

Since SDG&E announced the Sunrise Powerlink in August 2005, the project has been the subject of much public debate. Several misconceptions about a variety of issues related to the project continue to be repeated in different forums. It's vital to provide the public with the truth. The following information should help to separate the myths from the facts, dispel rumors, clarify misunderstandings and set the record straight.

MYTH	FACT
<i>There are "better alternatives" – such as adding more local power plants or re-powering the South Bay Power Plant.</i>	San Diego needs more power plants and more transmission. Two new local power plants are already planned; one, Palomar Energy Center in Escondido, will be in service this spring. A second power plant in Otay Mesa should be on line by summer 2008. These two plants will add 1,100 megawatts (MW). SDG&E's long-term resource plan already takes into account these new resources, plus the benefits of energy efficiency and conservation, as well as another 1,000 MW from either re-powering or keeping existing plants or building more new ones. Even given that, forecasts show a power deficit as soon as 2010. Transmission is also needed to meet the future energy needs of the region. It's not a question of building local power plants or transmission; we need "all of the above."

MYTH	FACT
<i>San Diego can meet local energy needs by putting solar panels on rooftops all over San Diego County.</i>	At the current price of solar technology, it would cost \$12 billion to generate the 1,000 MW the Sunrise Powerlink would deliver. However, only 20 percent of the homes in San Diego are located east of Interstate 15 – the area of the county with the greatest amount of sunshine. Solar panels are less efficient the closer you get to the coast. Even later in the day, they produce only about half the energy they do at noon. Because SDG&E's late summer peak demand is usually about 3 p.m., to get enough electricity from solar panels to meet that demand, the region would need to install twice the capacity of the line - 2,000 MW - at a cost of \$21 billion.

MYTH	FACT
<i>SDG&amp;E customers will have to pay for the entire \$1.4 billion projected cost of the project.</i>	In California, consumers statewide share the costs and benefits of high-voltage transmission lines. Under the current, state-mandated formula, SDG&E customers, who make up about 10 percent of the state's total, would pay about 10 percent of the costs of the Sunrise Powerlink project. Consumers in other parts of the state would pay the rest, just as we share the costs when Southern California Edison or Pacific Gas & Electric builds a new transmission line to serve their customers' energy reliability needs.

MYTH	FACT
<i>SDG&amp;E's proposal ignores the San Diego Regional Energy Strategy.</i>	SDG&E was part of the process that helped develop the regional energy strategy for 2030. In fact, the utility's long-term resource plan for the next five years includes many of the same recommendations. Goal 5 in the regional plan calls for "improving transmission capacity to meet reliability requirements and to enhance access to renewable resources." That's exactly what the Sunrise Powerlink will do.

MYTH	FACT
<i>Adding another 500-kV line parallel to the existing Southwest Powerlink is a better solution than the Sunrise Powerlink proposal.</i>	SDG&E is part of a regional transmission study group, led by the Independent System Operator (ISO). Last year, this group evaluated – and rejected – a proposal to build another 500-kV line along the Southwest Powerlink (SWPL) corridor. That route did not meet reliability criteria because both lines could be taken out of service at the same time by a natural or man-made problem, such as a fire. In fact, the segment of SWPL between Imperial Valley and San Diego has been out of service due to wildfires more than 20 times in the past 15 years. Another reason a line parallel to SWPL was rejected was because it would deliver 1,000 MW to the <i>southeast</i> end of SDG&E's system. More new transmission would still be needed to deliver the power to the northern part of the county where it's needed.

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MYTH	FACT
<i>Building local power plants is the key to energy independence.</i>	It's not that simple. Power plants take almost as long to site, license and build as a transmission line and they require transmission lines to deliver the power to homes and businesses. They are operated in compliance with state and federal law, and under contracts, so where they are located has little to do with energy independence. Relying only on local generation ignores the real issue, however, which is energy reliability. The entire western power grid is interconnected, which improves reliability and reduces cost volatility. San Diego already is an energy cul-de-sac. Turning the region into an energy island would limit access to diverse power sources, including renewables, and to less expensive energy. A combination of adding new power plants and new transmission ensures that we don't put all of our eggs in one basket.
<i>SDG&amp;E can meet the state's renewable energy goal without the Sunrise project.</i>	SDG&E could meet the goal of delivering 20 percent of its energy from renewable resources by 2010 using existing transmission, but at a much higher cost to customers. Right now, there are not enough local renewables to meet the goal. SDG&E's contract with Stirling Energy Systems could deliver as much as 900 MW of solar power from the Imperial Valley to our region, but not unless the Sunrise Powerlink is built.  SDG&E already has a contract for as much as 900 MW of competitively priced solar power from a project planned for Imperial Valley. The Sunrise Powerlink will enable this energy to reach customers in San Diego, as well as other renewable resources that are expected to be developed in the Imperial Valley.
<i>A major power line through San Diego County's backcountry creates a fire hazard.</i>	According to the California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection, transmission lines historically present a minimal fire risk. Fire-fighting crews, including air tankers, are trained to work around power lines, and routinely work closely with SDG&E's fire coordinators during a wildland fire. Fire officials say SDG&E's access roads often act as firebreaks and help fire crews reach remote areas in San Diego County's backcountry.
<i>SDG&amp;E's parent company, Sempra Energy, wants the line to sell the energy from its power plants in Mexico.</i>	The power from plants in Mexico and the western United States is already being delivered today across the existing transmission system. These plants don't need the Sunrise Powerlink.
<i>SDG&amp;E won't commit to using the Sunrise Powerlink to deliver only renewable power.</i>	By federal law, SDG&E does not control who uses the Sunrise Powerlink or other transmission lines within California. The agency that manages the statewide energy grid and the federal government have that responsibility. This "open access" to transmission benefits consumers because SDG&E and other utilities can deliver the cheapest available power from throughout the desert Southwest and California.
<i>If the CPUC doesn't make a decision on the Sunrise Powerlink this year, the federal government will step in.</i>	The Energy Act of 2005 allows the federal government to step in on projects related to federally designated "national interest energy corridors." At this time, no such corridors have been designated and the designation criteria haven't been determined yet.