

Winslow – Murden Cove “Missing link” Transmission Line Route Option Feedback

Introduction

Puget Sound Energy (PSE) hosted an online feedback period from May 3 through June 2, 2021. The feedback period was launched at the conclusion of the May 3 online community workshop. The purpose of this feedback period was to provide a forum for the Bainbridge Island community to provide feedback on route options under consideration for a new transmission line route that connects Murden Cove and Winslow substations.

This new transmission line, called the “missing link,” is a critical component of PSE’s plan to improve electric service reliability, reducing the frequency and duration of power outages for customers on Bainbridge Island. It’s PSE’s goal to understand community values and interests around the new transmission line. This 30-day feedback period was the second routing feedback period in PSE’s larger community engagement process to gather input from the community on the route options under consideration. This document contains a high-level summary of the community feedback.

Community members were invited to provide feedback through multiple venues:

- **Comment forms (43)** submitted via psebainbridge.participate.online (the project’s public participation website) and/or pse.com/bainbridge (PSE’s community website for Bainbridge Island).
- **Emails (38)** to info@psebainbridge.com (PSE’s project inbox for Bainbridge Island).
- **Route Explorer (21 submissions)**: Using this online tool, community members could review the route options under consideration for the new transmission line, explore the routing criteria PSE is using to evaluate route options, compare route options using available data and metrics and submit their feedback in response to questions.
- **Voice messages (2)** left at 1-888-878-8632 (PSE’s project voicemail inbox for Bainbridge Island).
- **Letters (2)** attached and emailed to the project inbox, info@psebainbridge.com.

A total of 106 total responses were submitted by 242 individual contacts.

Note: A few commenters provided multiple comments (e.g., one person may have submitted both a voicemail and an email, or a comment form and an email). Additionally, some members of the same household submitted a single comment signed by both members. One communication was a change.org petition (noted above as a letter) with approximately 165 signatures; while most signatories were from Bainbridge Island, some were from out of state/outside of the U.S.

Summary of Feedback

Comments submitted to PSE generally provided the following feedback:

Routing feedback

- Select the route that affects the least number of residences.
- Select the shortest, most direct route.
- Select the least expensive route.
- Select the route that requires the least amount of tree trimming/removal.
- Concern about transmission lines passing near schools; suggestions to select the route that passes by the least number of schools or does not pass by any schools.
- Concern about electric and magnetic fields (EMF) and residents' health, especially regarding schools.
- Support for co-locating the transmission lines where power lines already exist.
- Support for undergrounding the transmission lines.

General feedback

- Power outages are extremely challenging for residents who work from home; reliable power is needed to support remote work/school activities and increased use of electric vehicles.
- Support for building the new line quickly to improve reliability sooner, especially for residents who cannot afford to have a generator.
- Encouragement to investigate alternatives to improve reliability rather than building new transmission lines.
- Observations that when power outages occur, many residents resort to generators and wood burning stoves, both of which emit pollution and are not supportive of the island's sustainability and tree preservation goals.
- Lack of awareness of past community feedback given to PSE requesting more reliable power.
- Unfamiliar with what work PSE has already done to improve the electric system.
- Critique of and/or unfamiliarity with the project need and what solutions would solve the island's reliability challenges.
- Both support for and opposition to code amendments to accommodate routes through Category II wetlands. More general support for protecting wetland habitat without specific mention of code amendments.
- Sentiment that the island should retain its natural/less-developed (rural) character and does not need more reliable power.
- Suggestion to trim trees along existing lines to reduce outages instead of building a new line.
- Concern for new line's impact on natural environments (trees, wetlands, habitat, etc.)
- Concern that tree removal for the new transmission lines will expose residents to traffic, noise, and other disturbances from nearby roadways.
- Electrification (of the ferry and personal electric vehicles) is important to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and the island's system should be ready for this.
- Concern that during power outages, many areas of the island not only lose power and internet, but also cell service. Some areas of the island do not have cell service at all or so poor that cell phones only work with a booster powered by electricity.

Feedback themes

Comments were reviewed for recurring themes; instances of those themes occurring in the 106 comments were noted below from most common to least common

Theme
Support for undergrounding
Minimize impacts to trees
Minimize impacts to private property/residential neighborhoods
Minimize impacts to wetlands, habitat
Avoid schools/youth gathering spaces
Opposition to line and improving reliability
Support for line and improving reliability
Concern about EMF, health
Take shortest, most direct route
Minimize aesthetic/visual impact
Build the lowest cost route
Preserve natural/less-developed character of island
Select the route that can be permitted/built quickly
Avoid helipad/fire station
Look for opportunities to create/enhance trails
Minimize construction impacts

Themes by route-specific comments

If a comment mentioned a specific route option and also mentioned a specific route theme, it was noted here. Route A received the most comments. Colors indicating frequency of comments per theme were generated via conditional formatting in Excel.

Route theme	A	B	C	D	E
Support for line and improving reliability	12		3		1
Opposition to line and improving reliability	2	1	1	3	2
Take shortest, most direct route	13	3	2	1	3
Build the lowest cost route	7	3	2		2
Support for undergrounding	2	3	1	4	3
Look for opportunities to create/enhance trails	1	1			
Minimize impacts to private property/residential neighborhoods	11	7	3	5	4
Minimize impacts to trees	13	8	2	3	5
Minimize impacts to wetlands, habitat	6	3	4	4	2
Minimize construction impacts	1		1		
Avoid schools/youth gathering spaces	5	6	1	6	3
Minimize aesthetic/visual impact	2	2		1	3
Select the route that can be permitted/built quickly	3		2		
Concern about EMF, health	5	5	1	2	3
Preserve rural character of island	2		2	3	2
Avoid helipad/fire station	1	2		1	1

Note: Comments that oppose all routes were not counted in the above table.

Commenter Map

Map generated from addresses of commenters for whom location data was available; not all commenters are represented. Route Explorer respondents provided nearest cross streets, meaning addresses for those commenters are approximated (closest address to intersection used).

