

# Electric Reliability in Bellevue

(Updated May 2010)

## Background

Reliable electric service is a critical component of a thriving, technologically advanced community, yet Bellevue has had limited involvement in the planning and operations of the electric system serving the community. Bellevue's electric service provider, Puget Sound Energy (PSE), is a privately-owned utility regulated by the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (WUTC), and the city's authority is limited by the terms of a franchise agreement with PSE.

As the major population and employment center for the Eastside, electrical service reliability is critical for Bellevue to meet its own, and the region's growth management and economic development goals. Highly reliable electric service is important to meet economic, public health and safety objectives, as well as customer convenience expectations.

Over the past few years, there has been increased interest in the city's electric service for three primary reasons: a severe windstorm in the fall of 2006, which resulted in region-wide power outages lasting many days; a tremendous surge of growth, particularly in the downtown core, including many high-tech firms with significant needs for electricity; and an increase in home-based technology businesses, which boosts demand for electricity in residential areas.

## Goals/Objectives

In response to the increased attention, the Bellevue City Council adopted an Electric Reliability Interest Statement (in July 2008) that identified six areas of interest pertaining to a highly reliable electric service for the community. The Interest Statement was developed in consultation with City Council, external stakeholders, and Puget Sound Energy. The areas of interest are:

- Enhance the City's role as an informed stakeholder
- Ensure that a highly reliable electric system is built, operated, and maintained
- Ensure that the electric system keeps pace with future load growth
- Enhance the relationship between the City and Puget Sound Energy (PSE)
- Ensure an equitable rate structure
- Improve PSE transparency of operation

In order to address these areas of interest, Council approved \$350,000 in the 2009-2015 Capital Investment Plan (CIP) for an Electric Service Reliability Study (CIP Project G-76). In April 2009, staff selected a consultant, Exponent, to assist with the study. The consultant's first task was to work with city staff and external stakeholders (residents, businesses, and PSE) to develop a scope for the study, which Council will review before

a contract is awarded for implementation of the study. The study is intended to address these objectives:

- Define best practices for electric service providers in areas such as system planning, operations, maintenance, and technologies to improve the City's ability to work with stakeholders to achieve reliable electric power.
- Assess the current and future electric system that serves Bellevue to identify areas of opportunities for improvement to increase system reliability, system modernization, innovation, and capacity.
- Define the role of the City relative to its interaction with Puget Sound Energy, the electric system owner, and the WUTC, to ensure a highly reliable electric system for Bellevue.
- Define the criteria for the City to measure and monitor its electric system to ensure continuous reliability improvement.

## **Timeline/Status**

Consultant Selection – complete

Scope of Work Development – in progress

Present Scope of Work to Council – July 2010

Complete Study – First quarter 2011