

PG&E narrows route for high-power lines in north SJ County

By Alex Breitler
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Pacific Gas and Electric Co. is moving closer to determining a route for new high-power transmission lines that would cut across northern San Joaquin County.

Still, few specifics are known. The company next week will hold a series of open houses where it will unveil maps showing three broadly defined west-to-east corridors within which the 230-kilovolt power lines could be built.

The utility says it hopes the public will provide suggestions upon seeing the maps at the upcoming meetings.

"We want to make sure we have the least visual impact and environmental impact possible," PG&E spokeswoman Brandi Ehlers said.

The point of the project is to connect a substation near Eight Mile Road west of Interstate 5 to substations in Lodi and Lockeford. Smaller 60KV power lines serve the area around Lodi today, leaving a gaping hole between high-powered lines near Interstate 5 and similar lines that terminate in Lockeford.

The maps to be shown next week will depict potential corridors along Eight Mile Road and Highway 12, and a third farther north running from the Thornton area east to Acampo. Depending on which west-to-east corridor is used, the new power lines also might need to run parallel to Interstate 5 between Stockton and Thornton. A large area east and southeast of Lodi is also under consideration to hook in with the Lockeford substation.

The new power line would accommodate current and future growth, the utility says, while also improving reliability for about 50,000 homes and businesses in the north county. The project may also help the publicly owned Lodi Electric Utility save money on access charges that it currently pays for the smaller power lines.

The San Joaquin Farm Bureau has said farmers were following PG&E's proposal because new power lines can impact agricultural operations. It's not yet known

how tall the poles will be, but the towers will have to be planted somewhere. And PG&E has said that easements will be required beneath the power lines themselves, though some land uses - such as vineyards - are compatible, Ehlers said.

Next week's meetings are scheduled as follows:

- 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. Monday at the Lockeford Community Center, 19258 Jack Tone Road;

- 10 a.m. to noon and 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday at the Lodi Public Library, 201 W. Locust St; and

- 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. June 15 at the Bear Creek High School multipurpose room, 10555 Thornton Road in Stockton.

More details can be found at pge.com/northernsanjoaquinpc. To submit comments, email northernsanjoaquinpc@pge.com or call (888) 743-1175.

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