



NORTHERN PORTAGE RELIABILITY PROJECT

FAQs

1. Why is this project needed?

More than 9,600 customers in the Aurora area are served by a single (radial) 69-kilovolt transmission line. If service to the line is disrupted, there is the potential for a lengthy outage because no alternate power sources are available. Sustained outages in both June and November of 2017 demonstrate the need for new electricity transmission infrastructure to support reliable electric service.

The new line would improve reliability and resiliency, adding much-needed redundancy and operational flexibility for serving customers. The new line also will provide additional voltage support and help accommodate future growth and economic development.

This project will provide a second source into the Aurora area for electricity that will serve nearly 4,000 in Aurora and about 5,000 in Twinsburg and Reminderville.

2. How will this project impact my property value?

One major benefit of the project's preferred route along the rail corridor is that it would not cross any residential properties, requiring no new right-of-way encumbrances on any residential properties or businesses for the right-of-way corridor. This is the best way to avoid any impact on real estate values.

The rail corridor is approximately 100 feet wide, which is wide enough to accommodate our mandated 60-foot clearance and allow preservation of compatible vegetation to help screen the poles from view in adjacent areas. We have no reason to believe a line of this small size, constructed as proposed, will have any impact on the values of property it doesn't cross.

Each of the alternative routes proposed would result in greater visibility of the poles and require new right-of-way to be secured along residential property frontage, which would then be cleared and occupied with poles that are significantly taller (70' – 85') than those proposed for the preferred route (45' – 60'). The increased height would be necessary to accommodate an under build of the existing telecommunications and electric distribution lines along those corridors.

3. What is the visual impact of the poles?

The proposed construction will consist mostly of wood poles 45' – 60' tall. Where there are bends in the route, steel poles of the same size may be used to avoid the need for guy wires. Select poles at road crossings will need to be taller (70' – 80') to maintain adequate clearance for existing telecommunications and electric distribution lines.

Photo illustrations of the proposed pole structures from various perspectives along the preferred route corridor are available on the FirstEnergy transmission projects website at: https://www.firstenergycorp.com/about/transmission_projects/ohio/northern-portage.html

Based on input from the community, we plan to take more photos and create ground-level renderings to better understand where visibility is a concern along the preferred route. Considerations will be made to add or optimize vegetation screening.

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4. Why did you choose to conduct a public open house instead of a questions and answer session?

An open house format is the best way for property owners along the proposed routes to speak directly with FirstEnergy subject matter experts. It is a standard practice used by utilities across the country because it allows attendees to get answers about their specific properties and concerns from project experts, which allows everyone the opportunity to have their questions answered.

FirstEnergy mailed out 800 invitations to the open house to property owners along the proposed routes. Unfortunately, by the time we learned that invitations had been extended to thousands of unaffected residents, it was too late to change the venue. This led to less-than-ideal conditions to interact with those who live along the proposed routes.

Additional inquiries can be made to the FirstEnergy Transmission Projects hotline at (800) 589-2837, which will remain active throughout the balance of design and construction. Project updates will also continue to be made to the FirstEnergy transmission projects website at: https://www.firstenergycorp.com/about/transmission_projects/ohio/northern-portage.html

5. Will a hike and bike trail be built?

Our project can accommodate the construction of a hike and bike trail if this is of interest to the community. We are open to a cooperative discussion on this issue with all stakeholders. All existing rail tracks will be removed except for a 450-foot stretch of track next to the depot building at the E. Garfield Road crossing.

6. Why not place the transmission lines underground?

FirstEnergy only constructs underground transmission lines if there are no viable above-ground options, for several reasons.

First, underground construction generally has greater environmental impacts than overhead because the entire route must be excavated, significant access roads would need to be constructed adjacent to the trenched area to support heavy equipment, and it is generally not practical to cross wetlands, creeks, rivers, railroads or highways with open trenching.

Second, maintenance of underground lines presents additional challenges as locating faults and restoration can take more time to repair than overhead equipment, especially if excavation is necessary.

Third, the costs for such construction are significantly higher. At

the request of the City of Aurora, FirstEnergy evaluated an underground design for portions of this project following the preferred route. While technically feasible, costs for an underground installation would be at least three times more than the overhead option and could escalate to as much as seven times the cost in the event of complications. The cost of transmission line projects in Ohio are distributed across the rate base of all FirstEnergy customers in the state, much like the cost for building and maintaining the public highway system. It is not reasonable to pass the additional financial burden of underground construction onto the customer rate base to address concerns over the visibility of a 69-kv transmission line. However, FirstEnergy remains open to a cost-sharing agreement with stakeholders in the event the concerns of the community cannot be addressed otherwise.

7. What about EMF? Health Issues regarding Electric and Magnetic Fields

FirstEnergy is committed to keeping our customers safe. This applies to all aspects of our operations, including the design and routing of our transmission lines. Our facilities are built and operated with strict adherence to the requirements of all applicable state and federal statutes related to safety, including requirements

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specified in the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) Mandatory Reliability Standards and the National Electric Safety Code (NESC), as well as those adopted by the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) and the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA).

Electric and magnetic fields surround anything that transmits or uses electricity, such as household appliances, cellular devices and power lines. There are no federal exposure limits in the United States and no state agency has adopted exposure limits based on a finding that EMF causes adverse health effects. Some scientific organizations have recommended exposure guidelines for settings with very high EMF levels, which are far greater than any EMF levels found in our environment, including those near transmission lines.

Additional information about electric and magnetic fields and health can be found on the FirstEnergy website at the following link: <https://www.firstenergycorp.com/content/customer/help/safety/using-electricity/emf.html>

8. What are we doing to protect the bird sanctuary and how will the project impact that natural protected area?

The project does not encroach the Cleveland Audubon Society property. However, the sensitivity of this area is recognized, and measures are being taken to avoid adversely affecting birds and other ecological resources during construction and future operation. FirstEnergy will be coordinating with U.S. Fish & Wildlife and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources to confirm project plans do not adversely impact sensitive species.

In addition, design for this area is being completed using guidelines provided by the Electric Power Research Institute's Avian Power Line Interaction Committee (APLIC), and FirstEnergy's Avian Protection Plan. For example, pole structure design considers risk to roosting raptor species through the use of greater separation between conductors to prevent electrocution. In addition, flyway collision risk is being evaluated to determine if markers for visibility will be required.

For more information, visit [firstenergycorp.com/transmission](https://www.firstenergycorp.com/transmission).

