

INTRODUCTION

edr Companies (**edr**) is preparing an Environmental Assessment Report (EAR) on behalf of the Development Authority of the North Country (DANC), who are proposing to provide upgraded communications to local medical facilities in the Village of Lake Placid. As part of this effort, DANC is proposing to attach fiber optic cable to the existing National Grid 115kV Lake Placid transmission line for approximately 3.9 miles between the Hamlet of Ray Brook and the Village of Lake Placid in the Town of North Elba, Essex County, New York (the "Project"; see Figure 1). The proposed Project is located within the Adirondack Railroad Right of Way (ROW), which is owned and maintained by the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT). Prior to its construction, the National Grid 115kV Lake Placid transmission line was subject to Article VII of the New York State Public Service Law and a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need was granted by the New York State Public Service Commission (PSC) on August 14, 1978. In accordance with condition 14 of the PSC Commission Order, National Grid is required to report any proposed changes to the PSC for approval.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

As a New York State Public Benefit Corporation, DANC is a recipient of grant funds to build broadband throughout rural New York State as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). As part of this effort, DANC is expanding the communications network in the Adirondack Park from Gouverneur to Elizabethtown in Franklin and Essex Counties. The new communications network comprises the attachment of a 96 strand All-dielectric Self-supporting Optical Cable (ADSS) to existing transmission and distribution pole structures along state and local roads.

ROUTE DESCRIPTION

The Project is located entirely within the Adirondack Park in Essex County (see Figure 2). The Project begins with the attachment of the fiber optic line from the local distribution line to pole 53 on the existing National Grid 115 kV Lake Placid transmission line, located immediately south of State Route 86 near Brookside Drive on the eastern edge of the Hamlet of Ray Brook. The line proceeds in a generally east-southeasterly direction for 3.9 miles, running alongside the Adirondack Railroad. The Project terminates at pole 2, where the line will be buried for approximately 300 feet before continuing north outside of the Project area and eventually attaching to overhead distribution lines adjacent to the intersection of Old Military Road and Mill Pond Drive at the western edge of the Village of Lake Placid (see Figure 2). For the purposes of this EAR, the Project Area is defined as a corridor including 50 feet to either side of the existing Adirondack Railroad.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (NYSOPRHP) on-line Geographic Information Systems (GIS) database, and NYSOPRHP State Preservation Historical Information Network Exchange (SPHINX) database (NYSOPRHP, 2006, 2012a, 2012b) were reviewed to identify historic properties that are listed in, or have previously been determined eligible for listing in, the NRHP located within 0.5 mile of the Project corridor. These sites are listed in Table 1 and their locations depicted in Figure 3.

Table 1. Historic Sites within 0.5 Mile of the Project

Site Name	Status	Municipality	Distance to Line ¹
New York Central Railroad Adirondack Division Historic District	NRHP-listed	Town of North Elba	0.00 mile
Daniel Ames Farm	NRHP-eligible	Town of North Elba	0.18 mile

¹ Mileage in this column is the shortest distance to the any portion of the project.

The entire Project is located within the New York Central Railroad Adirondack Division Historic District, which includes the 80-foot-wide ROW associated with the existing Adirondack Scenic Railroad (Smith, 1993). The historic district includes approximately 118 miles of active railroad ROW and includes 41 buildings or features associated with the operation of the railroad. The only contributing feature located within the Project corridor is the railroad track (including ties), which is considered to be one feature for the purpose of the NRHP listing (Smith, 1993). In 2001, the NYSOPRHP, Federal Highway Administration, and NYSDOT entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) which set forth the process NYSDOT would follow for the rehabilitation and reactivation of the Remsen Lake/Lake Placid travel corridor, and included identification of projects or actions that would not affect the New York Central Railroad Adirondack Division Historic District (McVoy, 2001). Although actions specifically related to the existing National Grid 115kV Lake Placid transmission line are not addressed in the MOA, the general types of projects that are defined as “unlikely to have any impact on historic properties” include those do not introduce new structural or visual elements, and do not require substantial ground disturbance (McVoy, 2001).

The Project includes installation of a single fiber-optic cable on existing transmission line structures that already carry three circuits of wires. The Project’s potential effect on a given historic property would be a change (resulting from the introduction of the fiber-optic cable) in the historic district’s visual setting (CFR 2004). As it pertains to historic properties, setting is defined as “the physical environment of a historic property” and is one of seven aspects of a property’s integrity, which refers to the “ability of a property to convey its significance” (NPS 1990:44-45). Adding the fiber-optic cable to the existing transmission line will not result in a significant effect on the visual setting for the historic district. The proposed installation of the fiber-optic cable is consistent with the types of actions defined as “unlikely to have any impact on historic properties” per the NYSDOT’s MOA for the historic district (McVoy, 2001). Due to the limited scope of work proposed (i.e., adding a cable to an existing transmission line), no significant adverse visual effect on any historic resource is anticipated.

According to the NYSORPHP online GIS database (NYSOPRHP, 2012a), the easternmost portion of the Project corridor is within an area designated as archaeologically sensitive, indicating that this area is within one-mile of a previously reported archaeological site. Proposed ground disturbance activities for the Project are limited to locations where additional guy wires will be installed at 28 existing transmission-line pole structures. The new guy wires will be installed using a small piece of construction equipment (Skylift Ranger 40) to set the new anchors. The unit will be mobilized and deployed from a track-mounted pick-up truck with a track-mounted trailer that will run on the adjacent Adirondack Scenic Railroad. All new guy wire anchors will be installed within 18-24 inches of existing anchors and will not extend past these existing anchors into the ROW. All proposed ground disturbance will occur with previously disturbed areas within the existing railroad and transmission line ROW, and no soil disturbance activities are proposed in new locations that could affect previously reported or unknown subsurface archaeological sites. Therefore, the Project will not have any effect on archeological resources.

REFERENCES CITED

Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). 2004. 36 CFR 800 – Protection of Historic Properties [incorporating amendments effective August 5, 2004]. <http://www.achp.gov/regs-rev04.pdf>.

McVoy, G. 2001. Memorandum of Agreement, Remsen/Lake Placid Travel Corridor, Regions 1, 2, & 7. Memorandum issued by the New York State Department of Transportation, January 19, 2001.

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation (NYSOPRHP). 2006. *New York State State/National Register Listings Shapefile*. Obtained May 4, 2009 from Cristina Croll, Senior Natural Resources Planner, OPRHP.

NYSOPRHP. 2012a. *NY State Historic Preservation Office GIS – Public Access*. Available at: <http://pwa.parks.ny.gov/nr/> (accessed May 10, 2012).

NYSOPRHP. 2012b. *SPHINX System*. Available at: <http://pwa.parks.ny.gov/SPHINX/> (accessed May 10, 2012).

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