NOTICE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SCOPING MEETINGS

Issued: October 10, 2023

In the Matter of the Joint Application of Minnesota Power and Great River Energy for a Certificate of Need and Route Permit for an approximately 180-mile, double circuit 345 kV transmission line from Itasca County to Benton County, Minnesota (Northland Reliability Project).


The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) and the Minnesota Department of Commerce (Department) will hold public information and environmental assessment (EA) scoping meetings on Minnesota Power and Great River Energy’s certificate of need (CN) and route permit (RP) application for the Itasca County to Benton County 345 kilovolt (kV) transmission line project on the following dates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Meeting Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 23, 2023 (Monday)</td>
<td>Doors open -5:00pm Public Meeting 6:00pm – 8:00 pm</td>
<td>Spang Town Hall 35402 Spang Road, Hill City, MN 55748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 24, 2023 (Tuesday)</td>
<td>Doors open - 10:00am Public Meeting 11:00am – 1:00 pm</td>
<td>Taconite Canteen 240 Curtis Ave., Ironton, MN 56455</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 24, 2023 (Tuesday)</td>
<td>Doors open – 5:00pm Public Meeting 6:00pm – 8:00 pm</td>
<td>American Legion Hall 708 Front Street, Brainerd, MN 56401</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 25, 2023 (Wednesday)</td>
<td>Doors open - 10:00am Public Meeting 11:00am – 1:00 pm</td>
<td>Pierz Ballroom 133 Main Street South, Pierz, MN 56364</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 25, 2023 (Wednesday)</td>
<td>Doors open - 5:00pm Public Meeting 6:00pm – 8:00 pm</td>
<td>Palmer Township Hall 4180 105th Ave., Clear Lake, MN 56304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 26, 2023 (Thursday)</td>
<td>Doors open - 10:00am Public Meeting 11:00am – 1:00 pm</td>
<td>Sauk Rapids Government Center 250 Summit Ave. North, Sauk Rapids, MN 56379</td>
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WebEx (Online) Meeting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>October 27, 2023</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time:</td>
<td>12:00 - 2:00 pm</td>
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**WebEx (Webinar) Link:** https://minnesota.webex.com  
**Webinar Number:** 2482 714 2794  
**Webinar Password:** PUC!2023 (78202023 from phones)  
**Join by Phone:** 1-855-282-6330  
**Access Code:** 2482 714 2794

If you are joining the meeting by WebEx and would like to ask a question or make a comment during the designated portion of the meeting, use the chat function to send a message to the meeting moderator. If you are joining the meeting by phone, press *3 on your phone. When it is your turn to speak, your line will be unmuted, and you will be able to ask questions and provide comments. Additional information and instructions are available at: https://mn.gov/puc/activities/meetings/webex/

To find out if a meeting is canceled due to bad weather or other call 1-855-731-6208 or 651-201-2213 or visit mn.gov/puc.

**Meeting Information**

**Doors Open**
- Doors will open one hour prior to each meeting. Attendees will have an opportunity to review maps and materials for the project. During this time, comments made by attendees will become a part of the record for Commission consideration only if the attendee submits the comment in writing. Forms will be available for this purpose.
- Commission and Department staff, as well as staff from Great River Energy and Minnesota Power, will be available to answer questions about the project and the process.

**Public Meeting**
- During the public meeting, Commission and Department staff will make a presentation regarding the state’s environmental review and permitting process.
- After the presentations, attendees will have the opportunity to offer oral and/or written comments into the record.
- The same information will be presented at each meeting.
- Each meeting will last until everyone at the meeting has had an opportunity to speak.
- Comments received at the meeting and during the comment period will be used to develop the scope of the environmental assessment for this project.
Written Comment Period

Written comments will be accepted through **November 21, 2023. Please include the docket numbers in all communications (22-415 and 22-416).**

Focus your comments on information that will help answer the following questions:

- What potential human and environmental impacts of the proposed project should be studied in the environmental assessment?
- Are there methods to minimize, mitigate, or avoid these impacts that should be studied in the environmental assessment?
- Are there any alternative routes or route segments that should be studied to mitigate potential impacts associated with the proposed project?
- Are there any unique characteristics of the proposed route or the project that should be considered?
- Are there other ways to meet the stated need for the project, instead of the proposed transmission line, e.g., a different size or type of facility? If so, what alternatives to the project should be studied in the environmental assessment?

Comments may be submitted:

**Email:**  
Jim.Sullivan@state.mn.us

**Online:**  
https://mn.gov/commerce/energyfacilities/#comment

**U.S. Mail:**  
Jim Sullivan  
Minnesota Department of Commerce  
85 7th Place East, Suite 280  
St. Paul, MN 55101

**Important:** Comments will be made available to the public via the Commission’s website, except in limited circumstances consistent with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act. The Commission and the Department do not edit or delete personal identifying information from submissions.

Project Description

Minnesota Power and Great River Energy have submitted a certificate of need and route permit application for an approximately 180-mile, double circuit 345 kV transmission line from Itasca County to Benton County, Minnesota (Northland Reliability Project). The project consists of two segments.

The first project segment consists of an approximately 140-mile long, double circuit 345 kV transmission line connecting the Iron Range Substation near Grand Rapids, Minnesota to a new
Cuyuna Series Compensation Station near Ironton, and to the existing Benton County Substation near St. Cloud, Minnesota.

The second project segment replaces an existing 20-mile 230 kV line with a double circuit 345 kV line from the Benton County Substation to a new Xcel Energy Big Oaks Substation near Monticello, Minnesota. Additionally, the second segment will replace an existing 20-mile 345 kV line from the Benton County substation to Xcel Energy’s Sherco Substation in Sherburne County using double circuit 345 kV structures.

**Review Process**

The proposed Northland Reliability Project requires two approvals from the Commission – a certificate of need and a route permit. Minnesota Power and Great River filed a combined certificate of need and route permit application with the Commission on August 4, 2023. The Commission subsequently determined that the application was complete and initiated an environmental review and hearing process. This process will take about 12 months to complete, culminating in Commission decisions on CN and RP.

**Environmental Review.** Minnesota Department of Commerce, Energy Environmental Review and Analysis (EERA) staff will prepare an environmental assessment (EA) for the project. The EA will analyze the potential human and environmental impacts of the proposed project and alternatives to the project, as well as methods to mitigate potential impacts.

**Public Hearing.** When the EA is complete and issued, a public hearing will be held in the project area. An Office of Administrative Hearings administrative law judge (ALJ) will preside over the hearing. At the hearing, members of the public will have an opportunity to make an oral presentation, submit comments, and ask questions of the applicant and staff. The ALJ will use the EA, the hearing transcripts, and the entire administrative record to write a report for the Commission, that will include a findings of fact, conclusions of law, and recommendations regarding the project.

Upon completion of the public hearing process, and after receiving the ALJ’s report, the Commission will make final decisions on a certificate of need and route permit for the project, expected in late 2024. If the Commission issues a route permit, Minnesota Power and Great River Energy may exercise the power of eminent domain to acquire land for this project pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 216E.12.

**Additional Information**

**Filing Requirements.** Utilities, telecommunications carriers, official parties, and state agencies are required to file documents using the Commission’s electronic filing system (eFiling). All parties, participants, and interested persons are encouraged to use eFiling: [mn.gov/puc/edockets](http://mn.gov/puc/edockets), select Go to eDockets and follow the prompts.
**Full Case Record.** See all documents filed in this matter on the Commission’s website at: mn.gov/puc/edockets, select Go to eDockets, enter the year (22) and the docket numbers (416) for the certificate of need or (415) for the route permit and select Search.

**Subscribe to the Docket.** To receive email notification when new documents are filed in this matter visit: https://www.edockets.state.mn.us/EFiling, select Subscribe to Dockets and follow the prompts.

**Project Mailing List.** Sign up to receive notices about project milestones and opportunities to participate or change your mailing preference. Email docketing.puc@state.mn.us or call Leesa Norton at 651-201-2246 with the docket numbers (22-415 and 22-416), your name, mailing address, and email address.

**Department of Commerce Project Website:**
https://eera.web.commerce.state.mn.us/web/project/15114

**Project Contacts**

**Public Utilities Commission**
Craig Janezich, Energy Facilities Planner, craig.janezich@state.mn.us or 651.201.2203

**Department of Commerce**
Jim Sullivan, Environmental Review Manager, jim.sullivan@state.mn.us or 651.539.1059

**Great River Energy**
Dan Lesher, Manager, Transmission Permitting and Land Rights, dlesher@GREnergy.com, 763.445.5975

**Minnesota Power**
Jim Atkinson, Manager, jbatkinson@mnpower.com, 218.355.3561

If any reasonable accommodation is needed to enable you to fully participate in these meetings, please contact the Commission at 651-296-0406 or 1-800-657-3782 at least one week in advance of the meeting. To request this document in another format such as large print or audio, call 651-296-0406 (voice). Persons with a hearing or speech impairment may call using their preferred Telecommunications Relay Service or email consumer.puc@state.mn.us for assistance.