

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION ITEM

SUBJECT:

City Council scoping letter comments on Energize Eastside Phase 2 Draft EIS

STAFF CONTACTS:

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POLICY ISSUES:

State Law/Growth Management Act

The City of Bellevue has the authority to regulate land use and, under GMA, the requirement to consider the location of existing and proposed utilities and potential utility corridors in land use planning. The City must also plan for the provision of essential public facilities such as utilities consistent with the goals and objectives of its Comprehensive Plan, taking into consideration the public service obligation of the utility involved.

Comprehensive Plan

The Utilities Element Comprehensive Plan policies for non-managed utilities at UT-72 through UT-75 describe a framework for implementing the electric service system; requiring siting analysis; identifying tools to avoid, minimize and mitigate the impacts of new and expanded electric utility facilities; and providing highly reliable electric service for Bellevue customers.

This framework supports official City Council comment on the proposed Energize Eastside project through the EIS scoping process.

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL:

- Action
- Discussion
- Information

City Councilmembers may provide comments from the Council during the Phase 2 scoping comment period April 14-May 31, 2016. After tonight's direction a draft of the comment letter (See Attachment 1) can be brought back for Council action before the close of the scoping comment period.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:

Phase 2 Draft EIS Scoping

The Phase 2 Draft EIS Process is underway. This second phase of the Energize Eastside environmental review process will be a project level evaluation addressing a No Action Alternative and specific transmission line segment alternatives within the Action Alternative (PSE's Proposal). Additional reasonable project-specific alternatives may be identified during Phase 2 scoping. See Attachment 2.

The purpose of Phase 2 Scoping is to help the City of Bellevue and the partner cities identify those elements of the environment to be studied in the Phase 2 Draft EIS, as well as to allow the public to suggest reasonable alternatives to the proposal that may address the project purpose and need and present fewer environmental impacts. Phase 2 scoping is informed by the programmatic-level evaluations, particularly the description of the project's purpose and need as identified by PSE, included in the Phase 1 Draft EIS and by public comments submitted on the Phase 1 Draft EIS.

Several Action alternatives and a No Action Alternative are proposed to be analyzed in the Phase 2 Draft EIS. These are summarized here for purposes of drafting the comment letter and are detailed in the Request for Comments on Scope in Attachment 2.

- The No Action Alternative is a baseline against which action alternatives can be compared. Maintenance and conservation (including energy efficiency measures and increasing demand response components to reduce end-use customer usage) activities continue. Additional voluntary conservation and distributed generation, such as some of the measures described under Alternative 2 in the Phase 1 Draft EIS could occur under this alternative.
- The Action Alternative defined by the proponent is a new substation at Lakeside (Richards Creek) and new 230kV transmission lines. There are three major alignment segments and two of the segments propose route variations.

City Council scoping topics from Phase 1 review

The Request for Comments on Scope requires a specific lead agency (Bellevue) to request comments where visual impact simulations should be conducted, alternatives or measures to minimize visual impacts, and alternatives or measures that could minimize the risk associated with collocation of transmission lines with the Olympic Pipeline.

Phase 2 Draft EIS - Narrowing the range to project-specific

Regarding identification and analysis of EIS alternatives during Phase 2, the Request for Comments on Scope refers to requirements in WAC 197-11-440(5)(b) stating that a reasonable alternative means an action that could feasibly attain or approximate a proposal's objectives, but at a lower environmental cost or decreased level of environmental degradation. Reasonable alternatives may be those over which an agency with jurisdiction has authority to control impacts, either directly or indirectly through requirement of mitigation measures. See Attachment 3.

The Request for Comments on Scope also clarifies that the Phase 2 Draft EIS will identify alternatives from the Phase 1 Draft EIS that do not require or merit more detailed project-level impacts review; furthermore, it will articulate the reasoning and basis if one or more alternative(s) are not being carried forward.

Phase 2 Draft EIS - timeline

Similar to Phase 1, following scoping, the EIS consultant, in collaboration with City staff, will research and analyze a reasonable range of viable construction alternatives culminating in the issuance of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

Following publication of the Draft EIS and receipt and consideration of public comment, a Final EIS (FEIS) will be issued that incorporates the information from both phases. DEIS issuance is anticipated in early 2017 and FEIS issuance anticipated in late spring or early summer 2017. The FEIS will inform the drafting of conditions that would be attached to the future Conditional Use Permit and ultimately, with existing city codes and regulations, govern development of the proposed electrical facility through construction and long-term operations.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Draft Council comment Phase 2 Draft EIS scoping letter
2. Request for Comments on Scope and Notice
3. Regulatory background of scoping