

Lawmakers move to slow PATH project

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ANNAPOLIS — Several [Frederick](#) County state lawmakers are moving forward with legislation to slow the proposal to build a high-voltage power line across the southern part of the county.

The 225-mile, \$1.8 billion Potomac Appalachian Transmission Highline would span three states and has an application pending before the Maryland Public Service Commission.

It is intended to meet energy needs for the region, and will be needed by 2016, according to the project's attorney.

The [Frederick](#) County delegation of state lawmakers was approached earlier this month by the Sugarloaf Conservancy, a citizens group opposing the project.

Sens. Alex Mooney and David Brinkley are planning to introduce a bill this week that would address some of their concerns.

The bill would deal with which type of entity may apply to the PSC.

"Our concern is that we have a legitimate entity that is submitting the paperwork and to be answerable for everything going on," Brinkley said.

The project was turned down last year in Maryland when the utility company filed the application as PATH Allegheny. In Maryland, only Potomac Edison, an established electric company, can file for such a project.

This time, the utility company filed as Potomac Edison, but said that entity would own only 5 percent of the project, but would be responsible for construction, maintenance and operation of PATH.

Doug Kaplan, president of the Sugarloaf Conservancy, said that is a concern because the majority of the ownership of the utility would be a limited liability corporation.

That could become a problem if the proposed substation near Kemptown caught fire or some other problem occurred.

"If an electric company, Baltimore Gas and Electric, Allegheny Energy, a normal corporation, takes the risk, their corporation puts something in, then there's something substantial behind it," Kaplan said. "An LLC is where someone can just walk away if they want to."

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Sen. David Brinkley

Todd Meyers, a spokesman for Allegheny Energy and the PATH project, did not have a comment on the proposed legislation since the details of the proposal are not available.

"We would have to see the legislation and review it," he said.

Brinkley and Mooney oppose the PATH project.

"My constituents are justifiably concerned about the environment and the quality of life," Mooney said. Most of the line goes through his district.

Brinkley lives only a few miles away from the proposed substation, and his sister lives even closer.

He thinks lines should be buried and the substation located somewhere else.

"We don't disagree with the idea that power needs to be transmitted through the grid," Brinkley said. "We disagree with how. It is technologically feasible and affordable for them to bury these lines."

In addition to the senators' bill, Delegate Sue Hecht is working on legislation to address the issue.

The bill would be different, but is in the drafting stage, she said.