

Bonneville Power Administration
McNary-John Day Transmission Line Project
Record of Decision

Decision

The Bonneville Power Administration (Bonneville) has decided to construct the proposed McNary-John Day Transmission Line Project in Benton and Klickitat Counties, Washington, and Sherman and Umatilla Counties, Oregon. Bonneville has decided to implement the proposed action identified in the McNary-John Day Transmission Line Project Final Environmental Impact Statement (DOE/EIS-0332, August 2002). The proposed action consists of building 79 miles of 500-kilovolt (kV) transmission line between Bonneville's McNary Substation and John Day Substation. As part of the proposed action, Bonneville has also decided to construct certain short-line routing alternatives identified in the Final EIS. These alternatives are the *McNary Substation Alternative A – Relocate Building* and the *Hanford-John Day Junction Alternative A – North Side*. Bonneville has also decided to construct either one of the short-line routing alternatives (i.e., either Alternative A or B) at *Corridor Mile 32* and *Corridor Mile 35*, depending on the outcome of further negotiations with the owners of tribal allotments crossed by Alternative A at each location.

Background

Construction of the McNary-John Day transmission line is needed to allow new power expected to be generated in southeast Washington and northeast Oregon to be transmitted over Bonneville's transmission system. A number of gas-fired and wind-powered generation facilities have been proposed for construction in this area. The power generated from these facilities, when built, will need to be transmitted to the west side of the Cascades where there is a high demand for electricity from the west-side's urban areas. Because the existing transmission lines in this area are at capacity and cannot carry additional power, the construction of the McNary-John Day line is needed to allow the new power to be transmitted. Providing this additional capacity will allow Bonneville to meet statutory obligations to ensure that there is sufficient capacity on our system necessary to integrate and transmit electric power.

At the time of this Record of Decision, many of the generation facilities proposed in the area are on hold due to market conditions and the need to secure financing. Complete construction of the McNary-John Day line will correspond with funding commitments from the parties that will utilize the capacity added by the line. Bonneville is looking to those parties to pay for the costs of building the line based on the amount of line capacity they will use (pro-rated). The parties will, over time, be reimbursed through their payments to use the line. The cost of the line will be about \$117 million. It is assumed that commitments for funding will occur in the next one to five years.

Some preliminary construction activities, such as purchasing easements in specific sections of the line and constructing the proposed transmission tower pads at the Columbia River crossing

near McNary Substation, likely will occur in 2003. The schedule for constructing the remainder of the transmission line will depend on securing funds for the work.

Rationale for Decision

Bonneville has analyzed the environmental impacts of the proposed action, the short-line routing alternatives and the no-action alternative, and has considered public comments received on the Draft EIS. In making its decision, Bonneville considered how well the various alternatives would meet the following project purposes (i.e., objectives) identified for this project in the Final EIS:

- Maintenance of transmission system reliability;
- Consistency with Bonneville's environmental and social responsibilities; and
- Cost and administrative efficiency.

Bonneville believes that implementation of the proposed action with the identified short-line routing alternatives would best meet these objectives. The proposed action provides for maintenance of transmission system reliability by increasing the capacity of the system to accommodate the new power that is expected to integrate into the system. The proposed action also is consistent with Bonneville's environmental and social responsibilities. Bonneville worked to lessen potential environmental and social impacts through the design of the project and the development of mitigation measures. Cultural resources that were discovered along the line will be avoided, protected, or further evaluated as necessary. Wetlands that cannot be avoided will be permitted through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and compensation for wetland losses provided through off-site wetland restoration, protection, or enhancement. Fish impacts will be minimal by spanning all fish-bearing streams, preserving riparian vegetation, and providing erosion-control measures at construction sites. Wildlife impacts will be lessened by avoiding burrow locations, conducting further surveys for raptors to determine if nests are being used, scheduling construction so as not to disturb birds, and providing bird diverters on the conductors in areas of high flyway use. Vegetation and habitat impacts will be mitigated through reseeded disturbed areas, avoiding sensitive plant species, and restoring, protecting, or enhancing off-site locations. Although there will be additional incremental visual impacts due to having another transmission line in the existing corridor that holds two and sometime three lines presently, Bonneville has attempted to minimize this impact by placing the proposed line next to existing lines to the greatest extent possible. Bonneville is continuing to work with landowners in efforts to lessen impacts as much as possible to irrigation systems, orchards, and vineyards. Short-term impacts of construction on socioeconomics, air quality, transportation, and noise will be lessened through the use of mitigation measures. A complete list of mitigation measures adopted for the project is attached.

The proposed action would cost about \$117 million. These are reasonable costs for the construction of 79 miles of 500-kV line and associated substation work.

Alternatives

Bonneville considered the Proposed Action with several short-line routing alternatives, and the No Action Alternative.

Proposed Action

The Proposed Action includes construction of about 79 miles of 500-kV single-circuit transmission line. The transmission line will begin at the existing McNary Substation in Umatilla City (Umatilla County, Oregon) near the Columbia River, and cross the Columbia River into Washington between the McNary Dam and the Umatilla Bridge. The line will then generally follow the Columbia River and State Route (SR) 14 west through Benton and Klickitat Counties. At the John Day Dam, the line will cross back into Oregon and connect into the John Day Substation near Rufus (Sherman County, Oregon). For most of the route, the line will parallel existing transmission lines in an existing corridor that runs between the McNary and John Day Substations.

The new line will be on lattice steel towers. Construction will include the upgrade of about 40 miles of existing access roads, and the construction of 8 miles of new road and 270 short spur roads (each about 250 feet long from an existing access road to a new tower). In addition, the McNary Substation will be expanded on the east side by 1.3 acres.

As part of the proposed action, Bonneville considered several short-line routing alternatives. The short-line routing alternatives considered are as follows:

McNary Substation Alternatives

- Alternative A - Relocate Building (chosen alternative). The transmission line will exit the northeast side of the substation, cross Third Street (which runs in front of the substation), and head west, adjacent to the road for about 2,400 feet, then turn north and cross the Corps of Engineers' Wildlife Natural Area to the river crossing.
- Alternative B - Cross Wildlife Area. The transmission line would have exited the northeast side of the substation, crossed Third Street, and run northwest (gradually toward the river) behind the office building and across the Corps of Engineers' Wildlife Natural Area.
- Alternative C - Bus Work in Wildlife Area. With this alternative, the transmission line would have exited the northeast side of the substation, crossed Third Street, and then descended into bus work across the Corps of Engineers' Wildlife Natural Area behind the office building. The bus work would have been in a graveled fenced area about 2,000 feet long by 75 feet wide.

Hanford-John Day Junction Alternatives

- Alternative A - North Side (chosen alternative). With this alternative, the proposed transmission line will stay in alignment, paralleling the existing lines. This will require moving the existing Hanford-John Day line 200 feet to the north. At corridor mile 70, the

proposed line will cross to the south side of the corridor and the Hanford-John Day line will ease back into its original alignment in the corridor.

- Alternative B - South Side. With this alternative, the proposed transmission line would have crossed to the south side of the corridor just before the Hanford-John Day line enters the right-of-way. The proposed line would have stayed on the south side of the corridor for the rest of the route.
- Alternative C - South Side Highway. This alternative was very similar to Alternative B; the proposed line would have crossed to the south side of the corridor and highway just before the Hanford-John Day line enters the right-of-way. This alternative differed from Alternative B in that the proposed line would have stayed on the south side of the highway until the existing lines crossed the highway, eliminating two highway crossings of the proposed line.

Corridor Mile 32 Alternatives (either alternative may be constructed)

- Alternative A - Parallel existing line across tribal property. With this alternative, Bonneville will construct the proposed line across the tribal-owned property at corridor mile 32, paralleling the existing lines within the existing right-of-way. About 1,100 feet of conductor and perhaps one tower will be located on the property.
- Alternative B - Move entire corridor off tribal property. With this alternative, the proposed line will be moved to skirt around the tribal-owned property. The other two existing lines will also be moved to avoid the property.

Corridor Mile 35 Alternatives (either alternative may be constructed)

- Alternative A - Parallel existing line across tribal property. With this alternative, Bonneville will construct the proposed line across the tribal-owned property at corridor mile 35, paralleling the existing lines within the existing right-of-way. About 500 feet of conductor will be located across the property.
- Alternative B - Move entire corridor off tribal property. With this alternative, the proposed line will be moved to skirt around the tribal-owned property at corridor mile 35. The other two existing lines will also be moved to avoid the property.

No Action

The No Action Alternative assumes that no transmission line is built. Bonneville considers the No Action Alternative to be the environmentally preferred alternative. The No Action Alternative would not cause impacts to the environment (land uses, wetlands, vegetation, wildlife, cultural resources, visual) that the construction and operation of the transmission line will have.

Mitigation

All the mitigation measures describe in the Draft EIS and updated in the Final EIS have been adopted. A complete list of these measures is attached. A Mitigation Action Plan will be prepared to be included in the construction specifications to ensure mitigation measures are implemented.

Issued in Portland, Oregon.

/s/ Stephen J. Wright
Stephen J. Wright
Administrator and
Chief Executive Officer

October 30, 2002
Date

Attachment:
Mitigation Measures

bcc:

Adm. Chron. File - A-7

Official File - KEC-4 (EQ-14)

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