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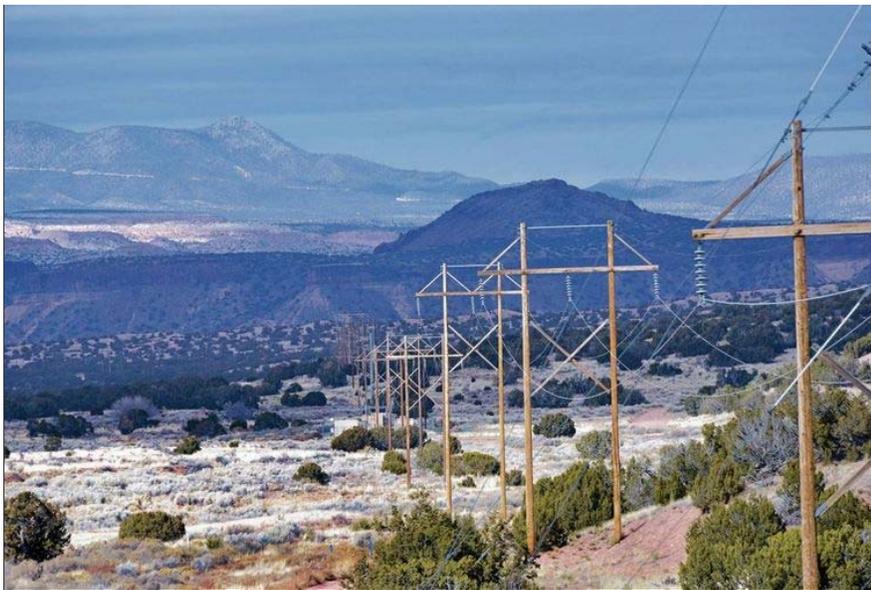
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County to aid Verde Transmission Line review

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The proposed Verde Transmission Line would replace the 164-kilovolt transmission line to the Norton substation on Old Buckman Road. Pictured are the existing 55-foot poles that could be replaced by poles twice the size. Clyde Mueller/The New Mexican

Posted: Tuesday, February 14, 2017 11:05 pm | Updated: 9:06 am, Wed Feb 15, 2017.

By Justin Horwath
The New Mexican

Santa Fe County will participate as a “cooperating agency” in the federal government’s anticipated environmental review of a Texas company’s proposal to build a 33-mile power line between Alcalde in Rio Arriba County and a substation on Old Buckman Road near Santa Fe.

The 345-kilovolt transmission line, supported by towers of up to 110 feet high, would cross the Pojoaque Valley, worrying some residents about the impact on views. Hunt Power, the company proposing the line, says the project, with an estimated cost of up to \$80 million, would add 600 megawatts of capacity to the

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electrical grid and provide a new means through which to transport renewable energy.

The company seeks roughly 12 miles of right-of-way from the U.S. Bureau of Land Management. The line would pass through public, private and tribal land, including 15 miles in Santa Fe County.

Santa Fe County commissioners on Tuesday approved a memorandum of understanding to cooperate with the BLM as it prepares an environmental impact statement for the so-called Verde Transmission Line.

In the role of a cooperating agency, the county will provide the BLM with “data, analysis, and expertise regarding Santa Fe County zoning and ordinances,” according to a memo presented to commissioners. The county also would review the environmental impact statement.

Robert Griego, the county’s planning manager, told commissioners there will be opportunity for members of the public to comment on the BLM’s draft environmental impact statement, which he said is scheduled for completion in a year.

Hunt Power does not need to submit a development application to the county for approval of the power line, Griego said.

Commissioner Ed Moreno said the federal environmental review represents “our opportunity to influence the way the process is going to work.”

“I’d rather be inside the room than outside the room, and I think this is a good opportunity for us to weigh in for our constituents,” Moreno said.

County Attorney Greg Shaffer said nothing prohibits commissioners from attending public meetings on the BLM’s environmental review.

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