

Regulatory Review Process

Wisconsin Project



When ATC files a regulatory application with the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin for a new, high-voltage power line project, we are required to submit two buildable route options.

When building new power lines, Wisconsin law requires colocation with existing facilities and infrastructure (e.g. utility corridors, highways and railroads, recreation trails) where it is feasible. The process typically begins by identifying a broad study area. Then potential corridors are identified that may be suitable for a power line.

Developing routes that may be suitable for power lines requires a balanced look at a variety of factors. ATC looks for route options will balance community and environmental impacts, constructability, current and future land use, project cost and specific electric system needs. We propose routes in our regulatory applications that address electric system needs for all energy consumers in an area and reduce local impacts to the extent possible. The next step is for the PSCW to evaluate the project need and route options.

WHAT IS THE PSCW?

The PSCW is an independent state regulatory agency, whose mission is to ensure that safe, sufficient and reasonably priced utility services are being provided to all of Wisconsin's customers. The PSCW oversees regulation of more than 1,100 Wisconsin public utilities that provide electric, heat, telephone, water and sewer services throughout the state.

REGULATORY REVIEW

The PSCW will conduct an independent review of the project to determine if the project is needed, hold public and technical hearings in which the public can get involved, and select the final route for the line. Depending upon the type of project, the PSCW works with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to create an Environmental Impact Statement, which is a detailed analysis of how the project might affect the environment. For example, an EIS is required for proposed power line projects of 345,000-volts or higher and when over 10 miles falls outside of existing utility corridors. If no EIS is required, an Environmental Assessment is prepared.

Depending upon the project, the PSCW also may work with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection to create an Agricultural Impact Statement, which is a detailed analysis of how the project might affect agricultural lands. If approved, the PSCW will issue an order that specifies terms and conditions that must be met for construction.

Other agencies, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Wisconsin Department of Transportation also may provide input on the project during the regulatory review phase, depending on locations of federally identified land that may be used for siting the line.

GETTING INVOLVED

The public is encouraged to provide input and ask questions about any case before the PSCW. While many of the comments and questions are taken into consideration, the PSCW ultimately decides whether the line will be built, how it will be designed and where it will be located. If the PSCW approves the project, it issues a written order. Listed below are ways the public can participate.

- Review the case docket: Each case is assigned an identification number and all documents associated with the case are available on the PSCW website: www.psc.wi.gov. The docket number will be identified after ATC files the application. Input can be uploaded into the Public Comments section. This input is included in the case record and is reviewed as the PSCW prepares its decision.
- Request to be added to PSCW and applicant mailing lists: The PSCW public notification letter, which identifies the proposed project, is mailed to affected property owners that are within 300 feet of the proposed centerline, along with government officials, libraries, media and other relevant agencies at the beginning of the PSCW review process. Individuals also may access the PSCW website and make the request to the PSCW docket coordinator.
- Attend a PSCW scoping meeting (if EIS required): These informal events facilitated by the PSCW and WDNR give the public a chance to learn about the proposed project and review process, to ask questions and talk directly with the PSCW or WDNR staff. If no EIS is required, the PSCW will solicit comments for the EA.

- Review the draft EA or EIS: The draft EA or EIS (if required) will be issued for public comment and posted on the PSCW website, and then a final EA or EIS will be posted prior to the public hearings.
- Submit comments to the PSCW and the WDNR: These comments are retained and taken into consideration during the review process.
- Attend a public hearing: Individuals may testify at public hearings. The testimony becomes part of the record used by the PSCW to make its decision.
- Attend a technical hearing: PSCW staff and others formally involved in the case (known as parties) provide testimony and exhibits, and if developed, the final EIS is also submitted. Testimony submitted by subject matter experts become part of the record and aid the PSCW in making its decision.

PSCW CONTACT INFORMATION

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WDNR CONTACT INFORMATION

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