



memorandum

date May 7, 2015

to Mark Johnson, Consultant Team Project Manager

from Marcia Wagner, Partner
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subject Energize Eastside EIS – Summary of Key Public Comment Themes from 2014

Introduction

Puget Sound Energy (PSE) has proposed to build a new electric substation and approximately 18 miles of high capacity electric transmission lines from Renton to Redmond in order to address an electrical transmission capacity deficiency and improve electrical grid reliability for Eastside communities. The name of this project is Energize Eastside. In early 2014, PSE formed a Community Advisory Group (CAG) tasked with studying route options for transmission lines and making a recommendation for PSE's consideration. In addition to their work with the CAG, PSE conducted extensive outreach with a wide range of community members throughout the Eastside to share information and to obtain public feedback on the project.

This memorandum contains a summary of the key public comment themes that emerged during Energize Eastside public engagement events conducted by PSE during 2014. The events included 8 CAG meetings, 6 open houses, 2 question and answer meetings, 9 sub-area workshops and 15 neighborhood briefings. 3 Square Blocks reviewed the meeting summaries for these events, which are publically available on PSE's EnergizeEastside.com website, in order to identify the types of comments that were heard frequently during PSE's community engagement process.

Our summary of key public comment themes is contained in the following section. It is intended to provide a high-level account of public comments heard during PSE's 2014 outreach activities, and does not include an all-inclusive list of comments nor individual comment records. Please refer to EnergizeEastside.com for detailed public meeting summaries.

Summary of Key Public Comment Themes

- **Need for the Project:** Community members raised concerns about the need for the Energize Eastside project, including the adequacy of the needs analysis conducted by PSE and the potential for demand-side reductions to address the need. Comments also recognized the importance of reliable power for residential users and the business community.
- **Proposed Route Alignments:** A number of concerns and questions were voiced about the proposed transmission line route alignments for the project. These included the facts that routes were located in residential areas, areas with community facilities such as schools and churches, along the lakefront which is an important aspect of community identity, and areas that were being considered for other public purposes such as light rail. Questions included how routes were chosen, the extent to which existing utility infrastructure and corridors could be used, whether routes could be located farther east and how negative impacts could be mitigated through route selection.
- **Alternative Solutions:** Many requests were made for consideration of alternative solutions to the electrical reliability issue, such as batteries, underground lines, underwater lines, demand-side reductions and new technologies like distributed generation. These were paired with requests for data on the costs of different types of solutions.
- **Process:** Members of the public requested a transparent, equitable process that involved them in decision making and addressed community concerns. There was a high level of interest in public access to all project data and documentation, and for third party evaluations of PSE's assessments. There was also a desire for information about the phases of permitting processes and how to engage.
- **Environment:** Concerns over environmental impacts of the Energize Eastside project were raised including loss of trees, loss of wildlife habitat, location of lines in environmentally sensitive areas, stormwater impacts of construction and decreased soil stability resulting from installation of tall poles. Concerns were also raised over the environmental impacts of alternative solutions including undergrounding.
- **Community Character:** Community members urged PSE to consider the long-term impacts of the project on community character. Of particular concern were tall poles and transmission lines and the tree removal that would be required for the project. There were requests for preserving trees and viewsheds, buffering transmission lines from surrounding uses, right-sizing the project (i.e., not building more capacity than is necessary to solve the problem), avoiding industrial blight and preserving community character.
- **Residential Properties:** Residential property owners in proposed route alignments raised a number of concerns about impacts to their properties and quality of life. These included concerns over decreases in property values, loss of views, the negative aesthetic impact of power lines and poles on their day-to-day lives and concerns about easements and eminent domain. Property owners also voiced equity concerns that they were being

asked to bear the burden of utility infrastructure for the greater region, and asked if any compensation or mitigation would be available to them.

- **Public Health & Safety:** There were a number of questions raised about the health and safety risks posed by the project. These included concerns over the impacts of high capacity electric transmission lines on people and animals, especially given that proposed transmission line routes passed by schools, churches, public recreation facilities and residential neighborhoods. There were also questions about the safety of building electrical infrastructure in the same location as the Olympic pipeline, about the ability of tall poles to withstand earthquakes and severe weather, and about the impacts of high capacity electric transmission lines on the HAM emergency radio network.
- **Noise:** Members of the public were concerned that high capacity electric transmission lines would emit unwanted noise. They also pointed out that tree removal along the proposed transmission line routes could reduce or eliminate existing buffers that play an important role in protecting residential areas from noises generated by highways and other high-intensity land uses.
- **Rate Increases:** Community members asked questions about rate increases and the likelihood that the project would be completed on time and within budget. There were a number of comments about the relative cost of undergrounding and other alternative solutions, and whether it would be worth paying higher rates for a solution that had fewer impacts on communities.