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Transmission Line Co. Commits \$20M Through NCIC

Money Would Be Directed To Regional Economic Development Efforts

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Staff Writer

LITTLETON — National Grid, partnering with Northern Community Investment Corp., has committed to providing \$20 million for economic development in N.H. communities along the route of its Granite State Power Link transmission line.

A memorandum of understanding was signed

at the Paul J. McGoldrick Learning Center in Littleton on Tuesday by Joseph Rossignoli, director of U.S. business development for National Grid, and Jon Freeman, president of NCIC, which would administer the money to promote economic and community development and job opportunities through a revolving loan fund and grants to route host communities.

“This commitment that Granite State Power Link has made to establishing a program like this is transformative,” said Freeman.

The fund is aimed at improving the quality of life for residents in the North Country, is a significant advancement for the region, and would boost workforce development and small business capital investment, he said.

“We are looking forward to being the conduit for real and lasting impacts and we look forward to working with you for many years to come,” Freeman said to the National Grid team.

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\$20 million

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Under the terms of the MOU, applicants eligible for the fund can receive up to \$100,000 for activities that include business acquisitions, construction, land or equipment purchases, working capital, and start-up costs.

Nonprofits and municipalities can receive up to \$100,000 in grants to support endeavors that meet local or regional economic and community development, public facilities, or infrastructure.

Both funding streams could grant higher amounts to a single project if approved.

"I'm proud to be representing National Grid on this proud and momentous occasion," said Rossignoli.

If the line is approved and permitted, National Grid will provide \$500,000 per year for a period of 40 years, beginning in late 2022, when the utility company expects the GSPL to be in service and collecting revenues.

Among those in attendance Tuesday were District One Executive Councilor Joe Kenney, Littleton Selectman Schuyler Sweet; Benoit Lamontagne, industrial agent for the N.H. Business and Economic Affairs Department; and Brien Ward, former state representative and founder of the former Littleton Economic Development Task force.

For local initiatives to succeed, they need seed money and good

partnership, said Ward.

"You couldn't have picked a better partner," he said.

Rossignoli said National Grid would be open to a suggestion by Lamontagne - some of the money being used as a match to help communities and economic development entities applying for federal grants but needing a match.

"Coming up with a match is extremely difficult for regions like this," said Freeman.

Staying within adjacent transmission corridors, the GSPL would build about 59 miles of new overhead HVDC line from a new converter station in northern Vermont to a new converter station in Monroe.

The line would enter N.H. in Littleton and Monroe, and from Monroe, would travel 109 miles through 23 N.H. communities in Grafton, Merrimack and Hillsborough counties along existing infrastructure and within the existing right-of-way to its terminus in Londonderry.

In December, National Grid entered a similar partnership with the Northeastern Vermont Development Association to commit \$20 million to Vermont host communities to benefit residents and businesses in the Northeast Kingdom.

The estimated \$1.1 billion GSPL is one of about a half dozen New England transmission line proposals bid into the Massachusetts Clean Energy RFP, the winner of which is expected to be announced Jan. 25.

The GSPL is scheduled to begin construction in mid-2020.

Forty percent of the GSPL's 1,200-megawatt capacity, which would carry new wind power by two developers in Quebec, is being bid into the Massachusetts RFP, said Rossignoli.

Sixty percent would be available to other generators that could make use of that capacity, he said.

In developing the GSPL, National Grid is partnering with the nonprofit Citizens Energy, founded in 1979 by former U.S. Rep. Joe Kennedy II, D-MA, to offer free or discounted heating services and other energy initiatives to lower-income families in the United States.

Citizens Energy has committed to giving back 50 percent of its profits to local communities for weatherization, energy efficiencies, and other programs, said Ryan Chaytors, director of business development for Citizens Energy.

As the GSPL advances, Rossignoli said National Grid intends to have a statewide fund similar to its competitor, Northern Pass, which several years ago created the \$200 million Forward N.H. plan.

The amount of money National Grid would provide would be commensurate or greater, and the GSPL will have minimal visual and environmental impact, he said.

Sweet said, "Wonderful project. Wonderful collaboration. Welcome to Littleton."