

August 19, 2014

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Ms. Shikany:

In response to the request of Ms. Wayland, an outline of the remarks I have prepared for the August 21st Quadrennial Energy Review meeting in Cheyenne is included below:

Over the past three years almost one dozen transmission opposition groups have organized across the Midwest and Great Plains. This deserves our attention because we have all seen public opposition, environmental concerns, and bureaucratic inefficiency combine to prevent needed infrastructure investment. When asking how renewable energy providers can avoid conflicts that delay projects, the answer needs to emphasize stakeholder engagement.

Engagement is most effective at a local, grassroots level. We're supporters of the idea that change can be made through the institutional process now in place.

We have found that action alerts and local media pieces providing information on various transmission projects make a difference. This is especially true of those focusing on upcoming key events and helping those interested or affected learn how they can engage in the regulatory process. We have also found that explaining what can be expected at a given event, such as an open house or public hearing, can boost participation.

Education should also play a role.

For example, develop fact sheets for our focus lines. These include regulatory processes, route descriptions, community concerns, and basic information such as how each line connects to clean energy resources and when it will be in service. We have found white papers to be less effective when working with the community, but helpful in engaging other organizations.

Last year we began using this tool to examine community concerns. This was a function of the work we were doing on the ground and the fact that, when considering the available research, reports focusing on gathering, examining, and quantifying community concerns seemed to be largely absent.

Our most recent report draws from media sources we've collected over the past 24 months –almost every news article written that concerned the projects we were following – and uses them to better understand community concerns and landowner opposition. After breaking down over 100 pieces, primarily focused on 8-10 lines, we took the concerns we found and separated them into six different categories – agriculture, conservation, eminent domain, health, need, and transparency – and developed best practices for each.

What did we find out?



CENTER *for* RURAL AFFAIRS

VALUES | WORTH | ACTION

At a minimum, each utility or developer should **engage landowners early and often**.

Meeting with landowners before a route is submitted allows affected parties to point out problematic areas and suggest a new approach. Open communication before a route is approved can help mitigate concerns, speed the process, and solidify the role of the landowner as a participant rather than a spectator.

Improve Online Presence

Questions remain after the hearing or open house meeting end. Make it easy to find answers.

Explain Regulatory Process

Very few landowners know what to expect throughout the process. Explaining the process can build trust.

Use Ag Mitigation Agreement

Often farmers are the biggest source of opposition, supported by citizens of nearby communities. Explain to them what you're doing to accommodate their needs.

Open Cultural and Environmental Resource Databases to Community

Keep an ongoing list of places to protect and the flora and fauna the community treasures. Let everyone see that you're taking their concerns seriously.

Increase Setback Distance from Homes

Concerns about the health impacts of a project will persist. Try to address the topic by increasing setback distances where possible.

Explore Alternative Compensation Models

If negotiations break down between the transmission provider and a landowner, often the transmission provider can fall back on eminent domain. Due to public relations, increased costs, and detrimental delays this is rarely the best option. We are optimistic after seeing companies such as Clean Line Energy Partners recognize this and react accordingly.