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## Power line plan reduced in scope

BY STEPHEN WILLIAMS Gazette Reporter

Plans for a buried high-voltage direct-current power cable between Canada and New York City have been scaled back but are still going forward.

The proposed Champlain Hudson Power Express has been scaled back to carry just 1,000 megawatts of power instead of 2,000 megawatts after Connecticut utilities showed no interest in buying the imported power.

“We said all along we would listen to the market,” said Don Jessome, president and CEO of Transmission Developers Inc. of Toronto.

On the other hand, he added, “There’s extreme interest in the New York market.”

Jessome spoke Wednesday at a meeting in Colonie held by the federal Department of Energy and the state Public Service Commission to get public input on what issues should be studied in an environmental impact statement on the project.

The plan calls for importing power from Canadian sources and transmitting it along a 355-mile cable route, with the cable being buried at the bottom of Lake Champlain and the Hudson River.

However, it would run underground from Glens Falls to south of Albany, following railroad rights-of-way through Saratoga, Schenectady and Albany counties before entering the Hudson River at Coeymans.

Public concerns at hearings held in the past week in Yonkers and Kingston focused on the potential impact on the Hudson River, and aquatic impacts also came up at Wednesday’s hearing.

Scott Lorey of the Adirondack Council said that group is concerned about the impacts on fish, marine life and other wildlife and believes those impacts need further study.

Tom Ellis of the Citizens Environmental Coalition in Albany condemned the project as leading to the damming of Canadian rivers and flooding of Native American lands to meet the power needs of New York.

“I believe the project if approved would have a devastating effect on environmental resources in Canada,” Ellis said.

Jessome has acknowledged he's negotiating for power from large hydroelectric projects in Canada, though no deals have been struck.

Alain Olivier, director of communications for the Quebec government office in New York City, said the Quebec government works closely and cooperatively with native people in development of new hydro facilities.

Jerry Pell, project manager for the Department of Energy, said the environmental review will be thorough. The DOE, Environmental Protection Agency, Army Corps of Engineers and state departments of Public Service and Environmental Conservation will all be involved.

"With five government agencies involved, not much will be missed," Pell said.

The Colonie hearing was just one in a series of meetings being held along the transmission route.

Another will be at 7 tonight at the Ramada Glens Falls/Lake George in Queensbury, and a final hearing will be at 7 p.m. Friday at the Plattsburgh North Country Chamber of Commerce offices in Plattsburgh.