

Richmond Times-Dispatch

Alternate route proposed for Dominion pipeline

- By RACHAEL SMITH The News & Advance
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An alternative route for the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline that would avoid Nelson County has been submitted by Dominion Resources Inc. in its “Route Alternatives” resource report to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

Dominion filed the report, along with a general project description report, on Friday as part of the pre-filing process required by FERC.

Dominion’s preferred route, along which surveying work has been ongoing since October, runs 554 miles from West Virginia to North Carolina, traversing 35 miles in Nelson. In the report, it is identified as the eastern alternative route.

A western alternative route would be about 607 miles long, originating in Clarksburg, W.Va., and ending near Lumberton, N.C. It would run through Danville and Chapel Hill, bypassing Nelson entirely.

The western route is almost 70 miles longer and crosses more federal and state land as well as nearly 86 more miles of forested land, the report said.

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But it also crosses fewer wetlands and fewer miles of historic places than the eastern route.

Dominion spokesman Jim Norvelle said the report presents discussion on alternatives for the pipeline and shows adjustments that have been or could be made to the preferred route.

“We needed to show the FERC why we have chosen the eastern alternative as the preferred alternative,” he said. “All of the work that we are doing on this project — talking with landowners, having information open houses, meeting with county boards of supervisors and commissioners — is along our preferred route. ”

The submission of alternative routes is required by FERC as part of the pre-filing process.

“I cannot tell you what FERC can or will do,” Norvelle said of which route the agency would approve.

“Many of the alternatives, variations and adjustments have been made part of the proposed route because of fewer impacts to the environment, historic and cultural resources,” he said.

Dominion is looking for the shortest route between the proposed delivery points with consideration of engineering constraints, crossing of public land, stakeholder concerns and impacts on environmental sources, the report states.

Dominion also investigated using other existing pipelines, such as the Mountain Valley Pipeline and Transco’s Western Marcellus Pipeline, according to the report.

New pipeline construction of up to 300 miles would be required to connect source areas in West Virginia to the Transco mainline. The report concludes that the environmental impact would likely be similar to or greater than that of building the Atlantic Coast Pipeline.

Marion Kanour, co-organizer of anti-pipeline group Free Nelson, said the group strongly encourages Dominion to use existing easements as the route of choice if the project moves forward, but would prefer the pipeline not be built at all.