

TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECTS

ROUTING AND SITING PROCESS

DETERMINING THE LOCATION FOR NEW ELECTRIC TRANSMISSION LINES

We know the process of identifying potential routes for new electric transmission lines is a sensitive one. We follow a careful and deliberate process that provides guidance for identifying and analyzing options for siting and routing transmission lines. Through input we receive from agencies, the public, communities and landowners, we consider options that are appropriate for the location and issues associated with a particular project. Be assured that we are committed to finding the best solution, and following a fair and inclusive process.

ROUTING CRITERIA

State policy on new transmission line routing specifically requires that we begin by considering corridor sharing for new transmission lines:

- Utilities – electric lines, natural gas pipelines, sewer lines
- Highway/Railroad – interstate, state highways, planned highways, roadways, railroads
- Recreational trails
- New Corridors – follow linear features, parcel lines to the extent possible

BALANCING ROUTING CONSIDERATIONS

Developing routes that might be suitable for transmission lines requires a balanced look at a variety of factors. Landowner and community input is always taken into consideration and the impacts of available alternatives are evaluated. Transmission line routing may involve trade-offs between a particular set of advantages and disadvantages. ATC looks for routes that balance community input with environmental impacts, constructability, current and future land use, project cost and specific electric system needs. We will propose a route that addresses an electric system need for all customers in an area and also reduces local impacts to the extent possible.

ATC considers many issues and factors, including:

- Local land use and development plans, including areas designated for specific future uses
- County and state road expansion plans
- Terrain and obstacle considerations, including streams and railroad crossings, embankments, bridges and soil conditions such as wetlands or bedrock
- Community and landowner impacts
- Natural resources, including wetlands, woodlands and wildlife areas
- Archeological and agricultural resources
- Length of the route and project costs
- Electric system performance

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PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

At ATC, we use an open and interactive approach that involves gathering information and public feedback at four distinct phases of project development.

- **Phase 1: Study area** We begin with a study area that identifies two end points (substations – new or existing) for the transmission line. We gather data on environmental sensitivities, roads, railroads, pipelines, utility corridors and environmental areas. It is during this phase that the project is introduced to the public.
- **Phase 2: Potential corridors** Based on routing criteria, potential corridors are identified after reviewing the study area. We identify many corridors (can be several hundred feet wide or more) between the end points that may be suitable for a transmission line route, but have not yet been thoroughly evaluated. These corridors represent opportunities to rule in or rule out possible transmission line routes that require further evaluation, and are presented to the public for discussion and input. Corridors that are not identified at this phase still may be added later. It is important that every possible corridor is explored.
- **Phase 3: Preliminary routes** The preliminary routes represent those that are “still on the table” and include two or three more defined route possibilities. The preliminary routes have been evaluated more thoroughly and are likely to be considered for the project. As part of the route refinement process, new line segments that were not considered in previous phases may be added to the project map.
- **Phase 4: Preferred and alternate routes (or “proposed routes”)** These are the two routes that have been identified as the best solutions based on environmental and land use considerations, suitability for construction, public acceptance, cost and electric system needs. Both routes are formally presented in our regulatory application to the Public Service Commission for authorization to construct the project. We are required to submit two possible routes and we will generally state which of the two routes we prefer and why. These routes are thoroughly characterized with supporting environmental, engineering and construction information, all of which is publicly available.

At each of the four stages, we contact local officials, community organizations, landowners and the news media to provide the latest developments of the project and offer opportunities for public feedback. Once the PSC receives ATC’s construction application, the PSC will evaluate whether the project is needed, hold a public hearing and decide where to site the line. The PSC route decision may or may not be the route that we recommend and may include some additional minor changes to the route.

In the route development process, new information may require us to add new route segments to our project map or to reconsider a route segment that had been eliminated earlier. For this reason, we encourage all landowners to follow project developments until completion of the regulatory review process. Our routing activities and decisions are available at open house events, on our Web site and through local news outlets.

