



Duke-American Transmission buys powerline project

By JEREMY FUGLEBERG Casper Star-Tribune | Posted: Monday, December 19, 2011 11:30 pm

A joint venture has led to the purchase of the \$3.5 billion Zephyr power line project, which is expected to move energy 950 miles from southeast Wyoming to Nevada for customers in the Southwest.

On Monday, Duke-American Transmission Co. officials announced the purchase of the power line project from a subsidiary of Pathfinder Renewable Wind Energy LLC.

Wyoming-based Pathfinder is developing a wind power project on 100,000 acres near Chugwater.

"Pathfinder remains a Wyoming-based company, and we look forward to continuing in our commitment to the state," Jeff Meyer, managing partner of Pathfinder, said in a media release. "The time was right to bring a proven, experienced transmission developer to the team, and in DATC we found an ideal partner."

Under study

The proposed line is under study and the new owner will begin an environmental analysis and examine routing and siting of the line in 2012 before seeking approval from federal regulators. The line is expected to be in service by 2020.

Duke-American Transmission Co. is a joint venture of Charlotte, N.C.-based Duke Energy and Waukesha, Wis.-based American Transmission Co.

Pathfinder has committed to use at least 2,100 megawatts of the Zephyr project's 3,000-megawatt capacity, which will run on a 500-kilovolt direct current line from Chugwater to the Eldorado Valley just south of Las Vegas, with a station converting between direct current and alternating current on both ends of the line.

The power line is intended to connect wind energy producers in Wyoming with customers in the Southwest, including California.

"Zephyr is an ambitious energy infrastructure project that is laser-focused on providing an integrated solution to a recurring problem facing America: How do we get clean, renewable energy to the population centers?" Phillip Grigsby, Duke Energy Commercial Businesses senior vice president, said in a media release.

Official comments

While wind generation and transmission development are being pursued separately, Pathfinder and Duke-American will work together to "increase the viability" of the projects, the companies' officials said in a joint media release.

"The success of this transmission project is dependent upon on the success of Pathfinder's generation project, and vice versa," said John Flynn, vice president of strategic planning and business development for American Transmission Co. "By working together on a parallel development path, we avoid the chicken-and-the-egg dilemma that has often challenged major projects like this."

The Zephyr project is one of several major power line projects in development in Wyoming.

A subsidiary of Denver-based Anschutz Corp. is developing the 725-mile, 3,000-megawatt TransWest Express project that will stretch from Wyoming to the Southwest.

Portland, Ore.-based PacifiCorp is building the 1,100-mile Gateway West project from Wyoming to Idaho and the 400-mile Gateway South project from Wyoming to Utah to ease overcrowded power lines.

The federal government in October said a team would work to fast-track permitting of the TransWest Express and Gateway West projects.