

# MONO COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Building • Planning • Compliance • Environmental

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## JUST THE FAX

Page 1 of \_\_\_\_\_

Date: July 10, 2006

To: Office of Electricity Delivery Fax: (202) 586-1472  
AND ENERGY RELIABILITY

From: Scott Burns

Re: Preliminary Energy Corridor Map

Comments:

PLEASE SEE ATTACHED



**Mono County  
Community Development Department**

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July 10, 2006

Office of Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability  
Room 8H-033  
U. S. Department of Energy  
1000 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20585

Subject: Preliminary Draft Energy Corridor Map Comments

To Whom It May Concern:

The Mono County Community Development Department appreciates the opportunity to submit the following comments on the **preliminary energy corridor map** associated with the West-wide Energy Corridor Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS). As a point of reference, Mono County is located in the scenic eastern Sierra Nevada mountain range, between Yosemite National Park and the Nevada border. Our economy relies heavily on tourism and secondarily on agricultural, particularly in the Tri-Valley area, which the preliminary energy corridor appears to bisect.

The preliminary energy corridor map lacks scale and detail needed to assess potential impacts to our region. A higher-resolution map, preferably with multi layered GIS-quality digital data we can import into our GIS system, would be helpful. This would allow an examination of property ownership boundaries and physical features impacted by the proposed corridor.

At the current scale and detail of the preliminary map, it appears the energy corridor could significantly impact scenic, historic, economic and natural resources in Mono County. We recommend that the PEIS include sufficient alternatives to address avoiding potential direct and indirect impacts to our region.

It also appears that portions of the corridor will cross private property and thus be subject to Mono County planning and permitting authority. We request that applicable Mono County General Plan policies be considered in corridor planning efforts and in the PEIS. Excerpts from the Mono County General Plan are attached for your consideration.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. Please direct any questions regarding this matter to Greg Newbry, Senior Planner at (760) 924-1811.

Sincerely,



Scott Burns  
Community Development Director

## **Mono County General Plan Excerpts**

### **Open Space and Conservation Element:**

#### **II. ISSUES/OPPORTUNITIES/CONSTRAINTS**

##### **Electrical Transmission and Fluid Conveyance Pipelines**

Electrical transmission lines and fluid conveyance pipelines (including gas pipelines) can be highly visible elements in the landscape if they are not routed and constructed carefully. Because of their linear nature and the need for access, not only for construction but for routine maintenance, the placement of transmission lines and pipelines often is not only conspicuous, but can contribute to erosion, water quality degradation, and loss of wildlife habitat.

##### **Visual Resources**

1. Outstanding scenery is one of Mono County's significant attributes. The County's scenic beauty and dramatic vistas, relatively untouched by civilization, attract tourists and recreationists, and are valued by residents.

2. Mono County's landscape is highly sensitive to manmade changes. Major issues to be addressed in protecting and enhancing visual resources in Mono County are protecting views from major travel routes and recreation destinations; improving the opportunity for visitors to view spectacular scenery (e.g. by providing additional turnouts and scenic vista points); designing community and manmade structures to blend in and be compatible with the surrounding environment; and coordinating scenic policies of local and federal agencies so that they complement each other.

4. The visual impacts of utility corridors and overhead utility lines have become an issue both in community areas and in undeveloped areas. The Public Utilities Commission (PUC) regulates transmission lines; the County has authority over some distribution lines. The Mono County Zoning and Development Code (MCZDC) currently requires underground utility lines unless certain findings can be made and a use permit is approved for overhead lines.

#### **II. POLICIES**

##### **GOAL**

To preserve natural open space resources which contribute to the general welfare and quality of life for residents and visitors in Mono County and to the maintenance of the county's tourism economy.

##### **GOAL VII**

To minimize the visual and environmental impacts of electrical transmission lines and fluid conveyance pipelines.

##### **OBJECTIVE A**

Electrical transmission and distribution lines and fluid conveyance pipelines shall meet the utility needs of the public and be designed to minimize disruption of aesthetic quality.

**Policy 1:** New major steel-tower electrical transmission facilities shall be consolidated with existing steel-tower transmission facilities except where there are technical or overload constraints or where there are social, aesthetic, significant economic, or other overriding concerns.

**Action 1.1:** Require selection of rights-of-way to preserve the natural landscape and minimize conflict with present and planned uses of land on which they are to be located.

Action 1.2: Encourage the joint use of transmission and pipeline corridors to reduce the total number of corridors and service and access roads required.

Action 1.3: Require the coordination of siting efforts so that other comparable utility uses can share rights-of-way in a common corridor where feasible.

Action 1.4: The County shall adopt a proactive position in the future siting of transmission and pipeline corridors by working with utilities and project proponents to specify those locations where transmission corridors are acceptable.

Action 1.5: Cooperate with the Forest Service and BLM in planning the use of utility corridors.

Policy 2: At the expense of the project proponent, comprehensive and detailed planning studies, including review of all feasible alternatives, shall demonstrate a clear need for new transmission lines or fluid conveyance pipelines, prior to the siting of these facilities.

Policy 3: New transmission or distribution lines or fluid pipelines shall be buried when such burial does not create unacceptable environmental impacts or the potential to contaminate shallow groundwater resources.

Policy 4: Where burial is not possible, transmission facilities and fluid pipelines shall be located in relation to existing slopes such that topography and/or natural cover provide a background where possible.

Policy 5: Transmission line rights-of-way shall avoid crossing hills or other high points at the crests. To avoid placing a transmission tower at the crest of a ridge or hill, space towers below the crest or in a saddle to carry the line over the ridge or hill. The profiles of facilities should not be silhouetted against the sky.

Policy 6: Where transmission line rights-of-way cross major highways or rivers, the transmission line towers shall be carefully placed for minimum visibility.

Policy 7: Avoid diagonal alignments of transmission lines through agricultural fields to minimize their visibility.

Policy 8: Require location of access and construction roads so that natural features are preserved and erosion is minimized. Use existing roads to the extent possible.

Policy 9: Require that materials used to construct transmission towers harmonize with the natural surroundings. Self-protecting bare steel and other types of non-reflective surfaces are appropriate in many areas. Towers constructed of material other than steel, such as concrete, aluminum, or wood should be considered. Coloring of transmission line towers to blend with the landscape should be considered.

Policy 10: Above ground transmission lines shall be non-specular wire construction.

## OBJECTIVE B

Transmission and distribution lines shall not adversely impact wildlife or fisheries.

Policy 1: New transmission or distribution lines shall avoid open expanses of water and wetland, particularly those heavily used by birds. They shall also avoid nesting and rearing areas.

Policy 2: Avoid the placement of transmission or distribution lines through crucial wildlife habitats, such as deer fawning and migration areas.

Policy 3: Design transmission lines to minimize hazards to raptors and other large birds.

### OBJECTIVE C

Ensure that development is visually compatible with the surrounding community, adjacent cultural resources, and/or natural environment.

Policy 1: Future development projects shall avoid potential significant visual impacts or mitigate impacts to a level of non-significance, unless a statement of overriding considerations is made through the EIR process.

Action 1.1: Future development projects with the potential to have a substantial, demonstrable negative aesthetic effect shall provide a visual impact analysis prior to project approval. Examples of a substantial, demonstrable negative aesthetic effect include:

- 1) Reflective materials;
- 2) Excessive height and/or bulk;
- 3) Standardized designs which are utilized to promote specific commercial activities and which are not in harmony with the community atmosphere;
- 4) Architectural designs and features which are incongruous to the community or area and/or which significantly detract from the natural attractiveness of the community or its surroundings;
- 5) *Dust or steam plumes; and*
- 6) *Excessive night lighting.*

The analysis shall:

- a) be funded by the applicant;
- b) be prepared by a qualified person under the direction of Mono County;
- c) assess the visual environment in the general project vicinity;
- d) describe the impacts of the proposed development upon views and scenic qualities within the project site and on surrounding areas; and
- e) recommend project alternatives or measures to avoid or mitigate visual impacts.

Mitigation measures shall be included in the project plans and specifications and shall be made a condition of approval for the project.

Action 2.6 Work with federal and state agencies on development projects on their lands to ensure that potential adverse visual impacts are fully mitigated.

Action 2.7: Existing visually offensive land uses located within scenic highway corridors should be adequately landscaped or otherwise screened.

Action 2.8: Require any expansion of existing visually offensive land uses within scenic highway corridors to be adequately landscaped or otherwise screened.

Action 2.9: Require naturalistic drainage improvements where modifications to the natural streamway are required in scenic highway corridors. When feasible, do not place streams in underground drainage structures.

Policy 3: Proposed transmission and distribution lines shall be designed and sited to minimize impacts to natural and visual resources.

Action 3.1: Install utilities underground in conformance with the Mono County Code.

Action 3.2: Require that utilities for all new subdivisions be installed underground, unless specific hardships can be demonstrated in conformance with the Mono County Code.

Action 3.3: Install new utility lines underground within scenic highway corridors, unless a variance is granted for overhead installation.

Action 3.4: Pursue the establishment of underground utility districts within scenic highway corridors as a mechanism to place existing overhead lines underground.

Action 3.5: Apply to SCE for financial support to convert eligible overhead lines to underground utilities .

Action 3.6 Require that overhead utility lines proposed within a scenic highway corridor be located in the least conspicuous manner possible.

Action 3.7: Use existing utility corridors and common poles wherever possible.

Action 3.8: Enforce the policies in the Energy section of the Conservation/Open Space Element pertaining to the siting and design of transmission lines and fluid conveyance pipelines.

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# Diné Power Authority

To: Office of Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability Fax: (202) 586-1472

From: Steven C. Begay, General Manager Date: 7/10/06

Re: Comment on the Preliminary Draft Energy Corridor Map

Pages: 5 Including cover sheet

Urgent  For Review  Please Comment  Please Reply  Please Recycle

Notes:

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call our office at (928) 871-2133.

