

Supervisor against plan to bring power lines to area

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The county Board of Supervisors will meet Dec. 4 to vote on a resolution opposing a potential plan by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power to install transmission lines through undeveloped areas of the Morongo Valley and surrounding desert.

At Tuesday's regular board meeting, Supervisor Dennis Hansberger said he plans to call for the resolution against LADWP's Green Path North project.

He made the decision after meeting with the California Desert Coalition, a nonprofit trying to preserve the desert. The coalition gave a presentation on Tuesday to three board members.

Coalition officials said there is another option for LADWP - using the 10 Freeway corridor, which is already home to transmission lines.

Hansberger agreed.

"I don't think there is a legitimate reason to cross this reasonably pristine area," said Hansberger, who represents the 3rd District.

The district encompasses some of the proposed area, which is primarily on federal land.

Randy Thomas, assistant chief operating officer for LADWP's Power System, said everyone is getting ahead of themselves.

"It's very, very early in the process," Thomas said. "Preliminary public meetings are not set for until January."

Currently, the utility is considering 7 to 9 possible routes, Thomas said.

The community's involvement is wanted, he said, to help determine the best path.

Under one of LADWP's plans, 500-kilovolt power lines would be stretched from Desert Hot Springs north, then brought around the Bighorn Mountain Wilderness westward to Hesperia.

The projected path is about 85 miles, and travels through such areas as the Big Morongo Canyon Preserve and Pioneertown Mountains Preserve.

"It's obvious there are other ways of doing this," said John Simpson of Twentynine Palms who is opposed to the project.

Hansberger said he understood the plan would save money for the nation's largest municipal utility. Using the 10 corridor would mean renting property, not buying it. But that's not enough of a reason to negatively impact the desert, he added.

Hansberger appears to have an ally in Supervisor Brad Mitzelfelt, whose High Desert district encompasses part of the proposed area.

Mitzelfelt said it was unfair that the desert takes the brunt of the project's impact.

"That doesn't sit well with me," he said.