

West-side issues

As a retired electrical engineer, I would like to add my support to the article *Engineers united on east side* (Dec. 8) and to Jim Collinson's column beside it, *All or nothing wrong approach on east side*. The increased losses and pollution from manufacturing the additional steel and aluminium needed for the longer route will far outweigh the environmental damage of the east transmission line right-of-way.

The environmental damage can be minimized by routing the line to avoid locally sensitive areas, such as wetlands, and by using selective clearing of the right-of-way in forested areas. Selective clearing involves clearing the small area around the transmission line tower and removing tall trees in mid-span, which, if they fall, could contact the transmission line conductor.

The cost of clearing is significantly increased, as hand-clearing is usually required. However, the visual and environmental impact is greatly reduced by this method. In very sensitive areas, construction and maintenance could be done by helicopter.

Helicopter construction and maintenance adds considerably to the cost but nowhere near the additional cost of the west route. These techniques are well known to transmission-line engineers but evidently not to our politicians.

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