

John D'Ambrosio: Directing traffic on New York's energy highway

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Published: 2:00 AM - 02/12/13

If there ever was any doubt that New York state's energy infrastructure is sorely in need of improvement, last fall's Hurricane Sandy erased (or should have erased) it.

As president of the Orange County Chamber of Commerce, I enthusiastically support Orange County Partnership President Maureen Halahan and so many other forward-thinking individuals who are backing critical projects that address this issue.

Last year, as part of Gov. Andrew Cuomo's Energy Highway initiative, a call went out to New York utilities, developers, investors and other interested parties for ideas that would "bring the state's electric power system into the 21st century."

One of the responses came from Competitive Power Ventures with its CPV Valley Energy Center, a project that has been in development for more than four years in the Town of Wawayanda. When completed, this project will position Orange County to help lead New York State's economic resurgence as electricity demand increases.

The center, which is nearly fully permitted, is precisely the type of facility that achieves the goals and objectives that have been established for the Energy Highway. It is a 650-megawatt, clean, natural-gas powered electric generating facility that will be one of the cleanest conventional power plants in North America, while occupying only 30 acres of land.

By using dry-cooling technology, the project is designed to use 95 percent less water than other similar "wet-cooled" generators. The small amount of water it will use will come from recycled "grey" water purchased from the City of Middletown.

In addition, the facility is expected to deliver more than \$270 million in annual reductions in electric costs for New Yorkers, reduce harmful pollutants by displacing power generated from older, dirtier generation sources, and spur more than \$1 billion in private investment in the local economy. In addition, during the 30-month construction period, the CPV project will employ hundreds of union workers and contribute millions to local tax coffers.

Meeting local needs

One of the notable things about the CPV Valley Energy Center is the way in which the CPV team introduced the project. The company went to great lengths to work with local and regional communities to meet the needs and address the concerns of everyone involved. They held scores of meetings with community members to educate and receive feedback on how to create a better project.

After talking at length with the principals at CPV, I was convinced that the addition of this project to the state's fleet of generation will enhance the overall reliability of New York's electric system, not only due to its location in the lower Hudson Valley, but also because of the plant's dual fuel capacity. The high efficiency of the project's combined-cycle technology will improve the state's system-wide

efficiency and consume less fuel than other conventional generators, resulting in reduced emissions for the state.

It's gratifying to know that innovative energy projects such as the CPV Valley Energy Center, as well as the Taylor Biomass gasification facility in Montgomery, are moving along and will soon be operating right here in Orange County. As New York state travels down the Energy Highway, it seems that Orange County will be directing a lot of the traffic.

-- John D'Ambrosio is president and CEO of the Orange County Chamber of Commerce.