

NEWS RELEASE

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Two-day event to tackle southern Vermont energy issues CVPS, VELCO seek recommendations on how to solve Southern Loop problems

Dozens of local residents will meet next week in a unique effort to develop public recommendations on how to solve growing constraints on Southern Vermont's electrical system.

Central Vermont Public Service (CVPS) and Vermont Electric Power Company (VELCO) are ultimately responsible for proposing solutions to the Vermont Public Service Board, but the companies are making an unprecedented effort to obtain public input on how to address issues along the Southern Loop, a 66-mile transmission line that runs from Bennington to Brattleboro, before making a filing with regulators.

“Southern Vermont electrical transmission facilities have limited ability to support increased electrical demand and are unable to withstand failures of, or to have preventive maintenance conducted on, key components at present demand levels,” says a problem statement created by a local leadership team, which will be the focus of the Jan. 30 and 31 event in Brattleboro. “The reliability of the regional bulk transmission system that connects southern Vermont, southwestern New Hampshire and northwest Massachusetts is at risk at existing demand levels, with increasing reliability risk as regional electrical demand levels increase.”

Already, a team of local residents and independent experts have helped produce a 55-page report on the Southern Loop's history and problems. A second group, the Southern Loop Leadership Team, invited a large group of Vermont residents, from a pool of nearly 250 nominees, to represent various interests in the intensive two-day event, known as a Utility Search Conference. During the course of the two-day event, these volunteers will develop recommendations for CVPS and VELCO to consider. Participants were chosen based on geography, as well as to represent interests such as local government, the environment, large energy users such as hospitals, manufacturers and ski areas, emergency services, associations, state and federal government, utilities, and local businesses.

While only those individuals who have been invited to attend the event are eligible to participate in the working sessions, the meetings are open to those who wish to observe the proceedings. The meetings will take place from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on both Jan. 30 and 31 at the Quality Inn on Putney Road.

The Vermont Department of Public Service intends to send personnel to observe the Utility Search Conference, and to be available to provide information to the participants in a manner that does not conflict with its responsibilities in any future regulatory process concerning the Southern Loop.

“We are hopeful that the participants will produce recommendations, on behalf of the general public, that address the issues and that we can implement,” CVPS President Bob Young said. “We believe this process will help align our goals of a safe, reliable electrical system with local concerns of the public.”

Added VELCO President John Donleavy: “Our goal is to have an information-sharing process that results in a proposal submission to the PSB that reflects all parties' concerns.”

After the Utility Search Conference, a Community Working Group of about 20 people, selected from the USC participants, will help CVPS and VELCO refine the recommendations and make public presentations on how the proposals were developed. A series of open houses will be held to keep the public apprised of the Community Working Group's efforts and gain more feedback from the public.

“Working together, we are confident that we can develop solutions to the Southern Loop issues that work for the electrical system and the people of Southern Vermont,” Young and Donleavy said.

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