WEST-WIDE ENERGY CORRIDOR)
PROGRAMMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL)
IMPACT STATEMENT.)

ORIGINAL

PUBLIC HEARING - AFTERNOON SESSION

Heard at the Elkhorn Conference Room
Holiday Inn Downtown
22 North Last Chance Gulch
Helena, Montana
October 27, 2005
2:00 p.m.

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BE IT REMEMBERED, that the proceedings in the above-captioned matter was heard at the Elkhorn Conference Room, Holiday Inn Downtown, 22 North Last Chance Gulch, Helena, Montana, on the 27th day of October, 2005, beginning at the hour of 2:00 p.m., pursuant to the Montana Rules of Civil Procedure, before Laurie Crutcher, Registered Professional Reporter, Notary Public.

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Whereupon, the following proceedings were had:

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MR. POWERS: Good afternoon. And thank you for coming. On behalf of the Bureau of Land Management, US Forest Service, and the Department of Energy, I would like to welcome you to this meeting to talk about West-Wide Energy Corridor Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement. That's the last time I'm going to try to say all that together. My name is Scott Powers. I'm the BLM national project manager, and I'm the lead for the BLM for this particular project. I work for our Washington office, but fortunately I live and work out of Billings, Montana.

I would like to introduce the other panel members who are representing DOE and the Forest Service, Andrew McLean with DOE, and Julett Denton with the National Forest Service. Would you two like to say something briefly.

MR. McLEAN: My name is Andrew McLean, and I'm representing the Department of Energy's Office of Electricity Delivery Energy Reliability. I want to welcome you all here, and thank you for all your comments.

MS. DENTON: I'm Julett Denton from the Forest Service, Washington office, and I thank you for taking the time to come and give us your thoughts and your opinions on how we were going to structure and collect information on the scoping process. I also have Terry Egonoff (phonetic) and Ed Nestlerod (phonetic) from the Forest Service, and they're back there somewhere. So after the comment period, if you have any questions, or you want to talk to us, they will be around.

Thank you for taking the time. We really, really need your input, because once we have gone through this process, as land managers and stewards of the land, we'll have to live with the decisions that we make. So it is important that we get your thoughts, and we have something that we all can live with. Thank you.

MR. POWERS: Thanks, Julett and Andrew. Before we get into the purpose that we're here to talk about today, the scoping process, I want to give you a little bit of background on the project itself, and explain why we're here, and why we're undertaking this. And most of you may know some of this, but I'll try to summarize it briefly for those that might not be that familiar.

The Energy Policy Act that was signed by the President on August 8, 2005 requires the Departments of Interior, Energy, Agriculture, Defense, and Commerce to consider the designation of utility corridors for oil, gas, and hydrogen pipelines, and electricity transmission distribution facilities on federal lands in the eleven contiguous western states. At this point, we're interpreting that to mean lands managed by the BLM and the Forest Service.

The Act also directs the Secretaries to incorporate the designated corridors into the relevant agency land use planning process, and to comply and do the adequate level of environment review in order to do that.

So what that means for the BLM and the Forest Service is if we designate corridors, it's a decision making process that has to be done through the land use planning process. It's a resource allocation decision that represents a fairly significant action. And in order to consider that designation, we have collectively decided the best way to approach that would be by doing a Programmatic EIS that addressed this process on a west-wide basis.

Currently when we receive right-of-way applications for linear facilities, by and large they're not located within a designated corridor. We have somewhat of a network of corridors around the west on BLM managed lands, and I think the Forest Service has a handful as well; but most often those corridors stop at that administrative unit boundary, and they don't really serve the purpose of a corridor, and the utilities has to plan on a much lengthier pipeline transmission line or what have you. So they don't really do much good from an infrastructure planning process.

We think that if we do an adequate job of doing this Programmatic EIS, we can issue a record of decision for each agency that will be the basis to amend the relevant land use plans west-wide at the same time. And once these corridors are designated in the land use plans, if we receive an application for a linear right-of-way within that designated corridor, because of the level of analysis that we're going to do within the Programmatic EIS, we expect to be able to tier off that EIS, and just do a site specific Environmental Assessment.

For those of you that have done business

on federal lands, especially with major right-of-way facilities, it's generally always defaulted to an Environmental Impact Statement; and by being able to tier off an existing EIS like this, or land use plan decision, we think it should significantly streamline and reduce the cost of the permitting process. And the other added benefit, as I mentioned before, from a utility standpoint, it allows for better infrastructure planning, or it helps you do a better job of infrastructure planning.

Argon National Labs is going to assist DOE, BLM, and the Forest Service in the preparation of the Programmatic EIS. And like I said, we have representatives of all three of the agencies who will be here and available after the meeting, if you want to have a one-on-one discussion. We also have representatives from Argon that are out in the hallway registering folks.

For those of you may not be that familiar with public scoping, in this particular case, it's a 60 day process that started September 28th, and will conclude on or about November 28th, whereby we're asking the public to tell us what

they think is important for us to address in this particular EIS.

We have some alternatives, very general alternatives that we've discussed and laid out in the notice of intent announcing the preparation of this EIS, but we haven't begun to develop any alternatives that actually represent corridors on the land. That's going to be done after we receive your input during the scoping process. And what we're hoping to receive from the public is from a utility standpoint, what kind of facility they want to put on the ground and approximately where, and why is that important, what makes that so significant that it should be addressed in this process.

And from any other interested party, any issues you may have associated with an action like this, we need to hear from you during the scoping, because it helps us define the scope of the analysis for the EIS.

There's four ways that you can provide input on this process, and we have them up here on this poster. One is the way we're doing it today. We are going to take formal testimony from those that want to provide it in that fashion, and we're

going to record it. We have comment forms that we would like for you to fill out if you prefer using that method, and leave it with us, or mail it in to us. You can comment on our web site. You can send it by fax, or you can send written comments directly to Department of Energy in Washington.

And if you elect to go that route, you need to keep in mind that they still screen for anthrax there, and it often disrupts the snail mail process, and there's no guarantees that it will always look the same as what you did when you mailed it, from what I've been told. But there is several avenues that you can take.

We're having scoping meetings in all eleven western states over a two week period. We're doing them from 2:00 to 5:00, and then 7:00 to 9:00 in the evening, and the same message is going out to each one of those.

So we really encourage you to tell us what's on your mind. We're going to issue, and make available to the public in January, a summary report of all of the input we receive at these eleven meetings, 22 meetings actually since there'll be two each day, and we hope to get a draft Programmatic, a draft EIS out for public

review by next August.

The other provision of the legislation that's extremely important, and why we're moving so fast on this from our standards anyway, is that we have to complete this process within 24 months after the legislation was passed. In other words, the plans need to be amended by August 7, 2007. And that's warp speed for a process like this. My personal feeling is I'm glad we only have 24 months to do it, or else it would take us 36 or 48, or whatever we were given.

So it's a challenge. It's going to be extremely complex. We need as much involvement and assistance by the public as we can get. And so what I'm going to do is ask those people that have signed up to come up and make a presentation, for them to come up and make their presentation. I'm not going to worry about time limits, unless you decide to go on for an hour or so, because we have plenty of time. I'd ask you to repeat your name and who you're representing. I'm going to turn this podium over so you can direct comments as well to the panel, and to the audience, and the recorder. Any questions on the process for today?

(No response)

MR. Powers: After we do the formal comment presentation, we'll turn that off, and we will open it up for a general discussion or questions about the EIS process, and we'll try our best to field them. If people want come back on formally later on, we can turn it back on.

So I'll call the first person, Ray Brush, Northwestern Energy. MT01

MR. BRUSH: Hopefully you'll be able to see the maps that I brought and placed on the easel over there in the far side of the room. My name is Ray Brush. I represent NorthWestern Energy. I'm the manager of Regional Transmission Policy. NorthWestern appreciates the efforts that the Department of Energy, Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Interior are doing to do this EIS, and help us get sited on federal lands in the eleven western states.

NorthWestern is one of the largest suppliers of electricity and natural gas in the upper midwest and northwest, serving more than 617,000 customers in Montana, South Dakota, and Nebraska. NorthWestern currently owns, and operates, and maintains approximately 7,000 miles of transmission, electric transmission, 50 KV and

above, and about 2,000 miles of natural gas transmission in Montana. So we're a significant player in the transmission game in the Montana area. We anticipate submitting written remarks as well as my oral remarks today.

Needs for the state of Montana, the way we see them, is that right now we have over 2200 megawatts of generation in our generation interconnection queue, and almost all of our transaction is committed today to existing resources. And so if new resources are added to the state of Montana, we're going to be experts somewhere. And so hence the need for corridors for more transmission out of Montana to meet the loads in the rest of the west.

Also our system is stability limited, which means when we lose a line, our response to that loss is very significant because we can lose load if we aren't careful. And the areas in which generation is planned to be located, in eastern Montana, we're looking at coal and wind, mostly coal development in this area; some coal up in the Great Falls area; and a lot of wind in central Montana.

And there are other transmission

providers in the state of Montana area also, Western Montana Power Administration, and the BPA and they also have generation interconnection requests on their systems. Up in the Glasgow area, for instance, there is about 500 megawatts of proposed wind generation in that area.

So you can see there is a significant need for new transmission in Montana, new corridors to meet those needs.

Some of the things we think we need to consider as we develop these corridors, one is compatible uses, what uses can we put within the different corridors, and to make sure that they go along with each other; and also make sure we don't rely too much on any one corridor, because of our reliability criteria here in the west. If we have more than one transmission line in a corridor, we have to look out for common mode losses of that transmission, and what effect that has on the ability to lose power in the state.

But with that, we also think corridors should be wide enough to handle multiple facilities. We realize how difficult it is to get facilities through Montana, and that places where we can build transmission are very limited,

because we have to use mountain passes to get through the mountains, and we have to look at other impediments to transmission.

There needs to be flexibility in corridors by designation. By flexibility, we mean not be so hard on having exactly one place. We have to be able to match up with jurisdiction changes, places like BLM, Forest Service, or State Lands, or private land. And we have to be able to coordinate all those corridors across those different pieces of land, so they match up into one consolidated corridor.

Also we should meet with state regulations, reporting with the Montana Facilities Siting Act, for instance. We also need to be sensitive to adjoining private property constraints, such as conservation easements, and visual impacts that might occur for private lands as we look at corridors on federal property.

We need to develop a streamlined process for facilities within designated corridors, so we don't have to go through a long EIS process we have to go through today, and hopefully go through a much shorter one, as Scott mentioned earlier in his comments at the starting of the meeting.

We expect this process to be an ongoing process, not just a one shot process such as we're going through today, but an ongoing process, and we expect we'll hopefully have the departments develop a process where we can add new corridors, and modify new corridors as the needs arise. As we move along in the future here, system requirements are going to change and system needs. Local growth may occur we don't expect. We need to be able to add new corridors.

Also the Act itself anticipates this will be an ongoing effort by federal agencies. Section 368(c) indicates that this will be an ongoing process, and work with utilities and other interested parties, and will be able to modify corridors and add new corridors. We expect this to be an ongoing process, and hopefully be a little more streamlined so we don't have to go through all of these public meetings, and we actually can have a process that we can work through.

The corridors we're talking about, hopefully selecting locations for corridors will help minimize the environmental impacts. We don't get away from them totally. We don't anticipate

that all of the corridors that we recommend will be utilized, because there are only going to be one or two projects that actually get built at any one time. So we'll only be using one corridor or several corridors together.

With that, I would like to talk about some of the corridors that we're doing. I'll go over by the map so I can read it. We will divide the transmission corridors we'd like to talk about into three groupings.

The first grouping are those corridors we really expect to develop, and we expect to develop them fairly soon.

The second grouping are ones that aren't as important to get developed today, but offer opportunities for the state of Montana to develop its resources; and they also include corridors that aren't necessary within our service territory, and so they may be developed by other parties.

The third set of corridors for electric transmission are those that have a lot of problems, a lot of environmental problems, and constraints with the land use. So as we move forward, that one will probably be the one least

likely to occur.

The first one I would like to talk about goes from the Townsend area, down through Dillon, all the way into Midpoint, Idaho, and this will help integrate new generation in Montana.

The second corridor is from Townsend, the same place. It goes over to Mill Creek over by Butte, and then south into Idaho.

The third one goes from Garrison, which is a BPA substation, located up just north of Deer Lodge by Garrison, Montana, and it comes down along this blue line, and then goes on into southeastern Idaho.

Another one is from Colstrip. There's a lot of generation being proposed in the Colstrip area. So we propose upgrading or adding new transmission from Colstrip all the way over to Garrison, which is the BPA sub, if that is needed.

Also looking in the Great Falls area for additional generation there, and so we're looking at Great Falls to Garrison, going along the existing 230 or 100 KV -- the 100 KV runs down through here, this red line -- and cross over to Garrison.

Another option would be to follow the

corridor for the existing 230 KV line over to the Ovando area, and going from Ovando back down into Garrison.

Also we're looking at how to get to Townsend from Great Falls. One possibility is to go down along the existing 230/100 KV corridor, and coming through the Helena valley over towards Townsend, which is south of Canyon Ferry.

Another option is to go along this corridor between Broadview and Great Falls, then drop down into Townsend just east of the Belt Mountains.

Our second tier, these are the ones that offer opportunities, but may not be developed the soonest. One is from Colstrip, going down to the Wyoming area. And this is a tie-in to some transmission projects that are occurring in Wyoming. One of those projects is from Wyoming down into Colorado. Another one is a Frontier project that you've probably heard about. They're planning to built transmission lines out of Wyoming to move about 12,000 megawatts to California.

Another one is one that goes from west of Billings, a substation we call Baseline, which

goes between Billings and Laurel, that goes down into northern Wyoming near a place called Frannie, right on the Montana/Wyoming border.

Also going north from Great Falls up towards Shelby, we expect that corridor to be developed. This is on the Montana/Alberta transmission line, and looking at a corridor right along through here for their transmission. Northern Lights is looking at a corridor that goes through this blue line here.

We also looking at the possibility of a 500 KV line that goes from Broadview, which is near Billings, up through Great Falls, and then goes over to Spokane. Where this line is currently drawn, and it says, "Rocky Mountain area transmission line," it won't get built here, or even recommended for this area. It goes right through the Bob Marshall Wilderness. We expect that line to go more along this line here that we've added, following red line up here to Hot Springs.

Then the last corridor is this one that goes from Ovando, over to Hot Springs, over to Spokane. And even if we were going to go down here and go through the Missoula area, is another

possible corridor for this area. There's a lot of land use constraints through here that are going to probably keep anything from getting built here in the near term.

And so what we view at NorthWestern, the most likely corridors for transmission expansion are those that go south into Idaho, down through this one here, also going from southeastern Montana into Wyoming, are the most likely corridors for development in Montana.

I've not talked about any corridors going east out of Montana, and the main reason for that is when it gets into the Dakotas, they have the same transmission problems we have in getting out of Montana. They have constrained transmission. It's going to take a lot of transmission to get into the Twin Cities, which is really the load for that generation.

Other transmission projects, one thing I was asked to mention. These little dots along the border, those are entry points into the US from Canada. It's important that we keep consideration for corridors to those points, because there's a lot of generation development occurring in Alberta that wants to come into the US, and we need to

keep those options open for all of us.

And I did say that we're also a gas pipeline company, and this is a map showing our gas system. And what we plan to do in the future, as need for capacity in our transmission increases, is to parallel the existing gas transmission line, or what we call loop service, where we build ten, fifteen, twenty miles of line to relieve a bottleneck along the transmission line.

What we do is we put another gas transmission about 40 feet or so away from the current existing transmission line. It requires a wider corridor than what we currently have, we expect in the future to be expanding those corridors through Montana, so we would like to have those considered, because a lot of our pipeline is on federal land.

That concludes my comments.

MR. POWERS: Thank you, Ray. We have a member of the Montana House of Representatives here, Mr. Allen Olson, and I was wondering if you would like say anything, Mr. Olson.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: He just stepped out to move his car. He'll be back.

MR. POWERS: A couple things that I forgot to mention. I did briefly touch on the website. It's up and running, it's current, it's going to stay current throughout this process. It's the best source of easy access information.

I want to just tell you briefly about the source of the map, because I don't want you to think it's something that it's not. All it represents are lines on a map that have been put there over the years as an expression of interest by a whole host of the utility folks around the west. And actually it was used for awhile by the Western Utility Group just to kind of raise the level of interest in this project, and express the need.

So with that, since we're waiting for Mr. Olson, we'll go ahead with the next person, Linda Bouck. MT02

MS. BOUCK: My name is Linda Bouck, and I am here today on behalf of Anaconda/Deer Lodge County. I would first like to thank the Department of Energy, the Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management, as co-lead agencies for hosting this meeting and starting the process of compiling information necessary for designation of

energy transportation corridors. I do have my testimony also written out, so I will give a copy of that at the end.

This is an important process which is critical to the orderly development of Montana's energy resources, and to ensure the reliability of energy supply in the NorthWestern United States. Anaconda/Deer Lodge County is already the site of a number of energy transportation facilities.

NorthWestern Energy has a 16 inch natural gas pipeline which crosses the northern portion of our county, and they also have numerous transmission lines, ranging in size from 100 to 230 KV, entering the county, and come in from all four points of the compass, and they converge at the Mill Creek substation east of Anaconda.

The Bonneville Power Administration also has a 230 kilovolt line and substation in our county as well.

When designating potential energy corridors for the future, and Anaconda/Deer Lodge County would like to ask that the lead agencies consider the following.

Number one, we would like to see designation of every existing transmission

corridor with an electric transmission line greater than or equal to 161 kilovolts as primary transmission corridors.

In conjunction with this designation, we would like to see adopted as a matter of policy a rule which creates a preference for rebuilding or upgrading those lines before constructing new facilities. The environmental effects of existing transmission lines have already taken place. Service roads and other facilities needed to upgrade, maintain, or repair the transmission lines are present, and there should be no need to do an extensive environment analysis.

In fact, the upgrade of existing transmission lines, even if it includes acquisition of some right-of-way to widen the corridor, should be categorically excluded from NEPA review.

We strongly endorse designating an electrical transmission corridor beginning at the 500 KV substation in Garrison, Montana, moving south through Powell, Deer Lodge, Butte-Silver Bow, and Beaverhead Counties, into southern Idaho as a way of moving the power to states south and west of Montana, and to give Montana greater

opportunity to import electricity produced in other states.

NorthWestern Energy has designated this corridor as one option for connecting the Colstrip 500 KV transmission line with transmissions in southern Idaho.

Four: A proposed corridor from Garrison to southern Idaho offers several advantages over other potential routes, including:

There are existing transmission lines along this corridor, which can be readily expanded to handle new lines, or a substantial upgrade of an existing facility.

The route avoids major population centers, and areas where there is extensive suburban development, such as Helena and Gallatin Valleys.

The route largely crosses land used for livestock and grazing land, instead of crop agriculture, and reduces the amount of potential impact on agricultural operations. The route does not impinge upon wilderness areas, national parks, or other specially designated areas set aside to protect wildlife, cultural, or recreational amenity values. Most of the federal land that

would be crossed by this corridor consists of grazing land.

And of course, probably most important for our county, is the route crosses counties that are in great need of economic development, and this corridor would likely enjoy more governmental and public support in those counties than other potential routes.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and we would look forward to working with DOE and BLM as this process continues. Thank you. I'll just hand mine to the secretary over there.

MR. POWERS: Mr. Olson, if you want to say something. MT03

REPRESENTATIVE OLSON: I appreciate the efforts the BLM, DOE, and the Forest Service are putting into this. This is something that is definitely very beneficial to the state of Montana. Any future development that we're looking at in this state is going to be very dependent on how this comes out.

I think Mr. Brush pretty much hit everything on the head as far as what we're looking for for corridor development, and I'm going to sit back and listen to the comments, and

most likely have some written comments to send in before the deadline.

MR. POWERS: Bob Marks from Jefferson Local Development Company.

MR. MARKS: I'd like to postpone.

MR. POWERS: Those were the only three folks that had signed up to provide any formal testimony. Is there anybody else that would like to at this point? Come on up, and state your name, and who you're representing, please. MT04

MS. DOGGETT: Thank you. My name is Jamie Doggett. I'm a Commissioner from Meagher County, which is the county just to the east of us here. And I also wish to extend my thanks to you for giving us the opportunity to participate in this process. And I apologize to the woman is going to be trying to type out all of these numbers I'm going to give you in a second.

I think a good outcome for us, I would like to propose a corridor that wasn't listed previously. I would like to see, and my constituents, to have the 100 KV transmission line from Rainbow Dam, which is near Great Falls, to Harlowton upgraded to a 230 KV from Two Dot to Loweth -- which is a former Milwaukee Railroad

substation -- from Two Dot to Loweth, transmission line upgraded to a 230 KV; a 230 to 500 KV substation constructed near the existing Loweth substation, and interconnected to it; and restructuring an upgraded 230 KV line from Loweth to Three Forks along the right-of-way where the old, now burned, 100 KV line used to run.

All of the transmission suggested would be built within existing right-of-ways. Also the Western Area Power Administration is constructing a 230 KV substation at Rainbow Dam, and a 230 KV transmission line along the highline that would terminate at Rainbow.

My proposal would create an integrated 230 to 500 KV system along the northern, central, and southern portions of Montana. It could be done without opening any new corridors, and my suggested plan ties into existing plans that the Northwest Area Power Administration and others have for transmission expansion.

Most of this power is generated, or primarily a lot of this power comes from wind generation. There is a new wind generation plant just established between Lewistown and Harlowton, Judith Gap, and there are other transmission or

power station wind generation stations being developed within Meagher County.

As the lady from Anaconda/Deer Lodge said, we are from counties that desperately need economic help, but we also have I think something that we are able to give. It would be a great opportunity for us to finally put that wind to use. Thank you for your time.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Is there going to be an opportunity for just questions?

MR. POWERS: Yes, there is, as soon as we finish with the formal presentation. Is there anybody else that wanted to speak? MT05

MR. MARKS: My name is Bob Marks. I'm representing myself, and also Jefferson Local Development Corporation. I wasn't quite sure what I would expect here, and I thought we'd get more of a presentation than we have so far, so we could comment on that. The gentleman from NorthWestern Energy gave us an indication of what their plans were, but there wasn't any definition as to whether those power lines or corridors would be operated by NorthWestern Energy or by others.

We've had an experience in southwest Montana, and also western Montana, twenty some

years ago with the construction of the corridor from Colstrip, to Taft, to Hot Springs, and so on, in western Montana, some of which involved a federal agency, the BPA. I think there's a concern -- and I'll speak some for the counties. I appreciate the comments made previously.

Sometimes when those corridors go through, the operators and the owners of those facilities are privately held. They have a significant tax base. Other times they are, for whatever reason, owned by public entities, which may or may not have a tax base to the local entities. Part of the sting of having a high power line going through your community is alleviated somewhat by the amount of resources local entities get from that. I think the people speaking on behalf of the counties appreciate that help from the taxation that comes back to help their local schools.

I would hope that when these corridors are developed, that in the development of the EIS, you also take into consideration some of the lands other than government lands that you're going to have to go through. There isn't a blanket of government land from any of these places to any

other place in the state that doesn't have to cross private land. While one of the commentators mentioned that they wouldn't dare go through the Bob Marshall Wilderness, some ranchers I know have the equivalent value on their land as other people who don't own any land have on the Bob Marshall. So I hope that you consider that.

I think it's going to be difficult to make a comment on the EIS because we don't know what we're talking about. We're talking about a generic process, rather than an intimate process, where we could talk about locations. And I think that's extremely important for people to consider when they make comments as to whose ox is going to get gored, meaning the private land owners and other entities. It's hard to comment whether a line from Townsend to Idaho is going to cross my ranch or my neighbor's ranch, when you don't know for sure where it's going.

I think it would be important, either in the scoping process or another process, to identify those peculiar areas, particularly so people can make meaningful comments. I don't see how federal agencies can ignore the needs and wishes of private land owners. Even in some of

the areas that are generally considered BLM or Forest Service, you're going to have in-holdings there that will be impacted as well.

I think the other thing that I'm concerned about is from some experience. When some of the private utility companies propose power lines, it ends up becoming a public entity, such as BPA. I think both Broadwater County, Jefferson County, and four counties west of here encountered that some years ago when BPA built the line. I'm not sure what the motive was, but part of it was to dodge some of the issues on the part of the private power company -- at that time Montana Power Company -- to meet some of the criterias necessary as a private entity that BPA didn't have to go into.

Since that time, the people who use that line pay a beneficial use tax to the local counties that that line passes through. The total valuation is $65 million. I think it's really important, while it may not be important to you people doing the EIS, it is really important to people who have to live under the darn thing. I'm not opposed to building power lines, but I think there's a bunch of these things that you have to

take into consideration, or should. I think you'd be derelict not to.

I hope that during the rest of the afternoon, people can give some more specific location opportunities, so we can comment on them; but so far today I see nothing we can comment on meaningful, other than we have a cup of coffee. Thank you.

MR. POWERS: Thank you very much. Also I want to acknowledge that Charlene Snoddy (phonetic) representing Senator Burns is here. I appreciate your attendance. I understand you don't wish to make a statement at this time.

Is there anyone else that would like to make a statement?

(No response)

MR. POWERS: One thing, Mr. Marks, when the draft of the Environmental Impact Statement will have a whole variety of alternatives and proposed locations, that will ask people to provide comment on it in the 90 day comment period and when the final decisions are made, it can be all or any combination of any of those alternatives that were considered in the EIS process, so they will have an opportunity to make

adjustments based on the public feedback.

Anybody else want to make public comment? Let's turn that off, and then we'll see if there's some questions.

MT06

(Off the record briefly)

MR. MELTON: I'm Jim Melton. I'm an environmental consultant. I work for a company called Maxim Technologies. We have five offices here in Helena, and seven offices within the 13 states that are being considered for this study. I assume it's 13 states. I don't apologize for being a consultant. I worked for BLM for almost 20 years in land use planning and analysis, and DOE for about five and a half with Western Area Power Administration.

I guess the comments I wanted to make I think is just to share, for everyone's information. I've worked on and seen a number of Programmatic EIS's, and maybe the gentleman's concern about the generic type of study is an important one. But I guess I don't see much relief in the guidelines, or NEPA policies, or CEQ, because you're doing a Programmatic EIS in terms of level of detail.

But I do think it's important, and it's

required to really set some guides in this early stage about the level of detail that's required, how that detail relates to the responsibility for addressing significant impacts, how it relates to reasonable foreseeable development scenarios that are also required, as well as cumulative impact analysis, as most of the NEPA folks that have done these kind of projects know.

So I think it's really important to try to establish, and kind of set out, if you will, some key guidelines as to how specific, and what the level of detail would be, how it relates to existing data bases.

If I've learned anything in my 35 years of doing EIS's, it's that consistency in data and data flow, in terms of how it's presented in the EIS, is very critical. And I know that there is a lot of good plans out there, a lot of great land use plans. A lot of them at BLM and Western Area Power, I've worked on, as well as consultants. We should take advantage of that data, and not try to duplicate it.

So establish very early what the level of detail is, and how you can use that data, that's already there, that's in existing land use

plans and EIS's, to record the information that you need in order to make the decision among those alternatives.

So I think there is a great deal of detail out there. I know there is. I've already worked on several plans myself.

There is an also an issue I have, and that's that there's several ongoing management plans. There's always going to be an ongoing land use plan and EIS basically in any state. I find the Bureau and the Forest Service perplexed -- and I have found that in my own career, so I'm not pointing any fingers.

As an employee, I can say that we always had a great deal of difficulty establishing uniformity with our corridors and right-of-ways as they relate to individual neighboring field offices, much less states. So I know that there's a great deal of inconsistency, as the person from NorthWestern Energy has pointed out, just from the private standpoint. There's a number of key corridors, there's a number of new needs, but a lot of the lines done in some of the current plans, as well as past plans, do not line up.

So there is another level, if you will,

or cut, if you will, that needs to be made as to what are we really searching for, what is the requirement to address it, and how can we establish a framework that could take advantage of the existing data; align lines that don't match that should; establish the key qualifier in terms of the level of detail that's required and the type of GIS meta data that is going to be needed to verify accuracy; so that once you establish these lines, they won't be found inaccurate when they're checked on the ground.

And basically do a real extra effort early on, now, to gather what information is out there and what isn't, and what has to be available, so that you can really have a good study, so several alternatives aren't found to be invalid, and you really get a good preferred alternative to make a selection on.

So that's pretty much my comments. I just wanted to say that this is a very timely effort. The Governor and several other governors just last week in Bozeman at the Energy Conference talking about the need for a private and public agencies to support energy development. And if there is one thing that will do that, it would be

corridors that are accurate, that you can count on, whether it's a private company or private land owner. So thank you.

MR. POWERS: Thank you, Jim. Is there anybody else that would like to make any statements?

(No response)

MR. POWERS: This concludes our recording of formal input, and now we're leave it open to informal discussion. If you have any questions, or if you don't want to ask questions now, when we break, we can do it on a one on one basis. There's some other BLM employees here as well, and are there any questions?

Let me qualify. I didn't mean to imply earlier that everything that is recorded is going on the website. None of it is going on the web site. What we're trying to do on the website is to help people understand the process, and when we get questions at these meetings, we're going to start writing them down, so that we can put those questions and answers on the web site, just as a way of providing more information.

(The proceedings were concluded at 2:56 p.m.)

C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF MONTANA)
: SS.
COUNTY OF LEWIS & CLARK)

I, LAURIE CRUTCHER, RPR, Court Reporter, Notary Public in and for the County of Lewis & Clark, State of Montana, do hereby certify:

That the proceedings were taken before me at the time and place herein named; that the proceedings were reported by me in shorthand and transcribed using computer-aided transcription, and that the foregoing -37- pages contain a true record of the proceedings to the best of my ability.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my notarial seal this 1st day of November 2005.

Laurie Crutcher

LAURIE CRUTCHER, RPR
Court Reporter - Notary Public
My commission expires
March 9, 2008.