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## **NH AGENCY DENIES OPA THE OPPORTUNITY TO ADVOCATE FOR MAINE RATEPAYERS**

*Maine ratepayers will pay approximately \$40M for New Hampshire transmission line.*

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**January 27, 2024 | HALLOWELL, ME** – On January 24, the New Hampshire Site Evaluation Council (SEC) denied the Maine Public Advocate's Petition to Intervene in an important proceeding to determine whether [Eversource](#), the residential power provider for New Hampshire, will be allowed to invest approximately \$400M in a new NH transmission line known as X-178, approximately 10% of which will be paid by Maine ratepayers.

"It's unfortunate that the NH agency refuses to hear from ratepayers outside NH who will be required to pay approximately 90% of the cost of this project," said Maine Public Advocate William Harwood. "It should be clear to all that if we allow utilities, such as Eversource, to act as monopolies, free from competition, we must have strong regulation and oversight of their spending in order to protect captive ratepayers who have no choice but to pay whatever the utility charges. It's unfair, and it's a dereliction of oversight duties."

Originally, the X-178 project involved replacing a handful of damaged poles on a 49-mile transmission line in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. Rather than limit spending to what was needed, Eversource decided it would rather spend approximately \$400M to rebuild the *entire* line. This raises the critical question of whether a complete re-build of the line is cost effective or even needed. Unfortunately, when the NH SEC considers the project, it will focus on the cost and benefits to NH citizens and not the other 90% of the cost which will be paid by out-of-state ratepayers under a regional transmission rate charged by all New England transmission utilities to all New England ratepayers.

"It's hard to hold New Hampshire officials accountable to out-of-state ratepayers footing most of the bill, if New Hampshire denies the statutorily created ratepayer advocates from participating in the proceeding to review the project," said Harwood. "We hope that this unfortunate development is a wake-up call to all state and federal public officials that something is terribly wrong with our regulatory oversight of these regional projects. If we expect ratepayers to trust the regulatory system, we must not shut out their representatives when their interests are very much at stake."

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