

Transmission Line Routing Community Sounding Board

CSB 5 Meeting Summary

March 31, 2021

Overview

Puget Sound Energy (PSE) hosted a meeting for Community Sounding Board (CSB) members on March 31, 2021. The meeting's purpose was to share what PSE heard from the Bainbridge Island community at the virtual workshop on January 21, 2021 to solicit feedback on route segments and during the subsequent feedback period, present the route options developed with route segments, gather feedback from CSB on those route options, and share an update about the upcoming second virtual community workshop. The meeting was held online via Zoom. Attachment 1 contains the list of meeting participants.

Opening remarks

Kierra Phifer (PSE) welcomed the group, shared a safety moment, and provided a brief overview of the meeting purpose. Kierra also introduced new project team members, Karen Brubeck and Elise Johnson. Elise is with Envirolssues and will be facilitating the Community Sounding Board moving forward. Karen Brubeck is with PSE and will be stepping into a community engagement role and will be the CSB's point of contact as Kierra shifts her focus to government affairs.

Elise Johnson (facilitator, Envirolssues) walked through the meeting agenda, ground rules and Zoom controls, explained meeting participants' roles and noted how observers can offer public comments. Kierra provided an overview of the community engagement process to date and the remaining engagement opportunities before PSE selects a preferred transmission line route.

Follow-up from CSB Update Meeting and Community Workshop in January

Community Feedback

Kierra shared an overview of feedback received from the community during the 3-week feedback period from Jan. 21 to Feb. 12:

- Support for the new transmission line & improving overall reliability
- Take the shortest, most direct route
- Support both for and against undergrounding
- Identify opportunities to create/enhance trails
- Concerns for impacts to private property; should not take private property for utility easements
- Minimize project costs
- Concerns for impacts to natural environment and vegetation management
- Concerns that transmission line construction will be intrusive and frustrating
- Power outages are hard on those with medical challenges
- Prioritize rebuilding Winslow Tap and other maintenance projects
- System should stay as-is; power outages are OK
- Living in a rural area should not mean having unreliable infrastructure
- Concerns about routing near youth gathering spaces
- Belief that overhead lines are less reliable
- Concern about the challenges posed by Category II wetlands along some of the route segments
- PSE should add batteries to Bainbridge Island to improve reliability

One CSB member noted that when looking at the heat map of commenters, it appears that one of the more intense hot spots of comment activity are people not directly impacted, and that PSE should perhaps not weigh their feedback heavily.

Meeting with Fire Department regarding proposed segments near helipad

Andy Swayne (PSE) provided a brief recap of a recent meeting PSE had with the Bainbridge Island Fire Chief and Deputy Fire Chief in which they discussed the possibility of routing the new transmission line near the island's helipad, among other topics. PSE has also reached out to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) about this topic. Representatives from the FAA have reviewed potential pole height information provided by PSE and indicated that a new transmission line would be compatible near the helipad and would not require marker balls and lights. Currently there are distribution lines near the helipad that have marker balls and lights. Andy expects that if PSE built a transmission line there, they would continue the practice of including these features as a safety precaution whether or not FAA requires them.

Category II wetlands

Andy S. shared a brief recap of a recent meeting PSE had with City of Bainbridge Island staff. While the municipal code currently does not allow primary utilities above or through Category II wetlands, after discussion, COBI staff indicated that they could be amenable to PSE submitting a code amendment for review and consideration. Andy explained that the code amendment review process includes a public comment component and a decision on the code amendment will ultimately be made by the City Council.

Discontinued segments

Andy S. described segments that PSE is no longer considering. These include segments east of SR-305 along Ferncliff Ave NE (20, 21, 22) because it does not make sense for a route to go too far east to turn and go west back across SR-305. Segments along WA-305 (10, 11) were also discontinued. WSDOT has communicated they will not consider approval of overhead utilities along a scenic highway when there are other viable routes that exist. PSE has also decided to discontinue segments 12 and 13 along NE High School Rd because they have no purpose with segments 10, 11, 20, 21, and 22 removed from consideration.

Routes proposed from continued route segments

Kirk Moughamer (HDR) shared the route options that have been developed from individual segments:

- **Route Option A** (segments 1-4-5-6-3) follows Sportsman Club Rd NE, NE High School Rd, and Fletcher Bay Rd NE. It passes the Copper Top business development, North Town Woods residential development, Bainbridge High School, Sportsman Club, and the Filipino Community Center. There's also a large strand of trees along Sportsman Club Rd NE on Segment 4 and an existing trail system along Sportsman Club Rd NE. There are existing overhead distribution lines along this entire route.
- **Route Option B** (segments 18-19-7-8-4-5-6-3) crosses WA-305 to the east, follows Moran Rd NE and Madison Ave N south (crossing WA-305 a second time), follows NE New Brooklyn Rd west, Sportsman Club Rd NE south, NE High School Rd west, and Fletcher Bay Rd NE south. This route passes by Fire Station 21 and the helipad. This route has existing distribution lines along most of its length.
- **Route Option C** (segments 1-2-3) follows Sportsman Club Rd NE south, follows NE New Brooklyn Rd west, then follows Fletcher Bay Rd NE south. There are existing overhead distribution lines along this entire route. Island Center Park and a park easement are located along the route on Fletcher Bay Rd NE. This route is one of the longer routes at 3.9 miles.

- **Route Option D** (segments 18-19-7-8-2-3) crosses WA-305 east, follows Moran Rd NE and Madison Ave N south (crossing WA-305 a second time), follows NE New Brooklyn Rd west and Fletcher Bay Rd NE south. This route passes by Fire Station 21 and the helipad. This route has existing distribution lines along most of its length. This route is the longest route at 4.4 miles.
- **Route Option E** (segments 18-19-7-9-14-15-16-17-5-6-3) crosses WA-305 east, follows Moran Rd NE and Madison Ave N south (crossing WA-305 a second time), follows NE High School Rd west and Fletcher Bay Rd NE south. This route passes the fire station, helipad, the aquatic center, Sakai Park, multiple schools and multiple churches. This route is closest to the downtown area of Winslow compared to the other routes.

These are the five route options PSE will present to the public at the upcoming community workshop. PSE and HDR discussed an additional route option that uses Segments 1-8-9-14-15-16-17-5-6-3. PSE decided not to propose that route option to the public because it has a lot of twists and turns and is not as efficient as the other routes but understands that the public may bring it up as part of their feedback.

Barry Lombard (PSE) noted the lines on the map are not representative of the specific location of the line itself. Kirk explained that the lines in the Route Explorer tool are representative of a 120-foot study corridor. The routes go through the mid-line of that corridor and do not represent the specific siting of poles, side of the road, etc.

CSB member Q&A

Q: At a previous meeting, some CSB members had suggested possibly re-routing Winslow Tap to allow the new transmission line to utilize segment 44 instead – is that option no longer being considered?

A: PSE doesn't see a lot of benefit from pursuing that option. If PSE did re-purpose part of the Winslow Tap route for part of the new line, part of the Winslow Tap line would still have to be replaced with parts of Segments 3 and 6. One benefit is that there are a few segments that were discontinued (23, 25) that could be reconsidered if the community is interested, but PSE hasn't heard that feedback and doesn't think it offers enough benefit. Additionally, PSE has a project currently underway to rebuild the Winslow Tap line—this is a significant investment and discontinuing use of a portion of the corridor is a questionable use of company assets.

Q: Is there data available on whether NE High School Road or NE New Brooklyn Road has more car-pole collisions? There have been a series of car-pole incidents where lines are damaged; it might be worth looking at which route is less likely statistically to have a pole hit by a driver.

A: The data was not considered as a criterion. Per control zone requirements, PSE will have to have poles set back at least 10 feet from the road.

Q: What will the poles and pole placement look like compared to the existing distribution lines?

A: Generally speaking, if PSE places the new transmission line along the same corridor as existing distribution lines, you can imagine looking down the road and replacing every other distribution pole with a transmission-height pole. Because transmission poles are taller, the pole spacing can be farther apart. In between transmission poles, there would be distribution-height poles there to support the distribution lines that are closer to the ground. At corners and other topographic locations, the design may be slightly different.

Q: So, the number of poles and locations would be about the same?

A: Approximately, yes. There may be some places where there will be exceptions.

Q: How many options pass by Fire Station 21?

A: Three of the five route options (B, D, E) pass Fire Station 21. If PSE does select one of those options, the existing distribution lines along the east side of Moran Rd NE and the south side of NE New Brooklyn Rd could potentially be overbuilt. PSE would not consider moving the lines closer to the helipad than they currently are.

Group discussion

Elise asked the CSB members questions about the route options presented.

What are your priorities for route options?

One CSB member noted the helipad is used frequently and is a critical connection to hospitals in Seattle. There are two airlift providers that use the helipad, and the Fire Department will run these proposed routes by them for their feedback. They noted that PSE has provided good communication about this issue.

Another CSB member shared their point of view, as well as that of their colleagues at the City of Bainbridge Island. One important issue is to avoid and/or mitigate for environmental impacts, especially to wetlands and streams. They would also like to avoid future impacts to non-motorized systems, which they are now working to expand and improve. Moving poles can be a major issue for this work. The city is considering putting bike trails along Madison Ave N, and have concerns about future poles impacting future bike routes. Additionally, they are interested in whichever route will have the least negative impact to the character of the island and rural feel, specifically not having too wide of a corridor and maintaining canopy vegetation. Their preference is for the shortest, most direct route.

Kirk commented that in theory, the shorter route would have the least amount of tree clearing. This is common but not always the case. He also noted that the shortest route, Route Option A, also has a stand of mature trees along Sportsman Club Rd NE that may be affected if that route is chosen.

One CSB member noted that new transmission poles at the intersection of NE High School Rd and Madison Ave N could be quite visible, despite there currently being existing distribution lines there. They noted that it might be one of the most visible places where a new line would be seen and that, over time, having a background of tall trees can help hide the visual impacts of the line. If the surrounding area is mostly buildings and lawns, the poles stand out more. For that reason, this CSB member is leaning against Route E and towards Route A. Route A is the shortest, likely the cheapest for ratepayers, possibly the least disruptive, and possibly the most reliable because with a shorter line there are fewer places it can fail and less to maintain.

One CSB member noted that they run along Sportsman Club Rd NE quite a bit, and as much as they enjoy it as an exercise route, they would happily have transmission poles there if that's what it takes to get reliable power. They commented that the Sportsman Club Rd NE routes are the shortest, most effective routes. Another CSB member noted that if a transmission line were built on the east side of the road, it could create more space to install a trail.

One CSB member noted that PSE has done a great job and they could live with any of the five route options presented. From their perspective, PSE should maximize three functions: 1) gain the quickest approval and get it built quick, as they want reliable power sooner rather than later and none of the routes will be easy; 2) select the route that travels the shortest distance; and 3) select the route that will require removal/trimming of the fewest trees, as visibility will always be a problem and while no one wants it in

their backyard, tree cutting will be the biggest issue for most people on the island. This CSB member noted PSE won't be able to please everyone, but they think these three points speak to what most of the community wants PSE to prioritize.

One CSB member voiced their support for trails, specifically for a route option that fosters the city's non-motorized plan where the trail routes are existing and proposed by the city.

One CSB member noted they care most about reliability. The shortest route has the least chance for things to go wrong but there are other factors that affect this. Regarding the setback from roads for control zone; if that allows for more trails, then all the better. This member also noted PSE is going to make some people mad but getting this transmission line built is important and PSE shouldn't delay plans for it as has been done a couple times before.

One CSB member noted all the route options are alongside existing roads and existing distribution systems. They questioned whether there are limited opportunities for adding non-motorized functions along these routes because of the width needed to have separated bike and car lanes, and whether this project can wait for those trails to be designed before needing to select a route. Kirk responded that it's still early in the process; PSE hasn't decided on a route yet and while there is desire to follow existing distribution lines, there are other factors to consider. Andy further commented PSE would be open to designing the transmission line to fit in with what the city plans to do with non-motorized projects. There may be opportunities for PSE and the city to collaborate. PSE is willing to work with the city to look for opportunities to complete the project in a way that facilitates what the city wants to do with the non-motorized plan.

One CSB member noted the city is far enough along with the non-motorized plan that they could identify where poles could be moved. Moving poles for capital projects is something PSE has done before, but it would be great to plan ahead. For any trails the city installs, they would likely also have to remove trees and it would be more efficient to do this in the same place for both the trail and the new transmission line.

Kirk shared a reminder that the side of the road for any route option has not been selected yet; the analysis is based on the center of the road because no engineering has been done. PSE's preference for locating in the public right of way (ROW) is because there's already existing distribution lines there, so there is already an impact. Andy added that, conceptually, if separating non-motorized trails from the roadway is desirable, maybe there's a space between the two where poles could exist—still with a setback from the travel roadway.

One CSB member shared PSE should pick the route that allows them to build the fastest. Since this process started, the island has had three to four extended outages and they are tired of losing power.

One CSB member shared that they generally agree with what others have said, but they're not as avid to get it done quickly. They want to make sure the route selection is done with as much care as possible with regard to protecting the island's ecosystems. There are many different factors to balance, and they think this is a good process.

One CSB member noted that they didn't have any route comments to contribute and were there to listen but that they appreciate PSE wanting to get detailed feedback from everyone, and that it's been good public engagement.

Elise then commented they've heard a lot about trees, trails, reliability, and permitting so far, and asked the CSB members another question.

Which route options would be most consistent with your priorities and why?

Each bulleted item below represents a different CSB member's response; not all members present shared responses:

- Route A or E, as these are the most direct and least impactful to natural resources; they also have the most potential for co-location of non-motorized facilities.
- The routes that utilize NE High School Rd (A, B, E), as the commenter thinks a trail along that road would be a win for both reliability and safety.
- Routes A and C, as those routes don't pass by Fire Station 21 and the helipad. The helipad is the only way to get trauma or heart patients to Seattle hospitals quickly and any routes near that helipad concerns this member. The helipad is currently used once or twice per week. This member will have more feedback to share when the airlift providers share their feedback on the proposed route options.
 - Another CSB member commented that from the island's perspective that helipad is a critical resource, and anything that jeopardizes the helipad use is a non-starter.
 - Some CSB members commented that perhaps undergrounding the line immediately around the helipad could be a way to address this concern.
- No route preference: this member's priority is ensuring Bainbridge Island has a reliable transmission system sooner rather than later. Other CSB members have covered the issues that are a priority for this member and their neighbors, specifically avoiding tree removal and emphasizing reliability in route selection.

What opportunities do you see with the route options?

Each bulleted item below represents a different CSB member's response; not all members present shared responses:

- Route E, if it turns out there isn't an issue with the helipad by Fire Station 21.
- Route E, if it can pass by the helipad without impacting airlift operations, may be less impactful than going through wooded areas. The route length is longer but the areas it passes through are already more developed and will be less visually impactful than other routes.
- One member felt undergrounding near the Fire Station could provide a better aerial environment because it would get rid of lines all together (including distribution)
- One CSB member commented that they echo comments from other members to put the line in developed areas. The route most consistent with their priorities is the one that has the least impacts to sensitive landscapes; including wetlands, wildlife habitat and tree canopy, but also is sensitive to visual changes in the landscape. This member also would like PSE's easements to allow for trail connections.

One CSB member commented that as this process is engaging the public on the transmission line route, the city is also in the process of negotiating PSE's new franchise agreement. They noted some members of the public have trouble discerning the differences between this process and that one; it may be a good idea for PSE to explain the differences at future meetings. Andy clarified the only relation is that it's likely a preferred route option will follow public ROWs, which will be governed by the franchise agreement PSE has with city. The franchise agreement is an arrangement between the city and PSE that governs how PSE can use public ROWs for operation of facilities.

Public comment

One member of the public was still in attendance at the meeting when Elise called for public comment but did not raise their hand when asked if they wanted to make public comment.

Next steps

The Route Explorer is available for CSB members to use until Sunday, April 4 at 5 p.m. At the second community workshop on May 3, PSE will share a recap of feedback heard from the community after the first community workshop and the route options under consideration. PSE expects the workshop notifications to go out to the community soon. After the workshop and a 30-day feedback period, PSE will review the feedback to inform PSE's preferred route. The next step is for PSE to identify a preferred route.

- Virtual community workshop: May 3
- Route option 30-day feedback period: May 3 – June 2, 2021
- CSB Meeting 6: summer 2021

Closing remarks

Elise and Kierra thanked CSB members for participating. The meeting concluded at 5:00 p.m.

Attachment 1: Meeting Participants

Community Sounding Board

Individual Interests

Carl Siegrist
Elizabeth Doll

Bill Lemon
Ted Jones

Organizational Interests

Hank Teran, Bainbridge Island Fire Department
Perry Barrett, Bainbridge Island Metro Parks & Recreation District
Maradel Gale, Sustainable Bainbridge
Mark Epstein, City of Bainbridge Island
Stephen Hellriegel, Net253 LLC
Tom Curley, Suquamish Tribe

PSE Staff

Andy Swayne, PSE Municipal Liaison Manager and CSB Technical Liaison
Barry Lombard, PSE Project Manager
Brandon Capps, PSE Local Government Affairs
Karen Brubeck, PSE Community Engagement Representative
Kerry Kriner, PSE Land Planner
Kierra Phifer, PSE Local Government Affairs
Shelby Naten, PSE Communications

HDR Staff

Bridget Brown, HDR
Kirk Moughamer, HDR
Vanessa Bauman, HDR

EnviroIssues Staff

Darcy Edmunds, EnviroIssues, Notetaker
Elise Johnson, EnviroIssues, Facilitator
Faiza Hassan, EnviroIssues, Zoom host and technical support
Nyles Green, EnviroIssues, Technical support

Observers

Chris Wierzbicki
David