

10.0 FEDERAL AND STATE AGENCY, LOCAL GOVERNMENT, AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The Applicants have pursued an aggressive public outreach effort that has provided opportunities for potentially affected landowners and other stakeholders to be involved in the routing process. The Applicants have held numerous open houses, work group meetings and meetings with individual landowners, government agencies and other interested stakeholders to provide information about the route development process and to gather comments on potential route segments.

This Chapter discusses these outreach efforts in general. More detailed descriptions and related documentation are contained in the Appendices.

10.1 AGENCY INVOLVEMENT IN PRE-APPLICATION

The Applicants first made contact with State elected officials and county administrative staff by letter in July 2006. The intention of the first contact with these officials was to introduce the Project. Applicants made contact again by telephone in August 2006.

In late October 2007, the Applicants mailed initial contact letters to each federal, State and local agency potentially involved in the Project (Appendix J). These agency letters provided general Project information and sought agencies' involvement in the route development process. Notes from agency phone conversations are included in Appendix J. Typically, issues that were raised in phone conversations would be discussed further at in-person meetings. Examples of the agency letters, notes from agency phone conversations and meeting notes from all meetings described in this section are included in Appendix J. Three rounds of meetings were held involving federal, State and local government agencies (not all agencies were included in all rounds of meetings).

The first round was held in January and February 2008. At these meetings, the Applicants discussed the Project background, need, details, permits required and approval process. The Applicants presented the proposed Project Corridor and provided the agencies with an opportunity to identify and discuss any specific concerns related to the Project area. Each meeting was tailored to the specific agency or government unit involved. Similar topics at each meeting included long-range development plans, major avoidance areas, State routing criteria, Project schedule, route selection process, and future communication with agencies and the public. The Applicants typically established a point of contact for each agency for the Project. At the time of this first round of meetings the alternative project configuration, connecting the Minnesota Valley and West Waconia substations, was under consideration in the Certificate of Need process. The Applicants presented an alternative corridor for this configuration (the "northern alternative") between the Minnesota Valley and West Waconia substations, paralleling the existing Minnesota Valley – Blue Lake 230 kV transmission line. Agencies in areas potentially affected by the northern alternative were involved in the first round of meetings. The northern alternative was later dropped from consideration in the Certificate of Need process and accordingly, these agencies were not included in later meetings as the routing process proceeded.

The second round of meetings was held in April and May 2008. By this time, the Applicants had narrowed the Project Corridor into route corridors. The Applicants presented the route corridors and focused on collecting information regarding resource locations and specific agency concerns within these areas. This information was used as input in the route selection process (Chapter 4.0).

The final round of meetings with agencies was held from July through October 2008. At this third round of agency meetings, the Applicants presented several preliminary route sections for the Project selected through the consultative process, including comments from the public and agencies. These meetings offered another opportunity for agencies to comment on the routes under consideration and identify important resources before the Applicants submitted the Route Permit Application to the Commission. The Applicants took feedback and made further adjustments to the route before developing the Preferred Route and Alternate Route.

The Applicants mailed out a second letter on November 3, 2008 to the federal, State and local agencies involved in the Project (Appendix J). These agency letters provided updated Project information, route maps, and a final opportunity for agencies to comment on the Project prior to the Route Permit Application submittal. Some agencies provided responses that are addressed in the following sections.

Table 10-1 identifies agency and local government meetings held during the pre-application process.

Table 10-1. Agency and Government Meetings Held During Pre-Application Process

Agencies	Date
Round 1: January and February 2008	
USFWS	1/7/2008
DNR	1/8/2008
Rice County	1/11/2008
Yellow Medicine County/Granite Falls City	1/14/2008
Lincoln County/Lyon County/Marshall City	1/15/2008
Dakota County/MnDOT	1/16/2008
Redwood County/Renville County/Brown County/Franklin City	1/18/2008
Scott County	1/22/2008
Sibley County/McLeod County/MnDOT District 7	1/23/2008
Carver County/Metropolitan Council	1/25/2008
City of Le Sueur and Le Sueur County	1/29/2008
MnDOT District 6	1/31/2008
SHPO	2/6/2008
Metropolitan Council	2/21/2008
Round 2: April and May 2008	
USFWS	4/25/2008
USACE	4/28/2008
BWSR	5/7/2008
DNR	5/14/2008
Scott County	5/23/2008
Dakota County	5/27/2008
Round 3: July to October 2008	
OES	7/24/2008
USACE/OES	8/6/2008
MnDOT	8/11/2008
Scott County	8/12/2008
BWSR	8/12/2008
Eureka Township	8/27/2008
USFWS	9/4/2008
DNR	9/8/2008
Upper Minnesota River site visits – Redwood, Franklin 69 kV, Brown County (DNR)	9/18/2008
Lower Minnesota River site visits –West Belle Plaine, Le Sueur Treatment Pond (DNR, USFWS, USACE, City of Le Sueur)	9/19/2008
Scott County/Sibley County/Dakota County/ Rice County/Le Sueur County/Hampton City/Belle Plaine City/Le Sueur City/New Prague City	9/22/2008
Lincoln County/Lyon County/City of Marshall	9/29/2008
Redwood County/Renville County/Redwood Falls City/Franklin City	9/29/2008
Yellow Medicine County/Granite Falls City	9/30/2008
Minnesota River site visit - Granite Falls (DNR)	9/30/2008
Minnesota Department of Agriculture	10/9/2008
Metropolitan Council	10/29/2008
Farm Service Agency	10/31/2008

10.1.1 FEDERAL AGENCIES

10.1.1.1 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Meetings with the USFWS took place on January 7, April 25, and September 4, 2008. Representatives of the USFWS also attended the Lower Minnesota River crossing visits on September 19, 2008.

In the January meeting, the USFWS sought clarification on the routing process, and expressed concerns regarding the Minnesota River crossing location, impacts to native prairie, and the MBTA. The USFWS noted the importance of identifying State lands with federal interests, coordinating with the DNR, landowners, and the USFWS. The USFWS suggested that land swaps might be necessary if USFWS lands were impacted. Avian issues were discussed, particularly in the Minnesota River Valley. The USFWS stated that measures such as minimizing the height of towers, using flight diverters on shield wires, and avoiding steep slopes that promote updrafts may reduce avian impacts. The USFWS participants also suggested the Applicants collocate with existing utility corridors, double circuit where possible, and plan the transmission system to accommodate long-range energy development throughout the State and region.

Items discussed at the April 2008 meeting included the Minnesota River crossing, NWR future acquisition areas, and the National Tall Grass Prairie Refuge Boundaries. Coordination with the USACE and discussion of a potential State/federal combined or coordinated environmental review process was a key discussion topic. The Applicants stated the Project as proposed does not have a trigger for a full federal nexus. In general, the USFWS's primary concern was avian impacts. Paralleling existing transmission lines is typically preferred at river crossings. The USFWS stated it may consider a crossing to be a new crossing if the new transmission line facilities follow existing infrastructure that is not a transmission line (such as a roadway), and significant mitigation could be involved. USFWS also recommended consideration of underground alternatives. Using H-frame structures would reduce the number of wires in cross section and could reduce avian impacts. Underbuilding existing transmission lines on the new transmission lines would also alleviate impacts. The Applicants stated they would consider NWR and other USFWS lands and easements in the route selection process and would study the feasibility of collocating existing transmission lines with the new transmission lines on the same structures at river crossings. The Applicants explained the engineering constraints and excessive cost associated with undergrounding.

In the September meeting, the USFWS's role in a coordinated State/federal environmental review process was discussed. The USFWS stated they would provide comments to the USACE once a permit application is filed. The Applicants requested written comments from the USFWS to include in the Route Permit Application. USFWS made specific suggestions such as routing on opposite sides of the road from USFWS easements and marking transmission utilities at river crossings and wetland complexes. Details of USFWS easements were discussed.

USFWS representatives attended the Minnesota River site visits at Belle Plaine and Le Sueur on September 19, 2008. At the West Belle Plaine crossing, NWR managers, area wildlife managers and hydrologists provided detailed information on the crossing. USFWS is actively acquiring land in the crossing area. The West Belle Plaine crossing would be in the middle of the area of the Minnesota River where they have identified NWR expansion. Lands on either side of the Alternate Route have not yet been acquired by the USFWS. Preliminary consensus indicated that the Le Sueur Treatment Pond crossing would have the fewest impacts to resources managed by the DNR on the lower Minnesota River, and the Brown County crossing south of Franklin would have the fewest on the upper Minnesota River.

The Applicants agreed to consider USFWS easements and other lands including future NWR acquisition areas, marking utility lines at river crossings, and collocating the transmission line with existing infrastructure at river crossings. Engineers will develop initial designs for structures at river crossings where collocating with existing transmission lines.

The USFWS sent a letter on December 5, 2008, in response to the Applicant's letter sent out November 3, 2008. The comments provided only pertain to Sibley, Le Sueur, Scott, Rice and Dakota counties. The USFWS restated its concern about potential impacts to migratory corridors (Section 6.5.4.7). The USFWS also stated their preference for the Le Sueur Treatment Pond crossing compared to the West Belle Plaine crossing, because this crossing is proposed in a previously disturbed area that would minimize the amount of resource impact.

10.1.1.2 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

A meeting with the USACE took place on April 28 and a joint meeting was held on August 6, 2008, with the OES and USACE. A representative of the USACE also attended the Lower Minnesota River crossing visits on September 19, 2008.

At the April meeting, the USACE stated they would anticipate issuing a single permit for the entire length of the Project for the Minnesota River crossings and wetland crossings. At this point in the Project, the USACE stated it did not believe an Environmental Impact Statement-level review would be necessary. The format of a joint State/federal environmental review process was discussed. The attendees discussed why the northern alternative corridor from Minnesota Valley to West Waconia was dropped from consideration. USACE also advised that any crossing that does not follow an existing transmission line will be considered a new crossing.

At the August 6, 2008, routing meeting with the USACE and OES, the merged State/federal environmental permitting process was discussed. All parties agreed that a merged process, where the USACE has an opportunity to provide comment at key points in the route permit process, will make it more likely that the requirements of the USACE's formal route review (post-route approval) can be met once the Commission makes a decision on the final route. After the meeting, the Applicants developed a document describing the merged process and responsibilities for the involved parties as summary guidance titled *Guidance for Merging Minnesota Route Permit and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Clean Waters Act (CWA) 404(b)(1)/ Rivers and Harbors Act (RHA) Section 10 Permits*.

10.1.1.3 U.S. Department of Agriculture – Farm Service Agency

The Applicants contacted the Farm Service Agency ("FSA") in January 2008. The Applicants and FSA determined that in-person meetings would be unnecessary until the final route proposals were determined. A meeting took place on October 31, 2008, to discuss the Preliminary Route sections, lands managed by the FSA, and processes for obtaining a transmission easement across their lands. Overall, the FSA suggested working with their office if a route is approved and to communicate with their borrowers and landowners. The FSA has three primary types of land they manage: CRP, Inventory Easement and Debt for Nature contracts, and lands that have mortgages through the FSA. CRP is the most common type of conservation land that the Project would cross. FSA stated transmission facilities are typically permissible on CRP easements provided the NRCS is notified and approves the land use. Typically, an evaluation must be completed by the NRCS upon the CRP participant's request to put the utility on CRP easements. The local FSA and NRCS will determine the magnitude of impacts to the easement. An FSA representative noted that a landowner may also

elect to terminate an easement agreement and pay damages. Many times the CRP lands have specific seed mixes that must be used in any restoration activities.

Inventory Easement and Debt for Nature contracts are 50-year to perpetual habitat easements established in exchange for mortgage debt relief. It is difficult to obtain a utility easement across these lands, and the FSA indicated there are no provisions to replace these lands as mitigation.

FSA also noted that there are new approval procedures for lands with FSA mortgages. The FSA is interested in adverse effects to the value of the property. If a transmission line were to cross lands with FSA mortgages, an appraisal typically would be performed to see if the property is being adversely affected by the Project.

The NRCS sent a letter to the Applicants dated December 15, 2008, explaining that with no federal financial or technical assistance, the Project is exempt from federal review by the NRCS and Farmland Protection Policy Act review and compliance is not required.

10.1.1.4 U.S. Coast Guard

The U.S. Coast Guard was contacted to determine their involvement in the National Environmental Policy Act process and the extent of their jurisdiction over navigable river crossings. Correspondences began on January 3, 2008. In a letter dated April 11, 2008, the Coast Guard advised that no Coast Guard permits are needed for the Project, and no Coast Guard involvement is necessary.

10.1.2 STATE AGENCIES

10.1.2.1 Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources

Meetings between BWSR and the Applicants were held on May 7, 2008, and August 12, 2008. Discussion topics in the May meeting included RIM and CREP easements and requirements for crossing these lands. BWSR and the Applicants discussed impacts that would occur within the transmission easement. WCA requirements and the need for LGU and Soil and Water Conservation District (“SWCD”) coordination was a large component of the meeting. Applicants were advised to work with the SWCDs individually and have general meetings once the route permit is issued. New rules are expected for the WCA in 2010, and one item under consideration is the delegation of permitting authority for Public Waters Wetlands from the DNR to the LGU. Under this scenario, Project impacts to Public Waters Wetlands would be reviewed under WCA instead of the DNR Public Waters licensing process.

Transmission line easements across RIM lands were discussed at the August meeting. BWSR stated that land removed from the RIM program at each pole footprint would require reimbursement to the State. Wetland banking, a wetland mitigation program managed by BWSR, utilizes the same easement alteration policy as the RIM program with minor changes made regarding reimbursement of funds.

BWSR sent a letter on November 12, 2008, in response to the Applicant’s letter sent out November 3, 2008. BWSR provided a copy of their RIM Reserve Rule and Policy that the Applicants are to follow if RIM or CREP easements are impacted due to the Project.

10.1.2.2 Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Meetings between DNR and the Applicants were held on January 9, May 14, and September 8, 2008. Representatives of the DNR also attended the Minnesota River crossing visits on September 18, 19, and 30, 2008.

At the January 2008 meeting, 14 members of the DNR discussed timing of DNR comments. The Applicants provided an overview of the route permit process. Attendees identified additional data to collect, such as DNR Shallow Lakes, to aid in the route selection process. The Applicants agreed to research these DNR-managed resources and include them in the route selection process. The DNR was also interested in ways to manage the ROW to benefit wildlife, minimize invasive plant species, and consider visual resources near State lands, particularly State Parks. Additionally, the DNR stated a preference for the Project to following existing ROW.

The route and data review continued at the May meeting, which involved 13 DNR members. The attendees discussed locations of DNR-managed resources and explained programs such as Roadsides for Wildlife and the Big Woods Program. DNR attendees expressed concern over avian collisions with power lines, the Minnesota and Redwood River corridors, native prairie banks and rock outcrops, and visual impacts to the Cedar Mountain SNA. The Applicants stated they would minimize impacts to these resources as much as possible.

The September meeting included 10 DNR members and focused on DNR concerns regarding the newly identified route segments and their possible impacts to habitat, avian use of flyways, water resources, and DNR lands. The group reviewed the proposed Minnesota River crossing locations. The attendees discussed possible impacts to habitat, avian use of the flyway, water resources, and DNR lands. The DNR recommended that minimizing impacts to DNR lands and habitat areas and collocating with existing infrastructure were important criteria to consider as the Applicants chose the routes. The DNR identified contacts within the DNR who could provide more data about these resources and how to minimize impacts to them. DNR advised that collocating with existing transmission lines is preferred to paralleling existing transmission facilities.

Several DNR staff participated in the September Minnesota River site visits. Area wildlife managers and hydrologists provided detailed information on DNR easements, high-quality native habitats, wetlands, and wildlife resources at each crossing. Preliminary consensus was that the Le Sueur Treatment Pond crossing would have the fewest impacts to resources managed by the DNR on the lower Minnesota River, and the Brown County crossing would have the fewest on the upper Minnesota River.

The DNR sent an email on November 21, 2008 stating their appreciation for the involvement in Minnesota River site visits. The DNR stated that the Applicants had identified all important natural resources at the river crossings. The DNR will continue to participate in the environmental review once the Route Permit Application is submitted.

10.1.2.3 Minnesota Department of Transportation

There were three formal meetings with MnDOT staff: January 16, 2008, in Dakota County, August 11, 2008, with Metro District staff, and a meeting November 17, 2008, with district staff in the Project area. These meetings focused on State-wide coordination of utilities in relation to MnDOT facilities and the Project's potential impacts to MnDOT facilities. The Applicants stated that new transmission line segments will typically require a 150-foot wide ROW for the length of the line. When the transmission line is placed cross-country across private land, a 150-foot easement will be acquired from the adjacent landowner(s). Applicants stated that they will locate the poles as close to property division lines as reasonably possible. Applicants also advised that when the transmission line parallels existing road ROW, their practice is to place the poles on adjacent private property, approximately five to 10 feet from the road ROW.

In addition, district MnDOT planners and engineers attended local meetings, where local issues such as future road developments were discussed. The District 7 traffic engineer and permitting specialist attended the Gaylord meeting on January 23, 2008. A phone conference was held with the District 6 planner on January 31, 2008. The District 8 planner contacted the Applicants and attended work group and open house meetings.

The Dakota County meeting in January included a project overview and a discussion of the Project schedule. MnDOT stated its preference that the facilities be placed outside MnDOT ROW on I-35 and U.S. Highway 52. MnDOT's long-range expansion plans, including adding lanes to I-35, were discussed. The Applicants asked about available data sets, including microwave towers. A key MnDOT contact was established.

The August meeting included a discussion of the proposed route segment options and MnDOT facilities and resources of concern. MnDOT suggested people to contact for more information regarding aggregate mines and telecommunications facilities. They also committed to identifying whether the pit maps on MnDOT's website are the most current version. The Applicants asked about plans for future expansion along the State highways the Project follows. No expansions were identified. General long-range plans include installing interchanges at some of U.S. Highway 52's at-grade intersections. MnDOT was encouraged to provide comments through the State process. MnDOT recommended contacting the FHWA regarding route segments near interstate and U.S. highways.

Local meetings focused on issues relevant to the multi-county districts within the Project area. The District 6 representative discussed several future road plans including a potential expansion of TH 19 from I-35 to Northfield, an interchange at I-35 and County Road 86, and a potential bypass around Northfield, Minnesota. These projects may move forward within the next 10 years, and the representative would be apprehensive to see a transmission line follow the existing TH 19 ROW at this time. Additionally, the District 6 representative discussed long range plans to expand I-35, but indicated this project would not occur in the foreseeable future.

The District 7 representative inquired about structures within the transmission easement ROW and mandatory federal clearance areas in the road ROW, and clarified that if transmission structures were located within MnDOT ROW, a utility would be required to move transmission structures at their own expense if future road expansions take place. The District 7 representative identified future improvements near Henderson, along Highway 19 and future industrial, residential and highway development anticipated along U.S. Highway 169 in Le Sueur.

The District 8 representative expressed his comments at work group and public meetings, and his comments were captured in that process as described in Section 10.3.

MnDOT sent a letter on December 5, 2008, in response to the Applicant's letter sent out November 3, 2008. MnDOT has future plans for an overlay along State Highway 19 and State Highway 23, which segments of the Project run parallel to. MnDOT does not currently have plans to extend the ROW in these areas; however, the overlay may impact parallel transmission lines.

10.1.2.4 Minnesota Office of Energy Security

The Applicants met with OES to coordinate review with the USACE. A joint meeting with the OES and USACE took place on August 6, 2008. See Section 10.1.1.2 for a summary of this meeting.

10.1.2.5 Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office

The Applicants met with SHPO representatives on February 6, 2008. The discussion centered on SHPO's involvement in the route permit process. SHPO representatives advised that the agency is still refining how to coordinate with the OES. SHPO will be involved if historic sites are found off reservations, or on reservations without a Tribal Historic Preservation Office. SHPO will concur if sites and findings are eligible for listing on the NRHP. SHPO is not responsible for and cannot conduct government-to-government consultations. SHPO representatives described what information they would like to see in the Applicants' analysis, which included archaeological sites, architectural history, and historic landscapes.

10.1.2.6 Minnesota Department of Agriculture

A meeting with the MnDOA took place on October 9, 2008. The purpose of the meeting was to provide the Department with an update on the Project and the routing process, and to discuss the draft AIMP. The AIMP was developed by the Applicants in response to earlier discussions with the MnDOA. The plan addresses how the Applicants will conduct mitigation of transmission line construction on agricultural land. MnDOA is reviewing the draft plan.

10.1.3 COUNTIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS

The Applicants organized meetings with local governments including counties, townships, cities, and regional planning organizations. All townships in the Project Corridor were contacted and given an opportunity to request a meeting on the Project. These meetings allowed coordination with local governments, ensured good data collection, and provided opportunities for local governments to participate in the route selection process. These meetings began in January 2008. Meeting notes for each meeting mentioned below are included in Appendix J.

The Applicants sent a letter to all LGUs in August 2008 notifying them of the upcoming Route Permit Application filing and indicating that the Applicants are available for meetings to discuss the Project if the LGU wished. A copy of this letter is included in Appendix J. This letter complies with the new Minnesota requirement to notify LGUs of a route permit application filing at least 90 days in advance of the filing. Minn. Stat. § 216E.03, subd. 3a.

10.1.3.1 Metropolitan Council

Meetings were held with the METC on January 25, February 21 and October 29, 2008. At the January meeting in Carver County, METC attendees described the energy planning efforts of the Metropolitan Energy Policy Coalition that represents six metro counties. Additionally, two new wastewater treatment facilities near Belle Plaine and Jordan and joint use of the ROW at these locations along the Minnesota River were discussed.

At the February meeting, attendees discussed future project locations and the appropriateness of ROW sharing in Scott and Dakota counties. METC stated most of their planned projects are sewer interceptors that should not conflict with the transmission line easements. Coordination will be important when the route is determined to avoid placing structures where they could jeopardize the existing facilities, and to prevent interference with planned interceptor projects. METC is also considering a park on the south end of Chub Lake.

At the October meeting, development limitations on “Agricultural Preserve” land in Dakota County were discussed. This voluntary program managed by counties limits development according to the county’s zoning decisions. Mining and Farmland and Natural Areas in Dakota County were also discussed. Airlake Airport structure height restrictions were discussed. The Airlake Airport runway expansion to 5,000 feet was recently approved. Land use development restrictions are more stringent on the southern approach to the runway, and filing a notification with the FAA will be necessary for any route within a 50,000 foot buffer, including the current Preferred Route.

10.1.3.2 Lincoln and Lyon Counties, City of Marshall

Meetings were held with government officials from Lincoln County, Lyon County, and the City of Marshall on January 15 and September 29, 2008. In the January meeting, the Applicants described the Project and sought comments from the meeting attendees on resources of concern within the Project area. Counties stated their preference for collocating transmission lines with existing utilities. Applicants provided information on the proposed structures and ROW requirements. A few general routing considerations were discussed during the meeting, including avoiding the City of Marshall, considering recent upgrades to the Marshall Airport, and considering the rural water system. Route segment options along Highway 19, north of County Road 33 and Lincoln County Road 17, were discussed. The Applicants stated they would review these route segments as part of the route selection process.

At the September meeting, the State routing process and timing, and details of collocating transmission lines with roads and other utilities (such as relocating distribution lines and minimum distance from homes) were discussed.

10.1.3.3 Redwood, Renville, and Brown Counties

Routing meetings were held with Redwood County, Renville County, Brown County and the City of Franklin on January 18 and September 29, 2008. In the January meeting, the applicability of local zoning requirements, the potential new Cedar Mountain Substation size and location, and local government involvement in the routing decision were discussed (such as the to-be-decommissioned bridge over the Minnesota River on Brown County Road 8).

In the September meeting, specific questions about routes and the route selection process were answered and public comment opportunities for the State review process were discussed. The county representatives expressed few objections about the Project.

10.1.3.4 Yellow Medicine County, City of Granite Falls

Routing meetings were held with Yellow Medicine County and the City of Granite Falls on January 14 and September 30, 2008. In the January meeting, questions were asked regarding easements acquired through eminent domain and impacts due to ROW widths. The Applicants described that eminent domain is a last resort and described allowable land uses within the easement areas. Consideration of long-term highway expansion plans and developments of the Granite Falls area airport were also discussed. The county does not have established plans for road development at this time. An airport expansion is planned, and the Applicants agreed to investigate the extent of the expansion in the county long-range plan.

The September meeting included discussion of the routing process and ROW requirements. The Applicants explained the schedule for constructing the Project. Attendees also asked about the scope of the easement that Applicants would acquire. Applicants advised that the easements would permit construction, operation and maintenance of the proposed Project, and that subsequent projects would require acquisition of additional land rights. Additionally, the Applicants stated that no structures would be allowed in the easement areas.

10.1.3.5 Sibley County

A routing meeting involving Sibley County was held on January 23, 2008. Topics included activities allowed within the ROW, stray voltage, and conditional use and road crossing permits. The Applicants described appropriate land uses on the transmission easements, clarified that stray voltage is associated with distribution lines, and stated that the Applicants are not required to obtain conditional permits once a route permit is issued. Long-range development plans show that no developments are scheduled that would interfere with the Project. County representatives prefer utility collocation, and the Applicants described the utilities' goal of minimizing the number of new ROW corridors. Attendees did not provide any recommendations as to where the Project should cross the Minnesota River.

Sibley County representatives were invited to a local government meeting scheduled for September 22, 2008, but were not able to attend.

10.1.3.6 Carver County

A routing meeting was held with Carver County on January 25, 2008. Attendees inquired about plans for the Project, such as where a new substation would be located and when it would be decided if the alternative northern corridor between the Minnesota Valley Substation and the West Waconia Substation would be used. The Applicants described the State Certificate of Need process, and the Route Permit Application and route approval process. The Applicants answered questions regarding ROW easement acquisition and land use. The Applicants responded to questions about how they were involving local governments, including Wetland Conservation Act LGUs. The attendees then discussed digital data sources and data availability to aid in the route selection process.

Carver County was only in the alternative northern corridor of the Project area. Prior to the second round of meetings with local government entities, the Applicants concluded that the Minnesota Valley – West Waconia configuration would not be used and therefore Applicants did not request Carver County's attendance at other local government meetings.

10.1.3.7 Scott County

Routing meetings were held with Scott County on January 22, August 12, and September 22, 2008. Topics at the January meeting were the characteristics of transmission structures, easement and ownership, landowner compensation, and ROW sharing with existing utilities and roads. The Applicants explained use of land within easements and design of the transmission structures. The possibility of a new Lake Marion Substation was discussed, and Scott County referred the Applicants to their 2030 Comprehensive Plan to obtain zoning and growth information. Scott County provided a large list of considerations (included in the meeting notes in Appendix J). This list includes expansion plans, resources to consider, and a suggested route along County Highway 86.

The August meeting focused on the Applicants' conclusion that the new line needed to interconnect with the existing Lake Marion Substation to meet the Project needs and therefore a new substation was no longer under consideration. The cities of Lonsdale, New Prague, Le Sueur, Belle Plaine, and Hampton and Scott, Dakota, Rice, and Le Sueur counties were invited to the September meeting. The attendees discussed the route selection process. The Applicants answered questions about ROW easement size, appropriate land use within easements, and the condemnation process. The Applicants described the "Buy the Farm" process authorized by Statutes Section 216E.12, subdivision 4, and a New Prague representative indicated that the public had recommended route segments to him. The Applicants recommended that members of the public contact Great River Energy directly. Route segment options were suggested, including moving the transmission line farther east away from the New Prague city limits. The Applicants agreed to review routing segment options requests they receive.

Scott County sent the Applicants a letter on September 30, 2008, requesting information on the homes located within 1,000 feet of the segments in Scott, Le Sueur, and Rice counties between the Minnesota River and I-35. In addition, they requested a breakdown of the route segment lengths that parallel existing and future road ROW. The Applicants responded to the request through e-mail on October 29, 2008.

10.1.3.8 Le Sueur County

Two routing meetings were held with Le Sueur County; one on January 29, 2008, and one as part of the southwest metro counties meeting on September 22, 2008. Attendees of the January meeting recommended coordinating with townships, and emphasized that the transmission line should follow existing ROWs including roads and field lines. The Applicants stated they are committed to following existing corridors. The Applicants explained the Project need and potential cost increases to ratepayers. The attendees discussed routing considerations including locations of parks, future development and zoning, and mine locations. The Le Sueur County representatives recommended the US Highway 169 crossing of the Minnesota River, and discussed the wastewater treatment ponds (that will be abandoned in the future) north of there as a possible crossing area.

See the Scott County subsection above for a summary of the September southwest metro counties meeting.

10.1.3.9 Rice County

Two routing meetings were held involving Rice County; one on January 11, 2008, and one as part of the southwest metro counties meeting on September 22, 2008. Discussion at the January meeting included potential future development projects such as reconstruction of County Highway 86 north of Lonsdale, and peaty soils south of the Lake Marion Substation. The Applicants noted these and asked that the attendees inform county commissioners of upcoming work group and public open house meetings.

Rice County representatives were invited to the September southwest metro counties meeting but were not able to attend.

10.1.3.10 Dakota County

Two routing meetings took place with Dakota County; one on January 16, 2008, and one as part of the southwest metro counties meeting on September 22, 2008. In the January meeting, discussion included long-range development plans and the county referenced their 20-year plan. The attendees discussed GIS data availability, accuracy, and completeness. The county was interested in GIS data sharing. The county asked about permits, collocation with roads, and ROW easement restrictions.

The Applicants answered these questions and learned about development restrictions on FNAP easements.

See the Scott County subsection above for a summary of the September southwest metro counties meeting.

10.1.3.11 Eureka Township

A meeting was held on August 27, 2008, with Eureka Township representatives. The discussion focused on potential route segments through Eureka Township. The Township requested that the Applicants re-evaluate a proposed alternative route segment along County Highway 70 in Lakeville and Farmington and the County Road 86 route segment on the south side of the Township (route segments that would avoid the Township). The Applicants stated they had evaluated these route segments in the route selection process but would analyze them further. The Township also suggested using the I-35 corridor to approach the Lake Marion Substation from the south and return to the south to avoid the Township. The Applicants answered questions about electrical system requirements and the need to interconnect with the Lake Marion Substation.

Eureka Township sent the Applicants a letter on September 11, 2008, notifying the Applicants of a resolution regarding the Township's position on the routes in Eureka Township and further advocated for the alternative segment along County Highway 70. The letter is included in Appendix J.

10.1.3.12 City of Redwood Falls

Representatives of the City of Redwood Falls were invited to the Redwood Falls area Minnesota River crossing visit on September 18, 2008, but were unable to attend.

10.1.3.13 City of Franklin

See the Redwood County subsection above for dates and comments during the two local government routing meetings involving the City of Franklin. Although invited to both meetings, representatives from Franklin were only able to attend a work group meeting.

10.1.3.14 City of Le Sueur

See the Le Sueur County subsection above for dates and comments during the two local government meetings involving the City of Le Sueur. At the January meeting, zoning and land use plans were discussed. Le Sueur plans to develop the northern portion of the city as commercial and industrial areas. See the Scott County subsection above for a summary of the September southwest metro counties meeting.

Representatives from the City of Le Sueur also attended the Le Sueur Minnesota River crossing visit on September 19, 2008. Le Sueur representatives described the plans for decommissioning the wastewater treatment plant. Le Sueur staff described their concerns regarding park land, impacts to commercial and residential areas, and viewshed. Representatives stated that bald eagles nest in the area.

10.1.3.15 City of Belle Plaine

See the Scott County subsection above for comments during the local government meeting on September 22, 2008, involving the City of Belle Plaine. Although invited to the Belle Plaine area Minnesota River crossing visit on September 19, 2008, representatives were not able to attend.

10.1.3.16 City of Lonsdale

See the Scott County subsection above for comments during the local government meeting on September 22, 2008, involving the City of Lonsdale.

10.1.3.17 City of New Prague

See the Scott County subsection above for comments on the local government meeting on September 22, 2008, involving the City of New Prague.

10.1.3.18 City of Hampton

Although invited to the southwest metro counties meeting on September 22, 2008, representatives of the City of Hampton were not able to attend. The City of Hampton did initiate phone conversations with the Applicants, and the city has been involved in public meetings and work group meetings.

10.2 PUBLIC INFORMATION OUTREACH

The Applicants notified all county and township administrators in the Project area by letter offering to brief the officials on the need for the Project, the route development process and the overall review process. Beginning in the fall of 2006, periodic briefings were presented to: Dakota County Planning Commission, Scott County Board, Renville County Board, Lincoln County Board, McLeod County Board, Brown County Board, Redwood County Board, Yellow Medicine County Board, Le Sueur County Board, Nicollet County Board, Sibley County Board and the Rice County Board. Presentations and updates were given to the Rural Minnesota Energy Board on May 14, 2007, and Metro County Energy Task Force on April 4, 2007, and at their subsequent meetings. These two Boards are represented by county commissioners and work on energy issues throughout the State. A summary of many of these briefings can be found in the previous sections and in Appendix J.

Letters were mailed to township officers in July 2006. The Applicants presented background information on the Project, including a discussion of the need for the transmission line and the general timeline. Presentations were made to several individual townships, including Eureka Township, Helena Township, Hampton Township, Vermillion Township, and the Renville County Township Officers Association. General background information and a general schedule were provided at district township officer meetings throughout the Project area from 2006 through 2008. Information was also provided at county township officer association meetings throughout the Project area, generally at the annual meetings.

Several presentations were made by the Applicants to non-government groups, including the Friends of the Minnesota Valley (“FMV”) and Lynd Township residents.

At a May 16 routing meeting with the FMV, land acquisition areas in the lower Minnesota River Valley were discussed. The FMV locates willing landowners, purchases land, restores habitat, and then gifts the land to the USFWS. Land acquisitions in the lower Minnesota Valley will be incorporated into the Minnesota Valley NWR system. Avoiding public land and land acquisition areas is important to the FMV.

Members of the public living near the route segment in Lynd Township requested a meeting with the Applicants. On September 29, 2008, the Applicants met with several landowners who lived near the Redwood River, where a Project crossing was proposed. On September 30, 2008, the Applicants and attendees visited several sites north of the Lynd area to identify other possible crossings for the

line around the Redwood River. Following the visits, the Applicants discussed routing options with the landowners and agreed to reexamine the crossing area.

Another meeting in the Lynd area was organized by an elected official from the area on October 14, 2008. The Applicants and a Commission representative described the Certificate of Need process, the Route Permit review process, the route selection process, and public outreach conducted to date. Attendees asked about structures, EMF, proximity to homes, and route details. The Applicants responded to the questions and encouraged continued public involvement throughout the routing proceeding.

10.2.1 MAILINGS AND NEWSLETTERS

Mailings were sent to more than 23,000 landowners and local officials within the proposed Project area. In August 2007, landowners, county administrators and township clerks all received a mailing prior to filing the Certificate of Need Application. The mailing included a description of the Project and the Certificate of Need process, as well as maps of the notice area and proposed substation locations.

Over the course of the next 20 months, several newsletters were sent to the landowners, as well as additional landowners that were notified about the Project as new areas came under consideration. The newsletters included:

- Project open house dates and locations; August 2007
- OES scoping meetings for the Certificate of Need environmental report and announcing work group meetings; December 2007
- Project open house dates and locations and an update on the Certificate of Need; March 2008
- Certificate of Need public hearings; including an official notice of the hearings from the Commission; June 2008
- Project open house dates and locations; August 2008.

Advertisements were placed in newspapers throughout the Project area at least one week prior to all open houses, OES scoping meetings, and Commission public hearings. All meeting dates and locations were posted on the Calendar section of the CapX2020 web site.

10.2.2 STATEWIDE CONFERENCES

The Applicants staffed booths and provided Project information at several statewide conferences, including the Minnesota Association of Township Officers (presented in November 2006; staffed a booth in November 2007), League of Minnesota Cities, Association of Minnesota Counties (December 2007), Minnesota Corn Growers Association (January 2008), Minnesota Farmers Union (November 2007), and the Minnesota Farm Bureau (November 2007).

The Applicants also staffed a table and provided Project information at the November 2006 Minnesota Transmission Owners biennial transmission planning meetings that were conducted at seven locations throughout the State, including Moorhead, Marshall, Rochester, Plymouth, and Duluth.

10.3 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Applicants relied significantly on a unique and inclusive approach for community participation prior to developing this Application. A consensus-building process, conducted over a 12-month time frame, provided opportunities for the Applicants to meet with communities within the proposed Project Corridor to describe Project goals and learn what factors community members believed should be considered when developing routes. Public participation, combined with environmental and electrical engineering expertise, guided the process of narrowing the initial 12-mile wide Project Corridor into the two proposed routes.

The Project's public participation process consisted of three rounds of open houses and two rounds of routing work group meetings. These meetings served to inform landowners and other stakeholders, and answer questions about the need for the new transmission lines and the routing of the new transmission lines. The meetings also provided opportunities to discuss the public process and to collect information on community preferences about the State routing criteria the team would follow to develop route options.

This inclusive approach created a meaningful public participation process that significantly improved the outcome of the route selection process. The meetings provided successive opportunities to collect information from the people who know the study areas best. A summary of comments received through the public participation process can be found in Appendix K.

Landowners, townships, and public officials throughout the Project Corridor were invited to participate in both the open houses and routing work group meetings. Many of the same individuals were active throughout the more than 12-month process. Communication with work group participants and active community groups occurred throughout the process. Project newsletters and meeting notifications were distributed across the entire Project Corridor.

Data and information gathered from the public involvement process were woven into the development of the Project and used to eliminate sensitive areas in the wide Project Corridor, and ultimately narrow the potential route options.

Finally, the public process has been continuously promoted and updated through the Virtual Open House on the CapX2020 Web Site at <http://www.CapX2020.com/Gallery/openhouse/index.html>.

The web site contains a form where landowners and other interested stakeholders can contact the Project team and make comments and/or suggestions about the route and/or process. Emails were typically responded to within one week. Updated fact sheets about the Project, including information about the public process and how to participate have been posted to the web site for easy viewing and downloading. Additionally, the Project team's toll-free telephone number is posted on the web site and staffed to answer questions and take comments from landowners and other interested stakeholders.

10.3.1 OPEN HOUSES MEETINGS

Open houses were held in September 2007, March/April 2008, and August 2008 throughout the Project area. Maps displayed the route analyses that had been undertaken to narrow the Project Corridor to route corridors, then to route segments, and finally to the Preliminary Route Sections that were the basis for the routes submitted in this Application. The displays provided information on the need and permitting process. Staff at computer stations provided participants with take home print-outs of the route corridors, route segments, and Preliminary Route Sections in relation to their homes and communities.

The Applicants solicited information about the types of land use in each area, environmental considerations and the types of criteria that the team should use in developing the proposed routes. The meeting organizers recorded comments and noted features on aerial photograph maps. These were later added to the comment database and considered in the route selection process. Preliminary Route Sections were presented at the last open house that were close to what the Applicants propose in this Route Permit Application. The team took comments on various aspects of the Project and asked for suggestions of different route segments if landowners were interested in providing route segment alternatives. The team provided explanations of how the process would proceed after the Route Permit Application was filed, including the opportunities landowners have to be a part of the process.

More than 1,500 people signed in at the open houses, and many more attended but did not sign in. Comments varied widely, including questions about landowner rights under transmission line easements, effects of EMF, design of the structures, what types of energy will be carried on the lines, impacts to environmental resources, and many more. See Section 10.3.3 for a summary of common themes from the public participation process. Table 10-2 identifies the date and location of the open house meetings.

Table 10-2. Brookings County to Hampton Open House Meetings

Round	Date	City	Meeting Location
1	Sept. 10, 2007	Hendricks	Midwest Center for Wind Energy
	Sept. 11, 2007	Marshall	Prairie Event Center
	Sept. 12, 2007	Granite Falls	Kilowatt Community Center
	Sept. 13, 2007	Olivia	Max's Grill
	Sept. 18, 2007	Redwood Falls	Redwood Area Community Center
	Sept. 19, 2007	Arlington	Arlington Community Center
	Sept. 20, 2007	Glencoe	PlaMor Ballroom
	Sept. 25, 2007	New Prague	The Park Ballroom
	Sept. 26, 2007	Northfield	The Archer House
	Sept. 27, 2007	Lakeville	Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites
2	March 26, 2008	Marshall	Best Western Marshall Inn
	March 27, 2008	Hendricks	Midwest Center for Wind Energy
	March 31, 2008	Olivia	Max's Grill
	March 31, 2008	Redwood Falls	Redwood Falls Community Center
	April 1, 2008	New Prague	Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
	April 2, 2008	Arlington	Arlington Community Center
	April 3, 2008	Farmington	Dakota County Extension & Conservation Center
3	August 19, 2008	Hendricks	Midwest Center for Wind Energy
	August 19, 2008	Marshall	Best Western Marshall Inn
	August 20, 2008	Marshall	Best Western Marshall Inn
	August 20, 2008	Redwood Falls	Redwood Area Community Center
	August 21, 2008	Arlington	Arlington Community Center
	August 26, 2008	New Prague	Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
	August 27, 2008	Lakeville	Holiday Inn & Suites

10.3.2 ROUTING WORK GROUP MEETINGS

Because numerous landowners and State and local officials expressed interest in more fully participating in the process, the routing team developed a series of informal work group meetings. Stakeholders were invited to participate, including those who had expressed interest in the Project by contacting the team through the Project web site, signed up at various meetings, or were involved in local governments and agencies. The meetings were held at central locations throughout the Project area.

Participants were seated in small groups, led through a discussion of the State criteria that utilities are required to follow, and asked to identify the issues within each county that should be considered when developing route segments. The maps displayed the most current State of the route development process and included several data layers showing resources that are relevant to transmission line routing, such as State and federal lands, aerial photo background, homes, roads, electrical infrastructure, and rivers. A summary of each meeting was sent to all attendees at the conclusion of the meeting series. These summaries are included in Appendix J. Table 10-3 identifies the date and location of the meetings.

Attendees of the first work group meetings were presented a map of the Project area. Much of the meeting focused on resources and areas to avoid, development of possible route segments, and location and verification of resources important to the attendees. The attendees discussed criteria that the Applicants should consider when selecting routes. Work group facilitators recorded participants' comments. See Section 10.3.3 for a summary of comments generated in work group meetings.

Attendees at the second round of work group meetings provided input on the potential route segment options that had been developed since the route selection process began, and helped identify positive and negative aspects of the various options. Significant input was provided on criteria, which included favoring route segments that minimized impacts to human settlement and other land use conflicts, including impacts to agriculture.

Table 10-3. Work Group Meetings

Round	Date	City	Meeting Location
1	Feb. 19, 2008	Morton	Jackpot Junction
	Feb. 20, 2008	Henderson	Henderson Community Center
	Feb. 25, 2008	Marshall	Best Western Marshall Inn
	Feb. 26, 2008	Fairfax	Fairfax Auditorium
	Feb. 27, 2008	Olivia	Max's Grill
	March 3, 2008	Arlington	Arlington Community Center
	March 4, 2008	New Prague	Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
	March 6, 2008	Lakeville	Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites
2	May 28, 2008	Elko	Elko Speedway
	May 28, 2008	Lakeville	Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites
	May 29, 2008	Arlington	Arlington Community Center
	May 29, 2008	New Prague	Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
	June 3, 2008	Redwood Falls	Redwood Area Community Center
	June 4, 2008	Marshall	Best Western Marshall Inn
	June 5, 2008	Hendricks	Midwest Center for Wind Energy

10.3.3 SUMMARY OF COMMON THEMES

Common themes and recommendations gathered throughout the public participation process, including the open houses and the routing work group meetings, are summarized as follows:

- Follow existing ROW and areas that have been previously disturbed – particularly roads and existing transmission lines
- Avoid heavily populated areas and areas planned for future growth
- Select routes with the least impact to homes, agriculture and environmental resources
- Consider routing lines along property field lines on a case-by-case basis
- Consider crossing rivers along existing corridors
- Evaluate opportunities near public land versus near homes and yards
- Evaluate TV, radio, GPS, and wireless internet interference
- Minimize potential for conflicts with wind generation development
- Consider ways to minimize visual impacts
- Keep access and cost in mind with regard to construction and maintenance
- Consider organic farms, rural water utilities and environmental impacts at river crossings
- Consider pasture land as potentially impacted less than row crops
- Look for opportunities to keep transmission lines as straight as possible
- Consider providing additional information to landowners

Ultimately, these common themes gathered throughout the public participation process were considered by the Applicants in selecting the routes proposed in this Application. See Section 4.1 for

a description of the route selection process and Section 10.4 for a discussion on routes suggested through public and agency involvement.

10.4 ROUTE SEGMENTS INCORPORATED THROUGH PUBLIC AND AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

The Applicants analyzed more than 1,800 route segments in the route selection process (see Chapter 4.0). Some of these segments were proposed by agencies and the public. Some of these recommended options were minor variations on route segments that the Applicants proposed and some were major revisions of proposed route segments. After listening to the proposed route suggestions, the Applicants conducted an analysis using the State routing criteria to determine which route segments would be incorporated into the Preferred Route or Alternate Route and which segments would be eliminated. While discussing all route segments suggested by the public is outside the scope of this document, several of the segments that were included in either the Preferred Route or Alternate Route are discussed below (including benefits and potential impacts).

10.4.1 BROOKINGS COUNTY – LYON COUNTY ROUTE SECTION

10.4.1.1 340th Street in Lyon County

A member of the public suggested a 10.5-mile segment from 330th Street and Lincoln Lyon Road on the county border to the intersection of County Highway 5 and 340th Street north of Ghent. The route segment turns north on the Lyon Lincoln Road and then east on 340th Street (see Appendix B.2, Sheets BL5, BL6, and BL7). The Applicants had previously considered following 330th Street east. The suggested route segment avoids several homes and relocates the route to a higher weight class county road that would be more appropriate for construction equipment. It also avoids a large livestock operation. The Applicants incorporated this suggested route segment into the Preferred Route.

10.4.1.2 Lynd Area Reroute in Lyon County

Landowners in the Lynd area conducted their own site visits and developed an eight-mile route segment alternative across the Redwood River north of Lynd (see Appendix B.2, Sheet BL18). This route segment is part of the Alternate Route and would affect fewer homes in the overland approach to the Redwood River crossing than the segment it replaced. It also minimizes visual impacts to residents living on and near the Redwood River. The new segment is located farther south than the original crossing location, initiating a different overland approach from the west that follows County Road 15/170th Avenue south to the field lines a half mile south of 250th Street. The route segment heads east on fence lines, crossing the Redwood River, then continues east and rejoins the original route segment.

10.4.2 LYON COUNTY – CEDAR MOUNTAIN ROUTE SECTION

10.4.2.1 Northern Route through Redwood and Renville Counties

A member of the public proposed this 30-mile route segment as a way to minimize impacts to homes from the intersection of County Highway 46 and County Road 59 in Redwood County to the Helena Substation North area. The suggested route segment generally follows County Highway 22/46, Minnesota Trunk Highway 19 and County Highway 1 across northern Redwood County and into Renville County (see Appendix B.4, Sheets LC14 – LC21). The Applicants concluded that the eastern portion of the route (east of County Rd 59) is suitable for transmission line routing, and that portion was incorporated into the Alternate Route. The portions that were not selected may have

been suitable, but other nearby route segments had fewer impacts to residences, natural resources, or current or future land uses.

10.4.3 HELENA – LAKE MARION ROUTE SECTION

10.4.3.1 Route Shift Northeast of New Prague in Scott County

Representatives of the City of New Prague suggested a 2.5-mile route from Drexel Avenue on the northeast side of New Prague going east along County Highway 2 to State Highway 13/Langford Avenue in Scott County (see Appendix B.6, Sheet HM4). The Applicants had previously considered turning south from County Highway 2 onto Drexel Avenue, east on 270th Street, and then north on Langford Avenue/County Highway 13 before returning to County Highway 2 east. The original route segment avoided Cedar Lake (a county park) and associated visual impacts, but had six more home impacts and higher materials costs due to corner structures and length. Due to the City of New Prague's suggestion and comments heard at public meetings regarding routing near Cedar Lake, the proposed route segment was incorporated into the Preferred Route.

10.4.4 LAKE MARION – HAMPTON ROUTE SECTION

10.4.4.1 One Half Mile North of 290th Street in Waterford Township, Dakota County

A member of the public suggested a six-mile route from the section line between Sections 1 and 2 in Greenvale Township, Dakota County to County Highway 47 going directly east along fence lines along the quarter-section line (see Appendix B.6, Sheet MP6 and MP7). The Applicants previously considered following 290th Street for the same distance. The suggested route segment does add impacts to one large wetland. A portion of this route segment travels cross country, not on field lines or any other corridor, and center pivot irrigation systems occur within this route. However, the suggested route segment eliminates impacts to approximately 10 homes and is one mile shorter. The Applicants incorporated the suggested route segment into the Alternate Route.

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