

ORIGINAL



0000056609

Torrey Pines Development, LLC
1121 W. Warner Road, Suite 109
Tempe Arizona 85284

RECEIVED 47

2006 JUN 28 P 2: 44

AZ CORP COMMISSION
DOCUMENT CONTROL

June 27, 2006

VIA HAND DELIVERY

Arizona Power Plant and Transmission Line Siting Committee
ACC Docket Control
Arizona Corporation Commission
1200 West Washington
Phoenix, AZ 85007

**Re: Opposition to Harquahala-West Alternative Routing for Proposed Palo Verde-Devers
2 Transmission Line, No. L-00000A-06-0295-00130**

Madam Chair and members of the Committee:

I am writing to follow up on the oral public comments provided by Jerry Witt to the Arizona Power Plant and Transmission Line Siting Committee (Committee) at the 6:00 p.m. public comment session held on June 26, 2006 with regard to Southern California Edison's application for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility (CEC) for the proposed Palo Verde-Devers 2 Transmission Line, Docket No. L-00000A-06-0295-00130. As we expressed at the public comment session, we have significant concerns with one of the proposed alternative routes for this transmission line.

Together with other partners, Torrey Pines Development, LLC owns many thousands of acres of land in the Harquahala Valley of Arizona. The Valley houses well over 30,000 acres of productive Arizona farmland, and its visual setting is truly spectacular – an expansive valley of irrigated farms with magnificent views of Arizona's mountain ranges in virtually every direction.

Unfortunately, one of the alternative routes proposed by Southern California Edison for the Devers-Palo Verde 2 line – specifically, the Harquahala-West alternative – would essentially cut the Valley in half. This would split the community both physically and visually, as well as impacting a large amount of currently productive farmland in an area that we expect to be farmed long into the future.

As documented in Section D.8 of the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement prepared by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (EIS), the right-of-way for the Harquahala-West alternative would cut across more than 8 ½ miles of irrigated land in the Valley

with a 200 foot right-of-way. The physical disruption caused by the right of way, together with limitations on land use (including crop-dusting activities) to either side of the transmission line would result in the loss of significant irrigated acreage, causing an economic impact that neither the Valley nor the State of Arizona can afford. The costs of acquiring this land and the state and federal lands on either side of the irrigated portion of the valley will also add significantly to the cost of the project – costs that we suggest would well exceed the modest \$3 million estimate for land acquisition provided by the applicant.

However, the visual impacts of this project on the Valley would be even more significant. Based on the applicant's initial testimony to the Committee at the June 26, 2006 hearing, the project would apparently require the construction of upwards of 50 transmission towers that would be 140' to 150' in height. Given the wide, flat expanse of the Valley, the visual impacts associated with this alternative clearly would be significant.

As documented in the Draft Environmental Impact Report and Environmental Impact Statement in Appendix VR-1, the Harquahala-West alternative would result in a significant, or "Class I" impact under BLM's Visual Resource Management methodology. This is the worst kind of visual impact under this system, and it would remain a Class I impact despite the mitigation measures identified in the EIS. According to the EIS, it would also be among the worst along the entire route of the line. By contrast, the preferred route to the north of I-10 would cause only a Class III impact (or an impact that is considered less than significant).

Unfortunately, the EIS provides us with only a single visual mockup of what the project would look like were the Harquahala-West alternative to be constructed (Key Viewpoint 27), and this taken from a point near the far western edge of the Valley. Although this viewpoint gives at least some sense of how disruptive the project would be if this alternative were chosen, we believe that this single viewpoint understates the full scale of visual impacts that would occur to the Harquahala Valley, since the project likely would be visible from virtually every part of the Valley, not just from its western end.

Our understanding based on the discussions during the public comment session is that the Committee may require the applicant to engage in additional visual modeling of the transmission line through the Kofa National Wildlife Refuge, where Class I visual impacts were also anticipated (despite the fact that the line would parallel the existing Palo Verde-Devers line. Given that the visual impacts to the Harquahala Valley would be of even greater potential significance (since the Harquahala-West alternative would cut across entirely new territory where no line currently exists), we believe that the Committee should require additional visual modeling for the Harquahala-West alternative as well if this alternative is given any serious consideration.

As a result of the visual and farmland impacts discussed above, as well as other significant, adverse environmental impacts that are documented in the CEC application and the EIS, Southern California Edison has already concluded that the Harquahala-West alternative is an inferior route, and has selected as its preferred route a routing that carries the line to the north of I-10 instead of through the center of the Valley. The Draft EIR/EIS similarly concludes that the Harquahala-West alternative is inferior to the applicant's preferred route, and the Corporation

Commission itself reached this same conclusion in previous proceedings considering transmission routes through this area. We see no reason to depart from these conclusions now.

As investors in the future of this area, we believe that it is important for the Committee to recognize that it will not just be the Valley's farmers and current residents that will have to live with this project and its consequences if the Harquahala-West route were to be approved by the Committee. Central Arizona and the Phoenix metropolitan area are growing quickly, and we expect that at least some of this growth will reach the Valley in the near future. This transmission route would effectively divide these future communities with a massive, man-made structure and a broad right-of-way that would be visible for miles, interfere with residents' enjoyment of their surroundings, and affect land uses and property values in the vicinity of the line for many, many years to come.

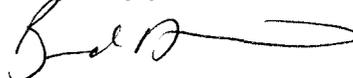
Southern California Edison has identified a number of potential benefits to the State of Arizona, including strengthening the Southwest transmission grid, increasing power pooling capacity, improving emergency interconnection options, increasing the efficiency of resource use, and certain economic and fiscal benefits. We assume that these benefits will be described and demonstrated by the applicant in detail during this case, and we look forward to hearing the results of the testimony and deliberation of these issues before the Committee. We are certainly very supportive of the need for additional transmission in this state to improve reliability and electrical interconnection in the southwest. If this project can provide those benefits, we are supportive of it.

However, we do not believe that these benefits need to be or should be derived at the expense of the Harquahala Valley area. Where, as here, there is a viable option to route a new transmission line along an existing transmission corridor where the visual and physical impacts associated with this type of project has already occurred, we believe the Committee should strongly favor such an option. We do not see any convincing evidence in the record which suggests that there is any reason to build a brand new transmission corridor through the Harquahala Valley when there is a serviceable corridor and right-of-way that is already in place.

As such, if the Committee decides to grant a CEC for this project, we urge that the Committee approve a CEC which permits construction to occur along the preferred route to the north of I-10 – and that it not approve a CEC that would allow for the construction of a line on the Harquahala-West alternative.

We greatly appreciate your attention to this matter, and thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

Very truly yours,



Brandon Wolfswinkel
Torrey Pines Development, LLC

Cc: Docket Control (25 copies)