

News Release

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Public Invited To Comment on PNM Electric Transmission Line Routes

Santa Fe: PNM will hold three open houses next week to gather public comment on possible routes for two new electric transmission lines in Santa Fe.

The open houses will take place Feb. 8-10, from 5 to 7 p.m. each day, at the B.F. Young Professional Complex, 1300 Camino Sierra Vista.

PNM wants to upgrade the existing 46k kilovolt (kV) transmission loop system that serves central Santa Fe with a 115kV system more typical of today's industry standards. This would involve building two new 115 kV lines and removing some existing 46kV lines that were built more than 50 years ago. On days of high electric demand, during both summer and winter, those 46kV lines operate near capacity.

"Since the existing lines were built, average household electric consumption and the city's population have both doubled," said Debbie Brunt, who oversees the company's operations in north central New Mexico. "We want to upgrade the transmission system in Santa Fe so we can continue to provide customers with reliable electric service into the future."

Last year, PNM launched the Santa Fe 115kV Loop Project by forming a Community Working Group and Routing Task Force comprised of community leaders and technical experts to identify potential routes for the new lines. The groups identified four potential routes; PNM will seek approval to build two of them.

PNM will choose between two routes suggested by the Community Working Group that run south from land it owns near Cerrillos Road, formerly the site of a power plant, to an existing substation near Siringo Road and St. Francis Drive. One of the proposed routes runs along Cordova Road and St. Francis Drive, while the other runs along a portion of Cerrillos Road and then St. Michael's Drive.

To complete the 115kV loop, PNM will also choose between two routes that would connect the PNM power plant property to one of two existing substations. One runs from the Cerrillos Road property east on Cordova Road, then north along St. Francis Drive to an existing substation behind the Santa Fe Radisson. The other runs from the Cerrillos Road property southwest along Cerrillos Road to an existing substation northeast of Siler Road.

While the routes being highlighted at the open houses are proposed as overhead construction, Brunt said PNM is aware some Santa Fe residents may want the company to consider underground construction. "We are willing to consider this option, but there are important issues that would need to be addressed for undergrounding to take place," she said.

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Undergrounding a transmission line poses technical challenges that overhead construction does not and costs between three and 10 times more than overhead construction. "The added costs would need to be paid by the city or its residents," Brunt said.

Last year, PNM received city, county and federal approval for a new transmission route that is currently under construction on federal land. That route, known as the Project Power line, will increase the company's ability to bring power into Santa Fe, while the 115kV loop project featured at the upcoming open houses would increase PNM's ability to move power within the city.