

Supervisors Come Out Against Power-line Plan

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By Ron McNicoll

Alameda County Supervisors are in opposition to the proposed powerline project that would go through the Valley.

The board voted unanimously at its meeting June 9 to oppose it. The motion was made by AliceLai-Bitker.

The resolution states that the county wants the two public power agency sponsors, TANC and WAPA, to drop the idea immediately.

Supervisors also declared opposition to "similar projects involving piecemeal developmental of electrical infrastructure." They want to see proponents anywhere in California coordinate with existing providers of power, and cooperate with local government and residents that are affected by the plans.

Supervisors called for the state and federal agencies that deal with the power grid to prepare a comprehensive survey and draft plan for consolidation of electrical transmission lines.

The resolution is similar to a letter that supervisor Scott Haggerty, whose district includes the Valley, sent on May 21 to TANC and WAPA.

In that letter, Haggerty expressed his "strong opposition" to the current TANC route through the Valley. On the point of the power lines' threat to the open space in South Livermore, Ruby Hill and the Sunol Valley, Haggerty pointed out the Valley's many open space policies were created through deep and wide-ranging deliberations.

Haggerty's letter called for creation of a state policy on power lines. The power grid in the state has many inefficiencies that could be corrected by combining and upgrading facilities on existing routes, he said. The idea is to obtain enough future power in the state without building any new routes.

Aside from what some consider the visual pollution of the powerlines themselves, many objectors in the Valley have said that the potential 200-foot-wide 50 mile right of way presents other problems. Placing the lines near homes and wineries would create potential health effects from electromagnetic field radiation.

The routing would also force people to give up some of their property, whether by negotiation or condemnation.

The county planning and community development department sent TANC and WAPA a 14-page letter on May 26 informing them of many county policies that appear to be violated by the powerline proposal as it now stands.

The power in the TANCWAPA project would not serve any customers in the Valley, but it would have the potential to be growth-inducing along the route, said the agency's letter.

The 600-mile route, which would begin in Lassen County, would terminate in Santa Clara. The city power company there is one of the five participating TANC agencies.

TANC, the Transmission Association of Northern California, is a joint powers agreement comprised of 15 member agencies. WAPA, a federal agency, is the Western Area Power Association

TANC is the lead agency. Its staff has said that the agency hopes to begin construction in 2011 or 2012, and finish by 2014 or 2015. The line's capacity would be about 500 or 600 megawatts. It is intended to carry green power from northern California, where the resources exist, but have not been developed yet.

The deadline for comments in the scoping period of the EIR, in which people can submit questions, was extended to July 30. Comments may be addressed to David Young, NEPA document manager, Western Area Power Administration, Sierra Nevada Region, 114 Parkshore Drive, Folsom, CA. 95630. Comments may be sent by fax to 916-353- 4772, or by e-mail to TTPEIS@wapa.gov.

Some 190 people attended a meeting in Livermore late in May, after the Tri-Valley Conservancy arranged a meeting with TANC officials. Nearly all of them raised their hands to indicate they are opposed to the plan. TANC had scheduled 12 scoping meetings, none of them in the Valley.