

# Boardman to Hemingway applies for site approval

**By Antonio Sierra**  
East Oregonian

The Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line is churning its way toward regulatory approval from the Oregon Department of Energy, which is kicking off the review process with a series of public meetings across all four Eastern Oregon counties that the line will run through.

Idaho Power is proposing a 500-kilovolt, 273-mile transmission line from Boardman to the Hemingway Substation in Owyhee County, Idaho, and just submitted a final application for site certificate. The cost for the transmission line is estimated \$1.2 billion.

The proposal has been contentious, and although the four-stop tour will not include time for public comment, Idaho Power spokeswoman Julie Stutts said company representatives will be available to respond to residents' questions and concerns after the meetings end in Pendleton, Boardman, La Grande, Baker City, and Ontario.

Critics like JoAnn Mar-

lette of Baker City contend the transmission line would alter Eastern Oregon's scenery, create negative effects on the environment, and create noise issues for local residents.

In an interview Thursday, Marlette said she has suggested Idaho Power instead bury the power lines or invest in microgrids — a small, local grid that has the ability to operate independent from the larger power grids — but her arguments haven't halted the project.

"It's all about the money," she said. "It doesn't matter if they ruin Eastern Oregon."

Jeff Maffuccio, the facility siting coordinator for Idaho Power, conceded Boardman to Hemingway would likely change some of the views in Eastern Oregon, but it's taking steps during the planning process to make the transmission towers less intrusive.

Maffuccio said none of the towers would have fencing around them and the service roads would be dirt rather than paved streets.

Boardman to Hemingway's application is thousands of pages long, and although Maffuccio said

he's confident Idaho Power has addressed any concerns up to this point, he wants to wait to receive more public input before he's assured that the transmission will clear the regulatory process.

While the line has alternative routes, the general path of the line is the same.

From the Oregon-Idaho border, the line snakes between Vale and Harper before charting a similar path to Interstate 84. The line bypasses Huntington, Baker City, and La Grande, splitting from I-84 around Meacham.

Boardman to Hemingway crosses Highway 395 south of Pilot Rock before taking a hard turn north toward Boardman after crossing Highway 207 in Morrow County.

Maffuccio said Idaho Power has altered the route based on local concerns, like moving the transmission line south after realizing how many people lived in McKay Creek area north of Pilot Rock.

"We didn't realize that there's a lot of houses until we got on the ground," he said.

Maffuccio said Idaho

Power is also working with Morrow County farmers and the Boardman Bombing Range to address any of their concerns.

Boardman to Hemingway won't go unopposed at the upcoming series of public meetings. Marlette said she plans to attend the meetings in Ontario, Baker City and La Grande.

The meeting in La Grande will take place from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m., Oct. 17 at the Blue Mountain Conference Center, located at 404 12th Street.

Following the public meetings, the department of energy plans to submit a draft proposed order to Energy Facility Siting Council for either approval or denial in the first quarter of 2019.

Once the order is submitted, the department will hold public hearings in all five counties and begin accepting testimony and public comment on the project.

Idaho Power projects to have final regulatory approval from the state in early 2021 and complete Boardman to Hemingway in 2025.

# Pendleton streets continue to crumble

**By Antonio Sierra**  
East Oregonian

The rubber has met the road in the city of Pendleton, and it's starting to show.

Despite the city nearly tripling its annual street maintenance budget within the past few years, the Pendleton City Council received a report Tuesday that showed the town's roads were continuing to degrade.

Public Works Director Bob Patterson said consultant Capitol Asset & Pavement Services drove around Pendleton's 76-mile street system and graded each road segment on a 0-100 scale called the "pavement condition index."

According to the most recent report, Pendleton's pavement condition index is 61, down seven points from a 2013 analysis.

Additionally, the share of roads considered to be in "good" condition fell from 61.4 percent to 43.1 percent.

Leading up to the 2013 report, Patterson said the city's pavement score was aided by state and federal grants that paid for a new overlay on Tutuilla Road, street improvements at the Airport Industrial Park, and the Airport Road extension.

The city also benefited from an increase in the state gas tax and a change in the distribution formula that netted the city more than \$300,000 per year.

Beset with widespread complaints about road maintenance, the city council proposed a 5-cent gas tax and a street utility fee to bolster street funding.

While voters rejected the gas tax, the council was able to enact the utility fee, which now ranges from \$425.35 per month based on the size of customers' waterlines.

Patterson said the city now maintains \$128,000 into the street fund's coffers.

But otherwise, the city will have to make cuts or look into new sources of revenue to reverse the road system's downward trend.

Capitol Asset & Pavement Services predicts raising the street funding level to \$1.6 million would increase the pavement condition score by five points, while making modest progress in decreasing the amount of roads scored "poor" or "very poor."

Both options would only make a small dent in the eight-figure maintenance backlog, but if the city really wanted to go for broke, the consultant calculated it would need to spend \$4.1 million per year, which would eliminate deferred maintenance and raise the city's pavement score all the way to 82.

Patterson presented some options to the council as to how they would collect more revenue to treat the current system.

The council could double the street utility fee to maintain the 61 pavement score or triple it to raise it to 66.

Patterson said the council could also explore a gas tax, a proposal City Manager Robb Corbett said would shift some of the burden to travelers.

"That concept has been very difficult to explain to the average citizen," Mayor John Turner said. "It's been very unpopular."

If the city doesn't take any action, the report estimates Pendleton's pavement condition index will fall to 53 in another decade.

In an interview before the meeting, Patterson said the city's street system is on a "slippery slope" on the maintenance curve, and will only continue its descent more quickly if nothing is changed.

Turner said the council would spend the next workshop reviewing all the options.

## SERVICE

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seniors at Grande Ronde Retirement Residence, Wildflower Lodge Assisted Living and La Grande Post Acute Rehab.

"I don't think the kids realize how much of an impact they have. (Wildflower residents) will be talking about this the rest of the day, I'm sure," said Wildflower's community relations director Jenna Wright, Wednesday morning.

Wright said visits like the one made by LHS students give residents an emotional boost. She said those who take advantage of the opportunities to meet visitors like the LHS seniors have fewer falls and tend to be in better moods.

Wright noted a number of Wildflower residents opened up to the LHS students.

"I heard some of them sharing secret family recipes," she said.

Betty Wiseman was among the Wildflower residents who the La Grande students talked to.

"They are awesome," said Wiseman of her visitors, LHS seniors Caitlin Crouser and Paloma Cooke.

"I like connecting with people in the community and learning about their lives," said LHS student Natalie Sumerlin about her visit to Grande Ronde Retirement Wednesday morning. "It makes me so happy."

The student said she was struck by how she and her classmates were greeted.



LHS senior Rebecca Conklin, (standing, left photo), talks with Ray Johnson, a Grande Ronde Retirement Residence resident, on Wednesday. Members of the LHS A Cappella Choir sing for GRR residents in the right photo.



Dick Mason / The Observer

"When we walked in, they were so excited to see us," she said.

The residents she spoke with included Alice McMullen, with whom she discussed the success of Gonzaga University's nationally ranked men's basketball team.

Natalie Nobles also enjoyed meeting with seniors at Grande Ronde Retirement Residence.

"It is fun talking with different people," she said.

Nobles said talking with people with varied backgrounds and experiences is something she became accustomed to while working in her family's restaurant growing up.

The impact students like Nobles and Sumerlin had at Grande Ronde Retirement did not go unnoticed by Kylie Ward, the facility's Life Enrichment Coordinator.

"(The residents) love it. It allows them to reminisce

about what they once did," Ward said.

She added that having the chance to interact with young people lifts the residents' spirits.

"It inspires them to thrive," Ward said.

At Grande Ronde Retirement, Wildflower Lodge and Post Acute Rehab, the residents were also greeted by the LHS A Cappella Choir, which performed without

instrumental accompaniment. The choir sang songs first made popular generations ago including "America the Beautiful," "Billy Boy," "Danny Boy," "Home on the Range" and "My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean."

"The response (received by the choir) was great. They all asked us to come back," said Carson McClelland, a member of the A Cappella Choir.

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