BPA Identifies New Potential Routes For Proposed Power Line

Local News

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The Bonneville Power Administration released a new map of possible power line segments the agency will consider for its I-5 Corridor Reinforcement project. The map includes new potential route segments in eastern Clark County farther from population centers, and two new potential substation sites near Castle Rock, Wash.

The map further refines years of preliminary examination of routes for the proposed new transmission line. The proposed project is needed to resolve a critical electric bottleneck that could otherwise lead to outages in southwest Washington and northwest Oregon as early as 2016. No new high-voltage power lines have been built in the area in more than four decades, although the area population has doubled.

“The local need for the line is without question,” said Brian Skeahan, general manager of Cowlitz County Public Utility District, which depends on transmission in the I-5 corridor for its power. “We need this transmission, and we need it relatively soon.”
BPA has scheduled four public meetings in southwest Washington and northwest Oregon to explain the status of the project and the next steps. Dates and locations for the meetings and the new map can be found at www.bpa.gov/go/i5.

“The extensive public input we’ve received has helped us develop a wide range of alternative routes that includes new options through less-populated areas,” said Steve Wright, BPA administrator. “We know that this is a lengthy and trying process, but we need to make sure we get it right. We understand that people who could be affected would like us to move as quickly as possible.”

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BPA will now focus on developing preliminary designs for each segment. That will help narrow corridors now depicted on the map, providing a more precise picture of where the proposed line might be located.

BPA is a not-for-profit federal electric utility that operates a high-voltage transmission grid comprising more than 15,000 miles of lines and associated substations in Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana. It also markets more than a third of the electricity consumed in the Pacific Northwest. The power is produced at 31 federal dams operated by the Army Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation and one nuclear plant in the Northwest and is sold to more than 140 Northwest utilities. BPA purchases power from seven wind projects and has more than 2,800 megawatts of wind interconnected to its transmission system.