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U.S. withdraws from wind energy power line project

Nichola Groom



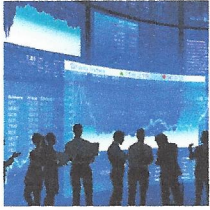
(Reuters) - The U.S. Department of Energy on Friday withdrew from a 2016 agreement to partner with a private developer on a more than 700-mile transmission line that would have delivered wind power from blustery Oklahoma to Tennessee and beyond. //

The termination of the deal between DOE and Houston-based Clean Line Energy Partners was mutual, both parties said in written statements.

Clean Line's proposed \$2.2 billion Plains & Eastern transmission line was under development for eight years but faced substantial opposition from landowners in Arkansas, who objected to having power lines strung along 200-foot-high towers on their properties.

The project also failed to line up a contract with the Tennessee Valley Authority to buy the wind energy it would transmit. Last year, TVA said it did not see a need for energy from the Clean Line project, noting its commercial customers were more interested in solar power generated locally, according to meeting minutes posted on its website. //





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In December, privately held Clean Line sold the Oklahoma assets of the project to a unit of NextEra Energy Inc but retains ownership of the Arkansas and Tennessee assets.

“The project is not dead, but is on a much slower track,” Clean Line Energy spokeswoman Sarah Bray said in an email.

In 2016, the Obama administration approved the line under a federal law that enables DOE to partner with private business on transmission. The law, passed in 2005, allows such projects to use the federal government’s eminent domain authority.

Earlier this year, Arkansas lawmakers including Senators Tom Cotton and John Boozman urged Energy Secretary Rick Perry to pause or terminate the project, citing the asset sale and lack of an agreement with TVA.

Reporting by Nichola Groom; Editing by Richard Chang

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