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PSC Needs Feedback on Weatherization Plan

Energy West would like to partner with the Great Falls Airport on its noise mitigation project and the Montana Public Service Commission (PSC) needs your feedback on the idea. During the initial stage of the project, the airport is soundproofing 12-15 homes with funding from a federal grant. The soundproofing materials will simultaneously weatherize the homes, reducing energy consumption. Because of the resulting energy cost savings, Energy West has requested that the PSC approve its proposal to spend \$22,000 as matching funds for the Airport's grant money. The PSC must approve the expenditure because the company plans to use Universal System's Benefit (USB) program funds.

"The PSC must make sure USB funding is used to meet the objectives of the program: cost-effective energy conservation and low-income customer weatherization," PSC Chair Greg Jergeson noted. "Energy West teaming up with the airport is an innovative idea but before approving it, we want to make sure the public is comfortable with the notion."

The PSC is taking comments on the proposal until May 24. Written remarks can be sent to the PSC at P.O. Box 202601, Helena, Montana 59620-2601 or through the PSC's web-based comment form at <http://psc.mt.gov/Consumers/comments>. Additional information about Energy West's proposed plan can be found under docket D2009.6.90 on the PSC website at <http://psc.mt.gov/eDocs>.

The USB program was established in 1997 by the state legislature and is funded by a surcharge on the annual retail revenues of gas and electricity companies. If the initial stage of the noise mitigation project is successful, Energy West may request to use more of their USB funding for soundproofing/weatherization work on additional houses; the PSC will need to approve future expenditures as well.

Made up of 5 elected commissioners, the PSC works to ensure that Montanans receive safe and reliable service from regulated public utilities while paying reasonable rates. Utilities regulated by the PSC generally include private investor-owned natural gas, electric, telephone, water, and sewer companies. In addition, the PSC regulates certain motor carriers, and oversees natural gas pipeline safety and intrastate railroad safety.