

# “Missing Link” Transmission Line Routing Community Announcement Summary

November 30, 2021

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## Overview

Puget Sound Energy (PSE) hosted an online Community Announcement on November 30, 2021. The purpose of the Community Announcement was to share the selected route option for the “missing link” transmission line with the Bainbridge Island community.

The meeting was held online via Zoom due to PSE and public health requirements restricting in-person gatherings at this time. Approximately 115 members of the public attended the online presentation. Attachment 1 contains the list of meeting staff.

## Opening remarks

Karen Brubeck (PSE) welcomed webinar attendees, presented the agenda, and shared a safety moment.

## Project need and solutions package

Andy Wappler (PSE) provided an overview of PSE’s solutions package for improving electric reliability on Bainbridge Island. The three core goals of the solutions package are improving resiliency by rebuilding the aging infrastructure of the Winslow Tap transmission line; improving reliability by building the Murden Cove – Winslow “missing link” transmission line; and building a smart, flexible grid with conservation and demand energy response tools, and a battery energy storage solution. Andy announced PSE’s selection of Route A for the new line.

The Bainbridge Island community is served by three substations: Port Madison substation in the north, Murden Cove substation in the east, and Winslow substation in the southwest. Port Madison substation is fed power through two transmission lines that traverse Agate Pass, while Murden Cove and Winslow substations each get power via single radial transmission lines fed from Port Madison substation. Since both Murden Cove and Winslow substations are each served by single separate transmission lines, if the transmission line serving a substation goes out, then the substation and all customers served by that substation lose power. Connecting the substations with the “missing link” would create a transmission loop, so that if one line goes out, the other can still feed the substations and provide power to customers.

## Community engagement

Karen provided an overview of the community engagement efforts since the community engagement around the routing process began in early 2020. The routing process will be complete after the final Community Sounding Board (CSB) meeting on December 2. However, she emphasized that if anyone has questions they can continue to reach out to PSE via the website, by phone or by email.

Throughout the public engagement process, PSE worked hard to engage the community on multiple fronts and used multiple tools to do so – community workshops, feedback periods, online open houses, interactive route explorer tools and information sessions. The project team has:

- Held 1500 minutes of public meetings
- Mailed over 60,000 direct mail pieces
- Received thousands of emails

- Hosted seven CSB meetings
- Held two community workshops
- Held two comment periods
- Hosted two information sessions
- Mailed five island-wide invitations for engagement
- Received and responded to hundreds of comments and questions

As the project continued through the routing process, PSE collected feedback on the project through email, phone, comment form, and through tools created to provide information on route segments (the Route Segments Explorer tool) and route options (the Route Options Explorer tool). PSE used feedback collected throughout the routing process to better understand community values and inform the route selection. Themes from the community's feedback included:

- Underground the transmission line
- Minimize impacts to trees, wetlands, and habitats
- Minimize impacts to residential neighborhoods
- Avoid schools
- Current reliability is adequate
- Improved reliability is needed now
- Take the shortest, most direct route
- Preserve island character
- Minimize visual impacts
- Keep project costs reasonable

## Routing process and selection

Early in the routing process, PSE convened a Community Sounding Board (CSB) to help inform the routing process. The 18-member group individually provided input and feedback throughout the routing process. Next, PSE established routing criteria to be met as potential route segments were evaluated throughout the routing process. PSE used the routing criteria to select route segments that could eventually be combined to form route options. An online community workshop was held on January 21, with a subsequent comment period held from January 22 to February 12 to collect feedback on route segments. Through evaluation of route segments and consideration of community feedback, five route options were developed that could potentially connect Murden Cove substation to Winslow substation. A second online community workshop was held on March 3, with a comment period held between May 4 and June 2 to collect feedback on route options.

While the technical team further analyzed collected fieldwork data and continued using routing criteria to evaluate the five route options, two online information sessions were held in response to community interest, one on underground transmission lines and the other on electric and magnetic fields (EMF). At each information session, an independent subject matter expert provided information on the related topic and answered questions from attendees. The presentation slides and meeting summaries for the information sessions are available on [psebainbridge.participate.online](https://psebainbridge.participate.online).

Based on analysis of route options while balancing community values and project need, PSE selected Route A for the new "Missing Link" transmission line. Route A travels south from the Murden Cove substation down Sportsman Club Road, turns west to follow High School Road, then follows Fletcher Bay Road south to Winslow substation. The selected route:

- Is the shortest route

- Impacts the fewest parcels, including residential parcels
- Follows public road rights-of-way for the entire length
- Contains land uses and zoning that represents less density
- Has a comparatively lower area of tree canopy
- Has existing overhead distribution lines along its entire length

Route A also follows PSE's existing distribution system along the road rights-of-way for its entire length. The route also provides the best opportunity to minimize impacts on the following community values:

- Trees, wetlands, and habitats
- Private property and residential neighborhoods
- Schools

After selecting a route, PSE created photo simulations from key observation points depicting areas along the route as they look today and what islanders could expect the areas to look like after the completion of construction. PSE's engineering and design team plans to first avoid project impacts, then minimize impacts as the transmission line design is progressed. Along the route we will collocate the transmission line over existing distribution lines unless there are specific locations where this is not feasible or there are better design alternatives. Vegetation management will be required along much of the route; in select areas, trees across the road from the collocated power lines will be trimmed if their branches stretch across the road. The photo simulations are available on [psebainbridge.participate.online](https://psebainbridge.participate.online).

## Community questions

After the presentation of the selected route Karen, Andy Wappler, and Andy Swayne transitioned into a modified Q&A on community questions that PSE wanted to proactively address. The community was informed if they have other questions, they can reach the project team by emailing [info@psebainbridge.com](mailto:info@psebainbridge.com), leaving a voice-message at [1-888-878-8632](tel:1-888-878-8632), or via comment form on [psebainbridge.participate.online](https://psebainbridge.participate.online).

### Which side of the road has PSE selected for the route?

- This has not yet been determined. PSE does expect a majority of the new transmission line to be collocated with existing distribution lines. Detailed engineering design will determine if there are areas where PSE cannot collocate transmission lines with distribution lines. Along Sportsman Club Road at the Sportsman's Club, PSE currently plans to locate the new transmission lines with relocated distribution lines along the west side of the road, whereas the existing distribution is on the east side of the road. This is to avoid impacts to trees on the east side of the road that the community has identified as significant and are located adjacent to a public trail.

### How is PSE minimizing impacts to vegetation?

- PSE plans to collocate the transmission line over existing distribution lines to help limit vegetation impacts. The selected route has a lower tree canopy density compared to the other potential route options. PSE's engineering and design team will work first to avoid impacts, then minimize potential impacts. PSE intends to remove as few trees as possible.

### How is PSE replacing vegetation removed?

- PSE is a willing steward in the community and will replace trees that are removed for the project. The project team understands trees are part of the character of Bainbridge Island and the community shared trees and vegetation are something they value. While the exact vegetation impacts are not yet known, PSE is committed to working with landowners, the City, and others to

replace trees removed for the new “missing link” transmission line. Living near or adjacent to a transmission line does not mean a property cannot have trees; PSE will replace removed trees with trees that are compatible with power lines.

### **Can PSE underground the line?**

- Subject to technical feasibility constraints, PSE could evaluate what it would take to build an underground transmission line between the Murden Cove and Winslow substations. However, it is up to the community to decide whether to invest in this study and in the cost difference to pay for the additional costs of designing and building underground. State regulations require PSE to first consider building overhead transmission lines because of their combination of reliability and affordability, both of which are important to our customers.

When a new line is constructed overhead, project costs are distributed between PSE’s 1.1 million customers. Undergrounding is an option, but under regulations underground transmission lines are considered a “local option” and the local community must pay the cost difference between overhead and underground lines for design, construction, and operations for the life of the facility. PSE has reached out to the City on two separate occasions over the past two years to discuss potential interest in undergrounding the transmission line. PSE has not yet received any indication that the City would like to pursue the conversation on undergrounding the “missing link” transmission line. If the City is interested in undergrounding the transmission line, PSE would need to begin that process as soon as possible to not delay the project.

### **Is PSE going to impact wetlands?**

- PSE’s technical analysis of the potential route options revealed that wetlands cannot be avoided by any route; however, because the selected route runs along existing roadways, impacts to wetlands can be minimized. The primary impact to wetlands will be removal of vegetation along the roadside edge where poles are sited. Since the transmission line will be collocated with existing distribution lines along a majority of the route, PSE anticipates this will reduce impacts to the environment, including wetlands.

### **Closing remarks and next steps**

Karen thanked the audience for attending the online community announcement. PSE plans to share the news of the selected route with the entire community by mail. Information on what to expect next from the project will be sent to property owners as the project moves into engineering design and permitting. The Community Sounding Board will have their last meeting on December 2 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., the meeting access link is available on [psebainbridge.participate.online](https://psebainbridge.participate.online).

There will be additional opportunities for community members to provide feedback on the project to the City when permit applications are submitted and reviewed. PSE expects the permit process to begin in 2022, with the new transmission line in service in 2025 or 2026. A [visual timeline of all project components](#) that must occur before the line can be in-service is available online.

Karen shared more information is available on the website at [psebainbridge.participate.online](https://psebainbridge.participate.online) and we will be sharing updates in our e-newsletter periodically. PSE is always available to answer questions at [info@psebainbridge.com](mailto:info@psebainbridge.com) or by calling 1-888-878-8632.

## **Attachment 1: Meeting staff**

### **PSE Staff**

Andy Swayne, PSE Municipal Liaison Manager

Andy Wappler, PSE Senior Vice President and Chief Customer Officer

Karen Brubeck, PSE Community Engagement Representative

### **EnviroIssues Staff**

Faiza Hassan, EnviroIssues, Zoom host

Kristine Danzinger, EnviroIssues, Technical support

Nyles Green, EnviroIssues, Notetaker

### **Listening staff**

Barry Lombard, PSE Project Manager

Colin McCann, PSE Communications

Kerry Kriner, PSE Land Planner

Kierra Phifer, PSE Local Government Affairs

Kirk Moughamer, HDR

Sara Leverette, PSE Legal

Shelby Naten, PSE Communications