



S.B. County officials balk at LA power line project

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San Bernardino County officials are asking the city of Los Angeles to stay out of environmentally sensitive areas in the Morongo Basin as it puts together plans to build power transmission lines through desert communities in San Bernardino and Riverside counties.

The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power is planning to build a system of electrical towers and power lines from Desert Hot Springs to Hesperia to transmit energy from geothermal, solar and wind projects in the Imperial Valley.

Depending on the route chosen, the Green Path North project would traverse from 79 to 350 miles through areas such as Morongo Valley, Yucca Valley and Pioneertown.

Supervisor Dennis Hansberger, whose district includes some of the areas affected, proposed the resolution, saying the project would delve into relatively pristine desert areas and harm scenic vistas.

Hansberger said he didn't have a problem with the project as long as it follows already designated corridors along Interstate 10.

"My position is not taking a position against the project," he said. "It's this corridor we object to."

Los Angeles Department of Water and Power officials could not be reached to comment Tuesday. Los Angeles officials have said the project is in its early stages and they are considering several alternatives, including along I-10.

Supervisor Brad Mitzelfelt said that the city's plans indicate that following the federally designated corridor could be expensive, requiring the purchase of up to 2,500 homes.

Mitzelfelt said that means it is important for the county to make its objections to a route through the Morongo basin clear from the outset.

"I think we have that much more cause to be concerned about this alternative," he said.

About a half-dozen members of the California Desert Coalition, a group formed in opposition to the proposed route, attended the board meeting. April Sall, co-chairwoman of the group, said members were pleased with the board resolution.

"The county recognizes the importance of these lands and that's an important step," she said.

Six other communities -- including the towns of Yucca Valley and Twentynine Palms -- also have passed resolutions opposing the project, Sall said.

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