



PG&E looks to upgrade Lodi area power lines

By Christina Cornejo/News-Sentinel Staff Writer

As part of PG&E's second phase in the proposed Northern San Joaquin Power Connect project, the gas and electric company will be offering series of open houses next week. The open houses will allow the public to give additional feedback on the proposed routes in the Lodi, Acampo, Lockeford and Thornton areas where PG&E would like to install two new transmission lines.

The project involves the construction of new 230 kV high-capacity lines to connect PG&E's existing Lockeford and Eight Mile substations with Lodi Electric Utility's existing Fred Reid Industrial Substation, as well as upgrades for these substations.

Currently, the three substations are connected by lower-capacity 60 kV lines.

These lines and substations serve more than 50,000 households in the Lodi area, according to Brandi Merlo, a spokeswoman for PG&E.

"The proposed Northern San Joaquin Power Connect project is a key component of our efforts to meet the needs of the region's growing population and economy," said Dave Meier, senior manager of PG&E's Stockton Division.

That increasing growth and demand may someday exceed capacity of the current lines, Merlo said.

New lines would not only increase capacity but also increase reliability and efficiency of delivery — a boon for industrial and agricultural customers who have an increasing demand for reliable electricity, she said.

While residents in the city of Lodi are customers of Lodi Electric Utility and not necessarily PG&E, they too may benefit in the long run from construction of these lines, since electricity is delivered to the city through PG&E's transmission lines.

Lodi will benefit from reduced citywide outages and lower costs. With a higher voltage transmission line, Lodi Electric Utility will receive significant cost savings from the transmission access charge — operating with low voltage capacity, instead of high voltage capacity, incurs additional charges.

Lodi Electric will then be able to use those savings initially to pay for upgrades to the substation and then pass along the savings to residents, according to Liz Kirkley, director of Lodi Electric Utility.

The multi-stage project offers multiple opportunities for the community to provide feedback throughout the process.

PG&E previously sought input from the community back in December 2015 during phase one, when they first introduced plans for the project to educate the community and seek out areas where new lines could be build.

In the next phase of the project, PG&E has drawn up a map of proposed areas where it would like to place the transmission lines. The company will be looking at minimizing community and environmental impacts before deciding a final route and needs community input.

There will be open houses on June 13 from 5 to 7 p.m. at the Lockeford Community Center, 19258 Jack Tone Road, June 14 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 4 to 7 p.m. at the Lodi Public Library Community Room, 201 W. Locust St. and on June 15 from 5 to 7 p.m. at Bear Creek High School's Multipurpose Room, 1055 Thornton Road in Stockton.

Residents who are unable to attend the open houses can obtain more information on the project website at pge.com/northernsanjoaquinpc.

In the final phases, PG&E will have to submit its proposal to the California Public Utilities Commission for that agency to conduct its own environmental and feasibility studies before they are given approval. PG&E is hoping to submit the proposal by late 2017 to early 2018, Merlo said.

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