



PG&E to begin planning San Joaquin Power Connect station upgrade project

Open houses at a glance

- Tuesday, Dec. 1 from 5 to 8 p.m.
Lodi Public Library Community Room, 201 W. Locust St., Lodi
 - Wednesday, Dec. 2 from 4 to 7 p.m.
Tokay High School Cafeteria, 1111 W. Century Blvd., Lodi
 - Thursday, Dec. 3 from 4 to 7 p.m.
Elkhorn School Multipurpose Room, 10505 David Road, Stockton
- To provide feedback, area residents may also call 888-743-1175 or email northernsanjoaquinpc@pge.com. An interactive website, www.pge.com/northernsanjoaquinpc, will become available ahead of the open house meetings.

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By Kyla Cathey/News-Sentinel Staff Writer

PG&E will hold a series of open house meetings to begin planning a proposed Northern San Joaquin Power Connect project.

The project would involve connecting three substations — the Lodi Industrial Substation owned by Lodi Electric Utility and PG&E's Lockeford and Eight Mile substations — with 230 kV transmission lines. Currently, the three substations are connected only by 60 kV lines, and the Eight Mile Substation is connected only indirectly.

The substations would also receive upgrades.

According to information provided by PG&E, the upgraded lines and substations would benefit more than 50,000 households in the Lodi area, helping the region stay ahead of demand and easing the burden of Lodi's electric load from the current system.

The upgraded transmission lines would also offer an added layer of reliability, said Nicole Liebelt, PG&E spokeswoman.

Connecting the three substations and installing higher-capacity transmission lines would address voltage and thermal overload concerns, according to PG&E materials about the project.

That would better serve north county residents, including those in Lodi. Right now, with two 60 kV transmission lines, Lodi residents could see outages if something happens to one or both of the lines.

In fact, there was at least one citywide outage in recent years because an accident brought down one of the two 60 kV transmission lines connected to the Lodi Industrial Substation, according to Shannon Koontz, public affairs representative at PG&E.

PG&E, which owns both lines, was performing maintenance on the other, so it was not in service, she said.

In a 2012 report, California ISO identified a need for new transmission lines the northern part of San Joaquin County. California ISO monitors the states transmission grid.

In its own assessment, PG&E has noted that energy demands from the wine industry, new residential developments, and growth among industrial users has created new demand for high-capacity transmission lines, according to a proposal overview.

The Northern San Joaquin Power Connect project could bring some additional benefits to the area, too.

“A project like this is a good tool for economics folks in the city or county,” said Koontz, because added capacity could attract new businesses to the area.

But PG&E doesn't want to forge ahead without input from the community, Liebelt said. That's why the company plans to host the first of a series of open houses at the beginning of December.

The meetings are part of the project's first phase, to identify areas where the new lines could be located and educate the community.

PG&E will introduce the project to the public and seek community input, Liebelt said. They will also share a large map with the proposed project area on it, so that potentially affected property owners can point out where they live and voice any concerns.

The project would require PG&E to get easements, because there are no lines currently connecting the three substations, Koontz said. New lines would need to be constructed between them.

Property owners would be fairly compensated, she said.

“Eminent domain is a last resort,” Liebelt said.

PG&E wants to make sure they are meeting the community’s wants and needs, the representatives said.

PG&E’s portion of the proposal would cover three phases — initial stakeholder outreach and feedback; route development and feedback; and environmental analysis and preferred alternative outreach — and is expected to be completed in 2017.

The proposal will be submitted to the California Public Utilities Commission, which will conduct its own environmental and feasibility studies, then return finalized plans to PG&E. The company will make final changes before construction begins. Contact reporter Kyla Cathey at kylac@lodinews.com.