

N.H. towns have questions about gas pipeline project

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New plans for a natural gas pipeline that would extend through Southern New Hampshire have officials in Londonderry, Pelham and Windham wondering how their towns will be affected.

Representatives for Tennessee Gas Pipeline Co. announced Friday the proposed pipeline — more than 400 miles long — would stretch across the Northeast and through the Granite State, instead of a large portion of northern Massachusetts.

The new route, announced earlier this fall as an alternative, is now part of the Houston-based company's permanent plans. It includes 71 miles of pipeline in New Hampshire. Tennessee Gas is a subsidiary of Kinder Morgan Energy Partners.

Company spokesman Richard Wheatley said the amended plan, called "the New Hampshire Powerline Alternative," was to be filed Monday with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

But officials in Londonderry, Pelham and Windham said they are still waiting to hear how the Northeast Energy Direct Project would impact their towns.

That includes Pelham Selectmen's Chairman Edmund Gleason, who said the town was first contacted by the gas company months ago. But when local officials asked question, they were ignored until recently.

Londonderry Town Manager Kevin Smith said Monday he hadn't heard about the project possibly passing through his town until he was contacted by a reporter last month.

And Windham Town Manager David Sullivan said he couldn't say much about the proposal until more information was received from Tennessee Gas.

"The town will talk to them and see what impact it has on us," Sullivan said.

Smith and Sullivan said they were recently contacted by the company and met with Tennessee Gas officials last week.

"We don't have a lot of information at this time other than the route and the map," Smith said.

Representatives for Tennessee Gas will make presentations to Windham officials and residents at the selectmen's meeting Jan. 5, Sullivan said.

Tennessee Gas will be at Londonderry Town Hall either Jan. 5 or Jan. 19, Smith said.

Gleason said Pelham and Tennessee Gas are still trying to set a date, but he said the meeting at Town Hall would be soon.

"We expect to hear something this week," he said.

The news comes as opponents of the project, the Northeast Municipal Gas Pipeline Coalition, gathered in Andover, Mass., yesterday to discuss the revised route.

Gas company officials said the route was revised to minimize the impact on parks, wetlands and conservation areas. The new route also uses existing rights-of-way where electric transmission lines have been placed.

In Londonderry, the pipeline would extend through the West Road area between Elwood Orchards and the town recreation fields, Smith said. That area has already been cleared for transmission lines, he said.

"The more they can use the right of way of PSNH, the better since they wouldn't disturb other areas," Smith said.

Tennessee Gas already has a natural gas pipeline through Windham and Pelham, but Sullivan and Gleason said it remains to be seen whether that line would be part of the proposed project.

"We're still in the dark," Gleason said.

Tennessee Gas also has a substation near Mammoth Road in Pelham, he said.

Construction of the \$5 billion project is to begin in two years, pending approval.