



Vail Valley Mountain Trails Alliance
PO Box 3986
Avon, CO 81620
www.vvmta.org

To: Brian Glaspell, Forest Supervisor, White River National Forest
CC: Leanne Veldhuis, District Ranger, Eagle-Holy Cross Ranger District

Re: Comments on the Draft Environmental Assessment for the Holy Cross Energy Avon–Gilman 115-kV Transmission Line Project

Dear Brian and Leanne,

On behalf of the Vail Valley Mountain Trails Alliance (VVMTA), I am submitting comments regarding the Draft Environmental Assessment for the proposed Holy Cross Energy Avon–Gilman 115-kV Transmission Line Project.

Preferred Alternative:

VVMTA strongly supports the No Action Alternative as the only alternative that avoids direct and indirect impacts to existing recreational opportunities. Recreational access and high-quality trail experiences are fundamental to our community's well-being and economy. Any alternative that introduces closures, reroutes, or visual intrusions undermines the integrity of these resources.

That said, we recognize the community and regional need for this transmission line. If the project must move forward, Alternative 4 is the most acceptable option, as it best balances system needs with reduced impacts on recreation compared to Alternatives 2 and 3.

Recreation Impacts by Alternative:

Alternative 2

- Significant impacts and closures on Meadow Mountain, including power poles that would serve as pylons within key winter recreation and backcountry skiing areas.
- Direct impacts or potential destruction of the Taylor Street/Cemetery Connector Trail, which provides important non-motorized connectivity.
- While it appears to be the least impactful to the Minturn Bike Park (MBP), there remain concerns over access closures along the road during construction.
- Impacts and closures of the Two Elk Trail.

Alternative 3

- Improves upon Alternative 2 by providing a better crossing at Dowd Junction, avoiding some of the most severe Meadow Mountain impacts.
- Still impacts or could destroy the Taylor Street/Cemetery Connector Trail.
- Requires closures and potential rebuilding of trails within the Minturn Bike Park, possibly including the pumptrack, as well as temporary road access closures.



Vail Valley Mountain Trails Alliance
PO Box 3986
Avon, CO 81620
www.vvmta.org

-
- Impacts and closures of the Two Elk Trail.

Alternative 4:

- Impacts and closures on Meadow Mountain, but the undergrounding element avoids aboveground pylons, which is an important mitigation for winter recreation and skiing.
- Still impacts or could destroy the Taylor Street/Cemetery Connector Trail.
- Requires closures and reconstruction of Dual Slalom, Mini Mile, and other Minturn Bike Park trails, though road access to the Bike Park appears less impacted compared to other alternatives.
- Impacts and closures to Two Elk Trail remain.

Conclusion and Funding Needs:

While we maintain that the No Action Alternative best preserves the integrity of the Meadow Mountain recreation area, Minturn Bike Park, Taylor Street/Cemetery Connector Trail, and Two Elk Trail, if the transmission line is determined to be necessary, Alternative 4 should be advanced as it minimizes the most severe recreation conflicts.

In addition, we stress the critical need for dedicated and significant funding commitments from both Holy Cross Energy and the Forest Service to restore and mitigate impacts to recreation areas. Trail systems, bike parks, and winter recreation zones require specialized design and construction resources to return them to equal or better condition. Without meaningful funding, the loss of connectivity and quality in these recreation assets will have long-term negative consequences for the community.

Therefore, we request that the Forest Service and Holy Cross Energy commit to:

- Establishing a recreation mitigation fund of sufficient scale to cover the full costs of trail reconstruction.
- Full reconstruction and restoration of any impacted trails, bike park features, and recreation infrastructure to equal or better condition.
- Ongoing coordination with VVMTA, local governments, and community partners throughout construction and restoration.
- Clear and consistent communication of temporary closures and mitigation measures to ensure safe recreational access during construction.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments. Please include VVMTA in future discussions regarding mitigation, trail restoration, funding commitments, and recreation management for this project.

Sincerely,



Vail Valley Mountain Trails Alliance
PO Box 3986
Avon, CO 81620
www.vvmta.org

Ernest Saeger
Executive Director
Vail Valley Mountain Trails Alliance

CC: VVMTA Board of Directors