



News

MAPP routes presented at Taylor's Island meeting

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TAYLOR'S ISLAND Proposed routes for the Mid Atlantic Power Pathway (MAPP) across Dorchester County are being presented by Pepco Holdings representatives at another set of meetings.

During the first, held here Thursday, there also was information about cost differences between aerial and underground lines, consideration of an alternative underwater route up the Nanticoke River, employment opportunities in constructing the \$1.425 billion project (including the line going under Chesapeake Bay) and a listing of permits that would be needed before anything could be built in Dorchester County.

This meeting series has two more dates in Dorchester. The next is Tuesday, Feb. 24, at the Church Creek firehouse, then Thursday, Feb. 26, at the E.A. Murphy Community Center, 104 Race St., Vienna. The same presentation will be repeated twice, at 4:20 p.m. and 6:20 p.m., at each event, which will both run from 4 to 8 p.m.

Information about the plan also can be found on the Web site www.powerpathway.com. A local group formed to oppose the power transmission line, Dorchester Citizens for Safe Energy also has its own Web site at www.dorchestersafeenergy.com.

A building permit from Dorchester County Planning and Zoning is among those needed to construct a 500 kilovolt (500,000 volt) electric transmission line on towers across Dorchester from Taylor's Island to Vienna.

According to the presentation by MAPP Project Leader Vincent Maione, the power transmission line also will require permits from the Maryland Public Service Commission, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Maryland Department of the Environment, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, the Maryland Board of Public Works and the Maryland Critical Area Commission.

Formal public hearings, which Maione said would be held in Dorchester County, are required by the Maryland Public Service Commission and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as part of the federal agency review.

Four proposed routes were presented. Maione explained that information about the landscape was combined with comments from federal, state and local agencies in a computer program to determine the best routes for different aspects maximum population avoidance, following existing rights-of-way and the most environmentally sensitive route. The fourth route was a combination of the other three.

About 50 people attended the presentation at the Taylor's Island firehouse. Maione said a crowd about the same size attended an earlier presentation.

There also were three Dorchester County Sheriff's deputies at the Taylor's Island meeting. Security measures are also expected at the meetings at Church Creek and Vienna.

MAPP representatives had several information stations set up, including two large aerial photographs of

the corridor across Dorchester being considered for the power transmission line.

Many people studied the maps to see where the proposed routes were in relation to their properties. There also was a listing of MAPP work opportunities and an application form for potential suppliers and contractors.

Maione said the lines for the proposed routes are not exact, "They are not going to be exactly where they are shown. We can't just build a straight line through everybody's property," he said, explaining that routes will be altered to go around houses, barns and other key buildings.

Several active members of Dorchester Citizens for Safe Energy attended Thursday evening's MAPP presentation, including DCSE President Libby Nagel.

Following a Feb. 3 presentation on MAPP by Pepco Senior Vice President William Gausman before the Dorchester County Council, DCSE sent a letter to Pepco asking for cancellation of the three meetings being held now in favor of one large meeting like the Feb. 3 event at Cambridge-South Dorchester High School "once you are fully prepared to address in detail the questions and alternatives ..." Expressing disappointment with the information Gausman presented Feb. 3 in the letter, Nagel suggested DCSE may tell supporters not to attend three community meetings.

Thursday Nagel said Pepco had contacted DCSE about the request and turned it down, leaving no alternative but to attend the meetings on MAPP representatives' terms.

Nagel asked Maione about a recent conversation at her farm. During that discussion, Nagel said she was told the line will run between her farm and an adjacent farm "in a straight line" and asked about Maione's suggestion that the line will be routed around houses and other structures.

Maione offered an apology for any misinformation and reminded Nagel of discussion about the effects of making turns in the line, explaining that wider poles are needed in curving areas of the line to support the added strain made on the line when it veers from a straight path.

People were shown two possible designs for the power lines to be run on sets of two towers, 115 to 125 feet tall, spaced 60 feet apart in a 200-foot right-of-way in either galvanized steel or weathering steel.

The MAPP presentation offered estimated cost differences between an aerial line and one that runs underground. It estimates the cost of running 30 miles of electric transmission line underground is at \$800 million, versus \$210 million to run 30 miles of line above ground

The cost of running the line underwater, up the Nanticoke River to Vienna, is now being developed, Maione said.

He showed maps of the Choptank and Little Choptank rivers noting the locations of shellfish beds, key subaquatic vegetation and other possible submerged resources. He said the same kind of map is being created for the Nanticoke River to estimate the cost for an underwater route.

Maione said one certainty about taking the line up the Nanticoke is, "It probably doubles the distance of the project to 70 miles instead of 27."

The audience suggested that an underwater route would mean an annual \$4 million saving for MAPP since the county would not be charging property tax on an underwater line.

Maione said a fee would need to be paid to the state to allow for an underwater line but wasn't sure if it was a one-time or an annual fee.

The line that will be buried on the floor of Chesapeake Bay is made more expensive because of its armor cladding. But there is cost savings because the underwater cable can be made in one solid length, avoiding the need for less reliable manmade splices, because the entire eight miles running under the Bay can be transported on one barge.

Maione said a truck can only carry about 2,000 feet of electric transmission line, requiring manmade splices with the start of each new length when running the line underground. Large electric boxes, have

to be buried at each point of splicing, which greatly increases the cost and making the line less reliable.

Current plans are to run the line for about two miles underground across Taylor's Island and under Slaughter Creek before MAPP takes to the air.

Maione said estimates using 2006 figures determined the Delmarva Peninsula would need expanded energy sources by 2013. Someone asked if the estimation of need has changed following recent declines in new home purchases, which could delay or postpone the MAPP project. Maione said that was a possibility.

MAPP literature says that 50 percent of the electricity carried through the new transmission line would be used on the Delmarva Peninsula. In Dorchester, Maione said, both Delmarva Power and Choptank Electric customers would be using the less expensive power generated just across the Bay at the Calvert Cliffs Nuclear Power Plant.

He estimates savings of 70 cents to 80 cents per 1,000 kilowatt hours on electric bills in Dorchester. At the same time, the charge of an additional 40 cents per month per 1,000 kilowatt-hours will be implemented to all users on the PJM (for Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Maryland) power grid in which MAPP would be included.

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