

# EVR Electrification Project

Community consultation report

February–April 2024



## Executive summary

In February 2024, we introduced our EVR Electrification Project to Elk Valley communities. To meet EVR's anticipated power needs, we began plans to build a new transmission line, substation, and associated infrastructure between Sparwood and Elkford. Our goal for this community consultation was to tell people about the project during the earliest planning stages so we could hear about the impacts of the transmission line route corridors from community members to help us decide which corridor is best.

For those people who provided comments during the community consultation, the top themes included concern about the preferred substation location near EVR's Alexander Creek conservation lands, concerns about habitat fragmentation and other environmental impacts on the transmission line route, and interest in keeping the new transmission line away from residential areas where it could impact aesthetic values.

## Project placed on hold in November 2024

In fall 2024, EVR decided to slow down the project. As the project progressed, it became clear to EVR that more work needed to assess the future technologies which have guided the project, their readiness for mining, and how they will fit into EVR's operating environment.

When the project resumes, we'll provide an update on our website and reach out to stakeholders via email. To sign up for these updates, please email [projects@bchydro.com](mailto:projects@bchydro.com).

As the project moves forward, we'll continue to engage with the community in a meaningful way and work to address and mitigate community concerns.

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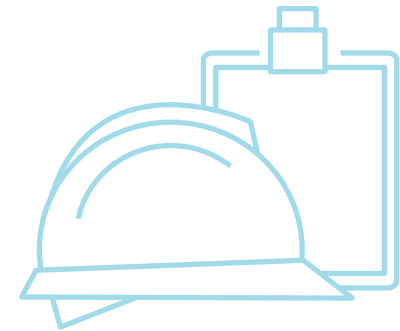
## Background

To deliver additional electricity to the mining operations owned by Elk Valley Resources (EVR), we began plans to build a new 230 kV transmission line, a substation, two new switching stations, and associated infrastructure.

In 2024, we studied four corridor options for the new transmission line route to meet EVR's request for power. The corridor options generally follow existing disturbances on the landscape: the highway, a forestry road, an existing transmission line, and the railway. Routing the new transmission line through these corridors would reduce impacts on fish and wildlife habitat, limit new habitat fragmentation, and allow us to use existing access roads.

To engage the community and gather feedback on our plans, we engaged stakeholders between February and April 2024. Feedback collected from the community through various feedback channels is presented in this report.

More detailed information about the project can be found at [bchydro.com/evrelectrification](https://bchydro.com/evrelectrification).



## What we did

Between February and April 2024, we engaged stakeholders to introduce our plans to build new infrastructure in the Elk Valley to deliver additional power to EVR’s mining operations. Through various feedback channels, more than 80 pieces of information were received.

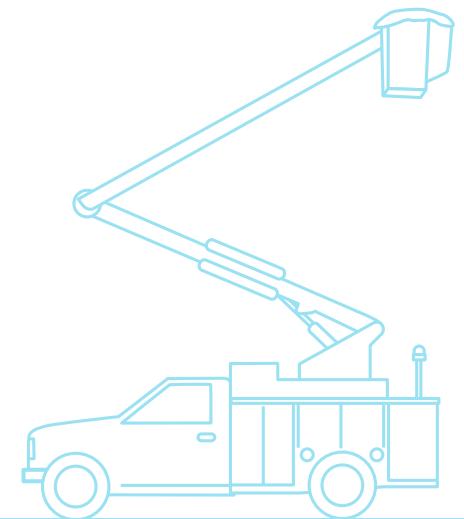
## How we heard from residents

<b>Public open houses</b> February 27 in Elkford February 28 in Sparwood March 6 virtually	<b>3</b> sessions <b>75</b> attendees <b>300</b> minutes / <b>5</b> hours spent with public
<b>Small group discussions</b> February to April, 2024	<b>8</b> sessions <b>12</b> organizations presented to <b>360</b> minutes / <b>6</b> hours spent with public
<b>Feedback forms</b>	<b>2</b> in Sparwood <b>8</b> in Elkford
<b>Email</b>	<b>14</b> emails received and answered
<b>Telephone</b>	<b>7</b> phone calls

## Communication and notification

To ensure awareness of the community consultation opportunities on our plans to build new infrastructure in the Elk Valley, we used several notification and communication tools to reach community members.

<b>Social media</b>	<b>1</b> geotargeted and boosted post on Facebook
<b>Media</b>	<b>1</b> newspaper ad <b>1</b> online news site ad <b>3</b> radio ads
<b>Letters</b>	<b>50</b> mailed invitations to elected officials and key stakeholders
<b>Website</b>	<b>1</b> project website updated with open house invitations



## How we did it

### Information sharing

Maps, a website, storyboards, and a slide deck were developed about our plans to build new infrastructure in the Elk Valley [see Appendix]. The materials highlighted the following topics:

- Electrification
- First Nations consultation
- EVR's decarbonization roadmap
- Proposed new substation
- Proposed new transmission line
  - Steps in building a transmission line
  - How we identify route options
  - Comparison tables for each section of the route
  - What the transmission line could look like
- Environmental studies
- What's happening next

### Gathering community input

The community was invited to share their thoughts in-person, online, by email, mail, and phone. A feedback form was distributed at the in-person and virtual open houses [see Appendix]. The form asked people which corridor they preferred in each section of the proposed transmission line. An open-ended question gave space to provide a more detailed explanation for their preferences. A series of three multiple-choice questions asked for feedback on the methods of sharing information. A final response box gave space for any other comments.

In total, we received 10 responses from feedback forms. The community was also invited to contact us via email at [projects@bchydro.com](mailto:projects@bchydro.com), by phone, or through the project's website.

We are consulting and engaging with First Nations and providing opportunities for First Nations to benefit from our work in their territories. We are having ongoing conversations with the Ktunaxa Nation, Yaq'it ?a·knuq'i'it (Tobacco Plains Indian Band) and Shuswap Band.



## Small group discussion

Between February and April, we gave three presentations to elected officials at the District of Sparwood, District of Elkford, and the Regional District of East Kootenay. We answered 14 questions about clean power and generation, community benefits, customer-driven projects, and construction contracts.

We also held five meetings with stakeholder groups interested in specific aspects of the project, including impacts to conservation lands, Indigenous consultation, and invasive species management. We will continue to meet with these community groups throughout the project.

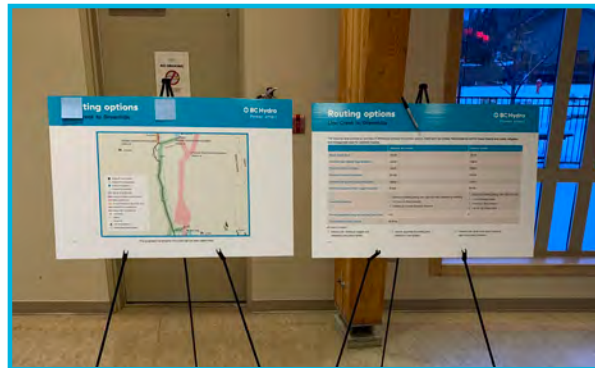
## Public open houses

The open houses provided information via storyboards about EVR's decarbonization roadmap and BC Hydro's plans to deliver more power to the Elk Valley mining operations.

Large maps on storyboards showed the transmission line route in four sections and the corridor options for each section. A companion storyboard showed a table that compared impacts for each section of the proposed line. A BC Hydro subject matter expert used a tablet with Google Earth to zoom in on specific locations along the route in discussion with participants.

Seven members of the BC Hydro project team attended the open houses and were stationed around the venue to answer questions from people as they viewed the storyboards. Three to five EVR employees were also available at the open houses to answer questions about EVR's decarbonization roadmap.

Feedback forms were placed on tables around the room and we invited participants to complete a form before leaving if they hadn't already. Participants were able to leave the feedback form in a drop box at the event or send it to us via email or mail later.



Storyboards, shown at the Elkford open house, showed maps of each section of the proposed transmission line with a table comparing impacts for the different corridor options.



Participants at the Sparwood open house speak to a BC Hydro subject matter expert.

A third, virtual open house was held on Microsoft Teams. We shared a slide deck that showed the same information that was available on storyboards at the in-person open houses and subject matter experts explained the content. A question-and-answer period followed. The feedback form was distributed to participants via email after the meeting but no responses were received.

## What we heard

Community input about the project was received from small group discussions, public open houses, feedback forms, emails, and by phone. Feedback fell into 10 different themes:

**32** mentions  
Environment

**11** mentions  
Communities

**7** mentions  
Engagement

**4** mentions  
EVR

**4** mentions  
Recreation

**2** mentions  
Project cost

**2** mentions  
Clean power

**2** mentions  
Indigenous  
consultation

**2** mentions  
Employment

**2** mentions  
Industry

## Environmental impacts

The top feedback theme noted by community members was concern about environmental impacts from the project.

The proposed location for the new Alexander Creek Substation received significant pushback from environmental groups who are concerned with its location on property owned by BC Hydro but surrounded by EVR's Alexander Creek conservation lands. Environmental stakeholders told us that the conservation lands are critical winter range for ungulates and part of an important north–south corridor in the Rocky Mountains for deer, elk, sheep, grizzly bears, and other species. Comments were received that the substation would “turn a natural landscape into a permanent industrial work zone”. Some environmental groups asked us to reconsider the substation location, look for alternatives, and review these with stakeholders.

Community members also told us they are opposed to the transmission line route crossing Big Ranch conservation lands. Stakeholders were concerned with impacts to wildlife habitat by the entire project, saying that the degree of impact is “unpalatable”. Stakeholders told us about the importance of EVR's social and environmental commitments in the Elk Valley and asked how BC Hydro's environmental commitments compare.

We heard that interaction with riparian and floodplain zones should be limited; invasive species control is vital during construction and for the ongoing management of rights-of-way, including blocking access for recreational vehicles; and vegetation removal should be minimized.

## Community impacts

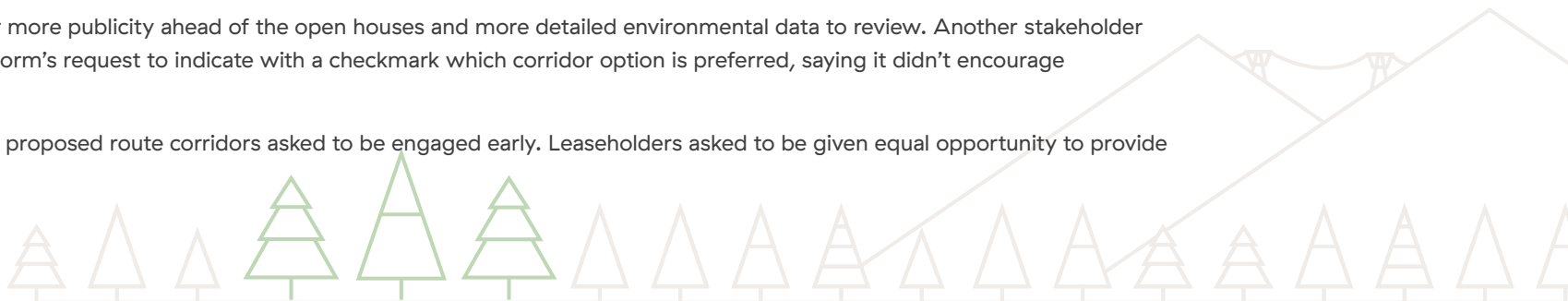
Some participants in Sparwood told us that they would prefer the transmission line follow the corridor on the eastern side of the valley, aligned with the railway line, to minimize impacts on residences and aesthetic values.

Similarly, in Elkford, community members were concerned about the aesthetic impacts of another transmission line through the community, and specifically over Elkford's municipal golf course. We heard that residents would rather the line align with the railway corridor on the eastern side of the valley and be placed on EVR property wherever possible. Community leaders suggested that placing the transmission line on the railway corridor option could open up a second evacuation route from Elkford during a wildfire. We also heard concerns about housing availability for workers during project construction.

## Engagement

Some stakeholders asked for more publicity ahead of the open houses and more detailed environmental data to review. Another stakeholder was critical of the feedback form's request to indicate with a checkmark which corridor option is preferred, saying it didn't encourage nuanced discussion.

Residents who live along the proposed route corridors asked to be engaged early. Leaseholders asked to be given equal opportunity to provide input as property owners.





## **EVR's plans**

Stakeholders were interested in EVR's need for more electricity, and details about their decarbonization plan. We referred these comments and questions to EVR.

## **Recreation impacts**

One stakeholder group preferred the new transmission line be aligned with a forestry road north of Elkford to create recreational access. Another was concerned the new substation would impact recreational opportunities in the area.

## **Clean power**

Stakeholders had the perception that BC Hydro may need to import more power to supply electrification projects such as ours, and were particularly concerned about power coming from Alberta.

## **Indigenous consultation**

The Elk Valley Métis told us about their deep, historic connections in the Valley dating back to the 1790s. They requested BC Hydro conduct meaningful engagement and consult them as a rights-holding Nation.

## **Project costs**

Some participants were concerned about the future cost of electricity due to increased demand from electrification of industry. Others asked whether EVR or BC Hydro would pay for the project.

## **Industry**

We heard from participants that the cumulative impacts from industry in this area are significant and we should avoid or mitigate additional impacts.

## **Employment**

Participants were interested in how many workers will be needed for construction and how contract and employment opportunities would be shared.

# Consultation materials

## Appendix A – Feedback form

**Note:** at the time consultation was carried out, EVR was owned by Teck and the project was known as the Teck Electrification Project.



# Consultation materials

## Appendix B – Storyboards



# Consultation materials

## Appendix C – Presentation



