



U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management

# News Release

Taos Field Office, New Mexico

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## **BLM Seeks Public Input on Proposed Verde Transmission Project**

### **Invites the Public to Public Scoping Meetings in Santa Fe and Española**

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is asking the public to help identify potential issues associated with a proposed high-voltage, overhead, power transmission line in Santa Fe and Rio Arriba counties. The BLM is responding to a right-of-way (ROW) application by Verde Transmission, LLC to construct a 33-mile transmission line that would connect the existing Public Service Company of New Mexico (PNM) Ojo Substation, in southern Rio Arriba County, to the existing Norton Substation, in Santa Fe County. The proposed ROW would be 150 feet wide and would include temporary access roads and staging areas for construction.

According to Verde Transmission, LLC, the proposed 345-kilovolt (kV) transmission project increases reliability in the area by increasing the capacity to transfer electricity between the two substations by approximately 600 megawatts. It will provide improved transmission access for local renewable and other energy sources. By creating a new connection between the two substations, the line will also allow the PNM more flexibility to schedule maintenance of transmission system components.

As part of its review process for the ROW request, the BLM needs to analyze the impacts of the proposed line. Based on its initial review, the BLM has determined that the proposed line could potentially impact cultural, visual, and wildlife resources; the Old Spanish National Historic Trail and the El Camino Real National Historical Trail; livestock grazing; and opportunities for recreation. Because most of the proposed route is located on Pueblo and private lands, the project has the potential to be near residential areas where the proposed line could create a substantial visual intrusion. As part of the application review process, the BLM and its cooperators will be working with local governments to address the concerns of their constituents, and will also be consulting with potentially affected Tribes.

If the ROW application for the project were to be approved, the BLM would have to amend the Taos Resource Management Plan because the proposed line is not consistent with the existing visual resource management classifications. Therefore, as part of the review process for the proposed project, the BLM will also be considering a potential plan amendment. Regardless of whether the plan is amended, mitigation measures would be required to reduce the visual impacts, as well as impacts to other resources, as appropriate.

The first step in the review process is the publication of a formal announcement opening the scoping period, and the beginning of a 60-day public comment period. That notice was published in the *Federal Register* on October 6, 2016. The BLM will host two informational public scoping meetings in Santa Fe and in Española. The scoping meetings will provide the public an opportunity to review the proposal and project information before submitting comments and resource information to the BLM. All meetings will be from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., with a formal presentation about the project proposal to begin at 6:30 p.m.

**Española Meeting**

October 24, 2016  
Northern New Mexico College  
Rooms AD101 & AD102  
921 Paseo de Oñate  
Española, New Mexico 87532

**Santa Fe Meeting**

October 25, 2016  
Courtyard Marriott  
3347 Cerrillos Road  
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87507

The BLM is the lead Federal agency for the public scoping process, though its final decision on the proposed route is limited to public lands administered by the BLM. The BLM has invited the following agencies to be cooperators: the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the National Park Service, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the New Mexico State Land Office, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Santa Fe and Rio Arriba county governments. Consultation will occur with three Native American Pueblo communities, including Pojoaque Pueblo, Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo, and Santa Clara Pueblo. The transmission line would also be located on private lands.

“Scoping meetings will provide the public an important opportunity to learn more about the project, share comments and concerns, and identify issues and alternatives to be considered during the environmental impact statement process,” said Sarah Schlanger, Field Manager at the BLM Taos Field Office. BLM staff and representatives of Verde Transmission, LLC will be available at the scoping meetings to explain project details and gather information from interested individuals or groups.

The public may provide comments at each scoping meeting. Comments can also be submitted to the BLM via the BLM project website at <http://www.blm.gov/nm/verde>, via email at [BLM\\_NM\\_Verde@blm.gov](mailto:BLM_NM_Verde@blm.gov), or by mail at the following address: Bureau of Land Management, Verde Transmission Line Project, P.O. Box 27115, Santa Fe, NM 87502-0115. The BLM will accept deliveries via courier/hand delivery to the Bureau of Land Management, Verde Transmission Line Project, 301 Dinosaur Trail, Santa Fe, NM 87508.

Please contact BLM Project Manager Adrian Garcia at (505) 954-2199 to be added to the project mailing list, or if you have questions.

-BLM-

The BLM manages more than 245 million acres of public land, the most of any Federal agency. This land, known as the National System of Public Lands, is primarily located in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The BLM also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM's mission is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of America's public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. In Fiscal Year 2015, the BLM generated \$4.1 billion in receipts from activities occurring on public lands.