

About 10,000 AEP/SWEPCO customers in Bowie County will be part of the pilot project this year for the utility's Advanced Metering System.

The wireless system will use technology to provide customers their real-time energy usage information and will also make it easier to make service connections and disconnects remotely.

Michelle Marcotte, SWEPCO communications consultant, said the pilot program includes Texarkana's 75501 and 75503 ZIP codes,

Marcotte said the reason that SWEPCO chose the Texarkana/Bowie County area as its Texas launch for the smart meter system is because it is one of largest cities and areas SWEPCO services in the state.

The Bowie County pilot program is on track to start soon.

The new meters will be placed where existing members are currently located.

SWEPCO filed a plan with the Public Utilities Commission of Texas on Aug. 4 to deploy the new meter system in its service area.

All of Texarkana, Texas, will be among the cities in the first phase of full deployment as SWEPCO plans to move east to west in installing the new meters. Texarkana and Bowie County are among the utility's easternmost services areas in Texas.

SWEPCO's proposal before the Texas utility agency includes a surcharge for the new metering system as well as customers who opt-out of the program.

Pending PUCT approval, the surcharge would be \$2.92 per month for residential customers for the first four years and \$2.42 for the next four years. It would begin in April 2022. The surcharge for other rate classes varies and expires after four years, according to a SWEPCO press release.

The plan also includes a provision for customers to "opt-out" and elect a non-standard meter, with a proposed one-time fee ranging from \$131.68 to \$233.39 depending on the option elected, and a proposed recurring monthly customer fee of \$22.97, according to the press release.

Marcotte said the new smart meters would not enable SWEPCO to perform rolling blackouts or brownouts to individual homes.

The smart meter system has been installed in Eureka Springs, Arkansas and that transition has been a smooth one, she said.