

Southern Loop Utility Search Conference

SUMMARY

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Preface

Vermont Electric Power Company (VELCO) and Central Vermont Public Service (CVPS) hired STAR Group, LLC (STAR Group) to design and facilitate a public involvement process in connection with the Southern Loop, an approximately 66-mile, 46,000 volt electric transmission line in southern Vermont.

Working with VELCO and CVPS, STAR Group identified and convened a Leadership Team made up of local leaders in Vermont. The 11-person Leadership Team determined the Problem Statement, the stakeholder groups, and the criteria for participant selection. In addition, the Leadership Team selected an 8-member Background Report Committee and tasked that committee with the role of overseeing the development of a Background Report on the Southern Loop.

STAR Group hired UtiliPoint International (UtiliPoint), an independent engineering firm, to prepare the Background Report. UtiliPoint prepared the Background Report by compiling and analyzing information supplied to it by members of the Background Report Committee. The report was mailed to conference participants on January 14, 2006.

The Southern Loop *Utility Search Conference*[™] was held at the Brattleboro Quality Inn and Suites on January 30 – 31, 2006. The conference was attended by 46 individuals who were selected from a list of over 200 nominees. Conference attendees represented government officials, local businesses, large commercial power users, environmental and alternative energy advocates, community organizations, emergency services and utilities. Several observers attended, but did not participate in, the conference. Observers on both days included staff from the Vermont Department of Public Service.

This Summary contains the key information and recommendations developed by the conference participants.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

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. 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.

GLOBAL SCAN ISSUES

Events and issues identified in the Global Scan that have significant implications for the people of Vermont.

- Expanded Chinese economy
 - Competition for energy/resources
 - Financing U.S. for military resources
 - Huge potential market
 - Low prices/low inflation
 - Increased pollution/global warming

- Population increase
 - Increased resource use
 - Supply and demand crossing
 - Demand on infrastructure
 - Increase disease rates
 - Decline in U.S. influence
 - Vermont 'growing slower' than other states

- Fossil fuels shortage
 - Reasons for war
 - Prices are a problem
 - Shift to other technologies
 - Increase in sales of hybrid vehicles
 - Perception of shortage
 - Decreased standard of living
 - Increase in conservation
 - Biofuels

- Global climate change
 - Bad ski seasons
 - Decline of maple trees and all hardwoods in Vermont
 - More invasive species
 - Increase in natural disasters
 - CO₂ emissions control
 - NE climate initiative
 - Species extinction
 - Positions of power
 - Tax burdens

- Terrorism
 - Privacy and civil liberties
 - Planning and preparation;
 - Increased security costs; Shifts in capital flow
 - Increased anxiety in society; Autoimmune response to terrorism
 - Replacing communism as the enemy
 - Loss of humanism
 - New factor in infrastructure planning and maintenance
 - Concern for border security

- September 11, 2001
 - Demographic changes in Vermont
 - Increased real estate prices in Vermont
 - Cultural attitude change/bigger is better/our right to consume
 - Focus on single-pointed goals for our existence
 - Change in flow of Federal funds

- Increased technology
 - Communication
 - Threats to privacy
 - Consumer costs
 - Need for energy
 - Increases in production and possibilities
 - Global travel

HISTORY

Historical trends from the past 25 years felt to be of the greatest consequence, including their implications, for each stakeholder group.

I. Group: **Associations**

A. Centralization

- Dinosaur- created 100 years to present
- Transmission & distribution challenge
- Mentality that corporation knows what's best for the community
- Centralized nature of product- generation & grid

B. Current reluctance in some communities to take on electricity on its own

- Need education re conservation beyond Demand Side Management (DSM)
- Co-generation
- DSM- Efficiency Vermont
- Support wind, biomass, local input

II. Group: **Environmental**

A. Barriers to Alternative Energy Supply:

- Inefficient load growth
- Deregulation's disincentive regarding generation
- Funding for transmission not DG/DSM
- Increased cost of fossil fuels
- Implications
 - a. Efficient end uses should have alleviated problem
 - b. Need for regulation and education to address problem

B. Inadequate planning / Vermont energy policy:

- DG incentives and DSM
- Increased understanding of environmental impacts
- Increased use of most dense fuels (e.g., wood, coal)
- Under use of pricing incentives
- Rejection of natural gas pipeline
- Emissions regulations
- Conflicts between utilities & regulators (regulatory uncertainty)
- Growth-based economy
- Maturation of renewable technologies
- Short-sighted pricing
- Volatility of fuels/prices
- ISO-NE influence

- Implications
 - a. Lack of investments in DG / DSM
 - b. Lack of incentives to develop DG (disincentives)
- III. Group: **Large Commercial Users**
- A. Avoidance of issue for past 20 years
 - Crisis management vs. proactive/preventative planning
 - Dramatic reduction of economic growth
 - Blackouts
 - B. Inadequate planning / Vermont energy policy
 - No real support for growth & infrastructure
 - Choice of DSM over infrastructure (Efficiency Vermont-special contract) upgrades led us to present situation
 - Has reduced many alternatives to resource generation/distribution
 - Fragmented solutions- no clear direction on key issues
- IV. Group: **Government**
- A. Continued growth of electricity use
 - Potential for brown-outs/blackouts
 - Stress on system
 - Need for major investments- DSM; Generation; Poles & wires
 - B. Short term measures instead of long term solutions
 - Need for large financial investments
 - Increase in environmental footprints
 - Negative financial impacts
 - End of incrementalism (band-aid approach)
- V. Group: **Emergency Services**
- A. Increased growth & development
 - Need increased emergency response resources and planning
 - Potentially increased response time
 - B. Regulatory stumbling blocks that delay improvement to the infrastructure
 - Increased costs to provide services
 - Takes longer to build infrastructure
 - Growth outpaces infrastructure upgrades
- VI. Group: **Utilities**
- A. Business & Regulatory evolution (Transmission power markets, distributed resources)
 - What is the utility's role now and in the future?
 - Clean and green, but very competitive
 - B. Convergence of infrastructure capability & reliability expectations
 - Load has increased
 - Harder to support voltage on Southern Loop
 - Higher expectation for reliability due to recent blackouts

VII. Group: **Local Business**

- A. Lack of preventative planning
 - No solutions
- B. Boom in building energy-intensive homes
 - Huge demand on electricity
 - Lack of energy efficiency and conservation

MOST PROBABLE FUTURE STATEMENT

In looking seven years into the future, identify what is happening in the community considering that no recommendations were implemented as a result of this conference and no one has succeeded in changing the reliability of the system.

An increase in blackouts, along with mandated and natural limits on electrical use have led to increased threats to public safety, the environment and the regional economy, with vulnerable populations most at risk.

Despite these drawbacks, individuals and municipalities and businesses have become much more responsible for meeting their own needs through innovation, conservation and local initiatives, some good, some bad.

In the face of these impacts, a response will be required by the PSB as mandated by statute which may result in an undesirable solution.

The above statement is further defined as follows:

- Safety
 - Communication failure
 - Strain on emergency services
 - Unsafe ad hoc individual solutions
 - Blackouts
 - Poisoning, life support system failures, food spoilage, more fires
- Economic
 - Loss of jobs
 - Loss of / change to tourism
 - Higher rates of recession/depression
 - Depressed property value
 - Depressed value of utility
 - Decreased development- no big loads, smaller houses
 - Blackouts
 - Losing local control
 - Fewer Act 250 permits
- Environmental
 - Increased regulated solutions / more pollution from local generators
 - Losing local control
 - Increased footprints
 - Increased renewable energy sources
- Social
 - Loss of confidence in utility and government
 - Scapegoating

- Municipal incentives
- Lifestyle paradigm shift
- Increase gap between rich & poor

MOST DESIRABLE FUTURE STATEMENT

Visualize the future seven years from today, and describe this most desirable future yet considering the Problem Statement has been solved.

We have an affordable, efficient and reliable power supply and transmission system that is environmentally and socially responsible and supports and provides for a vibrant local economy. This system is supported by a transparent and effective planning and permitting process that fosters innovation.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Identify the principal accomplishments necessary to achieve the Most Desirable Future. Participants grouped these into four areas:

I. Planning

- A. More regional and local planning and decision-making
- B. Localized & regional building codes
- C. Leveling the playing field between renewable and traditional energy supplies, between new and existing technologies, and between centralized and local planning

II. Technical solutions

- A. Synchronous condenser
- B. Transmission line upgrades
- C. T4
- D. DG- e.g., onsite, sustainable, renewable, green, indigenous

III. DSM

- A. Needs to be part of comprehensive state energy plan
- B. Implement maximum amount of cost effective DSM options within the Southern Loop
- C. Implement maximum amount of cost-effective DG options within the Southern Loop

IV. Community

- A. Keep more energy dollars local, in Vermont
- B. Strengthen local energy trade and industry
- C. Conduct energy education

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were presented to Bob Young of CVPS and John Donleavy of VELCO.

➤ **Planning**

- A. Nature of the CWG and where it goes from here
 - 1. Consider reconvening this entire USC group in a couple of months and establish two or three working groups of 20 or so (rather than the single group of 20 contemplated at present)
 - 2. Consider involving representatives from local colleges and/or high schools
- B. Level playing field
 - 1. Structure of ISO system – current ISO system may lead to decisions that are not in line with the types of ideas generated at this conference
 - 2. Renew the debate over PTF funding for traditional infrastructure as well as renewables/DSM/DG; find allies there and before FERC; need level playing field in terms of rules, regulations and incentives
 - 3. Renew lobbying efforts
 - 4. Develop strategic partners
 - 5. Determine who the ISO-NE Board members are and lobby them
 - 6. What other points of influence are there?
 - 7. Develop resources to push the above ideas (i.e., leveling the playing field between traditional energy sources and renewables/DSM/DG) further
- C. Local/regional/state collaborative efforts
 - 1. Need e.g., 40 of these types of meetings; one in each town
 - 2. Need conscious planning for DG & DSM
 - 3. Individual community solutions
 - 4. Decision making processes need to be better integrated
 - 5. Current decisions on one level may very well violate or conflict with decisions or policies made at another level, etc.

➤ **Technical**

- A. Synchronous condenser – considerable agreement that this option should move forward as soon as possible
- B. Transmission line
 - 1. The CWG should determine what the key elements of a new transmission line should be
 - 2. The CWG should evaluate the north-south (A-B) and east-west (C-D) corridors and recommend which corridor should be used to address the reliability issues
 - 3. There were still questions about whether and how much PTF funding would be available for the alternative transmission lines under consideration, so the CWG should evaluate this issue in determining which line to recommend; there is a question of public acceptance of A-C-D vs. A-B piece
- C. T-4 Transformer at Vermont Yankee
 - 1. Complicated by evaluating real solution
 - 2. Defer a recommendation on taking action concerning T-4 until the other elements (item B above) are evaluated
- D. DG
 - 1. Desire for any DG that was sited and put in area to be sustainable, indigenous, onsite or green-tagged
 - 2. We need Legislative and/or DPS support to make it happen
 - 3. Need to conduct an aggressive site search for DG opportunities within the Southern Loop area
 - 4. Conduct micro-hydro and solar site searches to see what would be feasible and acceptable
 - 5. Put out an RFP for DG after reviewing what is possible
 - 6. Need to make regulatory process easier to put DG into place
 - 7. Need to streamline utility interconnection procedures
 - 8. These ideas do not preclude fossil fuels for DG, even though fossil fuels perhaps are not the preferred sources of fuel
 - 9. Need to develop financial and other incentives to actually encourage action
 - 10. Could CVPS actually own some type of DG or some sort of renewable requirements?

- E. DSM
 - 1. Need changes to expand role of Efficiency Vermont, including additional offices within the Southern Loop area
 - 2. Evaluate what is possible for DSM in the Southern Loop area and then make a decision regarding moving forward
 - 3. Obtain additional assistance from utility where possible
 - 4. Develop financing options for individuals who elect to make energy efficiency improvements to their homes
 - 5. CVPS needs to be involved to help address local problems
 - 6. Implement all cost effective DSM opportunities within the Southern Loop

➤ **Demand Side Management (DSM)**

A. Government

1. Assign responsibility to some independent association to implement the DSM plans developed at this event
2. Members of the Southern Loop Leadership Team should meet with the PSB and/or DPS to (a) seek an increased financial commitment to DSM and (b) develop a plan to increase the scope of DSM within the next 2 years
3. Task Efficiency Vermont (EVT) to place satellite offices in Southern Loop region
4. Incorporate a DSM goal for 2, 4, 6 & 8 years; set specific and measurable outcomes for target area
5. Get the legislature to provide more DSM money to most problematic areas; eliminate the current level funding for DSM across the state
6. Include a DSM strategy in regional and town plans implement DSM & recover costs fairly
7. Develop local oversight/advisory board for EVT
8. Make funds available for implementation through RFP's

B. Education

1. Provide education & outreach to consumers & legislators
2. Introduce energy education into public school curriculums regarding what individuals can do to make energy use changes and an impact
3. Develop DSM training at vocational centers & community colleges
4. Fund and provide training of individuals and install and service the resulting measures needed

C. Implementation

1. Train auditors to audit commercial and residential properties, as well as individuals to fund and train trades-people to implement DSM audit results / measures needed to be taken
2. Engage local Fire Departments in energy audits (e.g., use infrared equipment to inspect for energy efficiency)
3. Involve all existing energy efficiency entities in the DSM effort
4. Provide new construction incentives - more comprehensive support in planning stages of developments
5. Educate the community about the value of performance contracts that can generate energy savings at no cost and no risk
6. Work with financial institutions to provide options that help consumers implements DSM & recover fairly the upfront costs

➤ **Community**

1. Encourage community-based renewable energy development
2. Utility Search Conference CWG should encouragement responsibility for the community process implementation
3. Develop community-based financing strategies for renewable & DSM investments
4. Learn from local communities
5. Initiate community renewable energy generation
6. Introduce and strengthen energy responsibilities in the Southern Loop - fund adequately
7. Get communities to establish local responses to energy-related issues
8. Increase subsidies for renewable energy projects that extend over several years
9. Build community support for engaging the community in the long view
10. Community, regional and state plans should all work at being integrated

APPENDIX A

Remarks by Mr. John Donleavy, President of Vermont Electric Power Company, Mr. Bob Young, President of Central Vermont Public Service and Ms. Deena Frankel, Director of Consumer Affairs for the Vermont Department of Public Service

John Donleavy, President of Vermont Electric Power Company (VELCO) and Bob Young, President of Central Vermont Public Service (CVPS) were present to receive the recommendations and to provide a general response to the issues and recommendations developed in the Utility Search Conference. Deena Frankel, Director of Consumer Affairs for the Vermont Department of Public Service, was also present and added her remarks. The following summarizes the remarks and observations made by Mr. Donleavy, Mr. Young and Ms. Frankel.

Bob Young

- Mr. Young thanked the group for working hard and enthusiastically to help the utilities to address the high load issues on the Southern Loop. He expressed appreciation for the group's recommendation that CVPS move forward with a synchronous condenser as part of a necessary response to present load demand on the Loop. He told the group that CVPS would take action on this recommendation immediately.
- Mr. Young did not believe that the T4 or other Southern Loop options would greatly impact the Vermont Yankee plant's options. He stated that Vermont utilities, including CVPS, have a contract to acquire power generated by Vermont Yankee through 2012 and that this contract is very favorable for Vermont electric ratepayers. However, Mr. Young stated that the Southern Loop problems and potential solutions have no impact on Vermont Yankee's up-rate or re-licensing.
- Mr. Young confirmed that CVPS currently is in the process of developing performance specifications to see what distributed generation's potential might be in the part of its service territory served via the Southern Loop. Mr. Young promised that once these performance specifications are developed, CVPS will put out requests for proposals to see what DG options might work. He said that CVPS was committed to working with citizen's groups and local communities to further develop these options.
- Concerning Demand Side Management (DSM), Mr. Young informed the USC participants that CVPS has retained Vermont Energy Investment Corporation and Optimal Energy for the purpose of studying the potential for DSM within the part of CVPS's service territory served by the Southern Loop. Mr. Young noted that CVPS would be willing to work with Efficiency Vermont to study DSM

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opportunities within the Southern Loop and that CVPS is committed to working towards the development of all cost-effective, reasonable DSM that is a part of the solution to the supply problems in the Southern Loop area.

- He remarked that he does not believe that some of the overarching policy issues raised by the USC participants fit within the context of identifying solutions for the Southern Loop, but rather would be addressed more appropriately in a broader discussion of regulatory and public involvement processes. He stated that CVPS and VELCO have participated in these discussions and would continue to do so in order to develop a more comprehensive, integrated planning process for the utilities and the State. He also noted that through these discussions, we can work together to make DSM more effective, pervasive and efficient.
- Mr. Young stated that CVPS is committed to working with communities and local groups to provide education on energy conservation, supply and other related issues in schools and by other means that communities would like. He further noted that CVPS will happily discuss how to more broadly integrate these discussions with the public and regulators including the Public Service Board and the Department of Public Service.
- Concerning the request that multiple Community Working Groups (CWG) be formed and that the USC be reconvened within the next several months, Mr. Young suggested that discussions must take place with the Leadership Team to identify the size and scope of the process to move forward. He wants to have an effective CWG that will continue to provide valuable input and looks forward to working with the CWG as it develops and moves forward from here.

John Donleavy

- Mr. Donleavy added his thanks for the dedication of all of the participants during the two-day conference and told the group that VELCO will continue to collaborate with the CWG and the public relative to narrowing down transmission and non-transmission options. He stated that VELCO will consider the impacts of transmission alternatives on potentially affected communities, as well as the various funding possibilities for transmission infrastructure. He also stated that VELCO will work to understand the value of Distributed Generation (DG) and DSM options as they analyze the various transmission and non-transmission options related to the Southern Loop.
- Mr. Donleavy noted that presently Vermont does not have enough in-state generation to meet its electric demand. This means that Vermont must work with the New England Independent System Operator (ISO-NE) and maintain its regional connections with the New England grid in order to ensure reliable electricity for the State.

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- Concerning the recommendation that VELCO and CVPS work to change ISO-NE's financial incentives that presently favor wire solutions over non-wire solutions, Mr. Donleavy reminded the group that the State of Vermont, together with VELCO, CVPS and all of the other utilities in the State, approached the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and ISO-NE a few years ago under a "united front" with just this idea and were rejected. He also noted that Act 61 requires VELCO and CVPS to continue to advocate this position and they intend to continue doing so.
- Mr. Donleavy remarked that various statutes, regulations and Public Service Board policies require Vermont utilities to engage in a great deal of planning. At present, VELCO is developing a 10-year transmission plan for the State of Vermont and will develop opportunities for public input and outreach as part of that effort.
- With respect to DG, Mr. Donleavy commented that there is a shortage in Vermont of generation and only very limited access to natural gas. Until the gas-supply problem is overcome, Mr. Donleavy suggested that businesses should be provided with incentives to lower their energy use and become more efficient.
- Mr. Donleavy stated his belief that it will be necessary to continue planning together through processes such as the USC, to define roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders, to jointly establish important goals related to energy, and, because "what gets measured gets done," to establish meaningful performance mechanisms so that progress may be measured in relation to those goals.

Deena Frankel

- The four DPS staff who had the opportunity to observe the session greatly valued the chance to hear the dialogue and rich input generated by the process. Even before the end of the session we began talking about how to bring back what we had heard and learned to the Department to be sure our colleagues also had an opportunity to benefit from the process.
- Ms. Frankel also addressed the strong thread expressed by the group about the need for greater public engagement in energy planning, not limited to the Southern Loop process. Ms. Frankel conveyed that there were multiple conversations going on in Montpelier about how to address this need, including a proposal from DPS for a broad-based, statewide public engagement process on Vermont's energy future.

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