Joseph Capuano

 95 North Vernon St.

 Athens, NY 12015

December 5, 2013

Secretary Kathleen H. Burgess

NYS Public Service Commission

3 Empire State Plaza

Albany, NY 12223-1350

Re: Case 13-T-0292 – West Point Partners Transmission Project

Dear Secretary Burgess,

I am writing to you to express my strong opposition to the West Point Transmission Project that would bury high voltage direct current cables through the Village of Athens, New York. My family has resided at the above address for over 40 years. We consider this proposed project to be an affront to our community and an unwelcome assault on our values. We believe it is deeply unfair that outside interests could bypass the will of the citizens of our village, do irreparable harm to the environment and the quality of life in our community, and unnecessarily plunder our resources all for corporate profits that will never be shared with our community. It is insulting to imagine that any such plot to make profits at our expense could be legal or could enjoy the cooperation of our State agencies.

It is my estimation that this project lacks the merits to proceed. It is not needed, the impacts are too great, and it is not in the public interest. Furthermore, it does not represent the best option available. What is clear is that this is all part of some “Amazing Race” to be first entity to get power downstate to serve New York City at any cost. The NYS Public Service Commission has not made clear what criteria it will use to determine whether this project is needed and if it is in the public interest. This project does not minimize the impacts to the environment or the quality of life for the residents of Athens. Furthermore, this project was developed in virtual secrecy, without the full participation of the public.

This project is not needed. For example, the Champlain Hudson Power Express will already bury a cable under the Hudson River to bring power downstate. The burden of providing affordable, clean energy to New York City should not be borne by the residents of a relatively rural, historic village. That burden should be borne by the residents of the communities that require the power. New York State should be promoting energy conservation efforts, as well as renewable energy development for New York City to take advantage of local power production potential while also reducing the burdens and environment impacts of long-distance transmission, energy loss, and pollution. We chose and continue to choose to live in Athens precisely because it is quiet, clean, and close to nature. This project will jeopardize these very qualities that we hold so dear.

The impacts of this project are too great. This project will literally tear up our streets and properties and cut our village like a fish. For years, we will have to endure significant hardships, such as the noise of construction, unsightly construction equipment, and restricted access to our homes and streets. In addition, property owners will have their property torn up. To add insult to injury, this project would effectively create a permanent easement on our properties to allow for the maintenance and repair of the transmission lines. This might not seem to be important point, but people who live in small towns take great pride in their property and spend their time and treasure to keep it looking nice. For example, I have personally planted dozens of trees that might have to be cut down and the Invisible Fence for our dogs would be damaged. Furthermore, we will be forced to live with the electro-magnetic field pollution emanating from the power lines. Finally, it is important to note that a significant portion of the proposed path (e.g., North Vernon Street and Union Street) contains a seasonal wetland. This area does not have a formal wetland designation, but that is not because it is not a wetland, but rather because resource constraints at the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers limit such designations.

The project is not in the public interest. Of course, this depends on how the “public” is defined. However, if the public is defined as the residents of Athens, it is not in the public interest. I have spoken to numerous residents along the proposed path and every single one of them deeply opposes this project. The residents of Athens will not benefit from the power provided. In contrast, we will face adverse risks to our property values. The residents of Athens won’t make any profit from this endeavor. Any cost/benefit analysis will show you that the residents of Athens will bear all the costs and all the benefits will go to the shareholders of this project.

This project does not represent the best option available. The route designated in the permit application would maximize the impact to the community. It goes right past our elementary school, go along a main street with numerous residences, and cut across the main road in/out of the village along the river. Construction would cut two of four exit/entry points into and out of the village. One could hardly imagine a path that would be more disruptive. Meanwhile, there are numerous alternative routes that could be used that would have a lower impact. Furthermore, it is not clear that any project involving the Leeds sub-station is necessary at all.

For these and many other reasons, I am deeply against this project. My family, friends, and neighbors share my objections. We hope the NYS Public Service Commission will do the right thing and prevent this unnecessary and reckless project.

 Sincerely,

 Joseph Capuano