

## Guest Columnist: State and region need a reliable 'energy highway'

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By **Maureen Halahan**

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In the aftermath of the devastating damage and prolonged power outages caused by Superstorm Sandy, no doubt many will call for the utilities, the state and federal governments and the private sector to make significant investments to improve our energy infrastructure.

To remain a viable place to live and do business, we must upgrade our energy infrastructure to ensure we will have the resources necessary to supply power and fuel to our region, so we can prevent the disruptions that put this area's economy at a standstill.

The energy infrastructure in New York was in crisis before Sandy made landfall. The need to make improvements and to add capacity is critical.

Remember, some government officials are calling to shut down Indian Point 2 and 3, and we must replace that energy as well.

A prime example of a major new energy project is the proposed CPV Valley Energy Center, which is to be built in the Town of Wawayanda.

This 650-megawatt electric generation facility will provide enough electricity to power more than 600,000 homes and thousands of businesses reliably.

Its state-of-the-art, natural-gas design will make it one of the cleanest conventional power plants in North America, and it will take up only about 30 acres of land!

Its air-cooled design will use just a fraction of the water required by older conventional plants. The \$900 million project is expected to create 500 construction jobs during peak periods. For a fast-growing region such as ours, the prospect of having such a facility here to ensure a reliable, clean electricity supply is crucial.

Recently, Gov. Andrew Cuomo's Energy Highway Taskforce released its "Blueprint" plan that issued recommendations and policy changes that could spark up to 3,200 megawatts of additional electric generation and transmission capacity, and \$5.7 billion in private investment throughout the state.

State officials said the Energy Highway Task Force would begin swift implementation of the proposed actions. These steps will significantly reduce the time required for development of energy infrastructure and includes a first-of-its-kind solicitation of new transmission projects by the Department of Public Service.

Many in the energy sector have expressed support for the governor's initiative. However, Matthew Cordaro, an advisory board member of the New York Affordable Reliable Electricity Alliance, injected a dose of reality.

He stated: "It is one thing to prepare a study, but quite another to have an energy highway up and running — a process that will take many years and that must overcome serious concerns about costs and feasibility. Among the near-term barriers are attracting billions of dollars in new investments and overcoming what is always fierce community opposition to new transmission lines and power facilities regardless of their location."

I concur. I believe it is imperative we support and champion energy projects such as the CPV Valley Energy Center. These projects will shape our energy future and help build a more modern energy infrastructure that will have sufficient power to meet our needs and keep the lights on.

-- Maureen Halahan is president and chief executive officer of the Orange County Partnership in Goshen and serves on the Mid-Hudson Regional Economic Development Council.

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