

Hudson Valley Smart Energy Coalition

PSC Allows High-Voltage Power Lines to Proceed Despite Project's Failure to Meet Tests of Need, Fairness and Emissions Reduction

Coalition says it made project better but that transmission lines still pose threats to regional environment and economy

Dec 17th by Scenic Hudson

HUDSON VALLEY—The [Hudson Valley Smart Energy Coalition](#) (HVSEC) expressed disappointment with the [New York State Public Service Commission](#) (PSC) decision today to move ahead with a major, high-voltage power line project through the Hudson Valley. The decision, the coalition says, ignores ample evidence that the \$1.2-billion, ratepayer-financed initiative is unnecessary, unfair to ratepayers and predicted to increase pollution. The decision also ignores thousands of public comments and expert reports undercutting the expressed rationale for the project—lowering peak-period electricity prices downstate and in New York City. Additionally, the proceedings have been rife with procedural flaws. The coalition said it still awaits a written order from the PSC to make the decision official.

The HVSEC thanked citizens whose advocacy with the coalition during the two-year proceeding led to modifications of the project and route that reduce its potential damage to historic and cultural assets, community resources and scenic beauty. The group said its member organizations would continue to question the reasoning for this project and pursue a more modern, efficient and sustainable plan to meet the state's energy needs.

The HVSEC reiterated its well-documented position, based on independent scientific and economic research, that there is no need for the high-voltage power lines. The coalition also disputed the PSC staff position that public policies could justify the \$1.2-billion project. Further, the HVSEC cited studies commissioned by the PSC itself that found that energy conservation projects consistent with the agency's [Reforming the Energy Vision](#) (REV) proceeding would provide more cost-effective benefits to the state and ratepayers, with dramatically reduced pollution levels compared to the proposed transmission lines.

The HVSEC and citizens who joined its campaign produced compelling scientific and technical findings that led the PSC to transform its regulatory framework for the project. One early success was persuading the agency to incorporate Gov. Andrew Cuomo's preference for lines within existing, rather than new, rights-of-way. Expert reports commissioned by the HVSEC on the project's negative visual and environmental impacts led the PSC to eliminate design options that posed more serious threats. However, these gains do not offset the public disappointment and bewilderment about the PSC's decision to endorse the project in the absence of a demonstrated need and despite egregious procedural flaws.

Scenic Hudson President Ned Sullivan said, "Scenic Hudson is disappointed the PSC has decided to move ahead with this project despite its failure to meet tests of need, fairness and emissions reduction. I commend the Hudson Valley Smart Energy Coalition and the citizens who have supported our professional intervention in this proceeding. Together we persuaded the PSC

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to improve the project and to confine the transmission line route to existing, rather than new, utility rights-of-way.”

Ian Solomon of Farmers and Families for Claverack said, “Today’s decision is a real disappointment for Hudson Valley residents, farms and businesses. We feel strongly that the wrong decision has been made, as all hard evidence shows the net impact will be detrimental to ratepayers, property owners and the environment. It remains to be seen exactly what shape the process will take from here, but we’re grateful for the Hudson Valley Smart Energy Coalition’s efforts and all the citizens who weighed in over the past several years and urged the state to do the right thing. These have resulted in some important redesigns of the route and proposed towers, which will be less harmful than some of the original proposals. We will continue to pursue opportunities for engagement in this ongoing process as it unfolds.”

Omega Institute CEO Skip Backus said, “Omega is disheartened to see this level of resource diverted away from the innovative energy future that we desperately need to embrace. We are grateful for all the time that so many organizations, citizens and local officials have invested over the last couple of years to help inform this process and to mitigate damaging parts of it. We look forward to an ongoing level of organization across communities as we continue to push for the highest energy vision possible for our region.”

About the Hudson Valley Smart Energy Coalition

The Hudson Valley Smart Energy Coalition includes municipal officials; environmental, cultural, historic and land preservation organizations; businesses; and residents who support creation of a modern, comprehensive energy plan for the Hudson Valley and New York State. More information available at www.hvsec.org.