



## Vermont System Planning Committee

*Ensuring full, fair and timely consideration of non-transmission alternatives to address Vermont electric system reliability challenges.*

# Long Range Transmission Plan Public Outreach

### Types of input required by Docket 7081

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in Docket 7081 includes three types of input VELCO must obtain on its Long-Range Transmission Plan (LRTP). First, VELCO must obtain certain input from other electric system participants during plan development. Second, VELCO must obtain input from the Vermont System Planning Committee. Third, the company must conduct public outreach on the plan to gather public input.

**During plan development** VELCO must obtain the following types of input:

1. Obtain forecast updates from the DPS and distribution utilities, if available, during development of the plan.
2. Coordinate major planning assumptions with DPS, the distribution utilities and the EEU during development of the plan.
3. Provide working drafts of the plan to ISO-NE.
4. Confer with the distribution utilities to obtain information and comment.

**The VSPC input process** for the LRTP is highly specific. It includes the following:

1. VELCO must provide the draft Plan, including, all assumptions, forecasts, and analysis to the VSPC. (Docket 7081 MOU, ¶ 12)
2. After consultation with the VSPC, VELCO and the Distribution Utilities will determine whether each Reliability Deficiency identified in the draft Plan is Bulk Transmission System, Predominantly Bulk System, Predominantly Subsystem, or Subsystem. In the event that VELCO and the Distribution Utilities cannot agree on the determination described in the immediately preceding sentence, the VSPC shall make the determination by vote, which shall be binding on the voting participants of the VSPC unless a request for dispute resolution by the Public Service Board under paragraph 111

of the MOU is filed within 30 days of the VSPC's determination. (Docket 7081 MOU, ¶ 13.)

3. The VSPC will make a preliminary determination of the likely Affected Utilities for each Reliability Deficiency identified in the draft Plan. (Docket 7081 MOU, ¶ 14.)
4. By 60 days after VELCO's submission of a complete draft Plan to the VSPC, the VSPC will collect the comments of its members in memorandum form, and convey such comments to VELCO. VELCO shall incorporate these comments into its draft Plan or respond to the VSPC in writing as to why they were not incorporated. (Docket 7081 MOU, ¶ 15.)

Finally, the MOU in Docket 7081 requires that VELCO, in consultation with the VSPC, design and conduct a public outreach process that engages the public in a deliberative format involving dialogue and a response to public comments. The outreach process must conform to Title 30, Subsection 218c(d)(2) of the Vermont Statutes, which states:

*Prior to the adoption of any transmission system plan, a utility preparing a plan shall host at least two public meetings at which it shall present a draft of the plan and facilitate a public discussion to identify and evaluate nontransmission alternatives. The meetings shall be at separate locations within the state, in proximity to the transmission facilities involved or as otherwise required by the board, and each shall be noticed by at least two advertisements, each occurring between one and three weeks prior to the meetings, in newspapers having general circulation within the state and within the municipalities in which the meetings are to be held. Copies of the notices shall be provided to the public service board, the department of public service, any entity appointed by the public service board pursuant to subdivision 209(d)(2) of this title, the agency of natural resources, the division for historic preservation, the department of health, the scenery preservation council, the agency of transportation, the attorney general, the chair of each regional planning commission, each retail electricity provider within the state, and any public interest group that requests, or has made a standing request for, a copy of the notice. A verbatim transcript of the meetings shall be prepared by the utility preparing the plan, shall be filed with the public service board and the department of public service, and shall be provided at cost to any person requesting it. The plan shall contain a discussion*

*of the principal contentions made at the meetings by members of the public, by any state agency, and by any utility.*

**The public outreach process** is further defined by requirements in the MOU. All public outreach undertaken in connection with the plan and specific projects must “provide an effective means to obtain informed input from affected persons and the public generally and to ensure that all stakeholders have an early, ongoing, and meaningful opportunity to influence the shape of electric reliability planning and projects to meet reliability needs in Vermont economically.”

The MOU also articulates a series of principles to which public outreach efforts related to specific reliability deficiencies must conform and which may guide the public outreach process associated with the LRTP. The principles include the following:

- a. Involve and integrate the public throughout the planning and decision-making process, both in the development of each plan and in the development of specific projects and their alternatives.*
- b. Structure public involvement to ensure that all affected and interested stakeholders can participate, recognizing time, geographic, and transportation barriers to participation.*
- c. Incorporate an invitation mechanism that ensures broad representation rather than relying upon self-selection, while still including committed advocates in the processes.*
- d. Use multiple techniques and communication channels to address the needs of different audiences, including those that are and are not actively engaged.*
- e. Utilize public involvement techniques that provide an opportunity for information exchange and dialogue, not simply testimony.*
- f. Develop a wide range of readable, credible information resources to support any and all outreach processes. Materials should include those written for the lay person's understanding of electric systems.*
- g. Ensure easy access to the process, and consider using multiple processes, including electronic tools (such as on-line dialogues) to maximize opportunities for participation.*

- h. Be clear with the public about what type of involvement is being offered, and how their input will be used in decision-making. This includes education regarding what opportunities are available to the public to influence decision-making. It also includes information regarding factors pertinent to the decision-making process such as: state obligations for utility service at minimum levels of reliable customer service, timing necessary to request and gain approval from the Board and other permitting agencies, rate and bill impacts, site-specific environmental concerns, aesthetics, and regional and federal obligations regarding reliability levels or economic Transmission considerations.*
- i. Conduct outreach in a manner that strives for direct and effective communication at all steps of the process with all individuals who may be affected by projected project impacts (including siting, environmental concerns, aesthetic, and cost/rate impacts).*
- j. Public involvement processes need to be objective, balanced, and fair.*

While the statutory requirement for outreach can be satisfied with two public meetings, consistency with the public outreach principles above will require additional meetings to provide more options for the public and greater geographical diversity of locations. Four geographically distinct locations, in addition to other outreach activities is a more realistic target for an effective process.

The MOU states the following about VELCO's obligation regarding the public input it has received:

*VELCO will consider the public input obtained during [the public outreach process], revise the draft Plan as needed, and publish the Plan including but not necessarily limited to all items required by this MOU to be in the draft Plan, a summary describing the significant comments received and VELCO's response to the comments, and any appendices required under Step 10 [the tri-annual plan update process].*

## **Communications Plan for Public Outreach on the LRTP**

### Objectives

1. To effectively target, inform and obtain input from key stakeholders in communities that will be directly affected if reliability deficiencies identified in the LRTP are addressed with transmission solutions.
2. To raise the level of general public awareness of the existence of the LRTP and its implications for local, regional and statewide energy-related choices.
3. To obtain input on the plan from numerous and demographically and geographically diverse stakeholders.

### Audiences

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- Local and regional planners
- Utility and environmental regulators
- Local governments
- Efficiency Vermont
- Communities that will be affected if transmission solutions are selected to address reliability deficiencies identified in the plan
- Geo-targeted areas (for energy efficiency services)
- Environmental groups
- Renewable energy developers
- Business and industry trade groups
- Economic development groups
- Local energy committees
- Legislators
- General public
- Audiences specifically named in 30 V.S.A. § 218c: “the public service board, the department of public service, any entity appointed by the public service board pursuant to subdivision 209(d)(2) of this title, the agency of natural resources, the division for historic preservation, the department of health, the scenery preservation council, the agency of transportation, the attorney general, the chair of each regional planning commission, each retail electricity provider within the state, and any public interest group that requests, or has made a standing request for, a notice [of public hearings on the LRTP].”

### Timing of public outreach process

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The public portion of LRTP outreach is scheduled to occur from March 1, 2009, through May 30, 2009. This means the draft plan must be available for public comment on March 1 and, to be considered for incorporation into the plan, input must be received by May 30, 2009.

### Major activities

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### **Stakeholder identification**

- Identify stakeholders using the lists already developed by VELCO and other utilities supplemented through consultation with the VPSC.
- Identify stakeholders specifically required by statute.
- Verify and complete stakeholder database including e-mail, phone and mail contact information to support multiple processes.
- Maintain stakeholder database during project ensuring capture of corrections and updates

### **Supporting media coverage**

- Target media based on stakeholder list.
- Seek media coverage prior to the beginning of the public input period to publicize the VSPC process in general and to lay the groundwork for the publication of the draft plan and the public outreach period on the plan itself. (Create fertile ground for the input process by raising general public, target audience and media awareness of the process.)
- Develop timeline and work plan to maximize media coverage about the availability of the plan and the opportunities for public input.
- Develop time and work plan for media coverage to solicit attendance at the public meetings on the plan.

### **Local/regional meetings**

- Identify locations for four general public regional meetings.
- Identify locations for “focus group” type meetings aimed at key stakeholders.
- Segment stakeholder list by location and identify those who require personal contact to maximize their participation (key stakeholders/opinion leaders).
- Plan and implement an invitation process that includes personal contact with key stakeholders and direct mail and e-mail invitations to others stakeholders.
- Coordinate invitation process with media plan.

- Plan and implement logistics of meeting location and arrangements.
- Create meeting agenda/format to maximize dialogue, possibly including an “open-house” type component (similar to process used in Southern Loop, East Avenue and GAR outreach), as well as a group discussion. Whatever format is selected should avoid a traditional approach to “testimony” or should at least supplement the testimony portion of the meeting with a dialogue format.
- As needed based on meeting format, prepare staff/facilitators for their role in the meeting.
- Prepare meeting materials.
- Conduct meetings.
- Evaluate meetings.

#### **Television outreach (VIT and/or PEG)**

- Evaluate potential use of Vermont Interactive Television (VIT) and/or Public, Educational and Government Access Television (PEG) as a tool for increasing public access to the input process.
- Based on the results of evaluation, incorporate resource appropriately.
- Evaluate the effectiveness the television component.

#### **Interactive web-based outreach**

- Research web-based interactive tools for obtaining public input and responding to questions about the LRTP. See, for example, the web tools used by the Department of Public Service for their public engagement process on energy planning.
- Based on the results of research, develop a web-based interactive forum for public input into the LRTP.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the web-based outreach component.

#### **Follow-up**

- Incorporate public input into the LRTP.

- Conduct follow-up with all those who participated in the process to inform them of how public input was incorporated and to provide access to the final plan as filed July 1, 2009.
- Evaluate the outreach process overall.

**Additional components to be added**

- Detailed timeline
- Roles
- “Make or buy” decisions (are outside consultant resources needed)