



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## Power line upgrades must move forward, Senator Maziarz says

GEORGE D. MAZIARZ January 22, 2014

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People use electricity in their homes and businesses every day and, since electrical power has been available to most of us for our entire lives, we also tend to take it for granted. Most people only think about the energy that powers their home once a month when they pay their utility bills, and in that case their typical question is, “why is my bill so high?”

One reason that your bill is so high is New York’s antiquated and inefficient electrical transmission system that is badly in need of an upgrade. The last major transmission project in our state was completed in 1988 and 85% of our transmission infrastructure was constructed before 1980. Due to the problems inherent in an older system, we cannot transfer power effectively from abundant upstate generation resources to the New York City market, where prices and demand are high. This scenario threatens upstate generation jobs and causes massive system congestion that increases energy rates across our state by \$650 million a year. This means higher utility bills for individuals and businesses.

In 2012, the Governor announced his Energy Highway initiative to address this problem. The goal was to develop transmission improvement projects that would ease congestion charges, allow the transfer of an additional 1000 megawatts of power from upstate generators to New York City, and create thousands of additional jobs in the process. As a part of this process the Public Service Commission (PSC) initiated the AC transmission proceeding in order to vet various transmission proposals. As of this writing the PSC has whittled down the list of

possible developers to just four and it is moving forward with the RFP and Article VII process on a dual track. I fully support this initiative and have expressed that support on the floor of the Senate, in press conferences, and in continuous filings before the PSC.

Let me be clear about the positive impact that the implementation of a successful transmission upgrade proposal would have in terms of our economy: This would be the largest statewide economic development driver that has been seen in decades. Here are just a two of the high points:

- **The implementation of a successful transmission upgrade proposal will generate more than \$7 billion in economic activity in the state and will create 12,000 direct and nearly 38,000 total jobs.**
- **The proposed transmission projects will facilitate the development of renewable generation. This, in turn, will generate almost \$4.6 billion of economic activity and create an additional 8,000 direct jobs.**

The benefits of completing these projects are not just economic, as there are also significant benefits for our environment. Emission of CO<sub>2</sub> and NO<sub>x</sub> will be reduced by 370,000 tons and 200,000 tons, respectively.

These transmission projects are good for the economy, good for the environment, and good for working men and women in our state.

However, time and again steel-in-the-ground economic development projects that would benefit our state have been stymied in the regulatory process or succumbed under pressure from special interests. We simply cannot let that happen this time.

In upstate New York, we have seen industry after industry leave as jobs were outsourced to other states or other countries. Our power generation industry has been the one glaring exception. Upgrading transmission will allow this industry to continue to thrive, while reducing energy rates for all consumers and improving our environment. It is the kind of win-win scenario that we are always looking for.

The PSC should implement the Governor's streamlined siting process for transmission lines in existing right of ways and move forward on these upgrades as soon as possible. The stakes are too high for them to do otherwise.

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