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## LS Power transmission line could be completed by 2010

By **Stephanie Tavares** / STAFF WRITER

The Las Vegas area may soon be connected to the bountiful renewable energy sources of Northern Nevada — and vice versa.

LS Power Group recently applied for the final stage of permits to build the southern portion of a 500-mile transmission line connecting North Las Vegas to Ely. The 500-kilovolt line would eventually extend into Southern Idaho and through the planned wind farms of Northern Nevada.

The privately owned line would cost approximately \$2 million per mile to build. It will be funded by private capital, but cannot be built until LS Power attains enough contracts from energy suppliers to carry electricity on the line.

The transmission line will run along the Southwest Intertie Project right of way that Idaho Power acquired from the Bureau of Land Management in the early 1990s. LS Power acquired the right of way from Idaho Power in 2005.

The right of way comes with completed environmental permits, although LS Power has submitted another set as well as construction, operations and maintenance permit applications to the BLM.

The right of way is in the same utilities corridor where NV Energy (formerly Nevada Power) plans to build a similar transmission line.

The NV Energy transmission line has been held up by the Ely Energy Center, a controversial coal-fired power plant in eastern Nevada.

Following LS Power's recent announcement of its transmission line plans, NV Energy CEO Michael Yackira vowed to "speed up the process" of building its planned line between Ely

and Las Vegas.

He did not offer any specifics about how the transmission line would be separated from the rest of the Ely Energy Center project or when construction would take place.

Although LS Power also intends to build a coal plant in Ely, the transmission line has always been a separate project.

The company separated the two because it expects the transmission line to receive little opposition and be completed sooner than the coal plant.

"We don't need the coal plant to build this transmission line," LS Power Project Development Director Mark Milburn said. "With the interest from the renewable energy developers, there's incentive to do this now."

If the company completes the permit process by year's end as anticipated, the transmission line could be under construction next summer and completed by the end of 2010.

LS Power hopes that by that time, permits for the northern half of the transmission line will be complete.

It expects to have the entire line completed, connecting Southern Nevada's electric grid to Idaho's, by 2012.

The line could bring much needed construction jobs to Southern Nevada. If all goes as LS Power intends, it could be calling for construction bids by the end of this year, putting hundreds of workers on the job within months.

Building such a large project would require contractors with specialized experience in transmission line projects — of which there are a handful in Nevada, Milburn said.

And although the line itself will create only a handful of long-term jobs, it could spur economic development in the renewable energy sector that could provide thousands of jobs.