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New player in gas line game wants smaller, Interior line

By Ted Land

There's another gas line proposal for the state to consider. This one is much less talked about than the plans for larger diameter lines to Canada and the Lower 48.

It's smaller, less expensive, and would only serve the interior.

The Fairbanks company behind the idea, Energia Cura, is in Anchorage visiting lawmakers. The company's name means "energy cure."

Owner Alex Gajdos hopes the line will bring affordable relief to Fairbanks.

"We're trying to make it happen a little faster, because as time goes on one-sixth of the state's population in the Interior is paying twice as much for the energy that they should," he said.

The company proposes a gas line to carry North Slope energy south along the Dalton Highway to the state's second-largest city, where, besides household customers, it would serve those all-important major users like mines, refineries and the electric utility.

"How do you make this gas line meaningful for everyone? It's through their electric meter. We can reduce Golden Valley (Electrical Association)'s costs by half. That's significant," Gajdos said.

Energia Cura's original plan called for a 10-inch line, but they say their still-ongoing open season, in which potential customers express interest, is showing even more demand, so they recently increased their plan to a 12-inch line.

That's substantially smaller than the 48-inch lines proposed by TransCanada and the Denali Project, but Gajdos says the line is not meant to compete with the larger ones.

He says they can operate in tandem because he's trying to serve a relatively small Interior population, while TransCanada and Denali are targeting a much larger base in the Lower 48 and Canada.

As for how to pay for the project, Energia Cura plans to solicit the help of private investors.

There would be no subsidies, although the company plans to offer the state a 7 percent ownership stake for allowing the gas line to travel on DOT property along the Dalton highway.

Energia Cura's goal is to be up and running by the year 2014, and while significant challenges remain, at least now, there's a plan.

Energia Cura still has to find investors, they need permission from the state to use their land and they must secure those industrial users, some of which are exploring other alternatives.

The company has constructed pipelines in Alaska and it currently maintains the second-largest pipeline system in the state connecting the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System to both North Pole refineries.