

# “Missing Link” Transmission Line Routing Community Sounding Board

## CSB 6 Meeting Summary

December 2, 2021

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### Overview

Puget Sound Energy (PSE) hosted a meeting for Community Sounding Board (CSB) members on December 2, 2021. The meeting’s objectives were to share how community feedback informed route selection, share the selected route option for the “missing link”, and discuss forward facing topics and feedback on the process.

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

### Opening remarks

Karen Brubeck (PSE) welcomed the Community Sounding Board (CSB), shared a safety moment, and introduced Angie Thomson (Envirolssues) to the CSB. Angie presented the agenda and reviewed the zoom controls.

### Community feedback and route selection

To understand community values and interests around the new transmission line, PSE engaged the community to gather community feedback. Throughout the routing process for the “missing link” which began in early 2020, PSE heard from hundreds of islanders and the CSB about the route siting and community values that should be included in the route selection. 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. While the community’s feedback varied, it helped PSE better understand the values of the community to 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

In addition to the community’s feedback, PSE considered feedback and ideas from the CSB about the route selection. Input from the CSB was analyzed thoroughly using the routing criteria that were established earlier in the project. Feedback and ideas originating from the CSB include:

- Consider an underwater cable through Eagle Harbor
- Consider adding route segments on Westerly and through the Sakai property

- Consider the City's Non-Motorized Plan and how it could interact with the new transmission line
- Shared the existence and potential concern around the Fire District's helipad
- Reroute the existing Winslow Tap transmission line to create new route segments

PSE also informed the CSB of the relocation of Route Segment 18. Route Segment 18 is the beginning route segment for Route Options B, D, and E. Route Segment 18 and impacted Route Options B, D, and E were re-routed to avoid new residential developments east of State Route 305 (SR 305). The revised Route Segment 18 and Route Options B, D, and E follow Sportsman Club Road from Murden Cove Substation to NE Business Park Lane, then moves east to cross SR-305 so it can connect back to its intended path along Moran Road NE/ Madison Ave N.

### **Missing Link's selected route option (Route A)**

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).

### **CSB member Q&A**

After the presentation on Route A, CSB members were provided time for clarifying questions about the selected route option. Key discussion points and responses are noted below.

**Does PSE have the potential to use tree wire for transmission lines? Right now, Fletcher Bay is a like a tree cave. In my mind, trees will be cleared left and right.**

- Tree wire is a covered (rather than bare) conductor. PSE has not previously used tree wire on transmission line projects but has used tree wire on distribution line projects. The benefit of tree wire is that it can help prevent outages by protecting the power line from contact with vegetation and debris. One downside to tree wire is that if a branch or tree remains in contact with an energized power line, PSE may not know about it unless a visual inspection is conducted.

**Why will the project take so long to complete?**

- There are various components that need to be completed before the new transmission line can be in-service, currently planned for 2025 or 2026. The project team is continuing into the design and engineering phase which will include fieldwork and detailed engineering to understand siting and potential impacts. As impacts are identified, PSE will begin to have conversations with property owners and the City of Bainbridge Island on what additional property rights need to be acquired so PSE can construct, maintain, and operate the transmission line. Another phase of the project is the permitting phase with the City and related agencies who have their own timeline for processing permits. PSE will also have to make improvements at Murden Cove and Winslow substations to get them ready for the new transmission line. The 2025/2026 in-service date is PSE's currently anticipated project completion date assuming everything goes smoothly and there are no significant project delays.

**For trees that have to be removed, is it possible to accelerate their replanting? It might help the island's perception of the project if it possible.**

- Accelerating the replanting of some trees as part of the project may be possible. Until the "missing link" transmission line is fully designed, PSE does not yet know the individual trees that need to be removed. As detailed engineering continues, PSE will have a better idea on the potential impacts and better plan for tree replacements.

**Along Fletcher Bay Road there are individual homes and no organized HOA. Did PSE canvas the study area or talk to residents impacted by the new transmission line?**

- PSE did not canvas the study area or reach out directly to residents during the routing process to begin conversations about potential impacts to their property. The purpose of the routing process was to identify a selected route within the study area. With the route was selected, PSE will begin engaging those impacted as detailed engineering and design identify impacts.

Note: PSE reached out to the entire project study area repeatedly during the process which included Fletcher Bay Road area residents.

**One of the long-term goals of the project is electricty load. Do you think the "missing link" will have the ability to switch the electricity load?**

- PSE is looking at a variety of distribution projects that will have the ability to move the electrical load from various points so key points in the electrical system are not stressed for extended periods of time.

**I expect the ferries will be electrified. Sentiments about the ferry system can't be any worse. Will PSE use this opportunity to also improve the ferry system and add value to it?**

- PSE is in conversations with the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) regarding their plans to electrify the ferries at Eagle Harbor. As part of the WSDOT Ferries electrification, PSE plans to build dedicated infrastructure to support ferry battery charging. Most likely, a dedicated distribution line from Murden Cove or Winslow substation will be built to supply power to the ferries. The "missing link" transmission line helps the electrification of the ferry system by improving electric reliability.

**CSB member feedback on things PSE could consider for construction**

CSB members were provided time during the discussion portion of the agenda to reflect on things PSE might consider during the design phase and construction. Feedback from CSB members included:

- Be proactive with homeowners. Be mindful of changes in City Council that will happen in 2022 since it might affect PSE's permitting ability.
- Communicate early and often to those interested in the project and those directly impacted.

- Keep talking about the positives of the project and what happens without the new transmission line. A lot of the conversation has been in a defensive mode. Hearing more about the benefits of the project will ease some tensions around the impacts.
- Be aware of traffic congestion that happens around the schools and events (like Bainbridge Island Rotary Auction) when the project is being constructed. The Bainbridge Island School District (BISD) has had trouble with traffic congestion throughout the school year and continues to have multiple hour-long traffic delays. The schools also function as a space to store and power the school's maintenance equipment. Seeing a connection between PSE working towards carbon neutrality and reliable electricity would be great.
- The "missing link" project is great for better electric reliability. It helps Bainbridge Prepares plan around earthquakes, wildfires, or floods.
- Get an early start identifying where materials and equipment will be stored on Sportsman Club Road. With the return to in-person school and traffic congestion around the schools, materials and equipment need to be secured. Begin talking to BISD early and planning around traffic congestion.
- Routing along Fletcher Bay Road presents the opportunity to partner with the City to build a bike lane.

### **CSB member feedback on the routing process**

CSB members were provided time to reflect on their experience as a member of the Community Sounding Board during the routing process. PSE will consider feedback from the CSB as the "missing link" transmission line continues into detailed engineering. Feedback from CSB members included:

- PSE did a good job of explaining the project need and providing information throughout the routing process. The Route Segment Explorer tool and Route Option Explorer tool were helpful in orienting CSB members with the route segments and route options.
- CSB members appreciated the early scheduling of meetings and detailed information from PSE when requested about related topics.
- CSB members shared their appreciation for PSE's listening and assessment of feedback

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

Karen thanked the CSB for their participation in the routing process. 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. CSB members will be kept up to date on the project via email as the project progresses. All past meeting materials from CSB meetings are available on [psebainbridge.participate.online](https://psebainbridge.participate.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.

## **Public comment**

Time was provided at the end of the meeting for members of the public to make a public comment about anything that was discussed during the CSB meeting. The following is a summary of public comments that were made by members of the public.

- What wasn't mentioned is that the City will be collecting environmental data from PSE as part of the environmental act. PSE will have to provide the aggregate number of trees impacted by the project. I hope PSE provides an accurate number of trees that are planned to be removed. I urge PSE to provide that information to the City as they did for another project being constructed in the City of Kirkland. That project is shorter in length than the proposed project on Bainbridge Island and PSE identified almost 300 trees for removal. I hope PSE recognizes that trees are on private property and that they don't see property owners as aggregate interests, work with them closely and diligently. Yes, property owners will lose tree coverage, but I hope PSE works closely with property owners to replace the removed trees.
- There's a number of community members that oppose the project for various reasons (impacts to property owners, loss of property values, concerns about safety of transmission lines, etc.) I don't see the value of the project. PSE is currently working to rebuild the Winslow Tap transmission line and should focus on that project before continuing the "missing link" project. Let's wait and see if the "missing link" project is needed after the Winslow Tap rebuild project is done. I'm concerned about how much PSE is going to profit off of the project.
- PSE has done a good job at presenting information at past info sessions and tonight. I support the projects and all of the positive things that have been brought up. However, there are not a lot of people showing up to these meetings. There are a lot of folks that don't understand what happens when you turn on a light switch or how you get power. There's a lot of misinformation around things like coal-usage, EMF, future need of reliable power, etc. We can't live with 20th century infrastructure in the 21st century. I don't believe councilmembers understand what PSE is doing. A majority of the island wants reliable power.
- A few observations. The community of North Town Woods has been completely ignored. The selected route will impact North Town Woods the most since they are along the selected route. I'm disappointed in the routing process and the engagement PSE has done so far. Other alternatives could have avoided the schools and commercial areas that the selected route travels by. There is interest in battery back-up power, why was that not explored? Because these meetings are held on Zoom, the public isn't fully able to have their voice heard. All of these meetings have diminished the power of public comments since they are on Zoom. There's a lot of boosterism in this meeting, not genuine concerns for property owners that are impacted by the project.

## **Attachment 1: Meeting Participants**

### **Community Sounding Board**

#### *Individual Interests*

Carl Siegrist

Bill Lemon

Elizabeth Doll

Ted Jones

#### *Organizational Interests*

Dane Fenwick, Bainbridge Island School District

Perry Barrett, Bainbridge Island Metro Parks & Recreation District

Maradel Gale, Sustainable Bainbridge

Stephen Hellriegel, Net253 LLC

### **PSE Staff**

Andy Swayne, PSE Municipal Liaison Manager and CSB Technical Liaison

Barry Lombard, PSE Project Manager

Karen Brubeck, PSE Community Engagement Representative

### **HDR Staff**

Kirk Moughamer, HDR

### **Listening staff**

Kierra Phifer, PSE Local Government Affairs

Shelby Naten, PSE Communications

Kerry Kriner, PSE Land Planner

### **EnviroIssues Staff**

Angie Thomson, EnviroIssues, Facilitator

Faiza Hassan, EnviroIssues, Zoom host

Kristine Danzinger, EnviroIssues, Zoom technical support

Nyles Green, EnviroIssues, Technical support

### **Observers/ members of the public**

David Johnson

Jill Anderson

Kathy Hansen

Kathy Huxley

Marc Hoecker