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November 12, 2013

New York State Public Service Commission
Empire State Plaza
Agency Building 3
Albany, NY 12223-1350

Re: Proposed 345 KV Transmission Line Project (NYPSC Case 12-T-0502)

Dear Commissioners:

Over the last six weeks, I have been contacted by a wide array of northern Dutchess County residents about their concerns with various proposed transmission line projects that would potentially run through the towns of Clinton, Hyde Park, Milan and Pleasant Valley. Through a series of private and public meetings with individual residents, community groups, utility companies and elected officials, it has become clear that the process to date has had several shortfalls. It is also apparent that key details require more consideration than they have been afforded in the proposals submitted thus far: all options need to be heard before a decision is made that could do irrevocable damage to these communities, to their property values and to the environment.

This process was begun by the governor's office in 2011 and has not yet had sufficient input from local stakeholders or their elected representatives. The process to date has also lacked adequate representation from the governor's office, which is critical to educating the public about this admittedly important goal of expanding New York's energy infrastructure. The governor's representatives need to be present throughout the process to field public inquiries and critiques. Indeed, that process needs to be expansive enough and publicized enough to maximize its accessibility to residents of potentially affected areas. At all phases going forward, it will be essential for the Commission to afford the public ample opportunities for participation.

One question that has been raised repeatedly by my constituents relates to the possibility of burying lines underground. I am aware that the up-front cost is substantially greater for buried lines than for overhead lines. I want to be certain, however, that any expansion of transmission capability accounts comprehensively for costs and savings: burying the lines presumably reduces line loss and outages, as well as mitigating the negative impact on property values and visual aesthetics associated with new towers and lines. It is my expectation that the Commission will be thorough in evaluating the true costs – and benefits - of line burial. My constituents need to know

if this is a viable option, and the public's assumption is that the Commission will pursue a rigorous analysis or require applicants to do so.

My constituents remain concerned about what value they will receive as a result of new transmission lines. It is frankly insufficient for them to be told that they will receive more reliable lines and some degree of financial compensation, since they are sacrificing not only land in quantifiable terms but visual appeal in aesthetic terms. Some are also going to spend months or even years in limbo while this process plays out, unable to sell their homes for fair value due to impending line construction or uncertainty about the parameters of the transmission project.

Finally, I want to make clear a concern that I will be repeating throughout this process: some of my constituents have seen three generations of family members lose parcels of land to accommodate electric and gas transmission projects. It troubles me that a fourth generation could be asked to follow suit without an exhaustive examination of all other possibilities and I request that the Commission keep this mind during its deliberations.

I look forward to engaging the Public Service Commission in the coming months. I urge you to honor the abovementioned requests and meet them head-on in the process which is to unfold between now and January. Please keep my office advised of any developments so that I can best serve my constituents and their needs in this delicate matter.

Sincerely,


Senator Terry Gipson
41st District