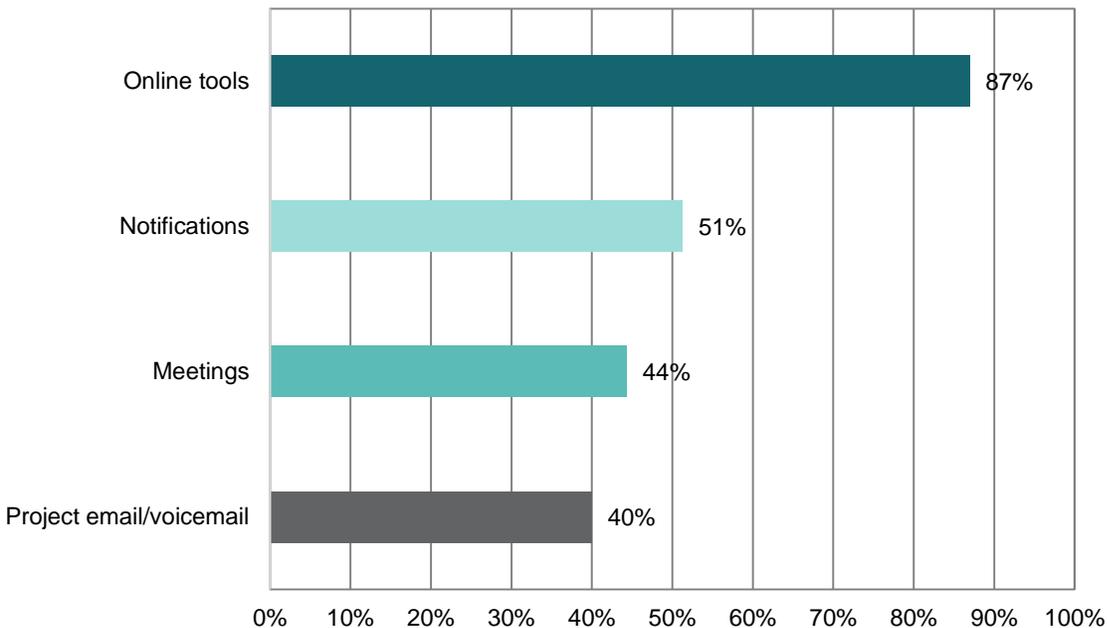
- Segment I (42 comments)
- Segment J (42 comments)
- Segment H (30 comments)
- Segment M (21 comments)
- Segment K2 (12 comments)

Question 3: Next steps for the Energize Eastside project

Which tools will you find most useful to stay informed during next steps (fieldwork, community input on design, construction, environmental review) for the Energize Eastside project? (please check all that apply) (115 responses)

Overall, respondents found the online tools (e.g., website, emails, interactive map, online open house) to be most useful.

Question 3: Public involvement tools (115 responses)



Comment summary

At the in-person open houses some attendees submitted written comments about the project.

On Nov. 12, attendees submitted two total comments that included the following topics:

- Feedback regarding which specific route option should be chosen
- Thanking the project team for providing answers to questions about growth, health, height of the poles, and the preliminary route recommendation

On Nov. 13, attendees submitted four total comments that included the following topics:

- Concern about burdening neighborhoods that already have additional infrastructure, such as power lines and the Olympic Pipeline
- Concern about close proximity to residences and effects on property values
- Feedback regarding which specific route option should be chosen
- Suggestion for an expansion of the conversation to include alternative solutions
- Suggestion to provide more information on health effects
- Thanking the project team for providing answers to questions