Appendix 7.4.TDI-NE.3

NECPL - Representative Newspaper Coverage

- The Concord Monitor, April 08, 2017
- Vermont Digger, February 16, 2017
- Hartford Courant, December 15, 2016
- The Berkshire Eagle, January 11, 2016
- The Addison Independent, January 10, 2016
- The Boston Globe, January 06, 2016
- New Hampshire Union Leader, October 29, 2015
- Associated Press, July 21, 2015
- Burlington Free Press, June 15, 2015
- New Hampshire Union Leader, June 03, 2015

The Concord Monitor, April 08, 2017

My Turn: Northern Pass and the long reach of the state's utility lobby

By TERRY CRONIN

By the time the Department of Energy published notice of the Northern Pass project in 2011, Thomas Getz was a decade into his chairmanship of the Public Utility Commission and Site Evaluation Committee. Now he's lead counsel for the project in both theaters. Yet neither the PUC nor the SEC recognized his switch from the state's foremost utility regulator to chief counsel for the largest transmission project in state history as having the appearance of impropriety despite the overlap.

The consumer advocate said nothing. The attorney general's counsel for the public said nothing. Moreover, no one on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources or the House Science, Technology and Energy committees questioned it. No one.

In late summer of 2015, Dan Weeks wrote a piece in the *Monitor* comparing lobbyists' influence on Vermont's 151-mile New England Clean Power Link Transmission Project to New Hampshire's 192-mile Northern Pass. It revealed a disturbing magnitude of difference between sums the transmission companies spent lobbying each state. Weeks used the Open Democracy Index to show that in 2014 Eversource's New Hampshire affiliates handed over $585,000 to lobby state officials for support of Northern Pass, not counting thousands more for political campaigns.

Remember, $585,000 was for one year; we're now into the sixth.

By contrast, in Vermont, the New York firm Transmission Developers Inc. proposed the Clean Power Link project in 2013, but the company first spent $2,500 to lobby state officials two years later. Weeks notes, "It (TDI) has donated nothing to political campaigns and has been discouraged from influence-peddling by robust disclosure

requirements, campaign contribution limits and public funding of elections – reforms that are absent in New Hampshire."

It seems New Hampshire's public utilities lobby captured our state's executive office, Legislature and regulators.

The PUC's recent ruling against the Northern Pass power purchase agreement provides a case in point.

The commission found the agreement would violate our state's 2015 divestiture law for its risk to ratepayers. Next, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee set to work on Senate Bill 128 so the commission could consider all proposals that could lower energy costs. If the full Senate and House agree to it, the regulators could abide the gamble of the Northern Pass agreement.

But this is fraught with trouble and, for their roles in the 2015 Evesource divestiture, Senate committee members Jeb Bradley and Dan Feltes should know better. Among the settlement's most expensive problems was the PUC-approved Burgess Biomass power purchase agreement. It entailed a 20-year, over-market power purchase price that the consumer advocate and the commission's own staff advised against. But urgent political pressure for the agreement in the interest of North Country economic development won out, so ratepayers were charged about $200 million in additional stranded costs.

George Sansoucy is an engineer and has worked over 40 years on energy and regulatory matters involving public and private utilities. He has testified in federal and state courts and agencies throughout the U.S. on utility infrastructure, energy projects and complex industrial property valuations. He graduated UNH in 1974 with a master's degree in civil engineering.

On the Northern Pass Site Evaluation Committee, Sansoucy has responsibility for the technical interests of 14 municipalities along the proposed transmission line, including Concord's. In November he called on the committee to terminate the Northern Pass hearings and require "that the company file a full-blown explanation" why it cannot use the existing Hydro-Quebec HVDC corridor. It's the one National Grid now proposes for its transmission link.

Sansoucy testified that the facts around the Northern Pass application do not warrant its widespread negative impacts. In his view the project's controversy stems from our regional utilities' unwillingness to cooperate in the efficient use of already existing

transmission and highway corridors for new HVDC lines. He also said – and this is critical – the route selected for Northern Pass is secondary to the company's failure to demonstrate a need for the project.

But considering the leverage of New Hampshire's utility lobby, I think only Hydro-Quebec's cold feet over paying for construction of Northern Pass stand between the commonwealth of our state's scenic beauty and an out-of-place, jaw-dropping transmission project.

(Terry Cronin lives in Hopkinton.)

Vermont Digger, February 16, 2017

SCOTT, QUEBEC PREMIER CONVENE FOR TALKS ON TRADE, IMMIGRATION ISSUES

FEB. 16, 2017, 5:26 AM BY MARK JOHNSON

QUEBEC CITY — Gov. Phil Scott and the premier of Quebec talked openly Wednesday of Vermont likely purchasing more Canadian hydroelectric power and shared concerns the Trump administration might hinder cross-border trade between the two countries.

Scott and Premier Philippe Couillard also focused on security and immigration issues including Canadians being reportedly turned back at the U.S. border as well as people fleeing into Canada from Vermont because of fears of being deported as President Donald Trump lays down a strong immigration policy.

The primary purpose of the two-day trip, Scott said, was to build on the "already strong" relationship between the province and Vermont. State businesses sell $5 billion worth of goods in Quebec each year; the province is Vermont's largest trading partner. The trip to Quebec was Scott's first official business outside the country since he was sworn in last month.

Scott will be giving the keynote at a renewable energy conference on Thursday. He also met Wednesday with the president of Gaz Metro, which owns Green Mountain Power and Vermont Gas. Scott was scheduled over the two days to meet with six business owners in hopes of wooing them to Vermont. Aides said the businesses are in the energy and manufacturing fields and that some are good prospects.

In an interview with VTDigger, following a 30-minute press conference he held with Couillard, Scott explained why he believes that it's important, as a new governor, to forge a relationship with the Quebec premier.

"You come here to Quebec City and here's an international, European-style city that's within three or four hours of our border and I think there's opportunity for trade that we're not fully taking advantage of," Scott said. "And I believe the more time you spend here, I think relationships mean a lot to those in Quebec. It's something I learned on the racetrack a long time ago, 25 years of racing up here" on the American-Canadian Tour. Scott was a popular and winning stock car driver before being elected governor last year.

“You build those relationships and it means something to them as it does to us, and I think the more we communicate, the more time we spend up here, the better off Vermont will be,” Scott said.

The state of Vermont and the province of Quebec share interests in energy, tourism, trade, border safety and the health of Lake Champlain.

During the press conference — mostly in French, which Scott said he barely understood, with the questions largely for the premier — Couillard said he hoped to sell Vermont more hydroelectric power in the future. Scott said more purchases would be likely if Vermont is to derive 90 percent of its energy from renewable sources by 2050, a goal Scott said he was committed to.

“We have all the energy you need,” Couillard told Scott with a laugh.

“That’s good to know,” Scott replied with a smile.

Afterward, the governor said he saw “opportunities to do so in the future, but obviously, we’ll have to leave that to the Green Mountain Powers of the world,” Scott said. Typically, the governor and the utilities have forged the agreements together with Hydro-Quebec. Green Mountain Power is a subsidiary of the Montreal-based corporation, Gaz Metro.

In addition to possibly purchasing more power, Scott and Couillard both spoke favorably about a large-scale transmission line that has won federal and state approved to go under Lake Champlain. Quebec could potentially feed power to the lower New England states through the New England Clean Power Link. Payments to Vermont will be used to pay for the cleanup of Lake Champlain and could cover more than half of the estimated $25 million the state must come up to comply with the EPA order to reduce phosphorus levels in the lake, Scott said.

The two leaders also share an interest in seeing more electric vehicles as well. Scott noted he added a tax holiday for the purchase of e-vehicles as part of his budget proposal.

Joining the governor were several key staff and cabinet members, including Public Safety Director Tom Anderson, Transportation Secretary Joe Flynn, Agency of Natural Resources Secretary Julie Moore and Commerce Secretary Michael Schirling.

In a private meeting earlier in the day, the two leaders also discussed the opiate addiction crisis — Scott said the problem was increasing in Quebec but was not as profound as in Vermont. They also discussed efforts to pre-approve passengers for border crossings for train service between the United States and Montreal. They also outlined a plan to have a student exchange program between the province and Vermont.

But the biggest focus of talks between Scott and Couillard was on energy and trade policy, particularly if there would be any changes made by U.S. President Donald Trump that could crimp trade.

"Our concern here north of the border is what impact may or may not be present following the new administration's integration of trade, the openness of markets," Couillard said. "I am, we are, strong believers in open markets. We believe it creates prosperity and jobs and should be maintained."

Earlier this week, Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau met with Trump, who opposed the North American Free Trade Agreement during his campaign for president. On Monday, Trump said the focus on changes to NAFTA are primarily with Mexico, but that he will "tweak" the 20-year-old trade deal with Canada.

"We have a very outstanding trade relationship with Canada. We'll be tweaking it," Mr. Trump said Monday. "It's a much less severe situation than what's taking place on the southern border."

Scott said in an interview with VTDigger that he didn't think Trump would radically alter trade with Canada because there were so many states on the northern border that depend on Canada as a trading partner. Scott, however, told Canadian reporters he was concerned about reports of Quebec residents being turned back at the U.S. border and that the incidents were being investigated "so we can get to the bottom of what happened." He noted the importance of free-flowing tourism for both parties.

On energy sales to Vermont and New England, Couillard said, "there's a lot of openness to grow, possibilities to grow. What must be kept at all costs is an open mind and I think both of us are on that side of the story." At one point, Couillard referred to Vermont as a "conduit" for power going to other New England states.

Relationships between the province and Vermont have been largely productive with a few hiccups over the years, including after the 1998 ice storm in Vermont when transmission towers in Canada toppled over and Vermont officials sought to cancel some contracts they were already complaining were too expensive.

Scott noted he traveled to Quebec in 2011 soon after he was elected lieutenant governor when he joined incoming Gov. Peter Shumlin and outgoing Lt. Gov. Brian Dubie on a trip to enhance the relationship between Vermont and Quebec.

Long-term contracts were renewed between state utilities and Hydro-Quebec in 2009, the final year of the administration of Gov. Jim Douglas, according to Scott's chief of staff, Jason Gibbs, who also worked for Douglas.

Scott expressed with Canadian press his sympathies over the death of six people during a mass shooting at a Quebec City mosque two weeks ago.

Couillard used strong language to condemn the killings. A Canadian reporter, Louis LaCroix, said before the press conference that Couillard, a former professor and neurosurgeon, had won high marks for how he responded to the mass shooting. Since the shooting, Couillard has spoken against imposing a ban on religious headwear for police and other authority figures.

The two leaders planned to have dinner together Wednesday and Couillard joked they would argue about whether the province or Vermont produced the best maple syrup.

Hartford Courant, December 15, 2016

Hydro-Power Line From Canada To Southern New England Gets Final Federal Approval

GREGORY B. HLADKY ghladky@courant.com

A plan to run a new hydro-power transmission line from Canada through Vermont to provide more clean electricity to southern New England has been granted a critical federal permit.

The U.S. Department of Energy action earlier this month clears the way for construction to begin next year on the $1.2 billion line that is expected to have a capacity to transmit up to 1,000 megawatts of power.

The New England Clean Power Link project will run for more than 97 miles along the bottom of Lake Champlain and another 55.7 miles along town roads and state highways on land. Construction is expected to begin next year and developers plan to have the transmission line fully operating by 2019.

Transmission Developers Inc. and it's New England subsidiary have already received approvals from Vermont state agencies and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for the new power line.

The federal approval for the Vermont project provides a “presidential cross-border permit” for the transmission line. That permit is required for any project crossing international boundaries into the U.S.

“This interconnection is a vital link that will unleash low-carbon, cost-effective electricity from Canada for the benefit of New England, replacing fossil-fuel generators and lowering energy prices,” Donald Jessome, CEO of the line’s developer, said in a statement.

A spokesman for ISO-New England, operators of the regional power grid, said the new line will be tied into the grid serving southern New England but that it’s difficult to tell how much of that electricity will be used by any particular state.

Unlike another major hydro-power transmission project in neighboring New Hampshire, the TDI-New England line has strong support from local environmental groups.

The company is part of the Blackstone Group, which is based in New York. In 2015, Blackstone has agreed to pay about $284 million for Lake Champlain cleanup projects over 40 years as part of a settlement with the Conservation Law Foundation.

In New Hampshire, the proposed 192-mile Northern Pass transmission project has run into major opposition from local residents, many politicians and environmental groups.

Connecticut Gov. Dannel P. Malloy has voiced support for bringing more Canadian hydro-power into southern New England to help the region’s clean energy needs and reduce reliance on dirty fossil fuels.

But some Connecticut environmental activists say they have significant reservations about major Canadian hydro-power projects like Northern Pass,

warning such transmission lines can have damaging impacts on the region’s ecology.

The Berkshire Eagle, January 11, 2016

Our Opinion: Vermont energy project an example for New Hampshire

Posted Monday, January 11, 2016 2:56 pm

The Berkshire Eagle

A Vermont company seeking to bring Canadian electricity south has the right idea. A New Hampshire company with the same goal should take note.

TDI New England's plan to build a 1,000 megawatt transmission line south through the state has been approved by Vermont utility regulators. It still needs federal permits before it can begin building a system that will bring hydropower through Massachusetts and southern New England but it seems assured of getting them.

TDI cleared its path to success by agreeing to put down 100 miles of cable from the Canadian border along the bottom of Lake Champlain, with the remaining 50 miles of cable buried in public rights of way until the line reaches Ludlow, where it links up to the New England power grid. With no power lines marring the landscape, the proposal earned support from environmentalists and utility regulators and no real opposition.

In contrast, Northern Pass in New Hampshire has grudgingly agreed to bury 52 miles of its proposed 192-mile transmission project from the Canadian border. This has not appeased environmental groups like the Forest Society and Appalachian Mountain Club, the latter, the nation's oldest conservation group, state officials or residents. Northern Pass officials assert that it will be too expensive to do what TDI is doing in Vermont, but it may not get its project at all if doesn't follow suit.

Both projects will lower energy costs and use a cleaner energy source than fossil fuels, but the New Hampshire project will stall until Northern Pass agrees to change its approach. TDI has additionally agreed to fund $263 million for Lake Champlain cleanup projects and $109 million for renewable energy projects in Vermont. Northern Pass can at least agree to hide its power lines from view.

The Addison Independent, January 10, 2016

Regulator OK's power line under lake from Canada

By Addison Independent

BURLINGTON — The Vermont Public Service Board (PSB) this week issued a Certificate of Public good to the New England Clean Power Link, a high power line that would transmit 1,000 megawatts of wind and hydro power from the Canadian border to a transfer station at Ludlow.

Ninety-eight miles would be buried under Lake Champlain, including a stretch running near Ferrisburgh and Panton and then hugging the shorelines of Addison, Bridport, Shoreham and Orwell. The Clean Power Link would veer onto land south of Addison County, in Benson.

The project, proposed by TDI New England, is anticipated to begin in 2016, with the aim of placing the line in service by 2019.

This is not the Vermont Green Line, a project from a different developer that would run a renewable energy power line under Lake Champlain from New York state to New Haven.

In authorizing TDI New England's Clean Power Link, the Public Service Board found that the transmission line will provide significant environmental, electrical and economic benefits for Vermont and the region, including, diversifying the state and regional fuel supply, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, creating hundreds of in-state construction jobs, producing over a billion dollars in new state and local revenues and public good benefits, and potentially lowering electricity costs. The PSB further found that the installation of the line underground in existing public rights-of-way and underwater in Lake Champlain will help reduce the overall visual impacts from the project.

The PSB said in a press release that TDI New England has also committed to supporting Lake Champlain clean-up efforts, state renewable energy programs, and Vermont electric ratepayer relief through the creation of several public-good benefit funds.

Vermont's Certificate of Public Good is the comprehensive state siting and environmental regulatory approval that is needed to construct and to operate the project in the state, and details the conditions under which the project can be built and operated.

"We are extremely pleased that the PSB has issued this certificate and that the state of Vermont has approved the New England Clean Power Link," TDI New England Chief Executive Officer Donald Jessome said. "This approval is the result of significant

regulatory review, public input and consultation with stakeholders. We are pleased that the final result is a project that is supported and approved in Vermont."

Sandra Levine, senior attorney with the Conservation Law Foundation, lauded TDI-New England for addressing a variety of impacts in a responsible manner.

"They have worked well with stakeholders and have demonstrated that large energy projects can meet high environmental standards," Levine said in a TDI press release.

Gov. Peter Shumlin also welcomed this milestone.

"This is good news for Vermont and the region, which needs more clean, renewable energy and a way to get it to market," he said in a press release.

In addition to this permit, TDI New England recently announced that seven electricity suppliers from Canada and the United States have expressed interest in transmitting up to 3,200 MW of power over the 1,000 MW Clean Power Link in response to the FERC-required Open Solicitation process recently conducted by the company.

The Certificate of Public Good was supported by agreements with the State of Vermont Public Service Department, the Vermont Agency of Transportation, the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation; the Conservation Law Foundation; the towns of Alburg, Benson, and Ludlow; and with Green Mountain Power, Burlington Electric Department and Vermont Electric Power Company (VELCO).

These agreements stipulate that, once in service, the project will contribute more than $720 million in direct public benefit payments to Vermont over its 40-year life. The agreements comprise a mix of dedicated funds, lease payments, environmental protections and other benefits.

The Clean Power Link is anticipated to provide $1.9 billion in energy savings to New England over its useful life. The project will also eliminate millions of tons of greenhouse gas emissions each year to help the region meet federal, regional and state goals.

The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources previously issued eight permits for the project confirming that the construction and operation of the Clean Power Link will be in compliance with Vermont's Water Quality Standards and consistent with the federal Clean Water Act.

The Boston Globe, January 06, 2016

Regulators approve $1.2b Vermont power line

Share via e-mail

By Jon Chesto GLOBE STAFF JANUARY 06, 2016

A proposed 154-mile power line that will bring electricity from Canada to New England was approved by Vermont regulators this week.

The $1.2 billion New England Clean Power Link would stretch across much of Vermont, including under Lake Champlain, and be capable of delivering 1,000 megawatts of power to a region with high electricity costs.

Don Jessome, chief executive of the power line's developer, TDI New England, said the "certificate of public good" his firm received Tuesday from Vermont regulators is the most important state permit that the project needs. TDI New England expects to file a request with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission later this year for that agency's approval. Construction on the project could begin in 2017 and be completed by mid-2019, he said.

Jessome said his company has received interest from seven electricity suppliers interested in shipping power along the line. He said his firm is currently reviewing their proposals but declined to name the companies or the generation sources.

The Clean Power Link is competing with another project to bring power from Canada, called Northern Pass, that is being funded by utility giant Eversource Energy. That project, however, has encountered stiff opposition along much of

its path in northern New Hampshire, where residents complained the mountain scenery would be ruined by unsightly transmission towers and power lines.

In August, Eversource announced it would put about one-third of its 192-mile power line underground, primarily through the White Mountains.

The Vermont project, by contrast, would be entirely underground or underwater — about two-thirds would be under Lake Champlain. The line's potential invisibility has minimized the opposition. The Boston-based Conservation Law Foundation supports it, in part because of the promise of additional funds to clean up the lake.

In Massachusetts, the Baker administration has proposed legislation that would essentially compel the state's major utilities, Eversource and National Grid, to buy hydropower from Canada, which would help finance the construction of new power lines to import the electricity.

"The passage of our hydro legislation is critical to make any of these projects real," said Matt Beaton, the Massachusetts Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs. "The only thing we're looking for is the ability to test the marketplace to see which one of these projects can deliver in a cost-effective manner."

Governor Charlie Baker and other New England governors see Canadian hydropower as a crucial way to reduce air pollution and global warming caused by burning fossil fuels, and to replace electricity lost through the retirement of older power plants within the region.

A spokeswoman for Northern Pass said Eversource executives believe the project will be a key part of the solution to New England's energy challenges.

She also said Northern Pass is the only power line to Canada with a committed energy supplier — in its case, Hydro-Quebec — lined up.

New Hampshire Union Leader, October 29, 2015

Buried line puts New England Clean Power Link plan on fast track

By DAVE SOLOMON

New Hampshire Union Leader

The federal Department of Energy on Thursday recommended that a high-voltage power line to transmit electricity from Quebec be granted a presidential permit.

No, it's not the Northern Pass.

The DOE issued its final environmental impact statement on the New England Clean Power Link, a 154-mile underwater and underground transmission line that will deliver 1,000 megawatts through Vermont and into the New England grid.

"The DOE's proposed action is the issuance of a presidential permit that would authorize the construction, operation and maintenance of the project, which would cross the United States-Canada border," according to the impact statement.

The secretary of state and the secretary of defense have previously reviewed the project and they have no objection.

The project sponsors, TDI New England, applied for the presidential permit in the spring of 2014.

Northern Pass, by comparison, has been in the works since 2010, underwent several route changes, and still does not have a final environmental impact statement from the DOE.

New York-based TDI, a subsidiary of the Blackstone investment group, first announced plans for the Clean Power Link in late 2013, applied to the Department of Energy in May of last year and in December applied for its state permits.

The state permitting process in Vermont is now the only major hurdle left for the project.

Significant differences

Like the Clean Power Link, the Northern Pass proposes to import a little more than 1,000 megawatts of hydro-electricity from Quebec.

There are two significant differences. The Clean Power Link is entirely underwater or underground, while the Northern Pass is mostly above ground.

And the Northern Pass has a deal with HydroQuebec to pump 1,000 megawatts into the transmission line if it gets built, while Clean Power Link has no such agreement, at least not yet.

TDI on Oct. 15 put out the word that it was looking for generators interested in buying capacity on the line, as the company launched the so-called “open solicitation process” for transmission customers.

HydroQuebec may or may not decide to put in a bid, but TDI CEO Don Jesome says the project will proceed either way.

“We chose very carefully to connect into the Quebec system and the reason we did that is there are multiple suppliers who can use the Quebec system to access our transmission line,” he said. “There are suppliers in Atlantic Canada and facilities in Labrador that have access to the Quebec system, and there are suppliers in the Quebec system besides HydroQuebec.”

In addition, Jesome said, domestic energy suppliers can “wheel” into the Quebec system and access the new power line. “As we go through the open solicitation process, we’re looking forward to multiple suppliers coming forward,” he said.

Multiple solutions

The line will originate at the U.S.-Canadian border and travel approximately 97 miles underwater down Lake Champlain to Benson, Vt., and then be buried along town and state roads and railroad rights-of-way or on land owned by TDI New England for approximately 57 miles to a new converter station to be built in Ludlow, Vt.

The project is expected to be in service in 2019, at a cost of approximately $1.2 billion, compared to current estimates for Northern Pass at $1.6 billion.

Lauren Collins, a spokesperson for Northern Pass, said the region needs more than one new energy project.

“There is a clear preference in the region to seek cleaner energy alternatives and, particularly, hydropower from the vast reserves in Canada,” she said in a statement.

“Northern Pass remains the only large-scale transmission project in development in the region with a confirmed supplier of power and an interconnection approval. But the fact remains that our shared electric grid needs multiple solutions to address high energy costs and a rapidly dwindling supply due to power plant retirements.”

Minimal resistance

Northern Pass opponents seized the opportunity to once again point out that the Clean Power Link encountered minimal public resistance in Vermont because of the burial of the line.

“It is well recognized in the industry that siting is one of the most difficult facets of building new energy infrastructure,” said Susan Schibanoff with Responsible Energy Action. “NECPL dealt with that issue first by creating solid community and political support with a fully buried line. It has clearly paid off in terms of the record speed with which they have moved ahead.”

Jack Savage, with the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, said the speed at which NECPL is moving through the approval process could affect the prospects for Northern Pass.

“If there are customers in southern New England who would like to avail themselves of additional HQ-generated power, NECPL would seem to be the option more likely to be able to deliver,” he said. “It may well be that NECPL is simply a better idea than Northern Pass, and thus will end up the winner in the rush to market.”

Associated Press, July 21, 2015

New line for Canadian power to NE wins support in Vermont

By DAVE GRAM, Associated Press Published: July 21, 2015 12:01 PM CDT

MONTPELIER, Vt. (AP) — A plan to run a 1,000-megawatt power line down Lake Champlain and across Vermont to bring Canadian power to southern New England is getting key support in the Green Mountain State.

Vermont officials and TDI New England CEO Donald Jessome said Tuesday the company had reached agreements with four state agencies, three towns and the state's largest power company, Green Mountain Power.

"With these agreements, the New England Clean Power Link is one step closer to providing clean, lower-cost, renewable electricity for Vermont and New England," Jessome said in a statement.

The company, affiliated with the New York investment firm Blackstone, offered several incentives to the state to bring Gov. Peter Shumlin's administration on board, to be paid over the project's 40-year life. Among them: a total of $263 million for cleaning up and improving Lake Champlain and its tributaries; $109 million for a state renewable energy fund; $212 million in lease payments to the state Agency of Transportation for power lines buried under state-owned highways and railways and others.

Christopher Recchia, commissioner of the state Public Service Department, said the "agreement provides significant benefits for ratepayers, and helps advance a potential transmission source of stable renewable energy supply that can mitigate price volatility and supply constraints in the New England power market."

The $1.2 billion project is expected to be moving power by mid-2019. It's one of at least four projects in various stages of planning to bring more Canadian power to New England. Cities like Boston, Hartford and Providence, Rhode Island are hungry for relatively low-carbon Canadian hydropower to help meet goals for reducing carbon emissions.

The major Canadian supplier of hydropower to New England so far has been Hydro-Quebec. Jessome said his company was in confidential talks with multiple potential suppliers north of the border.

"We're very bullish on being able to supply this line," Jessome said in an interview Tuesday. He said once the company has its state and federal permits in place, suppliers will come on board.

The company's plan is to run the power line from Alburgh, in Vermont's northwest corner, 97 miles down Lake Champlain to Benson and then underground, mostly along state highways, 57 miles to a converter station in Ludlow, in south-central Vermont, where it would connect with the New England power grid.

Burlington Free Press, June 15, 2015

Green advocates back under-lake power cable

JOEL BANNER BAIRD, Free Press Staff Write

Developers of a $1.2 billion project to run a high-capacity power cable beneath Lake Champlain have reached an agreement with the Conservation Law Foundation promising commitments to water quality and renewable energy in Vermont.

The project requires approval from the state's Public Service Board before construction can begin.

If constructed, its developers would pay at least $283.5 million into lake clean-up funds and renewable-power incentives over the 40-year life of the project, Don Jessome, the CEO of TDI New England, announced Monday.

The agreement has been filed with the Public Service Board as a part of Albany, N.Y.-based TDI's permit application for the Clean Power Link project.

Southern New England would be the beneficiary of the proposed 1,000 MW of hydro power as early as 2019, according to TDI.

From the Canadian border, the 6-inch diameter cable is proposed to rest on deep portions of the lake bottom, and buried beneath shallower sediments.

At Benson the cable would run underground to Ludlow, where TDI proposes to build a station where direct current would be converted to alternating current, and directed further south through existing power lines.

Discussions between the developer and Conservation Law Foundation advocates began in late 2013, shortly after the project was announced, Jessome said.

"We knew they were ready to roll up their sleeves," he added.

TDI-New England, a project of the Blackstone Portfolio Company, had originally proposed a $162 million contribution to environmental efforts in Vermont.

Over the course of private discussions, the developers became increasingly receptive to "acknowledging and quantifying" Vermonters' commitment to stewardship, said Chris Kilian, director of the nonprofit Conservation Law Foundation in Vermont.

"They were very sensitive to integrating suggestions we made regarding siting and routing," Killian said, "What they have proposed means that we're not just a 'pass-through' host of the project," Kilian added.

He credited the foundation's senior attorney, Sandy Levine, with spearheading those discussions.

The agreement with TDI includes financial support of the Lake Champlain Phosphorous Cleanup Fund, the Lake Champlain Enhancement and Restoration Trust Fund, and the Vermont Renewables Program Fund.

If the project is approved, TDI has also agreed to meet regularly with state regulatory agencies, with Vermont's transmission utility VELCO, and regional grid managers to explore how the southbound cable might enhance further development of renewable power in the area.

TDI's commitment to dialogue stands in contrast to other proposals to bring electricity from Quebec to big customers further south, such as the Northern Pass power line proposed through New Hampshire, Kilian said.

The developer's strategy in Vermont has a parallel on the other side of Lake Champlain.

Negotiations with New York-based conservation groups helped speed approval in September of an underwater cable between Quebec and New York City, the "Champlain Hudson Power Express," CEO Jessome said.

Jessome, citing confidentiality, declined to say whether other groups in Vermont had entered negotiations with TDI.

"But," he added, "we would look very carefully at their issues, and welcome the opportunity to discuss them."

The Public Service Board will likely schedule technical reviews of TDI's Clean Power Link this fall, Jessome said.

New Hampshire Union Leader, June 03, 2015

Dave Solomon's Power Plays: Vermont hydro project 'leapfrogs' Northern Pass

By DAVE SOLOMON

The Department of Energy on Wednesday released the draft environmental impact statement for the New England Clean Power Link, recommending a presidential permit for the plan to bring hydroelectricity from Quebec into New England through Vermont.

Anyone who's been following the Northern Pass debate might want to take a look at the 280-page report on the Vermont project to get an idea of what's in store for New Hampshire when the EIS for the Northern Pass comes out later this summer.

The application for the 154-mile, 1,000 megawatt transmission line through Vermont, which is mostly under water or underground, was only filed a year ago on May 22. Northern Pass opponents say this shows how fast an electric transmission project can proceed when it is underground, and that Eversource should take notice.

Transmission Developers Inc., a New York-based company, first announced plans for the Clean Power Link in late 2013, applied to the Department of Energy in May of last year, and in December applied for its state permits. Now, the state permitting process in Vermont is the only major hurdle left for the project.

"The state of Vermont and its citizens, who have the final say on siting, have yet to weigh in officially on the draft EIS, but the unprecedented rapidity with which the New England Clean Power Link has moved from application to the draft EIS shows what initial community support does for a project's chances of success," said Susan Schibanoff of Easton, a member of the Northern Pass opposition group, Responsible Energy Action.

"This EIS also paves the way for seeing burial of high-voltage cable in transportation corridors as viable and desirable," she said

Digesting the draft

The draft is rife with references to the desirability of underground cable for transmission

projects, with observations such as, “operation of the project would pose no risk to public health and safety because most of the cable would be buried underground,” and “operation, maintenance, and emergency repairs would have little or no effect on land use in the overland segment because the proposed transmission cables would be underground within existing rights of way.”

Eversource executives have filed an alternative proposal for a 1,000-megawatt transmission line with the grid operator ISO-New England, suggesting that the company is considering burying more of the Northern Pass lines if that’s what’s necessary to win approval.

“We’re still digesting the draft, but it is interesting to note that from the perspective of this EIS, burial of the proposed Vermont line along the road is not only feasible but has significant advantages,” said Jack Savage, spokesman for the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests.

“NECPL still has important permitting steps ahead, but it certainly seems that by adopting the new technology and focusing on burial, it has avoided controversy and leapfrogged Northern Pass,” he said.

Eversource spokesperson Lauren Collins said the recommendation of a presidential permit for the Vermont project is a positive development for the energy needs of New England, but that comparison to the Northern Pass project, first proposed in 2010, is disingenuous given the vast differences in geography.

Laying cable along the mushy bottom of Lake Champlain is a lot different than blasting through New Hampshire granite, for example.

“It is good to see another energy project making progress because it is clear that New England is in dire need of multiple new sources of power,” she said.

Similar solutions

Northern Pass expects its own draft Environmental Impact Statement later next month, and plans to begin the state permitting process in New Hampshire shortly thereafter.

“While these projects propose similar solutions to New England’s energy challenges they also have notable differences,” Collins said. “Northern Pass remains the only large-scale transmission project in development in the region with a confirmed supplier of power and an interconnection

approval. Our shared electric grid needs both of these projects and more if we are to address high energy costs and a rapidly dwindling supply due to power plant retirements."

Eversource may decry any comparison of the two projects as apples to oranges, but Northern Pass opponents will seize on the Clean Power Link EIS as proof that under-grounding is preferred and affordable.

"It shows that if you go underground, it is more expensive, but the process is so much quicker, with so much less public resistance," said Jim Dannis, another member of Responsible Energy Action, "And as the EIS says, you basically avoid environmental and visual impact issues.