

New pipeline routes stir new opposition at Dominion meeting

- [Rachael Smith](#)
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Residents gather around a map that outlines proposed routes in Nelson County.

Until about three weeks ago, David Schwiesow hadn't given much thought to the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline that has been a hot issue among Nelson property owners whose land might be the eventual site for the 42-inch pipeline.

But that changed when he found out Dominion Resources has identified his property as a potential alternate route for the natural gas pipeline.

Now, the Fortune's Point resident is trying to figure out how to protect his land, researching anything and everything he can find on the project in the process.

For him and many other Nelson County residents along the new proposed alternate routes, the Dominion open house last Thursday was just the first step in becoming more educated about the project.

Schwiesow describes his six-house community as historic and still is weighing the pros and cons of the pipeline. What previously was an issue that didn't affect him directly now has become personal.

"The pros are tax revenue for the county which will be substantial," he said. "Some jobs and energy independence for our country, and I still support the pipeline — but put it where you have electric utility rights of ways. Put it someplace that is already scarred that doesn't hurt people.

"The cons are the impacts on the natural beauty here, and now I'm more upset. Now it's personal, now they are destroying my property. So we are going to fight it tooth and nail."

For some residents who just three weeks ago were notified of new potential routes that could take pipeline infrastructure through their property, the open house at Nelson County High School was a new experience. To others, the event was yet another chance to let Dominion in on their thoughts.

"Even more people are threatened now — and many people who hadn't been paying as much attention before," said Joanna Salidis, president of the anti-pipeline group Friends of Nelson. "And they are really getting up to speed."

After announcing the alternate pipeline routes, Dominion scheduled its third informational open house; this one focused on those new options.

If approved and built, the pipeline would transport natural gas roughly 550 miles from West Virginia southbound through Nelson County and into North Carolina.

The new routes were developed after many conversations with landowners and local, state and federal officials, said Dominion spokesman Jim Norvelle. New survey letters were sent Feb. 23 to landowners along the alternate routes — the "Appalachian Trail South," "East of Lovingston," "East of Lovingston Connector," and "Wingina" routes.

Using these routes, the pipeline would cross fewer bodies of water and would bypass areas landowners previously said were a concern, such as Davis Creek, an area hit hardest by Hurricane Camille and the Norwood-Wingina Historic District.

"We were asked by a number of stakeholders to look at potential alternatives and that is what we are doing," Dominion spokesman Chet Wade said. "Because of this, we have a new group of landowners who are becoming more interested and more involved in the process."

Lovingston resident Julian Bryant is on the proposed "East of Lovingston Connector" path, where he owns 120 acres of "absolutely, positively gorgeous views, high up on the bluff of the right, deep dark forest" — his brother has plans to build a home there.

"And now the pipeline wants to come right through the heart of the property, a full half-mile right through the forest, right through the meadows," he said. "It would be devastating to the property. We will do everything we can to oppose this."

Wade said Dominion has not been able to identify any viable option that, at some point, does not run the pipeline through Nelson.

"Nelson is right in the middle of where we are coming from and where we have to go," he said.

Shipman resident Janice Jackson still is not pleased with the alternates, saying the project would have a devastating effect on the area's black communities.

"The latest re-route in Wingina would affect families and cemeteries along Cabell Road and [Virginia] 56," she said. "Combine this with a large number of parcels and houses in the Wheeler's Cove and Peavine areas. These include several African-American families with history going back at least five or six generations. When will Dominion figure out that they are going to run into significant barriers wherever they try to route in Nelson County?"



Affected landowner Will Fenton of Roseland constructed his own homemade “pipeline,” which depicts just how big the 42-inch structure would be.

The first steps in evaluating route alternatives involve identifying and trying to avoid potential constraints, Norvelle said. Before Dominion can submit a final route, surveyors will need to analyze all their options.

“Surveys are the only way to understand fully the potential benefits and constraints of these potential alternatives,” he has said.

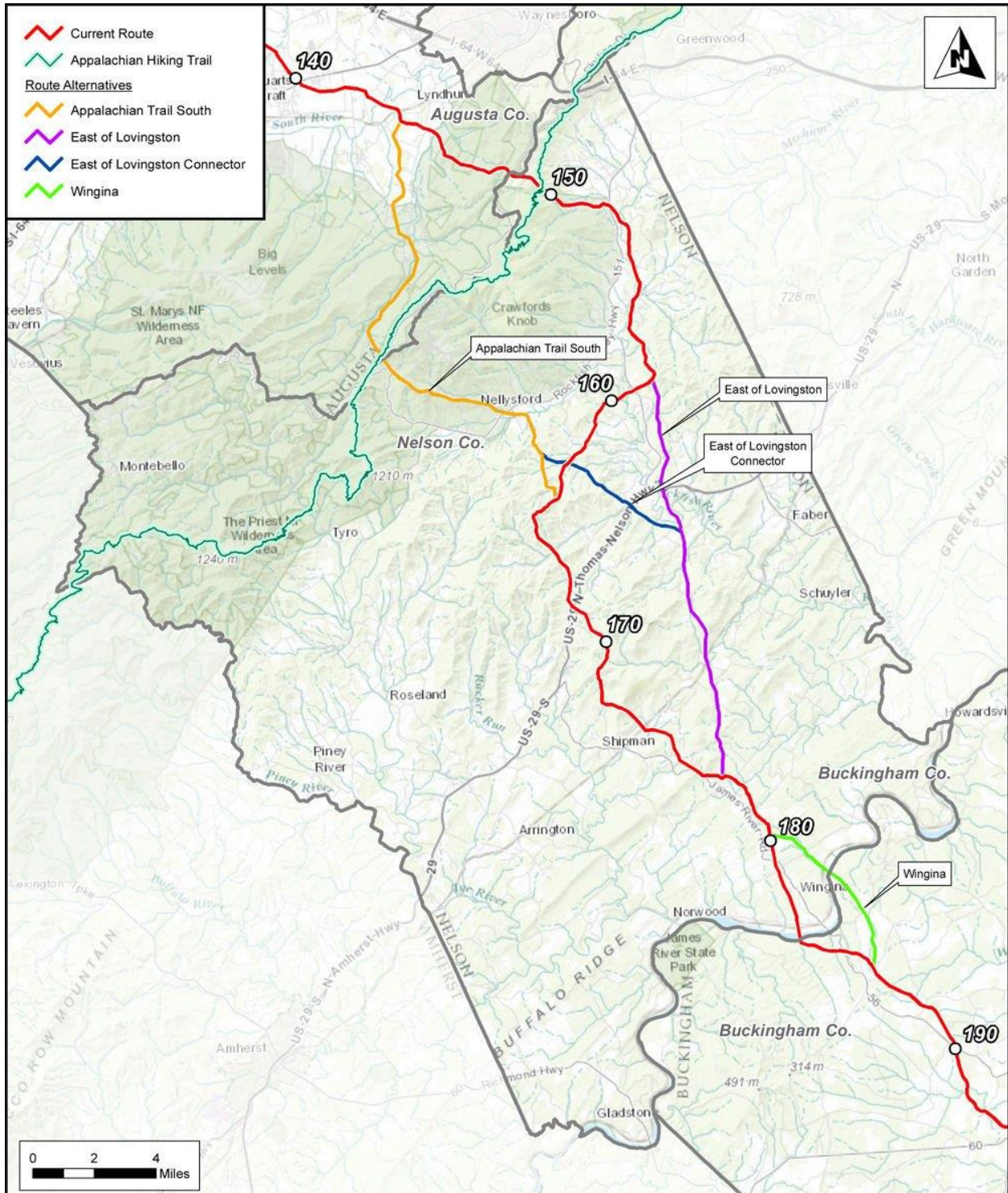
Dominion’s construction, engineering and environmental teams have reviewed and evaluated more than 3,000 miles of route variations, he said.

Faber resident Carlton Ballowe has property in Shipman where he plans to retire. He said he’s OK with the alternate route that could run through his property.

“I feel like we have the highest standards of living the world has ever known,” he said. “A big part of that is because we have abundant natural resources. If we are going to continue having that high standard of living, we are going to have to continue to have the infrastructure it takes to bring those resources to market. If this is where they feel they need to go, I have complete confidence that if they’re jumping through all the regulatory hoops, the pipeline will be safe, the impact to the environment will be absolutely minimal and I don’t have any fear.”

FERC planned to hold a scoping meeting on Wednesday, after press time, at which residents were invited to come face to face with officials and express their concerns.

The scoping period lasts 60 days, but with the new re-routes, Salidis feels that is too short of a time for newly affected residents to become educated. Friends of Nelson had called on residents to ask FERC to postpone its Wednesday meeting and extend the scoping period from 60 to 90 days. As of press time Tuesday, the meeting was still set for Wednesday. Dominion has said it plans to submit its final FERC application this summer.



This map shows the alternate Atlantic Coast Pipeline routes recently confirmed by Dominion.

- Graphic courtesy of Dominion Resources