

Settlement Paves the Way for Tri-Lakes Area Electric System Improvements

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This past November, Susan Crossett, Niagara Mohawk vice president of Public Affairs, shared the podium with New York Governor George Pataki, State Senator Betty Little, and other officials in the Adirondack community of Tupper Lake to announce a landmark settlement that paves the way for major improvements to the electricity delivery system that serves the Tri-Lakes area in New York. The improvements called for in the agreement, which include a new transmission line to supply the area, will ensure long-term reliability and provide the necessary capacity to support future regional economic development.

The Tri-Lakes region includes the communities of Tupper Lake, Lake Placid and Saranac Lake. Tupper Lake and Lake Placid have municipal electric departments that are supplied with power by the New York Power Authority (NYPA), while Saranac Lake is served by Niagara Mohawk. Niagara Mohawk is the transmission provider for the entire region. Significant growth and development in the resort communities of Lake Placid and Tupper Lake has sharply increased demand for electricity and has strained the capacity of the existing regional delivery system, especially during periods of extremely cold weather that coincide with heavy tourism activity. The settlement, which represents the culmination of several years of negotiations, allocates the cost of the planned reinforcements among Niagara Mohawk, NYPA and the two villages, all of whom will share the benefits.

Herb Schrayshuen, vice president of Transmission Commercial Services, led the Niagara Mohawk team that negotiated the settlement agreement. According to Schrayshuen, while the settlement marks an important milestone for the project, much remains to be accomplished.

“We now must turn our attention to presenting the settlement to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) for its acceptance. Provided that FERC concurs, we will then begin the next phase of this process – licensing the new transmission line and substation reinforcements that will serve this region,” he said.

The siting process will be led by NYPA and the route for the new line will be determined in consultation with the public and the Adirondack Park Agency. Schrayshuen added, “It is likely to take at least two years to site, license and build the necessary improvements, but we hope that with support from the communities and government officials in the region we will be able to expedite the process.

“In the meantime, we have made plans to get through at least two more winters with the existing infrastructure,” Schrayshuen commented. “We have worked with NYPA and the villages to develop a winter readiness plan to maximize the capacity of our existing resources.”

However, just like last year, if the weather forecast calls for the temperature to be less than 25 degrees below zero this winter, Niagara Mohawk will make public appeals through the local news media to reduce electricity usage to help make it through.

Schrayshuen said, “I am extremely proud of our exceptional negotiating team, whose professionalism and patience were instrumental in achieving this settlement. All involved should be commended and feel pleased that this long-standing issue is on its way to resolution.” He concluded, “We’re proud to be part of the solution to the region’s electricity needs, and look forward to supporting NYPA and working with the two villages as we move forward with this project.”

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