



## Department of Energy

Bonneville Power Administration  
P.O. Box 3621  
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TRANSMISSION BUSINESS LINE

January 9, 2006

In reply refer to: TNP-TPP-3

**To: People interested in BPA's Proposed Rebuild of the Libby (FEC) to Troy Section of BPA's Libby to Bonners Ferry 115-kilovolt Transmission Line**

In May and September 2005, the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) wrote to tell you about a proposal to rebuild a 17-mile-long section of the Libby to Bonners Ferry 115-kilovolt (kV) Transmission Line that could affect you. We asked for your comments on the project and hosted three public meetings including an additional meeting regarding electric and magnetic fields. Response was great; BPA received over 300 comments on the proposal. Thank you for taking the time to tell us your ideas.

This letter briefly summarizes those comments, outlines our next steps, and tells where to call if you have questions.

**The proposal is the same** - BPA is proposing to rebuild a 17-mile-long section of the existing 115-kV wood pole transmission line that runs west from Flathead Electric Cooperative's Libby (FEC) Substation in the town of Libby, Montana, to BPA's Troy Substation, east of Troy, Montana. The proposed rebuild would be located primarily along BPA's existing right-of-way with three potential re-routings – one to avoid immediately adjacent residences in the vicinity of the town of Libby near Pipe Creek, a second to bypass potential affected landowners in the Big Horn Terrace area, and a third at a river crossing prior to a washout at China Creek, approximately three-quarters of a mile east of the present crossing of the Kootenai River.

BPA is considering three voltage alternatives: rebuilding the line in-kind as a single-circuit 115-kV wood pole H-frame with some wood pole equivalent steel poles; rebuilding the line as a double-circuit 115-kV tubular steel pole line; and rebuilding the line as double-circuit 230-kV tubular steel pole line. BPA is also considering taking no action to rebuild the line, an alternative BPA always considers as required by the National Environmental Policy Act. BPA has not decided on a preferred alternative at this time.

Currently, the condition of many of the wood poles and cross arms is very poor and in need of immediate repair. The proposed line rebuild is needed to continue to provide safe and reliable transmission service to the local communities, and prepare for the future load growth in the area.

### **Public Comments**

Project scoping occurred between May 19, 2005 and October 30, 2005. BPA mailed project information to about 300 potentially interested and affected persons, agencies, tribes and organizations.

Two open house public meetings were held in May 2005 in Libby. An additional scoping meeting was held in September 2005 in Libby to hear comments from landowners in the Big Horn Terrace subdivision area, who were inadvertently left off the original mailing list and did not receive notification of the first two public meetings. Due to considerable public interest, we held an informational meeting on electric and magnetic fields in November 2005 in Libby.

BPA received 387 comments on the proposed project. Almost one-half (182) came from the meetings. We also received comments by mail, e-mail, and with permission-to-enter forms.

Forty-four percent (173) of the comments dealt with the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project. Fifty of those 173 dealt with socioeconomic impacts. Commenters asked about potential impacts to residential land use and property values. They also questioned how BPA determines land values. Resource impacts receiving more than 25 comments each were related to visual resources, public health and safety, and fish and wildlife. Other resource impacts receiving 10 comments or less included vegetation, recreation, noise, land use and transportation, cultural resources, and air quality.

Thirty-seven percent (143) of all comments focused on the proposed transmission line re-routing alternatives near Pipe and Quartz Creeks and across the Kootenai River. Specifically, comments focused on the proposed width of right-of-way that would be needed to rebuild the line, right-of-way clearing, the size and type of towers, and timeline for construction. Residents in the Big Horn Terrace area stated their preferred re-routing alternative (re-routing the line northwest across Quartz Creek to avoid the residential area) and their least favorite (rebuilding the line in the existing right-of-way through the Big Horn Terrace area). Residents along Lower Quartz Creek Road and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes stated their preferred alternative would be to rebuild on the existing right-of-way through the Big Horn Terrace area. A couple residents in the Pipe Creek area preferred we rebuild the line on the existing right-of-way along Kootenai River Road. Some commenters preferred moving the Kootenai River crossing to the east as much as possible away from Kootenai Falls. Other commenters suggested other routing alternatives which include: burying the line, moving the line to the south side of the Kootenai River, using the railroad right-of-way, and different variations of the re-routing alternatives.

About 17 percent (68) of the comments were questions about the project need in relation to population growth in the Libby/Troy area. Most commenters suggested rebuilding the line as a double-circuit 230-kV line to serve potential load growth and prevent having to enter the area again for many years. A few suggested BPA rebuild in-kind as single-circuit 115-kV line on the existing right-of-way. BPA also received many comments and questions on the need to rebuild the line and alternatives to rebuilding the line.

The remaining comments were scattered among topics including suggestions on the Draft EIS process, descriptions of previous fires in the area from downed wires along the existing line, questions regarding what communities receive power from this line and BPA's plans for the lines west of Troy and east of Libby.

All of the comments will influence the scope of the Draft EIS.

If you would like to see all the comments we received, you can visit our Web site at:

[http://www.transmission.bpa.gov/PlanProj/Transmission\\_Projects/default.cfm?page=LTL](http://www.transmission.bpa.gov/PlanProj/Transmission_Projects/default.cfm?page=LTL). If you would

like us to send you a copy of the comments, please call our toll-free document request line at **1-800-622-4519**, and leave a message. Please include the name of this project and your complete mailing address.

**Next Steps**

We are analyzing the possible environmental impacts of the project. Your comments are helping us focus our efforts. The information that we gather will be published in a Draft EIS that will be available for review and comment in the spring of 2006. Enclosed is a reply card that you can send in if you would like to receive a copy of the Draft EIS.

You will continue to see survey crews and environmental contractors working along the line through the following months.

Once we have completed the environmental review, BPA will decide whether and how to proceed with the project. If BPA decides to proceed, construction would likely begin in 2007.

**For More Information**

If you have any questions about this proposal or comment summary, please call me toll-free at **1-800-622-4519** at my direct number, (360) 619-6301; or send an e-mail to [kmrobinson@bpa.gov](mailto:kmrobinson@bpa.gov).

Thank you for your interest in this project.

Sincerely,

*/s/ Kirk Robinson*

Kirk Robinson  
Project Manager

Enclosures: Map and Reply Card