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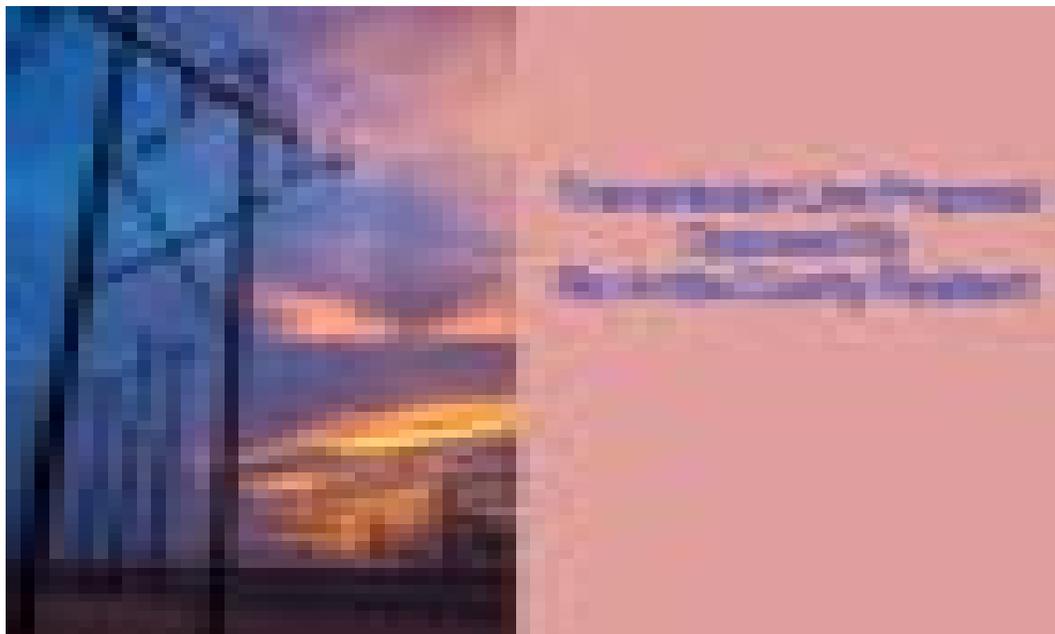
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Hunt Transmission Line Project Proposal Draws Critics

by Staff Reporter / Dec 22, 2016 / comments



Hunt Power representatives Jeremy Turner and T.J. Trujillo present the proposed plan for building a high voltage transmission line to Rio Arriba County Commission Dec. 15. Photo by Robert Naranjo for the Valley Daily Post

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Hunt Transmission Line Project Proposal Draws Critics

By ROBERT NARANJO

A newly proposed electric transmission line generated lots of energy at the last Rio Arriba County Commission meeting of the year. The Dec. 15 commission meeting in Espanola, included an informational presentation on the proposed "Verde Transmission Project" by Jeremy Turner and T.J. Trujillo representing the project's developers, Hunt Power out of Texas.

The proposed project developer, Hunt Power listed jobs, energy and other benefits in their presentation, but the audience did not buy it. Melvin C. Chaney of Santa Fe handed out a "Comment for Rio Arriba..." that began with "visual experience when seeing power lines is at several levels. The tourist says the "views of the Sangres would be better without the power line" and moves on, said Chaney. "The frequent visitor is quite upset when he/she finds a 120 feet high tower plunked near his/her favorite camp site," he added. "It gets more serious when the line is in sight of your home. Then it is a disaster when the line is wrapped around three sides of your home as the Hunt/Verde line does around a residence in Jacanita," he said.

He said the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has directed people to a "study sponsored by the BLM," titled, "Electric Transmission Visibility and Visual Contact Threshold Distances In Western Landscapes," but Chaney said that "estimation of

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visual effect has, to this time been subjective, no consideration is made for properties not directly crossed by the right of way. We know that properties at a distance suffer a loss in value. It may be that these data will be a basis for those at a distance to make claims against the line builder," he said.

"Here is a statistic of interest," Chaney pointed out. "There are more than 500 properties along HWY. 84-285 that are within 1600 feet of the proposed right of way," he said. He then pointed out, "In addition to the potential for serious health problems for our children, a power line has more effects that just visual." "According to research and publications put out by the World Health Organization (WHO), EMF (electro magnetic fields) such as those from power lines, can cause: Headaches, Fatigue, Anxiety, Insomnia. I suspect there are more," said Chaney.

Next up to speak against the Hunt Verde Project was Vince Roybal who said some of the same things that Chaney pointed out. He mentioned wildlife and endangered species being likely victims. And Roybal mentioned that the project passes right by an elementary school, a church and cemetery. "We have respect for our dead too," he said.

Keith Marquez, who said he was "Taos Pueblo born and raised," and asked how the project will benefit this area. He said studies have shown that EMF near elementary schools cause cancer. And he said that the Verde Project has not contacted the Eight Northern Pueblos.

He also said that Jemez Mountains Electric Cooperative has almost half of its infrastructure that can carry power. Why do we need this? And Marquez asked rhetorically that two brothers responsible for the "silver crises" a few years back--"We want them to manage this project," Roybal ended with, "I implore you," he told the commissioners to do everything possible to stop this project for the "sake of future generations."

Former Espanola Mayor was also in attendance when calls from the audience rang out, "Let Richard Lucero speak." Chairman Naranjo obliged and the former mayor said Hunt's Verde Project wants to run "a line through us?" Lucero then quoted Albert Einstein, implying that bees would die off with the transmission line. "Einstein said that when the bees are gone, all of us will be dead." Asked about the Pueblos and other cities who have agreed to be "cooperating agencies," he said, "I hope they change their minds," the former mayor said.

Chairman Naranjo indicated opposition to the project but said he could not entertain any motions for an official Rio Arriba County resolution against the Hunt Verde Project as it was only listed as a "Presentation" on the agenda, and could not be changed to an "action item" with proper notice as per the Open Meetings Act. If the County does act on a resolution on the Hunt Verde Project, it will have to wait until the January 2017 commission meeting in Tierra Amarilla.

According to information provided by Hunt Power, the Verde Transmission Project intendeds to build approximately 30 miles of 345 kilovolt ("kV") transmission line that will interconnect the existing Public Service Company of New Mexico (PNM) Ojo substation in the Hernandez area of southern Rio Arriba County to the existing PNM Norton substation in Santa Fe County.

The company claims the project is intended to complete a critical transmission loop in the northern New Mexico transmission system. Hunt Power says the project will strengthen import and export capabilities system-wide, help relieve congestion, strengthen the reliability of the existing electrical system, and improve transmission access for local renewable and other energy sources.

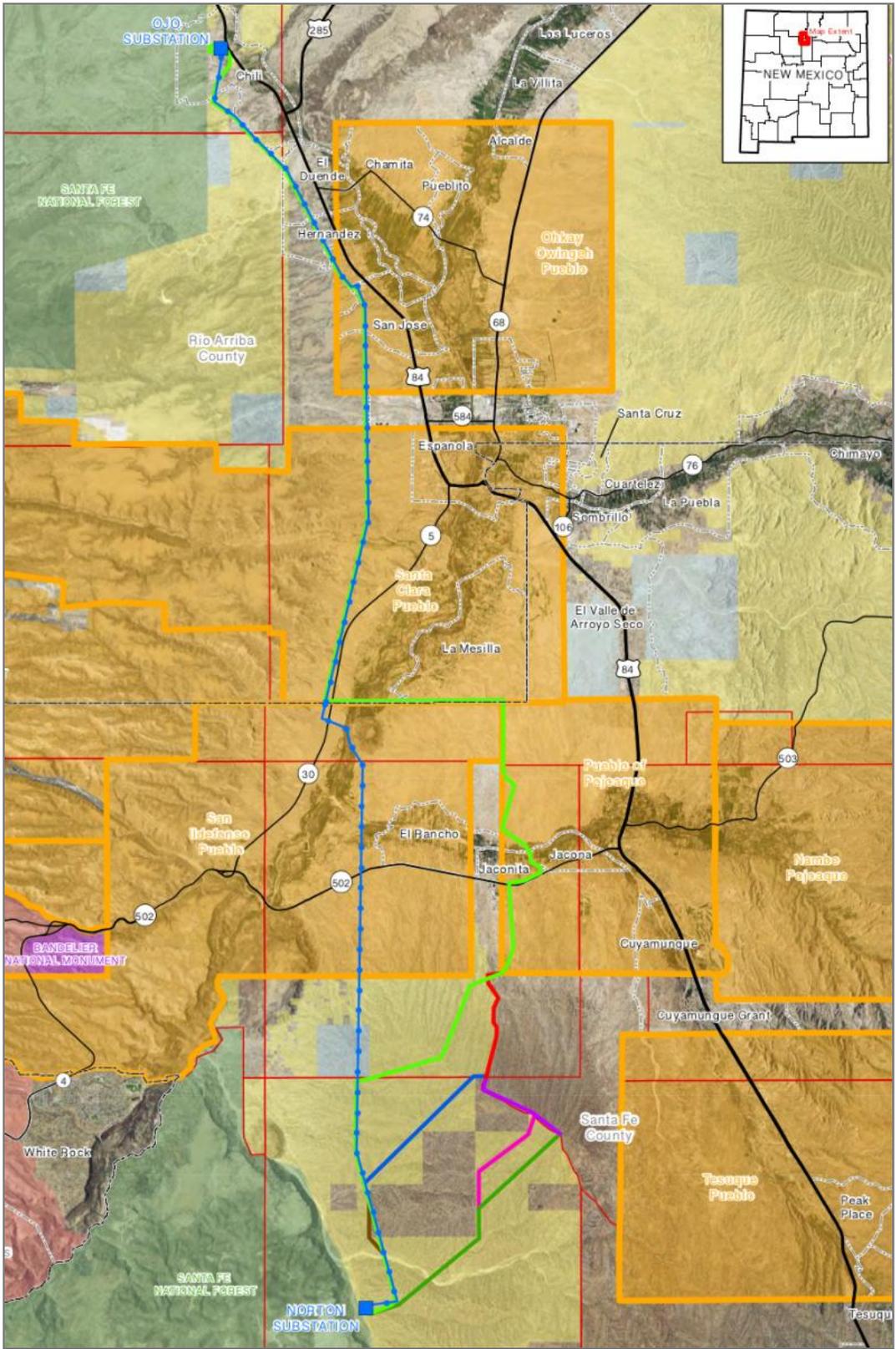
Improving transmission capacity for renewable energy is currently a major motivation in the development of transmission lines across the western United States as many transmission developers seek to find the fastest and cheapest way to move wind and solar generated power to California.

California's Renewables Portfolio Standard (RPS) requires California's electric utilities to have 50% of their energy sales derived from renewable energy resources by 2030. Renewable energy producers in states like New Mexico, Wyoming and Arizona are racing to get their transmission lines built and sales to California utilities locked in place.



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Source material from Hunt Power shows that the completion of this 30 mile stretch of line would open up an electricity pathway for renewable energy generated in wind farms in the eastern side of New Mexico to transmission capacity into Arizona and on to California.