

Eversource Line Rebuild Plans Generate Some Concerns In Sugar Hill

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Eversource Energy's X178 line rebuild, scheduled for 2024 and entailing new steel poles an average of 12 feet higher than the existing wooden poles, has some residents in Sugar Hill concerned about impacts to view-sheds as well as impacts to town roads during construction and from the access roads to be built as part of the project.

At the town's request, from 4 to 6:30 p.m. Aug. 1 at the Sugar Hill Meetinghouse, Eversource will hold a drop-in public informational session for residents from Sugar Hill, Bethlehem and Easton, who can ask questions of company representatives.

On Friday, Margo Connors, chair of the Sugar Hill Select Board who spoke as one board member and not on behalf of the board, said the informational meeting will give residents the opportunity to see what Eversource plans and how the project would impact them.

"I don't think the community is really aware of it," she said. "We don't want people to be blindsided by this when it starts."

During the Sugar Hill Select Board's June 26 meeting, board members met with Eversource project manager Sam Harris, Eversource community liaison Matthew Kohler, and project outreach coordinator Jennifer Codispoti, who answered preliminary questions in regard to two projects that will go through Sugar Hill.

Rebuilt within Eversource's existing right-of-way will be the X178 transmission line, a 115-kilovolt line that extends 49 miles from Campton through Easton, Sugar Hill and Bethlehem to Whitefield.

Board members inquired about roadways built during construction and how they will be left and if there will be gates.

Gates left will be at the property owner's directive, said Eversource representatives, according to the meeting minutes.

Timber mats will be used for construction in wetlands and live line construction work pads will be 100-by-100 feet and reduce to 30-to-60 feet.

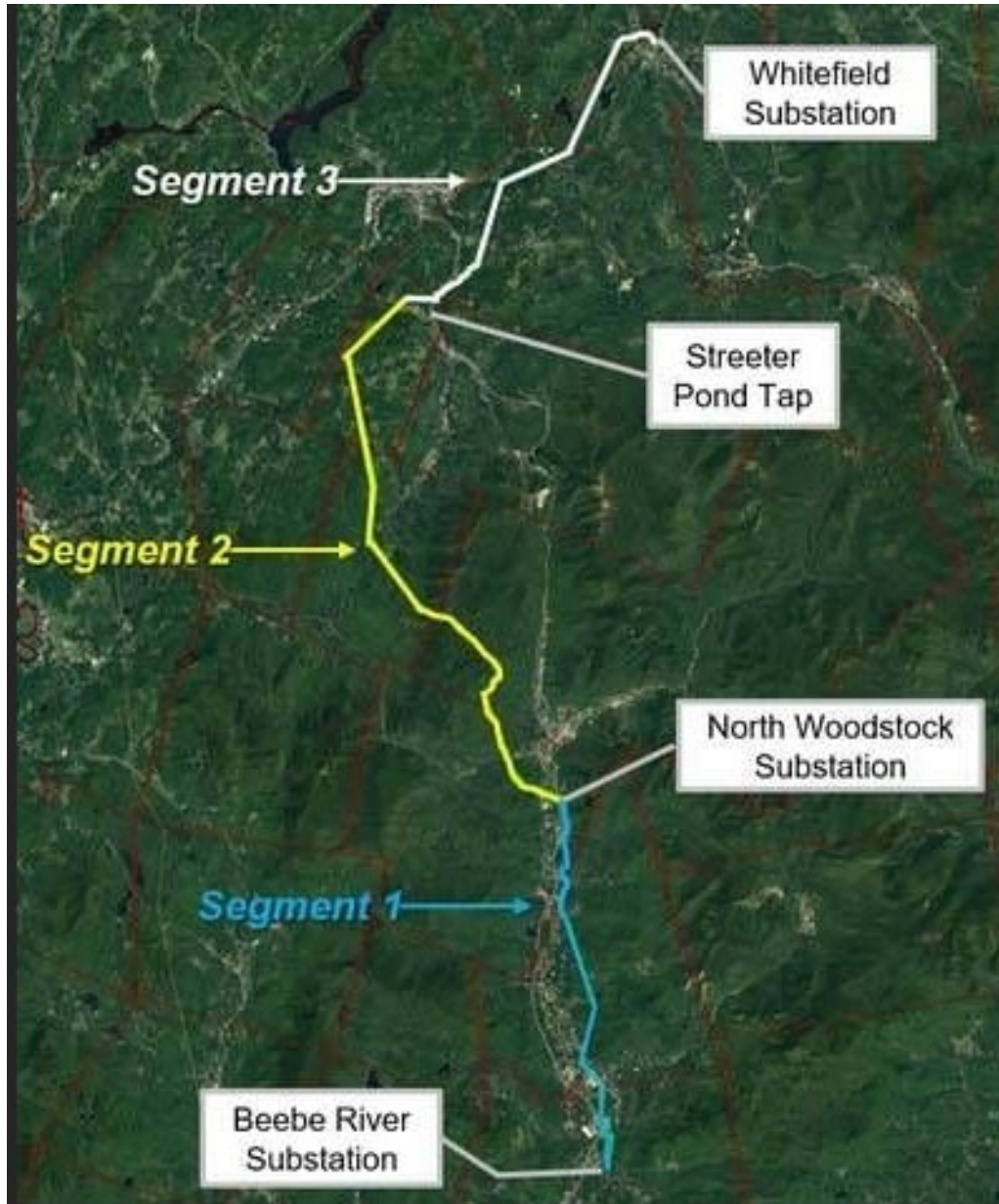
The project is in the initial phases with historical sites and test pits.

Mailers will be sent to abutting property owners to inform them of the work.

The project entails replacing the wooden H-frame structure poles with steel poles and replacing the existing conductor wire with modern fiber optic cable, known as Optical Ground Wire, along the length of the line.

The project also involves replacing poles along the Streeter Pond Tap, a 225-foot-long power line.

In their project narrative, Eversource representatives said the upgrades will replace structures that are in poor condition because of age and deterioration and the new infrastructure is part of the company's ongoing investments to deliver reliable energy to customers and communities.



Segment 1 is between the Beebe River Substation and Campton and the North Woodstock Substation; Segment 2 between the North Woodstock Substation and Streeter Pond Tap in Sugar Hill; and Segment 3 between the Streeter Pond Tap and the Whitefield Substation.

In Easton, the line crosses Route 116, Ginger Bread Road, Gibson Road, and Sugarbush Lane.

In Sugar Hill, it crosses Dyke Road, Presby Road, Hadley Road, Pearl Lake Road, Route 117, Center District Road, Blake Road, Crane Hill Road, Streeter Pond Road, and Route 18.

In Bethlehem, the line crosses Interstate 93, Route 302, Stoney Acres Drive, and Route 116.

In Coos County, where work in the north has already occurred for the 0154 Northumberland-to-Dummer line rebuild, it makes additional crossings in Dalton (Faraway Road, Route 142, and Mirror Lake Road) and in Whitefield (Forest Lake Road, Evergreen Drive, and Mt. Holly Heights).

Following local, state and federal permitting, Eversource expects construction on the X178 line to begin in the second quarter of 2024 and the completed line (all three segments) to go in-service in the fourth quarter of 2026.

Company representatives said restoration will be ongoing during construction for stabilization, to the extent that it's possible.

In Sugar Hill, concerns have been voiced about impacts to roads, natural resources, and view-sheds, including to the view-shed around the community forest that will have higher poles, said Connors.

Depending on topography, poles could be higher than the average of 12 feet.

The Sugar Hill Select Board met with the Eversource representatives for about 90 minutes and encouraged the company to minimize impacts as much as possible in sensitive areas and in view-sheds, though with the engineering and the space requirements for the wires, that minimization might only be able to go so far, she said.

“Wet met with them and brought up the fears that people have from past experiences,” said Connors. “Obviously, this is not Northern Pass ... We asked that many times because that's the first thing people are going to think.”

In the 2010s, area residents rallied against Eversource's failed Northern Pass Transmission line proposal.

In March, Eversource spokesman William Hinkle, for a story about the Coos 0154 line rebuild, told The Caledonian-Record that the company has no plans to import Canadian hydro-power along the new lines, which are instead being built to improve system reliability.

At least some access roads will be permanent and concerns in Sugar Hill revolve around how they are going to be left when completed as well as how the many tons of gravel for those access roads will impact the town roads that they will be transported along, said Connors.

While not a formal presentation, the Aug. 1 informational meeting will give residents the opportunity to see how the rebuild would impact them specifically.

“People will be able to go and ask their own questions,” said Connors.

Those with questions or wanting more information about the project, can contact Eversource at 888-926-5334 or NHProjectsInfo@eversource.com.