

**STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
SITE EVALUATION COMMITTEE**

DOCKET NO. 2015-06

**JOINT APPLICATION OF NORTHERN PASS TRANSMISSION, LLC AND
PUBLIC SERVICE COMPANY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE D/B/A EVERSOURCE
ENERGY FOR A CERTIFICATE OF SITE AND FACILITY**

**PREFILED DIRECT TESTIMONY OF LINDA LAUER
ON BEHALF OF
THE GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

December 29th, 2016

Please state your name for the record

Linda Lauer, Grafton County Commissioner

Please summarize your education background and work experience.

I have a B.S.ED. with a major in chemistry from Clarion State University (Clarion, PA) and a Ph.D. in chemistry from Duquesne University. I spent 5 years in the U.S. Navy, including three years as a chemistry instructor at the U.S. Naval Academy. After leaving the Navy, I joined Martin Marietta (now Lockheed Martin) Corporation, where I worked in the Advanced Manufacturing Technology Department and the Materials Evaluation Laboratories, and ultimately served as manager of the Materials Evaluation Labs. While at Lockheed Martin, I directed multiple defense-related research projects, the last of which was development of a special glass for the F-35 optical system. After 26 years, I retired and moved to New Hampshire. In 2012, I was elected to the New Hampshire House of Representatives, where I served on the Environment and Agriculture Committee. I was appointed to complete the County Commissioner term of the late Ray Burton in January, 2014, was elected to the seat in the 2014 election, and was re-elected in the 2016 election.

Have you testified previously before the New Hampshire Site Evaluation Committee or other regulatory bodies?

I have not testified before the New Hampshire Site Evaluation Committee.

What is the purpose of your testimony?

My testimony discusses the short-term, long-term and permanent impacts of the Northern Pass project on Grafton County's economy, as well as Grafton County's environmental and historical resources. I also raise the continued problems associated with incorrect or incomplete information in the application and supplemental material, as well as the late disclosure of information. We continue to receive new information up until the drafting of this testimony. As new material comes in, and we have time to review the voluminous recently disclosed information, we request the ability to supplement this prefiled testimony.

The Grafton County Commissioners have serious concerns about the effects of the proposed Northern Pass project on the citizens and businesses of Grafton County.

What are your concerns about incomplete or inaccurate information in the application and supplemental material?

Grafton County is particularly troubled by the fact that we are unable to properly evaluate the economic, environmental and historical impacts in Grafton County due to inaccurate and/or insufficient information, as well as the late disclosure of information.

Just in the last two weeks we received diagrams that, to our understanding, depict the exact location of the burial of powerlines. We are evaluating the burial plan for over 70 miles of roadway and communities in Grafton County. There is no feasible way for us to properly do this by December 30th. In addition, Northern Pass has requested additional time to submit additional information. Additional time is necessary to review and respond to that material.

While we understand that the committee has disagreed with our position that the application was incomplete, we continue to believe that the application is incomplete until all information is available. We continue to request more time to comment once all the information is received and we have the appropriate time to review the material.

These specifics are absolutely necessary to properly evaluate the temporary and permanent impact on the economy, including tourism, and our historical and natural resources, as well as the safety of the project. Even the Counsel for the Public's experts were unable to properly evaluate the project due to lack of required information. This program's time line must be held in abeyance until the necessary information is provided.

To further complicate matters, there is concern that the diagrams may not be accurate. On December 18th, an intervenor brought to everyone's attention her concerns that the Northern Pass maps are inaccurate. This Grafton County citizen also noted that private properties are going to be encroached. She specifically noted the following:

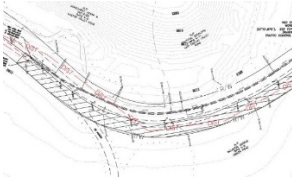
"the road widths on NPT's latest map of center Easton are still wrong, one can only conclude they are willfully so. DOT has the width here as 3 rods, and I have it as 40' because I have done more research. NPT knows the four rod width is wrong, yet it persists in producing bad maps. As Sabbow said, one can only imagine where else NPTs data is in error.

Rivers are not shown on some of the maps. No label, no blue. Without intimate familiarity with a location, one would not know where the rivers are.

Some culturally sensitive locations, however, are labeled in red with large red rectangles around them. One culturally sensitive location mapped by DOE teams would be covered by a proposed HDD work area

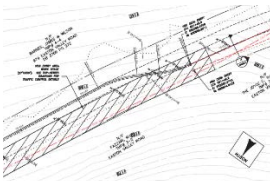
The HDD slurry pits do not appear to be shown at their proposed dimensions of 20' x 20' x 60', but considerably smaller." E-mail from Kris Pastoriza to Applicants and the Site Evaluation Committee dated December 18, 2016. She noted that

It is impossible to "go forward" with an assessment when the specs are wrong.

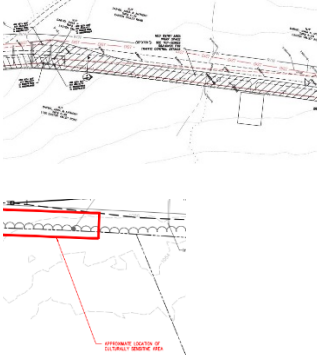


Map above shows a cross-hatched work zone on land that is private. The easement width here is 40' not the 66' NPT has drawn. Part of the private land is an extremely steep slope and the rest is wetland. The wetland is flagged, yet not shown on your map. The other side of the road is very closely bordered by a river.

Map below shows a cross-hatched work zone on private land. Steep slopes here as well, and a river on the opposite side of the road in the supposed easement, which is wrongly marked again.



More encroachment planned below, on conserved private property...



Other concerns about the plans are becoming evident, and will continue to become evident as the recently disclosed plans are reviewed by the members of the public directly impacted by the plans. For example, Dr. Campbell McLaren of Easton just provided notice that the plans encroach on his property, without his permission. It appears that the proposed plans encroach on his private property. It is the understanding of the commissioners that private property cannot be taken for this project against the will of the private landowners. While the commissioners have not been able to personally analyze these concerns of Grafton County residents on such short notice, the Grafton County Commissioners expect that the concerns outlined by these citizens will be clearly and directly addressed.

Where inaccuracies are identified, and where it is learned that private property is encroached upon, we must be able to modify our positions as well, and supplement our prefiled testimony. Accurate maps are an absolute prerequisite before intervenors must submit their full testimony. Private citizens must receive direct knowledge of any encroachment on their property.

Please describe Grafton County, NH and the role of county government.



Grafton County is 1750 square miles. The census population in 2010 was 89,118. Grafton County's median income for a household was \$53,075, for a family \$66,253. Grafton County's per capita income was \$28,170. About 5.1% of families and 9.8% of the population were below the poverty line. <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk>. This data is important. Grafton County citizens' homes are often their primary or only asset. Thus a drop in value of their residence has an enormous impact on their lives.

The county is the home of Dartmouth College and Plymouth State University. The White Mountain National Forest, the state's only national forest, is located in Grafton County. The Northern Pass plan goes through the scenic roads so vital to both property value and tourism in Grafton County.

The role of Grafton County in this process is to raise issues associated with this project in Grafton County. Counties perform services which work best when designed to meet local needs which are too expensive or too difficult for the towns themselves to provide. Individual towns have intervened in this matter, and we have reviewed and support their comments, as expressed in their prefiled testimony and other statements, including votes by citizens. We incorporate these comments by reference and do not need to repeat them.

County government has an executive branch consisting of three elected County Commissioners who jointly serve as the County's chief executive, and four elected department heads: the County Attorney, Sheriff, Register of Deeds, and Treasurer.

The County Legislative Delegation; this Delegation adopts an annual county budget which raises revenues and appropriates funds for county departments and programs. Grafton County has a budget of \$38,991,573 for Fiscal Year 2015 with \$21,603,608 to be raised by property taxes. The budget is Fiscal year 2016 is \$40,349,987.00 with 22,372,127.00 to be raised by property taxes. Property taxes is the primary source of income for county government in Grafton County. Thus any permanent impact on the tax base is of great importance. The Northern Pass' claims that individual property values will not decrease is without logic or merit. Of course a home's value will decrease in value if the scenic view is dominated by large powerlines. This decline is permanent.

What is the size of the project in Grafton County and why does that cause you concern?

The Northern Pass enters Grafton County in Bethlehem, New Hampshire. It starts with 4.9 miles of above ground powerlines in Grafton County, and then there is a planned "52.3 mile [buried] segment starting in the Town of Bethlehem at Route 302, following Routes 302, 18, 116, 112 and 3 and ending at the intersection of the transmission ROW and Route 3 in Bridgewater." (quoting the Applicant's executive summary). In addition, according to the executive summary, "[a]t the six locations where the overhead line transitions between the overhead line and cable, a 75' by 30' transition station will be

installed.” This segment of buried lines then continue above ground in Grafton County, with 1.6 miles of overhead lines dominating Ashland, 2 miles of overhead proposed in Bridgewater, and 2.5 miles of overhead lines in Bristol.

The routes are heavily traveled. As noted above, the routes include US 302 and NH 18, through the primary business district of Franconia; NH 116, the only direct route between Franconia and Easton; NH 112, the only direct route between the Haverhill area and the Lincoln-Woodstock area. US 3 is impacted literally through downtown Plymouth, and then continuing on with overhead lines transecting through Ashland, Bridgewater and Bristol. As noted above, each of these towns have already filed testimony about the negative short and long term impacts of the project on their towns, including the negative impact on the orderly development of the region. Comments by the towns include direct references to Master Plans. We are incorporating this material by reference, and do not need to reiterate it. The Grafton County Commissioners stand behind the concerns voices by the towns and its residents.

Each landowner and towns are experiencing significant impacts, individually. The cumulative effect in Grafton County cannot be overlooked as well. A major construction project through over 70 miles of well used roadways, will dramatically impact the economy of Grafton County as a whole. Thinking conservatively, Grafton County will be subjected to significant construction for the better part of a year. This large scale construction will dramatically impact the character of the county as a whole. This is vital, and impacts our economic base in that region of Grafton County, tourism.

What is the impact in Grafton County of the project during the construction phase?

The burial process will be disruptive to traffic flow along these roads and will have multiple negative economic impacts. We are also concerned about the safety of the practice itself, including the blasting necessary for the burial to occur. The plans can be analyzed for direct information on the nature and extent of the blasting that will occur in Grafton County.

Tourism, the major economic driver for the area, will be negatively impacted. US 302 is the primary route between Bethlehem and the Crawford Notch State Park, a popular tourist destination. Visitors to the area may very well choose to skip Grafton County during the lengthy construction phase and instead spend their time , and money, in the North Conway area rather than sit through traffic delays in Grafton County. The impact in the Bethlehem area, and along NH 112, the only route between the Lincoln-Woodstock area and Lost River Gorge and Boulder Canyon, another major tourist destination, are examples.

In addition to tourism effects, **commuter traffic** will be disrupted. A recent UNH Cooperative Extension study indicated that most workers in the Lincoln-Woodstock area live outside the town limits. Many residents of the Haverhill area work in the Lincoln-Woodstock area and must travel NH 112 on a daily basis. No reasonable alternatives exist for these employees.

The burial process along the proposed route will be **economically disruptive** to Grafton County businesses, both because of the disruption to tourism (e.g., the towns of Bethlehem, Lincoln, and Woodstock as mentioned above) and because business from local residents will be impacted by construction. The proposed route goes through the primary business district of Franconia, and small businesses such as the Franconia Village Store, Mac’s Market and the Dutch Treat restaurant will undoubtedly find that their patrons use other, more easily accessible businesses during the construction process. Some of the other businesses that are expected to be impacted include the Franconia Inn (on NH 116), Lost River Gorge and Boulder Canyons and Lost River Valley Campgrounds (on NH 112), Maple

Lodge Cabins, Jack O'Lantern Resort, and White Mountain Motorsports Park in Woodstock (on US 3), and the Pemi River Campground in Thornton (on US 3). Many of these businesses are seasonal, and the loss of even a few days of revenue can be significant to their annual revenue. The impact on downtown Plymouth businesses and the Plymouth area will be extremely significant, with every business along US 3/Main Street in Plymouth being impacted through the duration of construction in that area. In addition, Plymouth State University access as well as the Plymouth Area Senior Citizen program will be impacted. Because the Bridgewater and Ashland areas are facing above ground towers, this temporary impact will be permanent as well (see below).

It is recognized that some of the economic impacts in Grafton County along the buried portion of the route will be temporary. However, little definition of what constitutes temporary for this project exists. If the build shuts down a road for most of a season, many small business cannot weather loss of income for a season. The workforce from the Haverhill / Easton / Franconia areas will be effectively unable to get to work while the roads are closed. The length of time for the road closures: completely unknown. Moreover, the lack of compensation for the losses suffered by the businesses as a result of the Northern Pass construction cannot be ignored.

What are the permanent impacts in Grafton County caused by the Northern Pass project?

Permanent losses are a concern. Over ten miles of permanent, overhead lines will dominate our landscape. Where burial occurred, roads and communities will be permanently impacted with a dramatic change in character, often contrary to a master plan of development. Large structures will dominate small downtowns, a change in character that cannot be avoided.

The Northern Pass project must be responsible for adequately compensating all private citizens for their loss in value or damage to their property. The Northern Pass project cannot encroach upon private property without the permission of the landowner(s).

Unfortunately no adequate system to resolve disputes has been identified, only a mechanism to report concerns. Recourse when the Northern Pass denies a claim or individuals disagree with the Northern Pass's valuation of their loss appears to be file a civil lawsuit, a costly option that many cannot afford. The types of losses include, but certainly are not limited to, private well damage from construction, negative impact on property caused by trees/shrubs and/or walls being removed, cracked foundations or walls, as well as private drive damage. Effects of the construction process on private wells that are located adjacent to the proposed route is an enormous concern because there is no public water sources for residences, requiring reliance on private wells. The recently disclosed plans appear to encroach upon private property without landowner permission; this is not even legal. This project also transects the Appalachian Trail.

Where the lines are above ground, the permanent negative impact to the visual beauty of the region, again vital for tourism and property values, would be devastating to our tax base. Moreover, a large structure is envisioned in downtown Franconia. This structure would literally dominate the landscape in this charming village. This both destroys character of their downtown and impacts the economic development of the region.

Buried lines result in permanent impacts as well. Even if the buried lines go down the middle of the road, the maps indicate private property will be permanently and negatively impacted. Digging up along a significant portion of the roadway changes the character of the area. Trees, stone walls, and other landmarks will be permanently gone, not to be replaced. This alone changes the character of the region,

and not for the better. The economic impact of this change in character to our scenic byways is well documented by the Prefiled testimony of Carl Martland, the president of the North Country Scenic Byways Council. It also will result in tourists and people seeking to move to Northern New Hampshire to chose other alternatives, outside of these towns in Grafton County. The Commissioners recently received hundreds of pages of maps detailing the burial of the route. These maps are replete with references to the need to destroy natural resources, such as trees and shrubs, that will dramatically impact the character of the region, character that has an economic value. As Grafton County Commissioners, the permanent decrease in the value of properties could devastate the tax base into the future for all of Grafton County. It also would devastate many homeowners, who rely on their residence as their main asset.

If the lines are being buried, other yet unresolved problems arise. For example, ~~P~~one of the pre filed testimony ~~y~~ies notes- the problem of heat dissipation from the lines causing road damage from unequal temperature distributions across the road surface in cold temperatures. This would be a permanent problem, potentially the responsibility of the State or town. It is an enormous economic liability into the future as road repairs are disruptive and expensive.

Other long-term economic impacts to the towns along the burial route are also envisioned. The buried line will impact any other utilities that intersect the route, including water and sewer lines in Plymouth. The above ground lines in Ashland impact their town's infrastructure. The pre-filed testimony of both George Sansoucy and Sharon Penney specifically address this issue, so I won't repeat it.

Loss of value to property would have a significant, permanent ~~long-term~~ economic impact in Grafton County because taxes are raised based on property value. Short term revenue based on building the lines will not make up for permanent loss of property value. It is further clear that property values will decline, especially since there are alternatives.

The burial route proposed by Northern Pass presents multiple **environmental risks**. As an example, the proposed route along NH 116 crosses the Ham Branch and its tributaries in multiple locations. The Ham Branch has been classified as having one of the best brook trout habitats in the state. The effects of blasting and drilling on the water quality of this, as well as the many other wetlands, ground water and surface water along the proposed route, are of concern. It appears that the maps submitted by the Northern Pass may not even delineate all water sources, such as rivers and streams. This is not acceptable and precludes appropriate analysis. The Town of Bethlehem experts outlined concerns about negative impacts on wetlands. The Town of Ashland has clearly expressed concerns about its water. The Appalachian Mountain Club provided testimony of Dr. David Publicover about extensive environmental concerns. Recently received testimony outlines concerns about the blasting. We do not need to reiterate the extensive testimony outlining environmental concerns, but it is clear that Grafton County's environment is at stake in this project, especially since we are not looking at one source of impact on Grafton County's environment, but over 70 miles of impacts on our environment, both above ground, and below ground. Again the cumulative effect of multiple environmental impacts in Grafton County, each individually significant, cannot be underemphasized.

On all of the permanent impacts, we incorporate and include by reference the previously submitted testimony on behalf of the towns in Grafton County.

Do you have concerns that the Northern Pass will impact property values?

In the application, it notes that “Dr. Chalmers concludes that there is no basis in the published literature or in the New Hampshire research to expect that the Project would have a discernible effect on property values or marketing times in local or regional real estate markets.” The fact that perhaps experts have not had the occasion to research the decline in property value in New Hampshire by such a project does not mean there is no impact. On the contrary, that belays commonsense and indicates a complete lack of understanding of the economic importance of the scenic beauty of this area to property value. People chose Grafton County to live in due to its scenic beauty and natural resources. Second homes, for example, have value precisely because they are located in nature, and not dominated by powerlines. People will purchase their second homes elsewhere in New Hampshire, dramatically impacting real estate values in Grafton County.

Do you believe the Northern Pass will interfere with the orderly development of the region?

The application states that “[t]he Northern Pass will not interfere with the orderly development of the region. Any potential effect on land use will be minimal, and the Project will have positive effects on the local economy and jobs.” However, the information included in the application and the supplemental material shows the contrary. The jobs are all temporary, and there is insufficient guarantee that local individuals will receive the positions. The impact on property values is permanent. Moreover, the structures – the stations and the above ground lines – do interfere with the orderly development of the region, and the underground lines do as well, as the character of the towns are so dramatically impacted. I refer you to the testimony filed by the towns in Grafton County, along with their master plans.

The disruption in Main Street in Plymouth will be significant and changing. The Town of Ashland has documented serious concerns about their town infrastructure, including, but not limited to, its system of lagoons, raising significant safety concerns.

Do you believe alternatives exist that would not have such a significant impact on Grafton County and its tax base?

It is difficult to understand why the proposed burial route was chosen, when at least two alternatives exist that would minimize the above issues. The I-93 corridor option appears to have been summarily dismissed without any explanation, as has the option of using the existing energy corridors in the area. Maine has provided an example of using the highway system as a corridor and New Hampshire appears open to that possibility. Suffice to say that it is likely that there will, in fact, be long-term financial impact to Grafton County from the project.

Lastly, we understand that the state has a right of way from the center line of roads, but we do not understand how a public company has the same access to this right of way as the State. Put another way, we fail to understand why a private company can be allowed to negatively impact Grafton County.