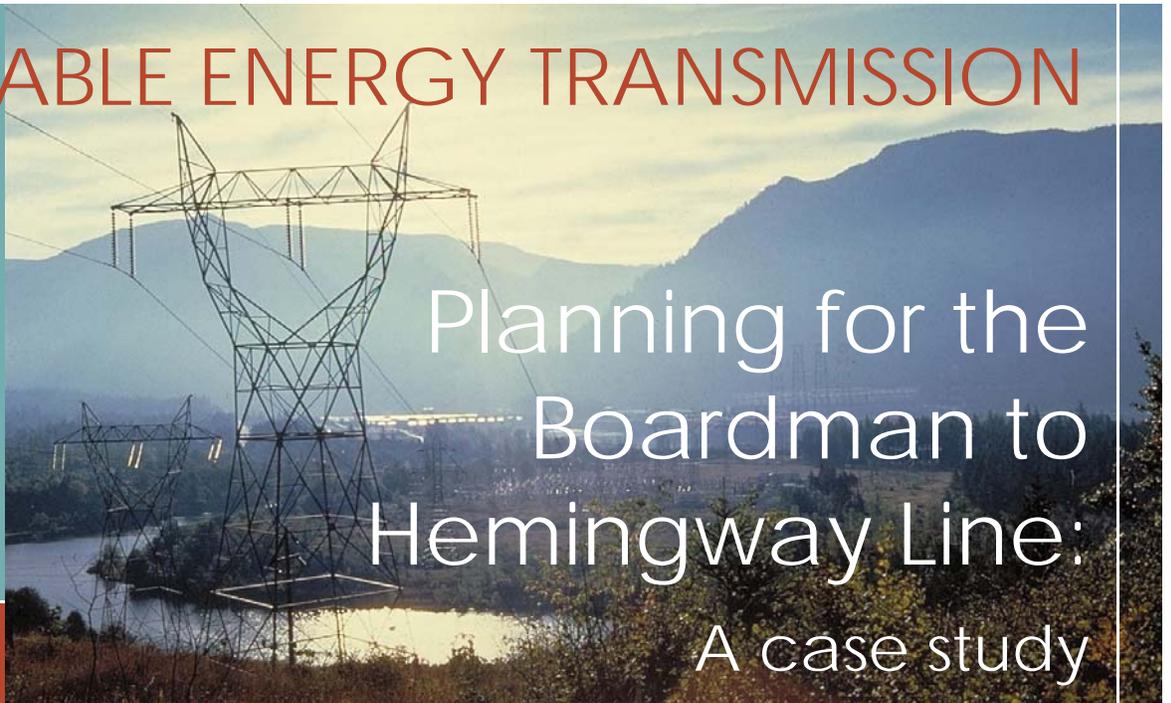


# RENEWABLE ENERGY TRANSMISSION



## Planning for the Boardman to Hemingway Line: A case study

*Through the Community Advisory Process, Idaho Power hosted 27 Project Advisory Team meetings, 15 public meetings and seven special topic meetings, involving nearly 1,000 people. Additionally, numerous meetings with individuals and advocacy groups were held.*

### PROJECT SUMMARY

The Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project consists of a 300-mile, 500 kilovolt (kV) transmission line carrying up to 1,500 megawatts (MW) from proposed Grassland Substation near Boardman, Oregon to the Hemingway Substation located approximately 20 miles southwest of Boise, Idaho. The project's goal is to improve the reliability and efficiency of the transmission grid system and address congestion problems with transmission in the northeast Oregon and the southwest Idaho region. The proposed route generally follows existing transmission lines and proposed Section 368 Energy Act corridors. Approximately 30 percent of the total proposed route length traverses federally administered Bureau of Land Management lands in Oregon and Idaho, and one national forest.

### Route Designation Planning and Conflict

In late 2007, Idaho Power submitted permitting documents to the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, and Oregon Department of Energy–Energy Facility Siting Council. Idaho Power developed, analyzed, and refined initial transmission line corridors in order to identify a preferred route. The proposed route was 254 miles long, included only 39 miles on public lands, and crossed the historic Oregon Trail in multiple places. Idaho Power's initial scoping activities held in October 2008 revealed significant opposition to the original route for the Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project. Principle concerns were substantial impacts to agricultural lands, visual impacts to the Oregon Trail, and the location of the proposed Sand Hollow Substation. In response, Idaho Power put the federal and state review processes on hold, withdrew its original route, and implemented a new comprehensive public process to gather more input.



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## Public Engagement Process

### Pre Environmental Review

Idaho Power hired a local public-involvement consulting firm, Rosemary B. Curtin, Inc. (RBCI), to help develop and facilitate a strategic public process to find a new route that would be acceptable to both Idaho Power and the communities in eastern Oregon and southwestern Idaho. The resulting Community Advisory Process consists of four objectives:

1. Identify community issues and concerns
2. Develop a range of possible routes that address community issues and concerns
3. Recommend proposed and alternate routes; and
4. Follow through with communities during the federal and state review processes

Idaho Power also established goals with measurable criteria for the Community Advisory Process:

- **Trust and Cooperation:** Gain the public's trust and cooperation in siting the Boardman to Hemingway 500 kV transmission line
  - Give the public ownership of the siting process
  - Develop a collaborative process that respects different perspectives and takes concerns into account
  - Respect environmental and cultural concerns not

covered by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process

- **Acceptable Line Routes:** Develop line routes for the Boardman to Hemingway 500 kV transmission line that are acceptable to the public at-large and adhere to NEPA and Oregon Energy Facility Siting Council siting principles:
  - Ensure that committee representation is broad enough to involve all key stakeholders
  - Include appropriate state and federal government agencies
  - Ensure that the public process is run such that it does not violate any NEPA siting process principles
  - Develop a collaborative process that promotes cooperation between the counties and cities through which the transmission line must cross
- **Project Cost:** Minimize project cost increases due to line route changes.
  - Propose line routes that do not significantly add to the cost of the Boardman to Hemingway project cost
  - Propose substation costs that do not significantly add to the cost of the project
- **Reliability:** Ensure that recommended routes adhere to Idaho Power's reliability criteria and serve the line's purpose



Local working groups comprised of residents, property owners, business leaders, local officials, and many others representing each of the counties in the project area became known as the Project Advisory Teams. Three regional teams were formed within the 11 county planning area. Later in the process, two additional counties were added. For over a year, approximately 450 Project Advisory Team members worked at the county level and gave a tremendous amount of time and input into the development of the proposed route. During the Community Advisory Process, the Project Advisory Teams:

- Identified community issues and concerns
- Learned about agency roles, regulations, and routing criteria
- Confirmed criteria for route selection using input from the broader public

- Reviewed data used to develop potential routes
- Developed a range of possible routes that addressed community issues and concerns
- Recommended proposed and alternative routes that met regulatory requirements and were acceptable to Idaho Power and communities

## Project Advisory Team Formation

To initiate the Community Advisory Process, in the spring 2009 Idaho Power and RBCI met one-on-one with community members potentially impacted by the Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line project. During these meetings, community members expressed concerns about the proposed transmission line project, including concerns expressed in most transmission projects:

- Transmission line was unnecessary
- Technical data and analysis used to site the original route were not accurate
- The transmission line was being forced upon communities without listening to their input or including them in the decision-making process
- Important land-use issues were not taken into consideration when siting the original route

During these initial meetings participants were asked to join a Project Advisory Team (PAT) and/or recommend other potential members.

When the one-on-one meetings concluded, Idaho Power developed a list of stakeholders and sent invitations to the first series of Project Advisory Team meetings to those stakeholders who indicated they wanted to participate. Elected officials, property owners, and residents within each geographic area generally constituted the Project Advisory Team. Representatives from economic development organizations, irrigation districts, businesses, community organizations, resource agencies, and advocacy groups were also asked to participate. Team members were added based on Project Advisory Teams identifying representation imbalances within each team. Additionally, if a new person attended a Project Advisory Team meeting, they were considered a team member and began receiving invitations to subsequent meetings.

## Community Meetings

### PAT Meeting #1

The first step of the Community Advisory Process was to build public trust between Idaho Power and community members through an open forum. At the first series of meetings, the Boardman to Hemingway project team

presented background information and the status and purpose of the project. After the Idaho Power presentations, the meeting attendees were divided into working groups of 15 to 20 members to identify community concerns and suggestions for siting the transmission line. The community members worked independently with third-party facilitators. Afterwards, Idaho Power representatives joined the groups to answer questions. Idaho Power recorded concerns and suggestions identified by community members and developed them into community criteria for each region. Project Advisory Teams later used these community criteria, along with environmental, engineering, and regulatory criteria to develop a range of possible routes for the transmission line.

To address the volume of concerns expressed at the first South and Central Project Advisory Team meetings, Idaho Power hosted an additional informal meeting to present information about the status, purpose and need of the Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project.

### PAT Meeting #2

The purpose of the second set of Project Advisory Team meetings was to provide team members a better understanding of:

- The federal, state and public processes involved in the project
- The regulatory and engineering criteria that would be used to develop transmission line routes
- The requirements and regulations of the project

To help team members better understand how the permit review processes would proceed, Idaho Power and RBCI developed a siting process background paper that outlined the federal, state, and public processes and addressed key issues that might arise as the processes work together. Idaho Power and Tetra Tech, Idaho Power's environmental consulting firm, developed material to help team members fully understand the regulatory, environmental, and engineering criteria that would later be used to develop possible routes. Representatives from the Bureau of Land Management, Oregon Department of Energy-Energy Facility Siting Council, U.S. Forest Service, and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife attended the second series of meetings to participate in an informative panel discussion and present their agency's review processes.

The materials distributed to team members in advance of the meetings included:

- Siting process background paper
- Routing consideration definitions
- Preliminary list of exclusion, avoidance, and placement opportunities

- Routing criteria table
- Regulatory framework table

The community criteria were also presented to team members for review and comment. All comments submitted by team members at these meetings were incorporated into the community criteria. Technical experts explained to the Project Advisory Teams that even though their community criteria were important, laws could conflict with community criteria.

### Round 1 Public Meetings

In July 2009, the Project Advisory Team members were consulted, to provide feedback on preferred times, dates, locations, and notification processes for a series of public meetings. They also discussed what information should be presented at the public meetings. Between August and fall 2009, seven public meetings were held in the North, Central and South advisory areas and in Grant and Harney counties. The open houses were intended to give an overview of the project, share the outcomes of the Project Advisory Team meetings and allow community members to ask questions and provide input on regulatory, engineering, and community criteria for siting the transmission line.

A total of 102,288 invitations were mailed to residents, agencies, local governments, and stakeholders in the project area in Oregon and Idaho. A total of 501 people attended the August 2009 open houses and 171 comments were submitted. An additional 106 people attended the fall 2009 meetings in Grant and Harney counties and 41 comments were submitted. Comments submitted at the public meetings indicated the public generally agreed with the project advisory teams and the criteria that would be used to site the transmission line.

### PAT Meeting #3: Route Identification

In fall 2009 a series of mapping workshops were held throughout the project area to identify a range of possible routes for the Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line. The mapping workshops began with an evening meeting followed by a drop-in mapping workshop the next day. At the evening meeting team members:

Received instruction on how the mapping workshop would proceed;

- Reviewed the regulatory, engineering, and community criteria to be used to map possible routes for the proposed transmission line
- Learned about the Geographic Information System (GIS) that would be used during mapping
- Reviewed the outcomes of the seven public meetings held in August

The all day, drop-in mapping workshop was divided into three sessions to make the best use of attendees' time. Team members had the choice of mapping their routes on paper maps or working with GIS operators to lay out routes at computer stations. The GIS contained regulatory, environmental and engineering data, such as environmental constraints, land-uses, and existing utility corridors. Idaho Power staff and technical experts from other organizations were available to answer questions. County planners from each county in the project area also attended the mapping workshop.

Idaho Power kept a detailed record of all routes developed by team members. Additionally, team members were asked to provide a written description and comments for each route they identified. Overall, the five Project Advisory Teams developed a total of 49 routes or route segments. The routes provided valuable information about areas the community felt should be avoided and areas to consider as placement opportunities.

After the mapping session, Idaho Power analyzed each route using the same criteria the team members used to generate them. The goal of the analysis was to find several cost-effective, reasonable routes that could be permitted and built.

### PAT Meeting #4: Route Refinement

The range of revised routes was presented to the Project Advisory Teams in December 2009. After this series of meetings Tetra Tech continued to analyze each revised route for the following factors:

- Permitting difficulty – community criteria and relative difficulty of gaining necessary permits from the federal, state and local governments
- Engineering criteria – the relative difficulty associated with building the line in a given route. Considerations include terrain, road construction, clearing, equipment movement, and accessibility
- Mitigation cost – the relative cost associated with mitigation actions required by permitting authorities

During the analysis, Tetra Tech divided the project area into 14 regions. After the above three factors were determined for each route, the routes in each region were compared and the most reasonable route for each region was identified. Those 14 routes were then narrowed to the three routes determined to be the most reasonable. These three routes were labeled the eastern route alternative, central route alternative and western route alternative.

### Special PAT Meeting

At the suggestion of some team members, Idaho Power invited the South Project Advisory Team members from Idaho to a special session to discuss the potential for



routing more of the transmission line through Idaho. The Idaho members were provided with GIS capability to evaluate the regulatory and community criteria that were at issue with routing through Idaho's Canyon and Payette counties. After evaluation, the Idaho Project Advisory Team members could find no additional routes in Idaho that would not violate the community criteria they had developed.

### PAT Meeting #5: Route Alternatives

At the fifth set of Project Advisory Team meetings Idaho Power presented the analysis of the eastern, western, and central route alternatives. Team members were given the opportunity to give input on the route alternatives and a possible proposed route. A series of five comment forms were provided to team members at the meeting. Questions on the comment form were intended to measure:

- The level of support for each route (eastern, western, and central)
- What PAT members liked and disliked about each route
- Whether any of the three route alternatives would be supported by the public as a proposed route
- Whether there was a route that had not been considered in the analysis

Idaho Power received nearly 400 comments. As the comments were being reviewed, the following themes emerged: support was divided between the western and eastern routes, and fewer people supported or opposed the central route. Community members did not identify another complete route between Boardman and Hemingway for consideration along with the eastern, western, and central routes.

### PAT Meeting #6: Preferred Route

Once all comments were documented and reviewed, Idaho Power selected the eastern route alternative. While mitigation costs were considered, they did not impact the final selection of the proposed route. The selection was based on a variety of factors such as:

- Regulatory criteria from the BLM, Forest Service, Oregon Department of Energy, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Idaho Department of Fish and Game
- Results of the technical analysis of the three

proposed route alternatives and segments

- Community criteria
- Difficulty of construction
- Placement opportunities and avoidance and exclusion categories

In spring 2010 Idaho Power hosted a final series of Project Advisory Team meetings to present the proposed route Idaho Power would submit in its revised applications to the federal and state siting processes. The reasons behind the eastern routes selection were discussed with the Project Advisory Teams as well as the next steps in the siting process.

The following input was provided about the proposed route at the last set of Project Advisory Team meetings:

- The South Project Advisory Team was not opposed to the proposed route, indicating it would receive community support provided it stays off of Exclusive Farm Use land in Oregon and irrigated farmland in Idaho. The team also recommended moving the route farther away from the National Oregon Trail Interpretive Center in the Baker City area.
- The Central Project Advisory Team was concerned that the proposed route was still too close to the National Oregon Trail Interpretive Center.
- The North Project Advisory Team supported the proposed route, but had concerns about the alternate route around the bombing range and Nature Conservancy preserve. It is still uncertain whether the U.S. Navy will allow Idaho Power to avoid private land by locating the transmission line on the bombing range. Idaho Power continues to work on this issue with other utilities that are proposing transmission lines in the Morrow County area.
- The Grant County Project Advisory Team was supportive of the proposed route because it follows the I-84 corridor. Although the proposed route does not go through Grant County, Idaho Power encouraged the residents of Grant County to stay involved in the federal and state review processes.
- All four Project Advisory Teams requested that Idaho Power keep them involved throughout the federal and state review processes.



In response, Idaho Power developed another alternate route that would go three miles to the east of the Interpretive Center. However, this alternate route could be challenging due to wildlife areas (i.e., sage grouse leks).

## Round 2 Public Meetings

After submitting applications to federal and state agencies to begin the review processes, Idaho Power hosted a series of six public open houses in each of the six regions to present the proposed route and provide information about the project, and provide key stakeholders and property owners the opportunity to learn about the transmission line project.

A total of 366 affected landowners living within 2,000 feet of the proposed and alternate routes were sent a personal notification letter to let them know the transmission line would cross or come near their property. Postcard invitations were also mailed to over 7,600 people that participated on a Project Advisory Team, attended an August 2009 public meeting, or had participated in the 2008 federal and state review process for the original route.

Overall, 220 people attended the public open houses. The public open houses made the communities aware of the Boardman to Hemingway project before the federal and state agencies began gathering public input for their review processes. Additionally, the meetings provided Idaho Power the opportunity to specifically meet with 50 property owners who did not participate in the Community Advisory Process and were unfamiliar with the transmission line project.

## PAT Process Outcome

Through the Community Advisory Process, Idaho Power hosted 27 Project Advisory Team meetings, 15 public meetings and seven special topic meetings, involving nearly 1,000 people. Additionally, numerous meetings with individuals and advocacy groups were held.

The level of effort put into the Community Advisory Process by Project Advisory Team members and Idaho Power resulted in the following significant changes to the original route proposed in 2008:

- The new proposed route primarily avoids irrigated farmland in Idaho and Exclusive Farm Use land in Malheur County Oregon. The proposed route also avoids city impact areas and parallels an existing 500 kilovolt transmission line for approximately 38 miles.
- The new proposed route avoids the view shed as much as possible from the front of the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center, avoids Exclusive Farm Use land in Baker County and now runs along the eastern part of the Durkee Valley.
- An alternate route is still being evaluated in the Boardman area around the U.S. Naval bombing range. Idaho Power is working with other utilities to coordinate the location of the Boardman to Hemingway transmission line with other proposed transmission lines in this area.

## Environmental Review Process

In summer of 2010, Idaho Power submitted a new Notice of Intent to the BLM and the Oregon Energy Facility Siting Council (EFSC). Two separate, concurrent environmental analyses must be conducted for the proposed project to meet both state and federal requirements. The BLM is the lead agency for the federal analysis process under NEPA and the ODOE is the lead agency for the Oregon state analysis process under the Oregon EFSC Site Certificate process. The EFSC process consolidates regulations of Oregon state and local agencies. The EFSC will approve the project's application only if it meets the state standards for land use, safety, and environmental impact, which apply on both public and private lands. The EFSC standards only apply in Oregon and do not apply in Idaho.

The BLM, ODOE, and United States Forest Service (USFS) filed joint notification for scoping meetings in July 2010 and concluded the comment period in September. Scoping meetings were held in August 2010. During each meeting, state and federal agencies provided an overview of their review processes and Idaho Power provided a brief presentation on the project. Meeting attendees were given an opportunity to comment in writing and discuss the project with staff, consultants, and Idaho Power.

As of April 2011, the scoping report had not been released to the public. During the first phase of the Boardman to Hemingway project, a number of community advocacy groups organized against Idaho Power such as Stop Idaho Power, Please Move, and Stop Gateway West. Activity on these sites has been less frequent since Idaho Power pulled the 2009 proposed route and implemented the public process.

# LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PROCESS

## Community Engagement

- For long-distance transmission lines, how individual communities define their physical boundaries is important. Those boundaries will assist in determining the level of engagement along proposed routes. County-level engagement may be most the appropriate.
- Enlist local leaders' assistance in designing the community engagement process and identifying stakeholders to engage in the process. Establish community advisory groups as soon as possible and guide the community engagement process prior to, during, and after any formal public processes.
- Where possible, engage the community in the process: gathering and evaluating data, and developing recommendations. While time-consuming at the outset, community ownership of information and findings may lessen local opposition to a proposed project.
- Have communities participate in the identification of possible transmission routes. Pre-selecting routes without community involvement, no matter how preliminary, is a quick way to galvanize local opposition. Instead, start the route selection process by getting stakeholders to agree and prioritize selection criteria.
- Realize that stakeholders have different concerns and issues that need to be addressed in the process. Determine at the outset how decisions will be made within community advisory groups and other public meetings.
- Consider additional engagement strategies that complement existing formal public engagement processes, particularly those that generate creative solutions to difficult issues or secure the participation of marginalized stakeholder groups.
- Practice flexibility. Adapt your community engagement process based on new information, the need for additional stakeholder participation, and changing external circumstances. Be prepared for the siting and permitting process to take more time than planned.
- Engage in an open discussion of community impacts, including environmental, public health, economic, and fiscal. There are a wide range of decision-support tools that can help facilitate such community conversations.
- Discuss a range of mitigation and compensation strategies. Clarify the parameters at the outset of this conversation and, in particular, what "fair and just" compensation means to the stakeholders involved.

## Communications and Information

- Communicate a detailed explanation of a project's "purpose and need" early and often. Use a range of modes to convey this information.
- Provide a publically accessible, central location for all project information. Update information in a timely fashion.
- Communication and educational materials must be accurate, succinct, and easy to understand.
- Proactively communicate project information. In the absence of meaningful engagement and information, people will assume the worst about a project.
- Keep accurate and detailed meeting minutes current and available. This is the best way to ensure that participants feel like they were heard.



# Consultants

## TetraTech (TtEC) *Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)*

TtEC is assisting the BLM in preparing the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Final EIS. TetraTech will conduct protocol level field surveys for wildlife, plants, wetlands, and cultural and historic resources. Wildlife surveys will include sage grouse, raptors, pygmy rabbits, and Washington ground squirrels. Wetlands will be mapped and later delineated for federal and state permit applications. A Class III survey will be conducted along the entire right-of-way, and visual inventory and assessments of impacts to historic trails will be completed.

In coordination with Idaho Power, TtEC developed a public involvement participation program that will include eight counties in the two-state study area. Activities include agency and community meetings, newsletters, public scoping meetings, public workshops, and public meetings on the DEIS document. In addition, TtEC will assist Idaho Power in obtaining all local, state, and other federal permits required for this project, including the Oregon Facilities Siting Permit.

## EnviroIssues *Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line website*

Limited funds, multiple agency coordination and a broad geographical audience were all challenges in developing a dedicated project web site. EnviroIssues was tasked with designing a web site that contained all the project information, forged distinct identity, and provided the look and feel of each of the partners' visual identities. EnviroIssues created a cohesive and identifiable site that clearly presents information to the public and allows multiple ways for the public to provide feedback and receive project updates. They also built a digital database that provides team members web access to information. This innovative database allows thousands of contacts and comments to be coded, tracked, archived, and sorted in a short amount of time. EnviroIssues' web-based communications management system, EnviroLytical, allows projects to document, store, track, and analyze ongoing activities with the public. It integrates with GIS data, online mapping, and other web tools, enhances transparency efforts, supports NEPA content analysis, archives communication records, and provides users with real-time project related information.

## Rosemary B. Curtin, Inc. (RBCI) *Project Consultant*

As the owner of RBCI, Rosemary B. Curtin has worked with communities and leaders in Idaho, Oregon, and Montana for the past 12 years. RBCI is a Boise-based firm that designs and carries out strategic processes to successfully engage communities in large and small decisions.

The Community Advisory Process Rosemary designed for Idaho Power's Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line Project was presented at the national Public Participation in Transmission Siting Conference in 2010.

Rosemary's creative public involvement processes have earned numerous national and local awards. She was recognized by the International Association for Public Participation for her involvement with the original Treasure Valley "Communities in Motion" project. She received the Idaho Transportation Department Excellence in Transportation Award for Public Information in 2005, 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2011.

Rosemary has a master's degree in political science from Northwestern University, and bachelor's degrees in political science and economics from the University of Utah.

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