Event: UI Fairfield Congress Project Town Hall
Date: Wednesday, October 4, 2023
Location: Fairfield Warde High School
Topic: Public Question & Answer

Question #1:

How tall are the existing poles and how tall are the proposed?

UI Answer #1:

Current transmission structures, which sit on the railroad, range from 65 feet to 100 feet above ground. The proposed new poles, which would directly abut or sit on the CTDOT right-of-way, would range from 95 feet to 135 feet above ground. UI selected poles at these heights because they minimize environmental impacts, maintain clearances from surrounding buildings, and accord with other safety codes, among other benefits.

Question#2:

Where will we put approximately 35 cars that are being displaced by work platform (construction period) "taking *[sic]* Jelliff's back parking lot"

UI Answer #2:

The work pads, access roads and construction areas that UI described in its application to the Connecticut Siting Council are estimates, based on the size needed for safely performing construction activities. Based on the Siting Council's conclusion and approvals, UI would work with property owners to minimize the size of work areas and limit impacts to business- or homeowners as much as possible, as we do with any transmission or distribution improvement projects.

Question #3:

How many parking spaces are lost, both private and public?

UI Answer #3:

While UI's original proposal did not eliminate any parking spots, CTDOT's recommendation for project amendments would result in the loss of one parking spot at Fairfield Train Station.

Question #4:

How much time has been spent looking for better alternatives to overhead wires?

UI Answer #4:

The UI team has spent more than four years evaluating alternatives and identifying the best project proposal plan for customers and the greater New England region, based on the requirements of the Connecticut Siting Council and the Independent System Operator of New England (ISO-NE).

Question #5:

Haven't the fires in Maui been a cautionary tale for overhead wires?

UI Answer #5:

While the situation in Maui is still under investigation and was likely due to many factors, it is likely that aging infrastructure had a role. UI's Project will address its aging infrastructure, making the electric grid more resilient and safer.

Question #6:

Why is it not possible to use the existing Eversource poles along the right of way?

UI Answer #6:

The existing transmission poles on the north side of the Project area are UI-owned and-operated assets, UI evaluated the possibility of using these poles in the current project, but based on engineering design criteria, they cannot be modified to accommodate the additional weights and electric loads needed on the south-side circuits.

Question #7:

UI - When did you first notify the Town about this? When was the Towns response after?

UI Answer #7:

UI first notified the Town of Fairfield in June of 2021. On July 13th, 2021, UI, the First Selectwoman and her staff met to further review the Project. Meetings and conversations with the Town continued through 2023 and continue today as UI seeks to improve electric reliability and resiliency for Fairfield residents.

Question #8:

If going through this process, why can't we look at burying these lines?

UI Answer #8:

Since 2019, the project team has extensively evaluated alternatives that best serve the Project's need in southwest Connecticut and greater New England region. One of the alternatives considered was to underground the transmission lines within the CTDOT

right-of-way or within the streets of Bridgeport and Fairfield. Based on the results of the alternatives analysis, UI concluded the underground solution did not best meet the regional need for three primary reasons: first, it would be significantly more detrimental to the environment; second, it would require more disruption to the community and townscape; and third, its significantly higher costs would have to be paid by all Connecticut ratepayers, driving up utility bills.

Question #9:

Please tell us if the trees adjacent to the Southport Train station parking lot (north bound side on Station Street) will be allowed to remain? Our location relies on these trees for a sound barrier to the train tracks and I95

UI Answer #9:

Based on the current project design, UI believes it will be able to leave the trees adjacent to the Southport Train Station in place, though some of the tree canopy and branches will need to be cut for clearances.

Question #10:

In the future, would this Project enable UI to increase transmission on this line from 115kV to 230kV or higher?

UI Answer #10:

The UI team does not expect the voltage of these transmission lines to change from 115-kV. The structures in this Project proposal are designed to support wires that can carry additional current, should there be a system need.

Question #11:

Is it true that Eversource has transmission lines? If so, how much did it cost per mile?

UI Answer #11:

Yes, Eversource has transmission lines. UI does not have information on the cost per mile for Eversource projects.

Question #12:

What is the duty to inform the public of plans that will result in serious harms to the community - both the duty of UI and the duty of the State?

UI Answer #12:

For projects like this one, UI follows and often exceeds the requirements set by the CT Siting Council. UI also strives to be a good community neighbor and takes additional steps to notify the public using bill inserts, project abutter mailings and social media updates, among other mechanisms.

Question #13:

Though significantly more expensive now to place the line underground, the rapid pace of climate change suggests that UI's proposal of lines resistant to Category 3 hurricanes will soon be inadequate - why not invest now in underground lines? Ultimately more cost effective, environmentally protective and a reduced cost in residents long term safety.

UI Answer #13:

When UI evaluates a project, the team considers multiple alternatives to determine the best proposal based on a variety of factors. UI looks to minimize impacts to community and environment and assesses operational needs and cost. As illustrated by the Connecticut Siting Council's 2022 Life Cycle report, underground transmission is still significantly higher in cost than that of overhead transmission, in addition to making outages more difficult to resolve and requiring additional footprint in the community. When determining design criteria such as wind and ice loading or Category 3 storms, UI consults industry standards such as the National Electric Safety Code (NESC), as mandated by the State of Connecticut, as well as other industry standards such as the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) in ensuring a safe and robust design is implemented.

Question #14:

Why can't you put the lines underground?

UI Answer #14:

While an underground configuration is feasible, it is cost prohibitive, requires a greater construction footprint, the impact to the environment is greater than an overhead configuration and makes outages more difficult to resolve quickly and efficiently. It is the obligation of the Company to present the most cost effective and technically compliant solution for customers and ratepayers in New England. UI presents transmission projects to the Independent System Operator (ISO) New England for evaluation, which then determines how the cost allocation will be set forth across Connecticut and the greater New England region.

Question #15:

Where does the electricity on these transmission lines go once it connects to Westport?

UI Answer #15:

These lines carry electricity through the southwest sections of Connecticut to Norwalk and terminate at a substation in Cos Cob, CT. Along this route, the lines connect to multiple substations in southwestern Connecticut and one interconnection to Long Island; because substations serve the entire regional electric system, these transmission lines are integral in serving electricity across New England.

Question #16:

Why can NY build a 339-mile transmission line underground and under Lake Champlain from Canada to NYC $7 billion ($21 million a mile) and it costs UI $1 billion to go 8 miles ($125 million a mile)?

UI Answer #16:

The transmission lines that are proposed for construction from New York to Canada consist of 500-kV and 300-kV direct current underground transmission lines. The UI transmission lines on the Project are 115-kV alternating current transmission lines. Due to the Project being direct current and higher voltage class, the New York to Canada transmission lines require fewer cables overall for power transfer.

Question #17:

Why is this being done? Is the DOT kicking you off the train line?

UI Answer #17:

UI is pursuing the Project to replace aging infrastructure to improve reliability for customers and align with current National Electrical Safety Code (NESC) standards. UI also intends to update our infrastructure to industry recognized best practice around wind and ice load criteria.

Question #18:

Is UI truly committed to an OPEN and TRANSPARENT dialog? If so, restart the clock and offer to pause the filing or refile starting today?

UI Answer #18:

UI is fully committed to an open and transparent dialogue. To avoid delays on its commitment to other stakeholders such as ISO New England and Connecticut towns who depend on the Fairfield to Congress section, UI has chosen not to pause or refile its application.

Question #19:

Is UI committed to working to find an alternative underground solution?

UI Answer #19:

UI has evaluated an underground solution and it has a larger environmental impact, longer construction duration and cost prohibitive. If the CSC requests UI to further evaluate this alternative UI can definitely do so.

Question #20:

Can lines be buried on the north side below the monopoles?

UI Answer #20:

No, it is not physically feasible to bury the south-side transmission line under the north-side existing monopoles. In addition, CT DOT will not allow an underground transmission line parallel to the tracks within the corridor.

Question #21:

Is UI committed to working with Eversource to combine the needs and use one corridor for power transmission?

UI Answer #21:

UI is committed to working with Eversource to deliver power to the residents of Connecticut and the region. Per requirements and standards set by the Federal Electric Regulatory Authority (FERC), each utility is responsible for maintaining and operating its own transmission assets. The entirety of the Fairfield to Congress Project area, along with all the assets, are owned and operated by UI.

Question #22:

The Project has a direct impact on 30% (210,000) of all UI customers UI serves and yet there were only 11 certified letters mailed out? You send out bills every month to collect money. Why would there NOT be clear messaging about the heights of the poles?

UI Answer #22:

To meet the statutory requirements pursuant to the Connecticut Siting Council process, UI mailed bill inserts to its customers and mailed 11 certified letters to the specific property abutters at New Pequonnock, Congress Street and Ash Creek Substation. In addition to the CSC requirements UI issued newspaper ads, mailed letters and postcards to Project abutters, updated its website, issued social media posts, and posted signs in the Project area to communicate the Project to the communities.

Question #23:

Have PURA and DEEP signed off on this? If so with what restrictions?

UI Answer #23:

Both PURA and DEEP have representation on the Connecticut Siting Council and will be part of reviewing and rendering a decision on UI's project.

Question #24:

Why is it that Eversource buried the lines while UI has not?

UI Answer #24:

The railroad corridor project Eversource is currently working on directly west of UI's territory, Eversource is not burying the transmission lines.

Question #25:

How will this affect the people with microwave syndrome?

UI Answer #25:

UI is unfamiliar with the term "microwave syndrome." However, based on the term, UI assumes this refers to electromagnetic fields in the microwave frequency range. Microwaves operate at a frequency of 2,400,000,000 Hertz (Hz) or 2.4 Gigahertz (GHz). In contrast, the project transmission lines (both existing and proposed) produce electric and magnetic fields [EMF] at a frequency of 60 Hz and thus "microwave syndrome" does not appear to be applicable to the project.

Question #26:

Can you explain the difference between the 345kV UG transmission project in 2006 and this one and why underground isn't on the table for this one?

UI Answer #26:

The 345-kV project in 2006 involved a new transmission line in a utility owned right-of-way to bring power to southwestern Connecticut for reliability purposes. The current proposed project rebuilds an existing transmission corridor, in CDOTs right of way and provides the most direct route for interconnection between the UI substations and Eversource.

Question #27:

What contributions has UI and affiliates made to local officials?

UI Answer #27: None, according to Avangrid anti-corruption policy under no circumstances shall Avangrid funds be used to make political contributions that constitute illegal corruption or bribery, or to political parties or candidates in countries other than the U.S., even if such contributions are permitted by the laws of the respective country.

Question #28:

Why were we not informed in a more realistic timely way?

UI Answer: #28

UI began its outreach and communication to Project abutters in 2021 using letters and postcards. UI continued communications to the general public, municipalities, and governmental agencies through 2023 via public and municipal meetings, Project website, electronic communications, social media, newspaper, and bill inserts.

Question #29:

What is the real cost of putting the lines underground?

UI Answer #29:

The estimated cost for undergrounding the transmission lines on the project is $1 billion. Underground transmission lines require additional cables, more easements, additional structures for aligning underground with existing infrastructure, longer construction schedule, and more materials. Additionally, there is a far more significant environmental impact and the cost and complexity to operate and maintain underground lines is greater.

Question #30:

Why does UI want to run electrical work in this specific spot and why is it necessary and beneficial to the community?

UI Answer #30:

The purpose for the location of UI's Project and corresponding electrical work is to stay as close as possible to the existing CTDOT corridor in order to align with existing UI infrastructure, such as substations and interconnections. The Project is necessary for increasing the resiliency, reliability, and safety of the electric grid in order to deliver power to the customers of the community and region.

Question #31:

In this age of climate crisis, transmission poles and wires should be buried for health and safety, plus conservation. Why would all other options be considered as this will save costs long term?

UI Answer #31:

When UI evaluates a project, the team evaluates one or more alternatives to determine the best proposal based on a variety of factors. UI looks to minimize impacts to community and environment and assesses operational needs and cost. As illustrated by the Connecticut Siting Council's 2022 Life Cycle report, underground transmission is still significantly higher in cost than that of overhead transmission, in addition to making outages more difficult to resolve and requiring additional footprint in the community. When determining design criteria such as wind and ice loading or Category 3 storms, UI consults industry standards such as the National Electric Safety Code (NESC), as mandated by the State of Connecticut, as well as other industry standards such as the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) in ensuring a safe and robust design is implemented.

Question #32:

What conversations have taken place with police, fire, and EMS regarding construction of these poles and the safety hazards this may pose?

UI Answer #32:

No conversations have taken place with police, fire or EMS. UI has worked closely with the Connecticut Siting Council to adhere to the safety codes set by the National Electric Safety Code (NESC), the Federal Electric Regulatory Commission (FERC), and other organizations, as it does with any transmission project.

Question #33:

About 8 years ago we put a nice transmission line under the Post Rd? Why do we need another line? Why not put another line underground?

UI Answer #33:

The 345-kV project in 2006 involved a new transmission line and utility right-of-way to bring power to southwestern Connecticut for reliability purposes. The current proposed Project rebuilds an existing line. The current Project provides the most direct route for interconnection between the UI substations and the distribution system and undergrounding these lines would be cost prohibitive and cause much greater environmental and construction impacts.

Question #34:

Prior to UI submitting its project proposal to the Sitting Council for approval what regulatory agencies approved and/or sanctioned this project? PURA or NE-ISO?

UI Answer #34:

Prior to submitting the application to the Connecticut Siting Council, UI submitted a Proposed Plan Application (PPA) to the ISO-New England Reliability Committee. ISO approved the PPA in January of 2019. The PPA laid out multiple alternatives that best met the reliability needs of the region. The ISO will consider whether costs are prudent and reasonable and in accordance with good utility practice. Additionally, the ISO will determine whether the project costs should be regionalized. Regions share of the costs is proportionate to its electricity demand. Once these determinations have been made the Project will become part of the Regional System Plan, meaning that these transmission lines play a key role in the way the entire New England grid is operated.

Question #35:

Why was co-location with the relatively new Eversource monopoles not considered as an option? Is it technically feasible?

UI Answer #35:

The Fairfield to Congress Project area is in UI-owned and -operated territory without involvement from Eversource. ISO-New England does not jointly consider projects from different utilities. UI frequently meets with Eversource to identify efficiency opportunities on other projects within this corridor.

Question #36:

Does UI recognize the historic village of Southport and landmark library where a pole 115' will be installed? I have discussed with experts and how safe will these be for families in the area? Why?

UI Answer #36:

UI recognizes and respects the historic areas of Southport and all municipalities in its territory. UI is currently working with the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office for any indirect or direct impacts to the historic aesthetic of the village.

Question #37:

The proposed high tower lines are designed to be more resilient, withstanding Category 3 hurricane winds. Given the rapidity with which significant climate change events are occurring, resiliency to withstand Category 5 hurricane winds seems wise. Burying the electrical lines is clearly a choice that is safer and, in the long run, more economical, more environmentally responsible and more protective of the human costs of environmental disasters. I would appreciate your explanation as to why UI has chosen a plan that is, in the short run cheaper but, in the long run, ultimately more costly on all counts.

UI Answer #37:

When UI evaluates a project, the team evaluates one or more alternatives to determine the best proposal based on a variety of factors. UI looks to minimize impacts to community and environment and assesses operational needs and cost. As illustrated by the Connecticut Siting Council's 2022 Life Cycle report, underground transmission is still significantly higher in cost than that of overhead transmission, in addition to making outages more difficult to resolve and requiring additional footprint in the community. When determining design criteria such as wind and ice loading or Category 3 storms, UI consults industry standards such as the National Electric Safety Code (NESC), as mandated by the State of Connecticut, as well as other industry standards such as the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) in ensuring a safe and robust design is implemented.

Question #38:

Is the entire replacement in the exact same location of what is being updated/replaced?

UI Answer #38:

No. The UI Project consists of removing 189 bonnets on 157 catenary structures and rebuilding 102 new single- or double-circuit monopoles within the CTDOT right-of-way or as close to CTDOT right-of-way as possible. Maintaining alignment as close as possible with the existing right of way minimizes the overall length of the line and also minimizes the access points and easements required.

Question #39:

Why are these lines not being dug underground? It is a much safer, long-term solution. This project is absolutely awful. It will destroy the surrounding towns and neighborhoods.

UI Answer #39:

When UI evaluates a project, the team evaluates one or more alternatives to determine the best proposal based on a variety of factors. UI looks to minimize impacts to community and environment and assesses operational needs and cost. As illustrated by the Connecticut Siting Council's 2022 Life Cycle report, underground transmission is still significantly higher in cost than that of overhead transmission, in addition to making outages more difficult to resolve and requiring additional footprint in the community. When determining design criteria such as wind and ice loading or Category 3 storms, UI consults industry standards such as the National Electric Safety Code (NESC), as mandated by the State of Connecticut, as well as other industry standards such as the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) in ensuring a safe and robust design is implemented.

Question #40:

It is not clear to me how this Project is being funded and what the impact will be to local residents' UI bills if proposal is implemented?

UI Answer #40:

The Project rebuilds assets that are considered Pooled Transmission Facilities (PTFs) by the ISO New England. This means they are required to allow the flow of energy from significant power sources (i.e., power generators) throughout New England. Therefore, costs for replacement of these assets are borne by customers throughout Connecticut and the New England region. Regions share of the costs is proportionate to its electricity demand.

Question #41:

What are the alternatives that were or should be considered? Why not anything underground?

UI Answer #41:

UI's Project team evaluated six alternatives: (1) Double Circuit, (2) Single Circuit, (3) Single Circuit with Catenaries Modifications, (4) Full Rebuild of Catenaries, (5) Hybrid Single and Double Circuit and (6) Underground in CTDOT ROW [right-of-way] or Streets. UI did consider undergrounding the Project in both the CTDOT utility corridor and in the streets of Bridgeport and Fairfield.

Question #42:

Has anyone looked into the property tax impact since it looks like a lot of property is going to be affected?

UI Answer #42:

UI is looking into the property tax impacts. UI will begin good-faith negotiations with impacted property owners shortly after receipt of the approval by the Connecticut Siting Council for the Project. During that process, we will review the details of each property with the owner to determine how the construction and permanent easements impact them. Fair compensation will be paid to each property owner based on these negotiations. UI's expectation and goal are to avoid the use of an eminent domain proceeding.

Question #43:

What is your proposed estimate to buy out and compensate owners for eminent domain? Is that amount included in your estimate?

UI Answer #43:

UI does not anticipate having to buy out property owners for eminent domain. UI will begin good-faith negotiations with impacted property owners shortly after receipt of the approval by the Connecticut Siting Council for the project. During that process, we will review the details of each property with the owner to determine how the construction and permanent easements impact them. Fair compensation will be paid to each property owner based on these negotiations. UI's expectation and goal are to avoid the use of an eminent domain proceeding. The current estimate for the proposed easements and land acquisitions is approximately $30 million.

Question #44:

When will you start notifying property owners about having their property taken by eminent domain. I am looking to replace our roof, but our business is on your list to be seized.

UI Answer #44:

UI will begin good-faith negotiations with impacted property owners shortly after receipt of the approval by the Connecticut Siting Council for the Project. During that process, we will review the details of each property with the owner to determine how the construction and permanent easements impact them. Fair compensation will be paid to each property owner based on these negotiations. UI's expectation and goal are to avoid the use of an eminent domain proceeding.

Question #45:

Is the eminent domain land being sought for access during construction? Why is a bigger footprint needed for pole project?

UI Answer #45:

UI's expectation and goal are to avoid eminent domain for access during construction. UI will begin good-faith negotiations with impacted property owners shortly after receipt of the approval by the Connecticut Siting Council for the project. During that process, we will review the details of each property with the owner to determine how the construction and permanent easements impact them. Fair compensation will be paid to each property owner based on these negotiations. UI's expectation and goal are to avoid the use of an eminent domain proceeding.

UI's Project is coming off the catenaries into or directly abutting the existing CTDOT utility corridor. Therefore, in order to maintain the necessary clearances to operate the line, UI will need certain easements extending outside the existing utility corridor.

Question #46:

Does UI currently pay an easement fee or right of way fee to CT? After the project will UI be able to cease this fees/payment to CT since it controls/owns the easement corridor?

UI Answer #46:

UI currently occupies the State of Connecticut Property by virtue of a long-term lease. Since the proposed Project is a rebuild of an existing facility that does not eliminate the need for the current corridor, amendments to our current lease are not required.

Question #47:

Did the Town of Fairfield approve this eminent domain? Or do they have a jurisdiction over a decision

UI Answer #47:

The Town of Fairfield does not have jurisdiction over the easements on the project.

UI will begin good-faith negotiations with impacted property owners shortly after receipt of the approval by the Connecticut Siting Council for the Project. During that process, we

will review the details of each property with the owner to determine how the construction and permanent easements impact them. Fair compensation will be paid to each property owner based on these negotiations. UI's expectation and goal are to avoid the use of an eminent domain proceeding.

For more information: visit www.UIRailroadTLineUpgrades.com visit the CT Siting Council website Docket No 516 (ct.gov) or email Outreach@uinet.com