

Progress in construction of power link to NJ

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The trenches that workers are digging along the Wantagh Parkway and the holes they are drilling in a muddy field on the east side of the highway in New Cassel have nothing to do with road improvements.

The construction is for installation of the 65-mile electric cable that will link Long Island and New Jersey in 2007 and allow the Long Island Power Authority to tap into power from the south.

On Tuesday, Neptune Regional Transmission System, the Fairfield, Conn., company building the cable, showed off the three months of work done so far to LIPA and government officials.

"It's the most important energy project in the history of Long Island because for the first time, Long Island will become part of the national energy grid, and for the first time, we'll be able to import power from the south, where it's a heck of a lot cheaper," LIPA chairman Richard Kessel said as he surveyed the New Cassel site where the cable will terminate. "It's important for the reliability of the system as well. When this is online two summers from now, it will have a significant impact on our customers' bills." How much the bill might be reduced is not yet known.

North Hempstead Supervisor Jon Kaiman said the investment by Neptune would provide an economic boost for Long Island, the town and New Cassel. Neptune is providing money for a community center on the west side of the parkway.

Neptune president Edward Stern said the company is preparing to pour the foundations for a building and substation yard north of Old Country Road and east of the parkway. The 12-acre site was a Department of Transportation landfill leased from the state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. Construction will take nine months.

The Neptune cable, which is about 10 inches in diameter and weighs 70 pounds per foot, will start to be laid in July in New Jersey and be installed on the Island in the fall. It will come ashore 50

feet below ground level at Jones Beach. The beach will be unaffected, because the cable will fed through a hole drilled offshore.

The cable's electricity then will be fed into the LIPA grid at a substation on Newbridge Road in Levittown.

Because of the construction, the bicycle path on the east side of the parkway will be closed temporarily from Merrick Road to Jones Beach starting in January.

The 660-megawatt cable to be leased by LIPA is expected to cost more than \$400 million.

"We'll provide tax revenue and bring jobs to Long Island for the construction and operation phases," Stern said.

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Neptune power cable
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