

This is a printer friendly version of an article from **coloradoan.com**
To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

Back

Article published Jan 14, 2008

Residents fired up over power line

BY KEVIN DUGGAN
KevinDuggan@coloradoan.com

A proposal to build a high-voltage power line aimed at improving electrical service north of Fort Collins has raised concerns among local property owners.

Tri-State Generation and Transmission, wholesale supplier of electrical power to Poudre Valley Rural Electric Association, has proposed building a 115 kilovolt line that would connect two Poudre Valley substations.

Residents whose property would be crossed by the line worry about the potential health effects of its electromagnetic field, said Barry Feldman, who lives on County Road 56 east of Colorado Highway 1.

Property owners also are concerned by the visual clutter that would come with the poles and cables needed for the line as well as the impact of the line on the value of their land, Feldman said.

Residents would prefer to see the line buried, he said. Tri-State officials say that's not an option.

"It seems there would be a more user-friendly way to do this," Feldman said. "We really don't want this in our neighborhood, but on the other hand we're not interested in saying it should go in someone else's neighborhood either."

Studies show exposure to electromagnetic fields from power lines does not cause health problems, Bob Pearson, a consultant with CH2M Hill, said during an open house on the project.

The line is needed, Poudre Valley REA representatives say, to meet the demand for more electrical power because of growth around Wellington and Waverly. It also would improve the reliability of service in the area by providing a second source of electricity.

Tri-State looked at five routes before settling on the proposed path, said Mark Murray, permitting and land rights manager for Tri-State. The chosen route takes advantage of existing rights of way as much as possible, he said.

But residents complained about the number of poles that would be used for the line — about 12 a mile — and the impact of views of the mountains.

"There is no perfect route," said Jim Byrne, a Poudre Valley engineer. "There is a route that is considered least objectionable."

About a quarter of the 8-mile line would follow an existing 69 kV line between county roads 60 and 56. The remainder of the line would be new, running along County Road 56 from County Road 15 to the Burlington Northern Railroad tracks and then south to the Richards Lake substation just west of the Anheuser-Busch brewery.

Larimer County planning officials have discussed the project with Tri-State, said principal planner Rob Helmick, but have not seen a formal proposal.

Because the county has limited authority over public utility projects, staff members and the planning commission will only do a "location and extent" review of the project and whether it fits in with the county's master plan.

A proposal is expected to be submitted to the county early this year, Murray said. Construction is expected to begin in late 2008 or early 2009 and last about six months.

Murray said company officials will work with land owners to address their concerns and look at different options

for locating the line.

But Richard Folot, who farms on 160 acres off County Road 56, said the project was being “rammed down the throat” of local residents.

“(Power companies) can do whatever they want,” he said. “They can walk all over us, and there’s nothing we can do about it.”
