

**The Northern Pass Transmission Line:  
A Case Study in Environmental Conflict Resolution and Public Participation**  
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Energy infrastructure is a critical area of study due to the widening disparity between power use and needed investments in transmission facilities, as well as the promotion of renewable energies that often require long transmission lines from remote sites of power generation. Additionally, energy projects are often met with opposition from local residents for a variety of reasons. Thirty years ago, Dennis Ducsik asked the question, “Can anything be done to avoid the grim prospect of more disruptive conflict over the location of power plants?” (1981, p. 155). His answer was an ‘open planning’ approach through collaboration between developers and the public. Despite worsening land use and energy conflicts since then, this type of collaboration has not gained much traction.

This thesis examines an energy battle being fought in New Hampshire over a proposed high-voltage electric transmission line called the Northern Pass. The main component of the \$1.1 billion project is a direct current transmission line whose 80- to 135-foot towers would carry up to 1,200 megawatts of hydroelectricity from Quebec to southern New Hampshire. By studying this currently unfolding case, I reveal the prospects for consensus-building around the transmission line as well as the role of the public participation that has taken place. The first part of the study was achieved through a conflict assessment approach comprised of interviews with stakeholders. The second part of the study employed a mostly qualitative analysis of citizen comments from public meetings held on the transmission line. The results show first that there is a great deal of mistrust and hostility between stakeholders involved in the Northern Pass, yet there are some prospects for collaboration between the developers and the public. Secondly, the analysis of public meetings shows that citizens value procedural fairness highly and thus developers and regulators must elevate this issue.