



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Farmington District Office
1235 La Plata Highway - Suite A
Farmington, New Mexico 87401
www.blm.gov/nm



In Reply Refer To:

San Juan Basin Energy Connect 230kV Transmission Project

Increasing residential and industrial electric growth in the San Juan Basin region of Colorado and New Mexico has put a strain on the existing electrical system. Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association (Tri-State), its member co-op La Plata Electric, and other regional utilities have ensured improvements and additions to the electric system over the years to maintain reliability. While these improvements have helped, there is a tremendous need to import more power into the region to help meet the needs of growing communities. The proposed San Juan Basin Energy Connect Project would involve the construction of a 230-kilovolt transmission line by Tri-State from the Farmington area in New Mexico to Ignacio, Colo. This line is needed to provide the power delivery infrastructure for the San Juan Basin to relieve transmission constraints, serve new loads and offer economic development through renewable energy opportunities. As a power provider and transmission line operator, Tri-State is working to define proposed corridors for the new line. Because of the regional significance, Tri-State is working closely with the following groups:

- La Plata Electric Association
- City of Farmington
- Western Area Power Administration
- Southern Ute Indian Tribe
- Bureau of Land Management
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- New Mexico Dept. of Game and Fish
- Colorado Division of Wildlife
- Rural Utilities Service

The environmental and permitting process of siting new transmission lines requires an open and comprehensive process that involves various factors including electric system planning, economics, the environment, public involvement, regulatory issues, land rights, and engineering input. Siting goals include maximizing the use of opportunity areas (existing easements, transportation corridors, rangeland, etc.) and minimizing the use of constraint areas (water bodies, irrigated agricultural lands, conservation areas, etc). As a result of receiving federal funds from the USDA's Rural Utilities Service (RUS) and constructing transmission infrastructure on public lands, the project is subject to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The Bureau of Land Management is the lead agency for the NEPA process, which will require evaluation of the potential environmental impacts from major actions before deciding to move forward. Other cooperating agencies are the Southern Ute Indian Tribe, the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the RUS. Tri-State is committed to following this thorough siting and environmental process in order to meet or exceed local, state and federal compliance requirements. NEPA documents fully disclose potential

effects of the proposed action and alternative routes, as well as provide a comprehensive analysis of impacts to the natural environment, cultural resources and local socio-economic conditions. Information from this process then will be used to seek land use permits from the appropriate federal, state, local county and municipal authorities. Regional utilities ensure reliable electric service in your community Public Scoping Workshops. As part of the San Juan Basin Energy Connect Project, public workshops will be held to provide details about the project and receive feedback.

October 7, 2009
Farmington Civic Center
(200 W. Arrington St.)
4pm to 7pm

October 8, 2009
Ignacio Community Library
(470 Goddard Ave.)
4pm to 7pm

This new line is needed to provide the power delivery infrastructure for the San Juan Basin that will relieve transmission constraints, serve new loads and offer economic development through renewable energy opportunities. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will conduct public scoping meetings in an open house format to provide information and solicit comments for the preparation of an environmental review document, an Environmental Assessment (EA). Comments collected will contribute to development of the EA and will be used to refine the proposed transmission line corridors. Exhibits at the workshops will include information on siting the line, preliminary corridors, the purpose and need for the project, and environmental studies. Workshop attendees will have the opportunity to talk one-on-one with staff from the utilities and other industry experts. Input will also be gathered at each exhibit on comment forms.

If you need special accommodations for the public meeting, call Coleman Burnett at (505) 254-1115 by Oct. 2 to make arrangements. If you have any questions concerning this meeting please contact Marcella Romero at 505-599-6339 or Coleman Burnett.

The public scoping period ends Nov. 8, 2009.

Thank you,

/s/

Marcella Romero
BLM Realty Specialist/Project Lead