

CITY OF CHINO HILLS

PRESS RELEASE



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Contact: Valerie McClung
(909) 364-2618
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Denise Cattern
(909) 364-2615

CITY OF CHINO HILLS FILES PROTEST AGAINST TEHACHAPI RENEWABLE TRANSMISSION PROJECT

The City of Chino Hills has filed a protest with the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) regarding the Tehachapi Renewable Transmission Project (RTP) proposed by Southern California Edison (SCE). The protest seeks a more in depth review of potential routes for the transmission lines for the project, including the SCE-selected route through Chino Hills that would cut a five-mile swath through Chino Hills, three miles of which cut directly through residential neighborhoods. Over 1,000 adjacent property owners are within 500 feet of the proposed behemoth towers. SCE's proposed route follows the path of an existing 150' SCE easement through residential neighborhoods.

The existing transmission lines were designed for 220kV but have been inactive for perhaps as long as 30 years. The Tehachapi RTP would replace the inactive lines with 500kV double circuit structures. In some neighborhoods, backyards would be 75' from the towers that are proposed to climb to 198' with a wing span for transmission lines of 60'. The tallest existing towers are about half as tall with a wing span half as wide. City officials are asking the CPUC to direct SCE to work with the City to analyze and review all viable potential alternate transmission line routes.

Citing their need to protect the safety, health, and welfare of Chino Hills residents, the Chino Hills City Council voted to retain the law firm of Goodin, Macbride, Squeri, Day & Lamprey, LLP and Shir Power Engineering Consultants, Inc. for their expertise in working on power-related projects and with the CPUC.

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“The City’s filing of a protest with the CPUC preserves our ability to participate in the process,” says Mark D. Hensley, City Attorney. “We have outlined our significant concerns with the route and will now focus our energies on working to review and fully analyze potential route alternatives. It is our hope that SCE will work with the City and participate in this review process.”

The City’s protest was crafted based upon their review of volumes of technical documents including SCE’s Proponent’s Environmental Assessment (PEA), which was submitted to the CPUC on June 29th. The PEA classified the impacts of the line segment through Chino Hills (Segment 8A) as “significant” and readily acknowledges that there will be significant impacts to the residents of Chino Hills which cannot be mitigated.

The City is particularly concerned about the aesthetic impacts and the hazard posed by having such high and long conductors at such a short distance from residences. Line breakage, mainly due to accidents, is not a very uncommon event and can result in a charged 500 kV line falling into the backyards and, given the proximity, the rooftops of nearby residences causing severe threat of safety hazards as well as property damage.

Additionally, the City’s protest includes concerns about the logistics of installing 195’ towers in a 150’ right-of-way, and the viability of using an 80-ton crane that would be required. Geologic conditions on the route also raise concerns about the long-term safety of the pole structures that would be approximately as tall as a 17-story building.

“Frankly, we have concerns about whether the existing right-of-way is adequate for safe construction and operation of 500kV lines,” said Doug La Belle, City Manager.

La Belle stated that the City understands that SCE is responding to a legislative mandate that requires them to comply with the State of California’s Renewable Portfolio Standard, which requires SCE to increase their sale of electricity produced by renewable energy resources to 20% by 2010. The Tehachapi project would deliver wind-generated power from Kern County to the Los Angeles Basin.

However, the City would like to ensure that potential alternative routes are more fully developed and analyzed.

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“We believe that there may be more reasonable alternative solutions for a route through Chino Hills that does not unsafely intrude into existing neighborhoods that are filled with residents,” said La Belle. “The City of Chino Hills believes, that together, SCE and the City can work toward analyzing potential alternative routes that may reduce the impact on Chino Hills residents while providing a path for renewable energy to meet the growing demand for electricity in the State,” said La Belle.

Filing of the protest is a very preliminary component of the Public Utilities Commission process to evaluate SCE’s application for a “Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity” for the Tehachapi Renewable Transmission Project.

“The process with the CPUC includes environmental review and will take close to one year,” said La Belle. “The protest is our opportunity to get our concerns on the table during the early stages of review.”

In the meantime City officials and consultants continue to meet with representatives of the CPUC and SCE to keep the lines of communication open. A copy of the City’s CPUC protest filing can be viewed on the City’s website www.chinohills.org.