

# Cassia County Gateway West Transmission Line

## Task Force Meeting Minutes February 22, 2010

### Opening:

The Cassia County Gateway West Transmission Line Task Force met for a special meeting held at 3:27 P.M., February 22, 2010, in the City Hall Council Chambers, Burley, Idaho. The meeting was recorded in digital format and is available on the county website at [www.cassiacy.org](http://www.cassiacy.org).

### A. Call to order

[3:27pm](#) Chairman Brent Stoker called the meeting to order. Brent gave an update and current status of the project since the last meeting held by this group, noting the group's task of producing the figures of annual costs for properties affected by the transmission line. With recommendations from Judicial, Legislative, and the Governor's Office, as well as Federal level (BLM), Stoker stated that this group's task is to come up with official credited annual costs. Stoker introduced Wilson Gray, University of Idaho Social Science Research Unit, who will provide comment regarding conducting a qualified survey to obtain annual costs, and absolute evidence of costs of expenses for affected property owners, for potential judicial review.

### B. Survey Review

[3:35pm](#) Wilson Gray gave a brief overview of the process of obtaining the sample data in a statistical and appropriate manner. He displayed and reviewed a draft of the proposed survey, based on information that was previously submitted, including considerations for irrigation systems, CAFO operations, crops, agricultural practices, weed control, etc... He noted some modifications of adding a question regarding whether or not a property owner has had experience with a transmission line going through their property: if so, than an additional survey might be conducted to generate specific data based on those specific experiences. He stated that primary survey would be distributed to a broad sample of producers across the counties involved, then possible resurveying just those who have had experience with transmission line costs regarding their properties. Doug Balfour, Power County, asked questions and provided comment regarding what questions would be asked on the second survey, to determine not only costs but impacts of production on properties for comparison. Kindra Munk, Power County, asked a questions regarding how to determine future expenses. Lynn Steadman, Cassia County provided comments regarding procedures for basing answers to the surveys, and noted question of how to account for potential costs and/or liability for certain agricultural processes such as burning crop residuals. Stoker asked Gray how many more questions could be added and what the cost constraints might be to further customize the survey. Gray responded that they were pretty close to the postage limit now with the survey, and that additional survey questions would bump the cost into the next postage category. Doug Balfour asked if a list of owners currently dealing with transmission lines could be provided for the survey to help expedite the process. Gray responded that a list could certainly be submitted. Lynn Steadman commented on the additional insurance costs and increased liability costs. Vicki Meadows, Power County asked how many surveys they were planning on sending out. Gray responded that for Cassia County they were planning on sending out at least 300. Dan Olmstead, Idaho Power, asked if the survey sample and size, will include company blind customers, or will it apply to several power customers. Gray responded that the survey will be company blind, with a list of farm operations provided by the assessor's office, and then a sample taken from that list. Olmstead also recommended for the survey to include what time the property was developed and when the irrigation equipment was installed. Joe Tugaw, Cassia County, commented on the perspective of looking to future plans for property development, and noted to consider that potential costs in the future may be greater than the costs today. Vicki Meadows asked if Power County would be included in the survey. Stoker responded that Cassia County has already donated services (mapper, assessor, etc...) for the project and are aware that monetary expenses for the survey will occur. Stoker asked the neighboring counties present to request from their commissions to participate in the survey project to share the costs and to provide the best possible data for the survey. Gray noted that the estimate for the Cassia County 300 surveys was right

around \$9,000.00. Stoker commented on the cost effectiveness that this survey could provide to be proactive and economical for the cause. George Urie/Twin Falls County noted that he would have to take the matter back to the commission for review, and asked what the purpose for determining this value was. Stoker replied that the data will help with negotiations between the land owners and the power companies in the future, no matter where the line ends up. Balfour noted that the BLM will also analyze the data to help determine the overall cost of the project dependent upon which route is taken. Cecil Sweeten/Oneida County commented that they would be committed to cooperating with other counties, even though they have a minimal amount of irrigated farmland. Urie commented that until they know exactly where the route will be, it will be hard to pinpoint the areas of impact. Vicki Meadows will take it back to Power County Commissioners, and that she believes that the survey will be a valuable tool. She asked if their task force could have the opportunity to review the survey before it's distributed to see there is anything they can add. Gray responded that he would have to check with the statistical analysis group to see how adding additional counties and questions to the survey could affect the cost and process. Stoker commented again that this survey would be a proactive tool to help further down the road with this and future power projects that may come this way. Doug Pickett/ Cassia County task force commented on the importance for the counties to work together on this now rather than wait for the federal process to take shape. Lynn Steadman commented again on the importance of trying to get all the costs included in the survey, to do the survey right the first time. Joe Tugaw commented on whether the survey would hold up in a court of law. Gray addressed his credentials as an economist for the group. Balfour commented on the validity of the survey as being admissible in court.

Stoker entertained a motion from the Cassia County Task force members present (14) to recommend to the board of Cassia County Commissioners to have the survey conducted. A motion to this effect was made and seconded, with the majority ten (10) present in favor, none opposed, and 4 abstentions. The motion carried.

Stoker asked Gray if residential interests could be represented in a small way on the survey. Comments were made regarding the effects of resale value on residential properties that may be affected. Dave Nebeker commented that it would be appreciated if the potential effects on people with this power line would be considered with as much value and same respect as the potential effects on sage grouse.

Gray noted that once the participating counties are known, they can then get information and cost projections distributed for review.

Joe Tugaw provided an update on the WEC/NTTG meeting, noting the lack of private landowner's representation on these organizations. He noted the values placed on airports and endangered species in determining transmission line routes.

Stoker thanked the participation from the local task force as well as the area counties represented here. Bill Funk, Power County, commented on his experience with power lines on his property. Gray commented on promoting the survey to get the best response. Steve Hepworth offered to provide funds to publish a notice in the newspaper to help promote the survey.

Chairman Stoker entertained a motion for Cassia County to take the lead to work with the surrounding counties on support and participation in the survey process, through e-mail correspondence. So moved.

With no further discussion, this meeting was adjourned at 5:04 P.M.

**Minutes submitted by:** Susan M. Keck, Deputy Clerk, Cassia County

**Approved by:**