

Date: January 27, 2010

From: Walt George, BLM Project Manager, Gateway West Transmission Line Project

To: BLM staff, Cooperating Agencies, and Interested Members of the Public

Subject: Siting Study Supplement Provided by Proponents

Introduction

BLM has received a revised siting study dated December 30, 2009 from the Proponents of the Gateway West Transmission Line Project. This supplemental study focuses on the alternatives that have been proposed by cooperating agencies and task forces and that were submitted to the BLM on or before September 4, 2009. In several cases, the Proponents made changes in their Proposed Routes based on those alternatives, and on October 6, 2009 provided the BLM with a memo explaining changes in the Proposed Route and providing preliminary recommendations regarding proposed alternatives.

BLM Adoption, With Modifications, of the Siting Recommendations

This supplemental siting study provides more data and the Proponents' recommendations for alternatives. The BLM hereby adopts the revised siting study, but modifies the recommendations contained therein as specified below. The BLM has decided that three of the routes recommended for elimination by the Proponents will be carried forward into full analysis in the draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). Further, the BLM has decided to fully analyze in the DEIS an alternative route for Segment 1E that follows the former alignment for the 500 kV circuit of Segment 1W, referred to as 1W-b. Finally, BLM defers its decision on eliminating from full analysis in the DEIS the Borah Substation approach (Alternative 5-2) proposed by Power County pending further discussions with Power County, the Proponents, and the Western Electric Reliability Council (WECC).

Table 1 summarizes the BLM conclusions regarding each route and compares them to those of the Proponents. Table 1 is followed by an explanation for each recommendation.

Table 1. Route Comparison Information, by Segment, and Recommendations

Segment	Proponents Alternative Route Designation	BLM Alternative Route Designation	Proponent Recommendations	BLM Decision
1	1E-1	(East of Laramie Range)	Eliminate	Eliminate
	1E-2	1E-A	Retain for Analysis	Retain for Analysis
	1E-3	1E-B	Eliminate	Retain for Analysis
	1W-b	1E-C (follow 1W-b)	Not Considered	Add for Analysis
	1W-1	1W-A	Eliminate	Retain for Analysis
2	2-1	2-B	Retain for Analysis	Retain for Analysis
4	4-1	4-F	Retain for Analysis	Retain for Analysis
5	5-1	5D	Retain for Analysis	Retain for Analysis
	5-2	(Power Co. Borah Sub)	Eliminate	Defer
7	7-1	7-I (Stateline)	Eliminate	Retain for Analysis
	7-2	7-H	Retain for Analysis	Retain for Analysis
	7-3	7-F	Retain for Analysis	Retain for Analysis
8	8-1	8-C	Retain for Analysis	Retain for Analysis
	8-2	8-D	Retain for Analysis	Retain for Analysis
	8-3	8-B	Retain for Analysis	Retain for Analysis
9	9-1	9A	Retain for Analysis	Retain for Analysis
	9-2	9C	Retain for Analysis	Retain for Analysis
	9-3	9D	Retain for Analysis	Retain for Analysis
	9-4	9E	Retain for Analysis	Retain for Analysis

SEGMENT 1

East of Laramie Range Alternative

The alternative route east of the Laramie Mountains was initially considered by the Proponents as a way of avoiding the steeper portions of the Laramie Mountains. However, due to the additional impacts of a significantly longer transmission line on big game crucial range, historic trails, and private lands without any apparent environmental benefit, the BLM concurs with the recommendation to eliminate this alternative from detailed analysis in the EIS.

Alternative 1E-A

The Proposed Route in this area would create a new corridor through sage grouse core habitat. The alternative is 21 miles longer. Despite the additional length, BLM concurs with the recommendation that given the emphasis placed on sage grouse core areas and habitat, Alternative 1E-A should be fully analyzed in the EIS.

Alternative 1E-B

The Proponents shifted their Proposed Route, reporting opposition from landowners to multiple transmission lines across their properties, and have recommended the eliminated of Alternative 1E-B from consideration. However, Alternative 1E-B follows an existing utility corridor as well as portions of designated WWE Corridor. Given the Alternative's proximity to existing and designated corridors, the BLM disagrees with the recommendation and will fully analyze Alternative 1E-B in the EIS.

Alternative 1E-C

This alignment was originally considered for Segment 1W. This alternative would be a 72-mile-long 230kV line beginning at the Windstar Substation and extending south and west to the planned Aeolus Substation, located 1,500 feet to the west of the proposed 1W(c) line.

Alternative 1W-A

The Proponents shifted their Proposed Route, reporting opposition from landowners to multiple transmission lines across their properties, and have recommended the eliminated of Alternative 1W-A from consideration. However, Alternative 1W-A follows an existing utility corridor as well as portions of designated WWE Corridor. Given the Alternative's proximity to existing and designated corridors, the BLM disagrees with the recommendation and will fully analyze Alternative 1W-B in the EIS.

SEGMENT 2

Alternative 2-B

The Proposed Route has been sited to be further from the Fort Fred Steele Historic Site and residences. Alternative 2-B is the Proponents' original Proposed Route. The revised Proposed Route and Alternative 2-B are of similar length and contain similar environmental impacts, but the alternative route would affect more landowners. BLM concurs with the recommendation to fully analyze this alternative in the EIS.

SEGMENT 4

Alternative 4-F

In the central portion of Segment 4, in the Kemmerer area, the originally Proposed Route would impact historic trails and wildlife resources. As a result of meetings and

discussions among WDFG, SHPO, BLM and the Proponents, the Proposed Route shifted to a more northerly alignment, as shown in the Proponents' October 7, 2009 submittal. The revised Proposed Route and the previously Proposed Route, now Alternative 4-F, are of similar length and each would have substantial resource impacts. BLM concurs with the recommendation to fully analyze this alternative in the EIS.

SEGMENT 5

Alternative 5-D

After discussion with local residents between Rockland, ID and the Borah Substation, the Proponents shifted the Proposed Route on to Public Lands to avoid irrigated farmland. The previously Proposed Route has been designated Alternative 5-D. Since there is still much community interest in route locations in Power County, a broad range of alternatives is warranted. BLM concurs with the recommendation to fully analyze this alternative in the EIS.

Power County Recommended Borah Substation Entry Alternative

Power County requested consideration of this alternative approach into Borah, asking that the alignment be immediately adjacent to existing transmission lines. The Proponents have stated that this alternative would not meet WECC reliability line separation criterion that forms part of the purpose and need of the project. BLM will defer its decision regarding the status of this proposed alternative pending discussions with Power County, the Proponents, and the WECC.

SEGMENT 7

Alternative 7-I (Stateline)

Citizens and landowners in southeastern Idaho formed a multi-county task force consisting of residents from Bannock, Oneida, Power, Cassia and Twin Falls counties. The task force submitted Alternative 7-I (Stateline Route) after consulting with local Idaho state legislators and staff from the states of Utah and Nevada. This route is significantly longer than the Proposed Route and has potential land use and visual impacts, but has been formally recommended by cooperating agencies. The Proponents have recommended its elimination on several grounds. The BLM disagrees with the recommendation and will fully analyze Alternative 7-I in the EIS.

Alternative 7-H

Comparison 2 compares the proposed Segment 7 with an alternative route. The Proponents revised a previously discarded route (7R) and have proposed the revised route as Alternative 7-H as a compromise between Alternative 7-I and the Proposed Route. Alternative 7-H is shorter than Alternative 7-I but longer than the Proposed Route. It has similar land use and visual issues as Alternative 7-I but reduces acres of impact in irrigated cropland impacts compared to the Proposed Route. The Proponents have requested it be retained for detailed analysis. BLM concurs with the recommendation to fully analyze this alternative in the EIS.

Alternative 7-F

The Proposed Route and Alternative 7-F are of similar length but with differing potential environmental effects. The Proposed Route would likely have larger private land use impacts, while Alternative 7-F would have more natural resource and visual impacts. The BLM concurs with the recommendation to fully analyze this alternative in the EIS.

SEGMENT 8

Alternative 8C

Alternative 8-C and the Proposed Route would cross near a planned expansion of the Mayfield Subdivision. The BLM concurs with the recommendation to fully analyze this alternative in the EIS.

Alternative 8-D

During consultation, the Idaho National Guard indicated their preference for an alternative that avoids a portion of the "Alpha" Orchard Hill Training Area. Alternative 8-D meets this objective. The BLM concurs with the recommendation to fully analyze this alternative in the EIS.

Alternative 8-B

The Proponents shifted their Proposed Route south to cross the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area (NCA). Approval of the Proposed Route would require an amendment of the NCA RMP. Alternative 8-B represents the Proponents' originally proposed route and crosses private land and the developing areas near Kuna and Melba. The BLM concurs with the recommendation to fully analyze this alternative in the EIS.

SEGMENT 9

Alternative 9-A

Alternative 9-A and the Proposed Route are approximately equal length routes and cross through and near different agricultural lands and affect some different landowners in Twin Falls County near Hollister, Idaho. The BLM concurs with the recommendation to fully analyze this alternative in the EIS.

Alternative 9-B

Alternative 9-B near Castleford, Idaho would affect more residents and developed agriculture than the Proposed Route which is mainly across public land. However the Proposed Route may have irresolvable issues associated with an ACEC and Wild and Scenic River study corridor. The BLM concurs with the recommendation to fully analyze this alternative in the EIS.

Alternative 9-D

Alternative 9-D, recommended by Owyhee County as their preferred route, is located for much of its length in the NCA on the north side of the Snake River. The Proposed Route impacts mainly agricultural land uses, whereas Alternative 9-D would impact natural resources on Public Lands. The BLM concurs with the recommendation to fully analyze this alternative in the EIS.

Alternative 9-E

Alternative 9-E, proposed by Owyhee County but not their preferred route, avoids agricultural areas by crossing mostly Public Lands in the foothills of the Owyhee Mountains. The BLM concurs with the recommendation to fully analyze this alternative in the EIS.