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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**NEW SW VIRGINIA TRANSMISSION UPGRADE UNVEILED BY APPALACHIAN POWER;
INFORMATIONAL OPEN HOUSE IN ABINGDON LATER THIS MONTH**

ROANOKE, Va., Sept. 10, 2015 – Appalachian Power has announced a new transmission project designed to help customers' electric reliability in southwest Virginia. The proposed Abingdon and Washington County Improvements Project is an estimated \$50 million investment that includes construction of a new substation, upgrading of six existing substations, and about 11 miles of new transmission line.

The company first identified the need for the electric infrastructure upgrades in 2013 when extreme winter weather and high power demand tested local electric reliability. The proposed upgrades will provide the area with a more reliable and modern network capable of handling increased load while reducing the likelihood of power outages.

The proposed new transmission line originates from an existing Appalachian Power transmission line on the west side of Abingdon. From there, preliminary routes run south out of Abingdon across Interstate 81 into Washington County before turning southeast to connect with a new five-acre substation on Vances Mill Road. Proposed routes continue east from the new substation to an end point at Arrowhead Substation east of Jeb Stuart Highway.

"The electric needs of the Town of Abingdon and Washington County are growing," said Mary Begley, external affairs manager for Appalachian Power. "Work that Appalachian is planning will address those needs and provide a transmission grid capable of handling future growth. This investment in our system provides Abingdon and Washington County with a network that can help attract new businesses to the area while allowing existing companies to compete and expand."

Appalachian Power will host an open house later this month to share details about the project with the community. The goal of the open house is to gather information from the public that will assist in the siting process.

“We work hard to come up with preliminary routes that we feel carefully balance the energy needs of the area while protecting the environment and natural beauty,” Begley said. “The open house is an opportunity for us to hear from those that live and work in the area. The information we receive from the public helps us to build a better project.”

The open house is scheduled for Thursday, September 24, from 5 – 8 p.m. at the Virginia Higher Education Center, One Partnership Circle in Abingdon. Visitors can arrive at any time during the open house.

Following the open house and additional field work, Appalachian Power will file an application with the Virginia State Corporation Commission seeking approval to construct the project. Upon approval, construction is scheduled to start winter 2017 and be completed by fall 2018.

Additional information about the project, including a project timeline, maps and continuous updates can be found at www.AppalachianPower.com/Abingdon.

Appalachian Power has 1 million customers in Virginia, West Virginia and Tennessee (as AEP Appalachian Power). It is a unit of American Electric Power, one of the largest electric utilities in the United States, delivering electricity to more than 5 million customers in 11 states. AEP ranks among the nation’s largest generators of electricity, owning nearly 32,000 megawatts of generating capacity in the U.S. AEP also owns the nation’s largest electricity transmission system, a 40,000-mile network that includes more 765-kilovolt extra-high voltage transmission lines than all other U.S. transmission systems combined.

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