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July 30, 2010

Dr. Jerry Pell
Office of Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability (OE-20)
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW.
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Dr. Pell:

On behalf of the City of Yonkers attached are comments on the scope of the DEIS being prepared for the proposed Champlain Hudson Power Express project.

If you have any questions regarding this material please do not hesitate to call me.

Sincerely,

Lee J. Ellman, AICP

**Champlain Hudson Power Express
Transmission Line Project
Environmental Impact Statement (DOE/ EIS-0447)**

City of Yonkers, NY Scoping Comments

The City of Yonkers, NY is the proposed location of the inverter station for the proposed Champlain Hudson Transmission Line Project. As such, it is the only place along the entire 385 mile route that will be subject to a permanent, visible, landscape and land use changing installation. The inverter station will be a significant addition to the Yonkers landscape changing the potential uses of the site upon which it sits. The scale of the inverter building will cause construction period impacts that are different than the short term impacts that other communities will experience from the cable burial. The landfall of the cables to and from the inverter will have both physical construction period impacts and long term developmental impacts upon the city as the cables may forestall development over them. Yonkers seeks to point out the areas of investigation that must be made a part of the DEIS for the CHPE Transmission line project.

1. Impacts on Land Use

The proposed project site is in an area of Yonkers that was formerly an industrial precinct. Industrial uses have been fading away in the vast majority of the area around the project site. It is more accurate to characterize the IPark/inverter site portion of the project site as a mixed use commercial park. There is as much office use as there is “industrial use” at this site; the industrial uses are what a planner would characterize as “light, non-nuisance, assembly and fabrication” and not as heavy industrial uses. The uses found around the proposed inverter site have more in common with a modern suburban mixed use office/commercial park than with the areas industrial history.

The proposed inverter site and the land fall area of the cables to and from that site are undergoing changes in land use that may not be reflected in the current zoning of these sites. The city of Yonkers would like to see the following areas addressed in the DEIS:

- 1.1. Properly characterize the areas land uses in a quarter mile radius around the inverter station and at the cable land fall.
- 1.2. Discuss the actual land uses in the IPark area that the inverter station is proposed to be located within in. Compare the compatibility of the inverter station to those uses. Discuss the impacts of the inverter station upon those current uses and upon the marketability of the site for such uses with the inverter station building in place.
- 1.3. Discuss the Alexander Street Master Plan (Master Plan, Urban Renewal Plan and BOA Plan) in light of that plans recent adoption, its land use controls over the proposed area for the inverter station and stated intentions for redevelopment by the City of Yonkers.

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- 1.4. Discuss the potential impacts of the inverter station on future economic development activities in the area including foreclosure of potential plans for commuter parking, redevelopment of the IPark parking lot and impacts of the industrial land use upon current plans.
- 1.5. Discuss the status of planning programs currently underway by the City of Yonkers and others that may be affected by the proposed cable land fall and by the location of the inverter station.
- 1.6. Discuss the potential impacts upon marina development and harbor management by the city of Yonkers due to the cables being in the Hudson River in the Yonkers area and the impact caused by the cables land fall in Yonkers.
- 1.7. Discuss the impact, if any, upon the Beczak Environmental Education Program and on the Yonkers Canoe Club.
- 1.8. Discuss the impact, if any, upon the continued use of the Yonkers Recreation Pier as a ferry port and a point of embarkation for other ship borne uses.
- 1.9. Discuss Alternative siting options for the inverter station. Can the station be moved within the general area of the current IPark proposal? Identify other sites for the inverter that will reduce or eliminate impacts to proposed plans. Identify other sites for the inverter that will have a positive land use impact.

2. Impacts on Cultural and Historical Resources

The proposed inverter station and the cable land fall are occurring in the oldest developed part of the city of Yonkers. The inverter station is proposed to be built on lands of the former Otis Elevator Plant. The older buildings surrounding the proposed inverter site have been determined to be National Register of Historic Places eligible. There are other potentially historic structures in the vicinity that need to be taken into account during permitting.

The following areas of investigation should be included in the DEIS:

- 2.1. The former Otis Elevator Plant, now called IPark, surrounds the proposed inverter site. Discuss the impacts upon these potentially historic buildings stemming from the construction of the inverter station. Discuss means to blend the proposed station into the historic architecture of the former Otis Plant.

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- 2.2. The Philips Manor Hall is approximately 500 feet from the proposed inverter site. Discuss potential construction and operational impacts upon this 17th century building stemming from the inverter station. Based upon local knowledge of the inverter site it is likely that pile driving will be required for construction. Additionally, delivery of construction materials to the inverter and land fall sites will likely pass the Manor Hall site. An important architectural historical feature of the Manor Hall is the papier mache ceiling in the parlor that has been deemed highly susceptible to vibration impacts. Discuss the impacts of construction activity (delivery of construction materials and pile driving) and operations activity (delivery of materials) from the inverter upon the Manor Hall.
- 2.3. Approximately 350 feet from the inverter site is the City of Yonkers Jail. Discuss the impacts of the inverter station construction and operations upon the city jail a) in its current use as a city jail and b) under proposals for reuse found in the Alexander Street Master Plan.
- 2.4. Approximately 500 feet from the inverter station is the Beczak Environmental Education Center. Discuss the impacts of the inverter and the cable land fall upon the operations and mission of the center and upon its potentially historic building (the former Habishaw Club site).
- 2.5. Approximately 350 feet from the inverter station and in the area of the cable land fall is the Westchester County North Yonkers Pump station. The 1930's vintage building is historically notable for its smoke stack built to appear as a light house. Discuss the impacts, if any, of the construction of the inverter and the cable land fall upon this locally important visual and historical resource.
- 2.6. Special care needs to be taken to properly characterize the archeological issues surrounding the inverter station site and the cable land fall. Local experience suggests that a Phase 1A archeological survey will be the minimum required and that there may be a need to have archeologists on site during construction. The nature and extent of archeological study needs to be determined in the course of the DEIS.
- 2.7. The Glenwood Power Station has been deemed in 2008, by the Preservation League of New York State, as one of their most threatened historic buildings in New York State. If the cable land fall will occur anywhere in the vicinity of this building the impacts of cable siting upon this building needs to be taken into account in the DEIS

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3. Impact upon Human Health: The area immediately surrounding the proposed inverter station and the area of the cable land fall (including the exit of the AC cable from the inverter station) are areas of high density of human use. The IPark/Otis Plant area is a densely populated mixed-use office and manufacturing area including public access uses such as the Yonkers Board of Education and the Yonkers Main Branch Public Library. Unlike a heavy industrial and commercial neighborhood there is significant numbers of persons using the area that have no reason to believe that there may be any health or safety issue present in the vicinity. Additionally, planning efforts on the part of the city of Yonkers would have this neighborhood even more densely populated with both employees and residents.

The following areas of investigation should be included in the DEIS

- 3.1. Explain the operation of the inverter station and the cables serving the station. Discuss the potential for explosion and/or fire of electrical equipment contained in the facility. Discuss mitigation measure to be taken to reduce impacts of potential fire and/or explosion such are deluge systems, fire suppression systems and the like.
- 3.2. Discuss the presence of any toxic materials used at the facility. Are there non-toxic materials used at the facility that when combined with other non-toxic materials at the faculty might become toxic?
- 3.3. Explain the electrical and magnetic field impacts of the proposed inverter station and the DC/AC cables coming to and leaving the station. The Alexander Street area is planned to become increasingly residential; are there any known impacts that would hinder that conversion from industrial to residential/mixed use usages? Are there any human health impacts upon workers in adjacent buildings in the IPark/Otis Plant complex? Are there any potential impacts upon equipment or manufacturing or research activities that may take place in the buildings surrounding the proposed inverter station or adjacent to the cables serving the station.
4. Impacts upon Air Quality: There are several businesses and many area employees and residents proximate to the proposed inverter station and the cable land fall that may be impacted by air quality issues. The city of Yonkers requests that the following issues be investigated and discussed in the DEIS:
 - 4.1. Investigate and discuss area businesses that would be negatively impacted by construction period air quality impacts. Discuss mitigation that can be instituted to eliminate any air quality impacts.

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- 4.2. Discuss air quality impacts of operation of the inverter station. Will there be ozone creation from the electrical equipment? Will there be any public health issues to area residents from the operation of the plant? What mitigation can be instituted to deal with air quality issues to area residents?
- 4.3. Yonkers has had several major transformer fires at Con Edison sub-stations. Discuss the potential for the same type of issues to occur at this facility. What impacts can be reasonably expected from such an event given the high population density in the area? What mitigation measures will be taken to reduce the potential for electrical substation type of fires?
- 4.4. Southwest Yonkers is an asthma problem area. Discuss any impact that might add to the asthma problem stemming from the proposed inverter station.
5. Visual Impacts: The proposed inverter site is in the forefront of a potential national register eligible site. Discuss the visual impacts of the proposed new structure and how these visual impacts might be mitigated by alternative design or siting. Prepare sections though the site to allow a good understanding of the relative heights of the new versus the old buildings. It is important to also prepare and show in the DEIS visual simulations of the proposed new building in its setting from public viewing locations. At a minimum the visual impacts from the Yonkers Train Station Platform should be shown. Typical to DEIS practice in NYS would be to also produce visual simulations of the impacts of the new visual element upon users of local resources including area parks, the Hudson River, the Palisade Interstate Park overlooks and from areas such as the Phillips Manor Hall, the Bell Place National Register Historic District, the Old Croton Aqueduct State Park, the locally landmarked Phillips Manor Hall historic district and notable viewing areas of the downtown such as Leslie Sutherland Park overlook in the Park Hill neighborhood. It is important that visual impact simulations be produced even from those sites, such as the Philips Manor Hall site, that may be screened from the inverter site. Proving the null impact to these important sites is a crucial part of the environmental review.

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6. Socio-economic impacts: the downtown area of Yonkers is making a positive transition after significant effort on the part of the city government, community and business groups and the various property owners in the downtown area. There is concern that the proposed inverter station may have negative impacts upon plans for the area and for the move towards a mixed use, commercial- residential downtown. The following issues should be investigated and discussed in the DEIS:
 - 6.1. Discuss the property tax implications of the proposed inverter station and any other real property installations that are a part of the proposed action.
 - 6.2. Examine and analyze the impacts of the proposed inverter station and cable land fall upon other properties in their vicinity. Will the inverter station have a positive or negative net property tax impact upon the city of Yonkers?
 - 6.3. Examine and analyze the occupancy impacts of the inverter station upon nearby properties. Will the inverter station cause a change in the quality of occupancy in the commercial buildings to the east of the proposed site? Will the inverter station have any impacts upon the residential community to the north of the IPark/Otis site?
 - 6.4. Examine the impacts upon the planned changes to the downtown area around the site of the proposed inverter station adopted planning documents. What socio-economic changes are likely with and without the inverter station?
 - 6.5. Can planned building programs be carried out with the inverter station in place? If the planned Metro Center program cannot be built with the inverter station in place detail the socio-economic differences between the Metro Center project and the inverter station project.
 - 6.6. Detail the tax impacts of the inverter station versus other planned uses of the site. Discuss employment at the site, income tax implications of employment at the site, sales tax spin-off impacts of employment at the site and the impacts upon the surrounding downtown with the inverter, with other planned uses and without the inverter.

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7. Environmental Justice: The city of Yonkers location within the regions geography has resulted in a large amount of region serving utility and transportation land uses that may have disproportionate impacts upon area residents. Yonkers hosts two major Con Edison substation facilities as well as other Con Ed transmission lines. The New York City water supply reservoir and aqueducts cross the city of Yonkers causing a level of development impacts. Transportation corridors such as the New York State Thruway and the several parkways use a larger amount of land in Yonkers than in other communities that these roads transit. While there are undoubtedly positive impacts from each of the above cited examples they nonetheless raise the question of whether or not the city of Yonkers and its residents are shouldering more than their fair share of the regions burden of these uses. Additionally, the city of Yonkers has a higher share of the county's low income and minority populations than would be proportionate to its share of the county's overall population. The area around the proposed inverter station is overwhelmingly low income and minority. The following issues should be discussed and examined in the DEIS:

- 7.1. Analyze and discuss in the DEIS the impacted population in the vicinity of the proposed inverter station that may be subject to environmental justice issues.
8. Miscellaneous issues.

- 8.1. Utility issues. The area surrounding the proposed inverter station is the oldest developed portion of the city. The city's experience with other development projects has shown that there are significant problems to be dealt with due to underground utilities that may not show on available plans. It is likely that work required underground will take longer than otherwise anticipated and may cause larger impacts to traffic than in other cases. The DEIS should take this fact into account in all relevant sections.
- 8.2. Made land. The area surrounding the proposed inverter station, particularly the Alexander Street area, is made land that did not exist 100 years ago. Projects built in the immediate vicinity have had to drive piles to approximate depths of 100 feet. The impact of pile driving on other land uses and historic buildings has been noted in earlier comments. The cable land fall may have to be supported on piles and the impacts of that activity should be investigated in the DEIS.
- 8.3. City of Yonkers infrastructure. Will the inverter station require service from city of Yonkers infrastructure including water, storm or sanitary sewer? What volume of water will be required at the inverter station? Will potable water be used for any reason other than human consumption and sanitary needs? Where will connections for city infrastructure be made? Does sufficient capacity exist for the needs of the inverter station or will new connections be required to be made?