

Sun Lakes Homeowners Associations



September 26, 2013

President & Board of Directors
Salt River Project
1521 N. Project Drive
Tempe, AZ 85281-1298

RE: Price Road Corridor 230 kV Project

Dear Mr. Rousseau and Directors:

As representatives of 10,000 homes and approximately 17,000 homeowners in Sun Lakes, we urge you to designate Germann Road as SRP's preferred route for a 230 kV transmission line from the Schrader Substation to the planned RS-28 substation in the lower Price Road Corridor.

This is not our first choice. We don't believe high-voltage lines on extremely tall poles have any place in densely populated residential areas. We advocated undergrounding the line—an option SRP appears unwilling to consider. That said, we are realists. Your engineers and siting experts narrowed the route choices to either Hunt Highway or Germann Road. We believe the evidence overwhelmingly points to Germann as the logical route.

We make that case on three fronts: The character of the neighborhoods, your own statistical analysis, and basic fairness.

Our Neighborhoods

When Ed Robson began developing the retirement community of Sun Lakes more than 30 years ago, he knew potential buyers would be attracted by its panoramic vistas. Built adjacent to flat, sparsely populated Gila River Indian Community (GRIC) land on its south and west, Sun Lakes had—and continues to have—majestic views of nearby mountains and awe-inspiring Arizona sunsets. He was determined not to impede these vistas in any way, so all utilities went underground. He understood that retirees want something more than a living space in their Golden Years. They want sunsets. They are home most of the time. Intangibles like scenic views matter.

SRP is required to seek a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility. We are struck by the utterly incompatible nature of very tall poles jammed in the middle of treasured views.

From its beginning, Sun Lakes has been a middle class community. We are people who raised families, put kids through college, dote on grandchildren and—along the way—put enough aside so we could live in a resort-style retirement community. But most of us are not rich. Our Sun Lakes home is the major investment for most of us. We are deeply worried about the impact of high-voltage lines next to our homes. Realtors tell us we can expect something on the order of a 10-to-15 percent decline in value for homes closest to the 230,000-volt line. With property values still well below their peaks of a few years ago, this is troubling for all and an economic disaster for some. Realtors also tell us some prospective buyers won't even look at homes along what might be a high voltage line route.

By the Numbers

The SRP analysis of Opportunities and Sensitivities, dated June 13, classified 15 potential routes then under consideration as “Least Desirable,” “Average,” or “Best” in each of 23 categories.

Only one of the 15 routes had more “least desirable” red flags than either of the Hunt options—an early warning Hunt is a bad choice for SRP and for property owners along the route.

By contrast, Germann had fewer “least desirable” designations than any other route except one—a statistical indication Germann deserved serious consideration for the transmission line.

We realize more must go into the statistical analysis than counting color-coded boxes. So let’s look at some factual information which may or may not be clear from the June 13 analysis:

- Germann Road is much wider (six lanes). Hunt is a two-lane road built very close to homes.
- Germann already has 69,000-volt lines. Moreover, SRP has a 130-150-foot right-of-way along Germann. Measured from the road’s center line, the 55-foot potential right-of-way along Hunt would be a cramped work space for SRP and would extend through walls and into the back yards of many Sun Lakes homes. A similar problem would exist along Old Price Road, a route needed to get the line from Hunt to the RS-28 substation. Clearly the open access that Germann provides is much more beneficial to construction than the narrow corridor on the north side of Hunt and east side of Old Price Road.
- Hunt Highway is densely populated. According to SRP’s measurements, its density is nearly twice that of Germann. What the statistics do not show is all of Hunt’s density is on the north side of the road. Planners might view the open space on the south side of the road (GRIC property) as an asset. What it really means is a very tight concentration of homes all on the north side—the only side on which SRP can build.
- Germann has more open space and more commercial space; Hunt is strictly residential.
- Germann has a heavy concentration of apartment buildings. Renters tend to be more transient. Along Hunt, however, the vast majority of homes are owner-occupied—people heavily invested in the quality and character of their neighborhoods. According to your own figures, there are no apartment houses along the Hunt/Old Price Road route.
- The average age of residents along the Sun Lakes portion of Hunt Highway is in the mid-70s. A number have pacemakers and other medical devices. They are home all day. They are troubled by carefully chosen SRP language—such as “consult your physician”—when asked about the potential impact of high-voltage lines on their medically necessary equipment.
- Germann is a more direct route to the Price Road Corridor.

Basic Fairness

Germann is in the City of Chandler. Hunt is outside the city limits. For more than two decades the city has promoted Price Road Corridor as its prime destination for high-tech manufacturing and other corporate campuses. It has been a very successful development, allowing Chandler to emerge as one of the nation’s most forward-looking technology areas. The city benefits financially from the Price Road Corridor, both directly—through expanded tax revenue—and indirectly, by bringing a large number of well-paying jobs to the community. We in Sun Lakes celebrate Chandler’s success. But we insist that those who benefit most directly must also absorb the cost of doing business. One such cost is hosting high-voltage power lines. If a line is needed and reasonable—indeed better—routes exist within the city, it should go there. It is fundamentally wrong to ask the citizens of Sun Lakes to absorb the pain of progress for the citizens and city of Chandler, who will reap the benefits.

We Sun Lakers appreciate the efforts SRP personnel, particularly Project Manager Tom Novy and Public Involvement Supervisor Janeen Rohovit, have made to keep us informed. They have been patient and forthcoming. When concerns grew, they were responsive in setting up additional community meetings.

Now decision time nears. The decision to go through a densely populated residential area is a bad situation to begin with. We ask that you look deeply at not only the numbers but the realities behind the numbers. When you do, we believe you will find a Germann route far more compatible with SRP's goals, neighborhood characteristics, and basic fairness.

The Boards of Directors of all three Sun Lakes HOAs have approved resolutions endorsing the contents of this letter.

Sincerely,

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