

# Residents near vineyards decry power line plan

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LIVERMORE — In a scene that pitted environmental cause against environmental cause, about 200 Livermore residents on Wednesday packed the Robert Livermore Community Center to protest plans for a massive power line project through their backyards.

The proposed 600-mile line would originate at yet-to-be-developed wind and solar power plants in northeast Lassen County. It would send renewable energy to Santa Clara and other parts of Northern California, but not before passing through farms and vineyards in Alameda County.

Livermore Valley landowners are worried about the aesthetic, economic and health impacts of proposed transmission lines and towers.

"You'll do this over our dead bodies," one woman said of the project. Her comment drew loud applause.

The emotionally charged meeting underscored a growing California controversy — how to meet growing demand for green power without creating new environmental problems.

Supporters say the project would relieve stress on the aging power grid. It could help meet unfunded state mandates under Senate Bill 14, which demand that utilities provide 33 percent of their power from renewable sources by 2020.

"There is growing pressure in the Legislature to get us to this 33 percent (figure)," said Patrick Mealoy, operations manager for the Transmission Agency of Northern California.

If approved, the project would serve members of the agency — a consortium of 15 cities and utilities that operate their own public power departments.

Mealoy said the group is working with the Western Area Power Administration, part of the Energy Department.

Five members — the Sacramento Municipal Utility, Modesto and Turlock irrigation districts, and the cities of Redding and Santa Clara — are funding the initial environmental work. Funding has not yet been secured for the \$1.5 billion power line.

Opponents at the meeting called the project a "green oxymoron."

"I can think of few structures that are more visually jarring than "... massive power lines," Livermore Vice Mayor John Marchand said.

"The Valley is already cross-stitched with ugly, obsolete (power lines)," said longtime Livermore activist Bob Balzer. He and others suggested finding alternate routes.

"I'm really not seeing a vision of the future here," said resident John Toeppen, questioning why lines wouldn't go underground.

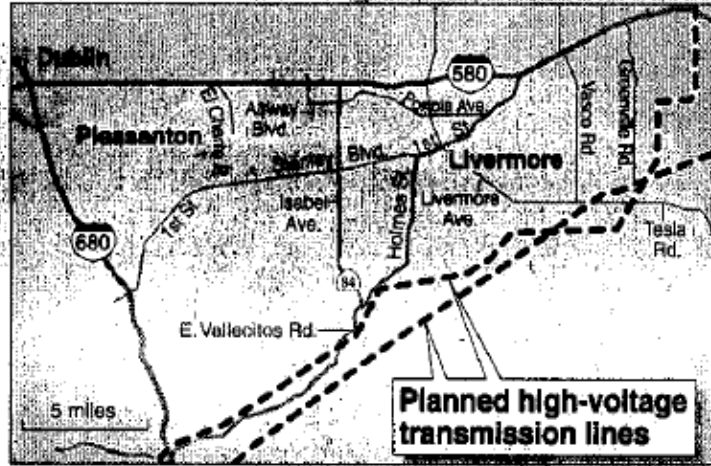
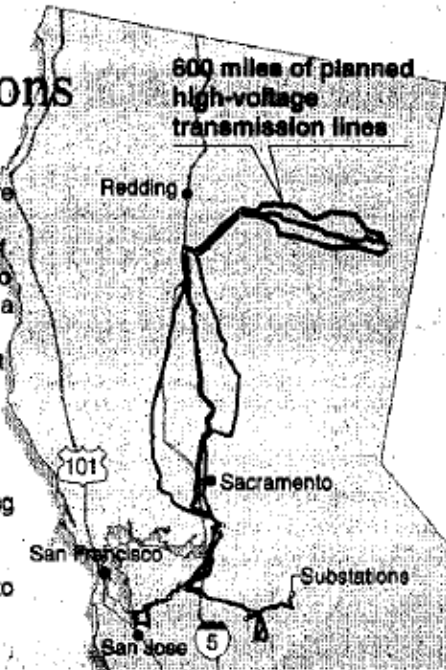
The first phase of the environmental review process will likely take two years or more.

Residents have until July 31 to make comments, which will be used to determine which environmental concerns to address in the draft environmental report. Send comments to [TTPEIS@wapa.gov](mailto:TTPEIS@wapa.gov); call 926-353-4777 or go to [www.wapa.gov/transmission/ttp.htm](http://www.wapa.gov/transmission/ttp.htm).

# High tensions

A heated community meeting was held Wednesday in Livermore with members of the Transmission Agency of Northern California, who fielded questions about a section of planned high voltage power lines that would cut through area vineyards and open space. The power lines could carry increased electricity from developing geothermal and wind energy sources in northeastern California to as far south as Santa Clara County.

600 miles of planned high-voltage transmission lines



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