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## TANC deserved to be tanked

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Justifiable public outrage has killed a 600-mile high-voltage transmission line proposed from northeastern California down through the Central Valley and into the Bay Area.

The commissioners of the Transmission Agency of Northern California voted Wednesday morning to stop the environmental review process after three of the six partner utilities pulled out.

We agree with the decisions made Tuesday by the Modesto and Turlock irrigation district boards, both of which voted unanimously to drop out of this project. The Sacramento Municipal Utility District, the largest partner, dropped out July 1.

As we've said before, we believe the planning for this project was badly flawed. The most controversial element was that preliminary maps showed huge towers and high-voltage lines going over houses and barns and through neighborhoods, fields and scenic landscapes. The routes were only initial suggestions -- and would have been significantly modified, proponents said -- but they so infuriated people that the project lost any chance of winning public favor.

In its vote Tuesday, the MID board cited the potential for expensive litigation. That was an understatement. Many organizations and individuals had threatened lawsuits.

While this project is dead, several key issues underlying it remain:

State leaders continue to talk about upping the mandate for electricity from renewable resources, without fully acknowledging that power generated at solar and wind farms will have to be moved around -- and that requires transmission lines. The push for renewable sources must recognize all the costs involved.

This debate is not limited to California, either. Around the country, transmission line proposals have run into huge objections.

During discussions on this Northern California line, it became apparent that this project, because it was proposed by publicly owned utilities rather than private utilities such as Pacific Gas & Electric, was outside the normal system of state or Public Utilities Commission checks. A bill pending in the Legislature would change that.

Many people were especially angry because TANC apparently would have had the power of eminent domain to acquire property and-or rights of way outside the jurisdictions of the partner agencies. In other words, a landowner east of Oakdale could have been forced to sell land or easements even though he or she would not benefit from the project.

The MID's participation in this project had surfaced as a likely issue in the November election, when three of the five director positions are to be filled. Criticism of how this was handled could still be a campaign issue.

High-voltage transmissions lines are not built often. When they are, they're usually controversial because of their size, ugliness and lingering concerns over safety. In some areas and countries, there's a big push to put lines underground, where they are less disruptive and less vulnerable to a natural or man-made disaster or even to a terrorist attack.

Some long-term good can come out of this transmission line controversy if citizens will get more involved and stay engaged in the decision-making about renewable power.

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