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Testimony on

L.D. 2205, "*Resolve, to Require the Public Utilities Commission to Initiate a Feasibility Study to Evaluate Transmission Technologies and Siting Locations for Any Future Electric Transmission Line Proposed Pursuant to the Northern Maine Renewable Energy Development Program*"

Presented by
Representative Scott Wynn Cyrway
District 63

Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee
Tuesday, February 20, 2024

Good afternoon, Senator Lawrence, Representative Zeigler, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Technology:

I am State Representative Scott Wynn Cyrway, and I proudly represent District 63, which includes Albion, Freedom, Unity Township, and a portion of Winslow. It is an honor to appear before you today for the purpose of introducing of L.D. 2205, "*Resolve, to Require the Public Utilities Commission to Initiate a Feasibility Study to Evaluate Transmission Technologies and Siting Locations for Any Future Electric Transmission Line Proposed Pursuant to the Northern Maine Renewable Energy Development Program.*"

The LS Power transmission line project recently faced termination by the PUC. This highlights the need for a reevaluation of our energy goals by approving a feasibility study.

The purpose of a feasibility study is simple -- to explore the most effective ways to reach our energy goals while also preserving the natural beauty of Maine and the livelihood of its people. The LS Power project encountered significant opposition and scrutiny from our citizens, raising questions about the true costs, the proposed route, and the environmental impact of the line.

In the midst of these debates, alternative projects and feasibility studies from other states were presented, showcasing the use of underground transmission lines along existing highways and public lands. In states like Minnesota, New Hampshire, Vermont, and New York, where time was taken to do these feasibility studies in advance, the willingness of their residents to support the projects has been much greater.

Over, please

One additional point that should be raised is that the opposition of this transmission line was not specific to any political party. It is a bipartisan issue. When it comes to threatening someone's livelihood, it does not matter how they vote at the ballot box. With new projects in development, such as the 126 megawatt Downeast Wind in Washington County, we cannot afford to overlook Maine's pristine topography, along with the future of our residents, when writing bills that support our energy plans. We cannot sacrifice long-term, socio-economic benefits for short-sighted construction costs.

Right now, we have a quote from an engineering firm of $50,000 to do a feasibility study over the next six to eight months. This will allow us to find a well-thought-out strategy, backed by sound engineering principles, **before** reopening this project for proposals. If we can do that, then we can all get behind a plan that will work for the people, not against them.

Thank you for your consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.

Resolve, to Require the Public Utilities Commission to Initiate a Feasibility Study to Evaluate Transmission Technologies and Siting Locations for Any Future Electric Transmission Line Proposed Pursuant to the Northern Maine Renewable Energy Development Program

Sec. 1. Feasibility study required. Resolved: That the Public Utilities Commission, referred to in this resolve as "the commission," shall contract with an independent engineering firm to perform a study concerning the feasibility of the generation connection infrastructure necessary to connect up to the maximum number of megawatts permitted by ISO-New England, as designed pursuant to the Northern Maine Renewable Energy Development Program, as established in the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 35A, section 3210I, subsection 1, before the commission issues a new request for proposals for development and construction of the electric transmission line pursuant to Title 35A, section 3210I, subsection 2.

Sec. 2. Administration of feasibility study; partners. Resolved: That the commission shall contract with an independent engineering firm to formulate and administer the feasibility study. The commission may also contract or otherwise consult with an organization or firm with expertise in public policy related to energy, public utilities or infrastructure. The commission and its chosen partners for the feasibility study are referred to in this resolve as "the project team."

Sec. 3. Feasibility study; requirements. Resolved: That, in designing the feasibility study, the project team shall identify different technologies and methods for the development and construction of the high-impact electric transmission line, including a buried High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) method, and possible routes for the transmission corridor. With respect to each proposed solution, the project team shall evaluate:

1. The extent to which the proposed electric transmission line would satisfy the requirements of and advance the goals of the Northern Maine Renewable Energy Development Program;

2. The extent to which the proposed electric transmission line advances the clean energy goals of the State;

3. Infrastructure demands, including:

A. An analysis of the new infrastructure development necessary to complete the proposed electric transmission line and connect the line to the proposed King Pine Wind project in Aroostook County and other renewable energy resources in northern Maine;

B. The necessity and feasibility of integrating the proposed electric transmission line with existing infrastructure; and

C. Possible methods for integrating new or existing broadband infrastructure;

4. Resources needed for and possible obstacles associated with successfully and efficiently integrating with the electric grid;

5. The extent to which the proposed electric transmission line would affect the land, use of or enjoyment of the land, including:

A. Ecological and other environmental impacts;

B. Impacts on scenic character;

C. Impacts on recreational uses of affected land;

D. Impacts on historical sites;

E. The extent to which any proposed route would pass through privately owned land; and

F. The extent to which any proposed route would pass through a state-owned or federally owned nature preserve.

6. Economic impacts, including:

A. A cost-benefit analysis of the proposed electric transmission line; and

B. Economic impacts on the citizens, communities and municipalities affected by the construction and operation of the proposed electric transmission line;

7. Public health and safety considerations;

8. Reliability and resiliency of the proposed electric transmission line when exposed to inclement weather, natural disasters and other foreseeable stressors;

9. Longterm maintenance and repair;

10. Regulatory and permitting challenges;

11. Cost allocation; and

12. Community input.

Sec. 4. Deadline to complete feasibility study. Resolved: That the project team shall complete the feasibility study no later than January 1, 2026.

Sec. 5. Report. Resolved: That, after completing the feasibility study, the commission shall, no later than January 14, 2026, issue a report to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over energy, utilities and technology matters. The report must include:

1. A summary of the feasibility study; and

2. The project team's recommendations based on the conclusions of the feasibility study, including:

A. Preferred technologies and methods;

B. Recommended siting locations, including any advice concerning particular routes to be avoided; and

C. Any recommendations for additional legislation or further study.

The joint standing committee may report out a bill related to the report to the Second Regular Session of the 132nd Legislature.

Sec. 6. Further action by commission. Resolved: That the commission may not resume the request-for-proposals process pursuant to the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 35A, section 3210I, subsection 2 or otherwise continue developing an electric transmission line until the following conditions are met:

1. The feasibility study is completed;

2. The commission submits its report to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over energy, utilities and technology matters pursuant to section 5; and

3. The Second Regular Session of the 132nd Legislature is adjourned.

131st Maine Legislature

Resolve, to Require the Public Utilities Commission to Initiate a Feasibility Study to Evaluate Transmission Technologies and Siting Locations for Any Future Electric Transmission Line Proposed Pursuant to the Northern Maine Renewable Energy Development Program

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SUMMARY

This resolve requires the Public Utilities Commission to contract with one or more partners to initiate a study evaluating the feasibility of alternative technologies and methods and siting routes for the development and construction of an electric transmission line pursuant to the Northern Maine Renewable Energy Development Program. The feasibility study must include an evaluation of a number of factors, including, but not limited to, economic impacts, environmental impacts, public health concerns and a cost-benefit analysis of the proposed electric transmission line and requires the commission to consider community input. Upon conclusion of the feasibility study, the commission is required to issue a report to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over energy, utilities and technology matters, which must include a summary of the feasibility study and any recommendations by the commission and its partners. The resolve authorizes the committee receiving the report to report out a bill related to the report to the Second Regular Session of the 132nd Legislature. The commission may not resume the requestforproposals process or any other work on the electric transmission line until the feasibility study has been completed, the report has been submitted to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over energy, utilities and technology matters and the 132nd Legislature has adjourned.