

**Wood River Electrical Plan**  
Plan Development and Public Process Narrative  
March 2, 2016

*The summary below describes the public process associated with the development and implementation of the Wood River Electrical Plan between 2007 and 2016. The purpose of the Plan is to identify needed improvements to the electrical system to meet the current and long term electrical needs of the Wood River Valley. The process involved initial plan development, community review, plan refinement, local jurisdiction coordination and stakeholder coordination. Activities also included identification of needed local funding, further plan refinement, affected property owner coordination, permitting discussions and value engineering to reduce local costs for the final Plan.*

## 2007

### **Initial Wood River Electrical Plan development**

In 2007, Idaho Power Company (IPCO) convened a 20-member broad-based local Community Advisory Committee (CAC) to help develop the Wood River Electrical Plan (WREP or the Plan). The initial Plan was developed with the CAC over a series of 7 facilitated meetings that included education about the existing electrical system, projected future needs and alternatives evaluation. The initial Plan emphasized the need for system reliability and included recommendations for improvements to infrastructure and programs to meet the current and long-term electrical needs of the Wood River Valley.

## 2008

### **Initial community information and engagement**

In 2008, IPCO, with the support of the CAC, conducted community presentations in Hailey and Shoshone and to local governments to introduce the initial WREP and gather comments. In general, very solid support was expressed for the Plan. Improvements to the system south of the Wood River Sub Station (WRSS) to the "King-Woodriver" transmission line and "Silver" transmission line received strong support. Support for the proposed redundant 138 kV transmission line between WRSS (north end of Hailey) and Ketchum was mixed, but with a majority in favor. Some individuals remained unconvinced of the need for a redundant transmission line between WRSS and Ketchum, or suggested that redundancy could be provided through other alternatives.

## 2010

### **WREP refinement; Redundant line routing and design**

In 2010, IPCO reconvened the CAC for two meetings to further refine the WREP. The CAC discussed detailed sizing and alignments for reconstruction of existing transmission lines and pole heights, design and alignment for proposed new transmission lines. The CAC focused on alternatives to avoid or reduce potential new visual and physical impacts that may be caused by development of the proposed redundant 138kV transmission line between WRSS and Ketchum.

## 2011

### **Further WREP refinement; Overhead and underground options for the redundant line**

Early in 2011, the CAC was reconvened once to further discuss line route alternatives for the redundant line; specifically options for both overhead and underground installation of the redundant line from the St. Luke's Hospital area to the Ketchum substation. While the CAC preferred to have the redundant line buried from the St. Luke's Hospital area to the Ketchum substation, concern was expressed about public support for the local incremental cost of undergrounding any or all of this section, estimated



at \$14.3 million. As a result, subsequent presentations included options for both overhead (OH) and underground (UG) construction.

#### **WREP refinement and redundant line underground funding alternatives discussion**

During late 2010 and throughout 2011, IPCO conducted a series of meetings with local jurisdictions, elected officials and stakeholders to introduce and gather input on the refined Plan. Presentations covered details of both OH and UG alternatives for the proposed redundant transmission line between WRSS and Ketchum and plans for reconstruction of the King-Woodriver transmission line. Discussions included funding alternatives for the estimated local incremental cost to bury the redundant transmission line from the St. Luke's Hospital area or Elkhorn Rd. to the Ketchum substation. The primary funding source identified was the formation of a Local Improvement District (LID) as outlined in the Idaho Code for that specific purpose. The LID boundaries, as developed by elected officials, included all properties in Blaine County that would be impacted if the existing single transmission line between WRSS and Ketchum were to go out of service.

## 2012

---

#### **Gather input on the Plan and proposed LID for UG funding**

Early in 2012, the IPCO planning team conducted formal presentations to the City of Sun Valley, City of Ketchum and Blaine Co. to update them on the status of the Plan and explain the proposed LID and cost estimates for the UG section alternatives and gather input. Following these presentations, the IPCO planning team also met with planning department staff from the City of Ketchum, City of Sun Valley and Blaine Co. to discuss permitting requirements for the proposed redundant line between Hailey and Ketchum.

#### **Affected neighborhood, property owner, business owner and stakeholder coordination**

Over several months in 2012, members of the planning team conducted more than 40 meetings with individuals, small groups, adjacent neighborhoods, home owner associations, affected property owners, business owners and other stakeholders. The purpose of the meetings was to inform them of the Plan, cost estimates, redundant line route alternatives, proposed LID boundaries, estimated costs and to gather input. Response from attendees was largely supportive of the overall Plan, but with concern for the local cost for UG of the proposed transmission line and any new visual impacts from the proposed redundant transmission line. A minority of individuals still expressed doubt for the need for the redundant line.

Following neighborhood, property owner and stakeholder meetings, additional presentations were conducted for local governments and elected officials to present the results of these sessions and gather input.

#### **WREP adjustment due to potential sage grouse habitat impacts**

The CAC was convened again in 2012 to learn new information about the potential impact to sage grouse habitat that may be caused by recommended improvements in the Burmah area of the SE section of the existing electrical system. Since sage grouse were currently under federal review for potential listing as an endangered species, IPCO informed the CAC that the current recommendations for this section would need to be removed from the Plan. IPCO will reconvene the CAC at a later time to develop new alternatives for improvements to this section.

#### **Public open house events to gather comments on the current WREP and proposed funding for the underground portion**

Late in 2012, the CAC was convened again to provide input to the planning team regarding format, content, visuals, and support materials for upcoming public open house events. Three public open house events were held in December 2012; one each in Hailey, Sun Valley and Ketchum, to present the refined Plan, routes and cost estimates. Proposed boundaries and approximate property owner costs for the LID to fund the incremental local cost for UG of the redundant line were included. Reaction to the Plan was largely positive, but some individuals still questioned the need for the redundant line, as well as the cost to local property owners. Some individuals expressed opinions that the reliability history of the existing transmission line did not warrant a redundant line or that redundancy could be accomplished through the use of renewable energy sources. Strong opposition was widely expressed for any new overhead transmission lines north of the St. Luke's Hospital area.

## 2013

---

### **Local elected official and staff coordination; Consider adding burial of local distribution lines**

Early in 2013, work sessions were conducted with local elected officials and staff to present the results of the public open house events and discuss next steps including permitting, design and construction planning. Discussion with the Ketchum elected officials also included alternatives to combine the burying of existing distribution lines in Ketchum in the same trench as the proposed UG transmission line through Ketchum.

### **Ketchum City / Ketchum Energy Security Committee coordination**

In 2013 Ketchum formed the Ketchum Energy Security Committee (later to be named the Ketchum Energy Advisory Committee - KEAC) to evaluate and provide input to the City regarding future energy security. IPCO met with members of the Committee and City representatives in late 2013 to explain the Plan, including the proposed redundant line, project cost estimates and local incremental costs for the UG sections. Discussion included a review of alternatives and inquiries from the Committee. Members of the Committee requested a cost / benefit analysis for the redundant line, consideration of alternatives to the redundant line and opportunities to bury existing distribution lines in Ketchum in coordination with the proposed redundant line UG construction.

## 2014

---

### **Community Advisory Committee expansion and development of a new alternative to the redundant transmission line.**

In response to inquiries from the City of Ketchum and the Ketchum Energy Advisory Committee, in late 2014, IPCO invited representation from both entities to join the CAC to investigate the possibility of any new alternatives to the proposed redundant line. The "updated" CAC was convened twice late in 2014, beginning with an open invitation for proposals for any viable alternative to the redundant line. Although new representation from Ketchum did provide materials that outlined their goals for Ketchum's energy security, including expanded development of renewable energy, distributed generation and energy conservation, a viable alternative to the redundant line was not provided.

However, IPCO did introduce to the CAC a new alternative to the redundant line that would provide 100% Historical Load Backup power if the existing transmission line was out of service. The alternative incorporated the use of UG lines, strengthened distribution system and additional substations. This alternative also afforded a substantial cost savings compared to the local UG expense for the fully redundant transmission line. Although IPCO noted that this alternative was not a complete replacement for redundant line, it was developed in response to concerns for the local cost for undergrounding. The CAC unanimously supported this new alternative. IPCO then conducted several informational sessions with local elected officials and key stakeholders to introduce the new alternative and answer questions.

## 2015

---

### **Value engineering and redundant line cost estimate revisions**

Because the 100% Historical Load Backup alternative did not provide true redundancy for the existing 138 kV line, during the first half of 2015, IPCO conducted a series of internal value engineering assessments comparing the 100% Historical Backup alternative to the fully redundant 138 kV line alternative. The result was a re-confirmation of the fully redundant 138 kV line between WRSS and Ketchum as recommended by the initial CAC. The only adjustment compared to the original proposal was a re-routing of the UG section along SH 75 into Ketchum, rather than along the bike path.

Of significant importance, the outcome of this effort also included a substantial reduction in the local incremental cost for the UG portion of the fully redundant 138 kV line. Through the identification of cost savings for materials and credits for expenses to reconstruct the existing 138 kV transmission line that would be avoided if a redundant line was in place, the local share for UG was reduced to approximately \$2 million or less.

IPCO then introduced the updated 138 kV alternative and lower local cost projections via one-on-one meetings and email with CAC members, and work sessions with local elected officials and key stakeholders.

## 2015 to Date

---

### **Current WREP status and next steps**

Since mid 2015, IPCO has been working with local governments in Ketchum, Sun Valley and Blaine County to confirm the necessary permit requirements for implementation of the redundant line project. IPCO has filed a Conditional Use Permit with Blaine County for construction of the updated redundant transmission line project between WRSS and Ketchum as described above.

*Note: See WREP Activities Summary table and associated documents for details of the activities outlined above.*