



In the Matter of the Route Permit Application
for the Hollydale 115 kV Transmission Line
Project in the Cities of Plymouth and Medina,
Hennepin County, Minnesota

**Environmental Impact Statement
Scoping Decision Document
PUC Docket No. E-002/TL-11-152
Issued: July 31, 2012**

The above matter has come before the deputy commissioner of the Department of Commerce for a decision on the scope of the environmental impact statement (EIS) to be prepared on the Hollydale 115 kilovolt (kV) transmission line project proposed by Xcel Energy and Great River Energy (GRE) under the full permitting process.¹

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Xcel Energy and Great River Energy (applicants) propose removing approximately eight miles of an existing GRE-owned 69 kV overhead transmission line and constructing a new 115 kV overhead transmission line in its place, constructing an additional eight-tenths of a mile of new 115 kV overhead transmission line, constructing a new substation, and modifying associated transmission facilities in the cities of Medina and Plymouth, Hennepin County, Minnesota.

The applicants are requesting a 200 foot route-width where the transmission line is to be rebuilt along the eight miles of existing 69 kV transmission line between the Medina Substation and GRE's 115 kV transmission line just north of Fernbrook Lane in the city of Plymouth. A 400 foot route-width is being requested for the eight-tenths of a mile of new 115 kV transmission line that would run from the intersection of GRE's existing 115 kV transmission line and follow along the north side of the Canadian Pacific Railway east to Cheshire Lane, then south along Cheshire Lane to Schmidt Lake Road, and east along Schmidt Lake Road to the proposed location of Substation Site A.

The proposed transmission line will require a right-of-way of 75 feet (37.5 feet on either side of centerline). Because the proposed project would utilize approximately eight miles of existing 69 kV transmission line right-of-way that has a current width of 70 to 100 feet, the applicants indicate that the project can be designed to fit within these existing easements, thereby requiring little to no new right-of-way while still satisfying the needs of the project.²

¹ Minnesota Rules 7850.1700 to 7850.2700.

² Xcel Energy and Great River Energy. Application to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission for a Route Permit – Hollydale Project (June 30, 2011), Docket No. E002/TL-11-152.

In addition to the Proposed Route, the applicants have identified a second route as required by Minnesota Rules 7850.1900, subpart 2.³ The second route is identified as Alternate Route Segment A in the applicants' Route Permit Application. The application also discusses the route selection process and the reasons why the applicants chose the Proposed Route over the alternative routes. Alternative Route A is depicted on Figure 2 and described later in this scoping document.

PROJECT PURPOSE

The applicants indicate in the route permit application that the proposed project will provide increased distribution capacity and avoid feeder circuit overloads in the Plymouth area distribution delivery system. This includes increased distribution capacity in the Plymouth and Medina areas to better serve current customers and the expected load growth. In addition, the applicants explain that system reliability would be enhanced by supplying the existing Hollydale substation with a redundant 115 kV connection.

REGULATORY BACKGROUND

A route permit application for the project was initially filed by the applicants on June 30, 2011. Because the transmission line proposed is between 100 and 200 kilovolts it is eligible for review under the alternative permitting process.⁴ At that time the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) accepted the application as complete and authorized the Department of Commerce Energy Facility Permitting (EFP) staff to process the application under the alternative permitting process.⁵

EFP staff initiated the environmental assessment scoping process by establishing an advisory task force (ATF) and holding a public information and scoping meeting, including a prescribed comment period. The scope of the environmental assessment was issued by the Department of Commerce on December 7, 2012.⁶

On February 27, 2012, the applicants, in response to a motion filed by certain landowners within the proposed project area, filed a petition requesting that the Commission convert the route permit proceeding from the alternative permitting process to the full permitting process.

³ Xcel Energy. Letter Identifying Second Route Preference (June 21, 2012), eDocket No. 20126-75904-01.

⁴ Minnesota Rules 7850.2800, subpart 2B.

⁵ Minnesota Public Utilities Commission. Order Accepting the Hollydale 115 kV Route Permit Application (August 25, 2011), eDocket No. 20118-65712-01.

⁶ Minnesota Department of Commerce. Environmental Assessment Scoping Decision Document (December 7, 2011), eDocket No. 201112-69009-01.

The Commission granted the request in an order issued on May 4, 2012, authorizing review under the full permitting process, pursuant to Minnesota Rules 7850.1700 to 7850.2700. The Commission also referred the docket to the Office of Administrative Hearings for conduct of the contested case hearing.⁷

Under the full permitting process, the Commission has 12 months from the date the application was accepted as complete to make a decision on the route permit. The Commission may extend this time limit up to three months for just cause or upon agreement of the applicant.⁸

Certificate of Need

If a transmission line capacity is greater than 100 kV and is 10 miles or more in length, a certificate of need (CN) is required. Several of the route alternatives in this EIS scoping decision are, or have the potential to be, greater than 10 miles in length. If the route chosen by the Commission is longer than 10 miles, the applicants must obtain a CN from the Commission.⁹ For a line of such length, the Commission must determine need prior to issuing a route permit. If a CN is required, there will be additional environmental review and hearing process for determining whether a CN should be issued. The CN environmental review and hearing process may overlap or run concurrently with the route permitting process; however, the CN schedule is uncertain at this time. The applicants filed a CN application on July 2, 2012.¹⁰

SCOPING PROCESS

The scoping process has two primary purposes: 1) to ensure that the public has a chance to participate in determining what routes and issues should be considered for study in the EIS, and 2) to help focus the EIS on the most important issues surrounding the route permit decision. The scope identifies potential human and environmental issues that will be addressed in the EIS. The scope also presents an anticipated schedule of the environmental review process.

Prior to the permit review process being converted to the full process, EFP completed scoping under the alternative permitting process. The robust scoping process resulted in a scoping document that included 13 alternative routes and all issues and concerns raised at that time.¹¹

⁷ Minnesota Public Utilities Commission. Notice and Order For Hearing Under Minnesota Rules Chapter 1405 (May 4, 2012), eDocket No. 20125-74462-01.

⁸ Minnesota Rules 7850.2700, subpart 1.

⁹ Minnesota Statute 216B.243.

¹⁰ Xcel Energy and Great River Energy. Application to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission for a Certificate of Need for the Hollydale 115 kV Transmission Line Project in the Cities of Plymouth and Medina (July 2, 2012), Docket No. ET2/CN-12-113.

¹¹ Minnesota Office of Administrative Hearings. Summary of Public Testimony (ALJ Summary Report), OAH Docket No. 8-2500-22806-2 at 3 (July 20, 2012), eDocket No. 20127-76984-01.

Because the proposed project as described in the route permit application has not changed and no new information has arisen that would affect the potential environmental effects of the project, all issues and route alternatives included in the December 2011 Hollydale Environmental Assessment Scoping Decision are included in this scoping document and will be evaluated in the EIS.¹²

Public Information Meeting

Public information meetings were held on June 7 and 8, 2012, at Wayzata High School in Plymouth, Minnesota. The meetings were presided over by administrative law judge, Eric L. Lipman with the Minnesota Office of Administrative Hearings. The meetings were an opportunity for members of the public to learn about the proposed project and provide comment on the scope of the EIS that will be prepared by Department of Commerce EFP staff. Approximately 270 persons attended the public meeting on June 7, 2012, and 90 persons attended the afternoon meeting on June 8, 2012.¹³

A court reporter was present at the public meeting and transcribed questions asked and comments made by the public, as well as responses from EFP staff and the applicants. In total, 45 people provided testimony and asked questions about the proposed project.¹⁴

Public Comments

A comment period following the meetings remained open until 4:30 p.m. on June 22, 2012, and provided the public an opportunity to submit comments to Judge Lipman via U.S. mail, e-mail, or fax. A total of 251 comment letters were received by the close of the comment period.¹⁵

The administrative law judge provided the following in his Summary of Public Testimony with regard to topics that should be included in the EIS scoping decision:

"In the view of the Administrative Law Judge, the December 7, 2011 scoping decision for the environmental assessment does a good job in identifying areas of significant environmental impact, possible alternatives to explore and focal points for mitigation measures. Most of the feedback received during the public hearings and the later comment period can be addressed squarely within the topic areas outlined in that initial scoping decision."

¹² Minnesota Rules 7850.2500, subpart 2.

¹³ ALJ Summary Report at 1, eDocket No. 20127-76984-01.

¹⁴ ALJ Summary Report at 1, eDocket No. 20127-76984-01.

¹⁵ ALJ Summary Report at 2, eDocket No. 20127-76984-01.

In his report, the administrative law judge also summarized the key topics that were raised by commentators during the public meeting and in letters received during the comment period, as follows:

- Right-of-way and easement practice
- Undergrounding transmission line facilities
- Noise impacts
- Aesthetic impacts
- Proximity to homes
- Impacts to property values
- Electric and magnetic field exposure
- Impacts to implantable devices
- Proximity to schools
- Compatibility with residential and commercial areas
- Compatibility with wetland and shoreland areas
- Impacts to mature trees

The administrative law judge also noted issues that relate to the economic, employment and sociological effects that cannot be avoided if the proposed action is implemented, as follows:

- The reasonable investment-backed expectations of adjacent landowners with regard to the size, location and future uses within a transmission line easement.
- The type of zoning and land use that is best suited for a 115 kV transmission line.
- The lack of firm answers with regard to electric and magnetic fields as they relate to long-term health impacts and the risk of any uncertainty to those individuals living adjacent to a transmission line.
- The cost associated with undergrounding transmission line facilities and the appropriate method of allocating those costs.

A summary of the issues raised in the scoping comments, as well as the frequency the issue was raised, is provided in Table 1.

The administrative law judge's summary report, oral comments, and comment letters received are available for viewing and downloading on the project website maintained by the Department of Commerce at: <http://mn.gov/commerce/energyfacilities//resource.html?Id=32808>.

Table 1: Topics Raised During Scoping Period*

Topic	Number of Comments	
	EIS Scope	EA Scope
Impacts to property values.	112	238
Electric and magnetic field (EMF) exposure.	102	193
Undergrounding of transmission line facilities. Discuss the options available for underground transmission facilities. Discuss the pros and cons as they relate to EMF, aesthetics, cost, operation and maintenance, security/reliability, right-of-way requirements, security/reliability, noise, and construction.	79	17
Proximity of transmission line or substations to homes, businesses, schools and churches.	64	54
Aesthetic impacts.	49	122
Noise impacts including transmission line and substation operation and maintenance and construction related noise.	28	94
Impacts to vegetation, such as tree loss along and within the right-of-way during construction and future maintenance, specifically the potential loss of mature trees.	24	28
Easement and right-of-way issues: allowable uses such as, fire pits, barbeques, filling mowers with gasoline; location of existing and future structures (homes, garages, decks and sheds); clearing and maintenance requirements; easement agreements along the existing 69 kV transmission line right-of-way; characterization of the existing right-of-way.	19	67
History and future of existing 69 kV line.	18	97
Impacts to recreation areas such as parks, biking trails, and walking trails.	17	27
Impacts to wildlife (avian concerns).	15	59
Impacts to surface waters (lakes, wetlands and streams).	13	111
Maximize the use of road and railroad rights-of-way.	8	-
Physical hazards associated with transmission line facilities (pole collapse, fire and storms).	7	38
Zoning issues, including potential plans the city of Plymouth has for the land proposed for Substation Site A.	7	1
Project cost including cost of alternative routes.	6	13
Impacts to medical implant devices (pacemakers and insulin pumps).	6	4

Topic	Number of Comments	
	EIS Scope	EA Scope
Interference issues (radio, TV, satellite, GPS, computers and wireless internet).	4	3
Displacement or eminent domain issues.	4	2
Induced voltage.	2	-
Certificate of Need issues.	2	-
Transmission structure composition and design.	1	38
Federal Housing Administration (FHA), Falling Hazard Regulations.	1	28
Stray voltage.	1	-
Issues related to construction of the transmission facility (destruction of property/compensation, access, and traffic issues).	1	12
Wood pole treatments and potential impacts.	1	1

*The number of comments for each topic in the table is an approximation, as similar topics and topics that directly correlate to one another have been combined.

All alternative routes described in the December 2011 Hollydale Environmental Assessment Scoping Decision will be included in this scoping decision document and evaluated in the EIS (Table 2 and Figures 2 to 9, and 11 to 13).

Table 2: Alternative Routes from the EA Scoping Decision

Alternative Route Identified in EA Scope	Re-designated for EIS Scope
Alternative Route A	Alternative Route A
Alternative Route B	Alternative Route B
ATF Alternative Route B-1	Alternative Route B-1
Alternative Route C	Alternative Route C
Alternative Route D	Alternative Route D
ATF Alternative Route E	Alternative Route E
Alternative Route F-1	Alternative Route F-1
Alternative Route F-2	Alternative Route F-2
Alternative Route F-3	Alternative Route F-3
Alternative Route G	Alternative Route G
CSAH 24 Alternative Route	Alternative Route H
Medina Road Alternative Route	Alternative Route I
Providence Academy Alternative Route	Alternative Route J

A group of citizens suggested Alternative Route G-1 in a petition requesting Xcel Energy to convert the permit review to the full process¹⁶ and this route was included in the Draft Scoping Document made available during the public meetings on June 7 and 8, 2012. Alternative Route G-1 will be included in this scoping decision document and evaluated in the EIS (Figure 10).

Twelve distinct alternative route segments were also identified in comment letters submitted to the administrative law judge, many of which are variations on the Proposed Route or the alternative routes listed above. The 12 alternative route segments will be included in this scoping decision document and evaluated in the EIS (Figure 14).

Agency Comments

The Three Rivers Park District provided comments during the EIS scoping period, as noted below. Also noted below are comments that were received from state and federal agencies during the scoping period for the environmental assessment and included in the December 2011 Hollydale Environmental Assessment Scoping Decision.

Three Rivers Park District

An e-mail received from Three Rivers Park District on June 7, 2012, identified land acquired through the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act that is located within or near the Proposed Route or an alternative route. The Land and Water Conservation Fund Act states that all lands funded through the Act are to be retained and used solely for outdoor recreation and any conversion of these lands to uses other than outdoor recreation must be approved by the National Park Service.

Natural Resource Conservation Service

A letter from the Natural Resource Conservation Service dated August 11, 2011, indicated that the proposed rebuild of the 8 miles of existing 69 kV transmission line to 115 kV transmission line and the proposed construction of 0.8 miles of new 115 kV line does not appear to permanently affect agricultural land, thus precluding the need for further action on this project under the Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA).

If as a result of the proposed project agricultural lands are affected, and if federal monies are involved, a FPPA site assessment is required. Should the location and activities have the potential to impact agricultural land, a Farmland Conservation Impact Rating form and detailed site map of the area impacted for each Minnesota county should be submitted.

¹⁶ Plymouth Residents Opposing Hollydale Power Line Project Petition for Minor Adjustment to Scope of the Proposed Environmental Impact Statement (March 11, 2012), Docket No. ET2/CN-12-113, eDocket No. 20123-72442-01 and 20123-73194-01.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

An e-mail from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) dated August 16, 2011, indicated that there are no federally listed or proposed species and/or designated or proposed critical habitat within the area of the proposed project. The USFWS did recommend the installation of bird diverters where the Proposed Route would cross an approximate 70-acre wetland situated between Lawndale Lane North and Garland Lane North where Highway 55 crosses the wetland. The existing 69 kV transmission line currently crosses the wetland in this location.

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

A letter from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) dated November 9, 2011, raised concern over the construction schedule outlined in the route permit application. The DNR indicated the construction time frame summarized in the route application shows construction commencing in the second quarter of 2012, which is an unfavorable time to work in wetlands and waterbodies. The DNR also cautioned that this warmer time of year can also increase the potential for the incidental spread of invasive species.

The DNR also suggested that a detailed discussion of right-of-way vegetation removal for both upland and wetland areas should be included in the environmental document. The DNR also recommends including a discussion of the construction procedures used to remove the existing 69 kV transmission poles and how new transmission poles will be erected, including route, right-of-way, and alignment considerations.

Because bird diverters are an important mitigation measure in reducing the number of avian collisions in wetland habitats, the DNR indicated that the environmental document should include a discussion of bird diverters and the location(s) where they would be most effective.

Minnesota Department of Transportation

In a letter dated November 9, 2011, the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) advised that there are some locations where the northern portion of Alternative Route Segment A would run along Interstate 494, though the proposed power line will be further away from Interstate 494 than the existing transmission lines and well away from Mn/DOT right-of-way. In addition, Mn/DOT pointed out that Substation Site A shares the property line with Interstate 494, but does not appear to limit the use of Mn/DOT's right-of-way.

However, where Alternative Route Segment A travel south to the interchange of Interstate 494 and Rockford Road, the transmission line location may overlap Mn/DOT right-of-way. The provisions of Section VI of the Utility Accommodation Policy relating to utilities occupying a portion of freeway rights-of-way would apply, and an evaluation of whether the transmission line would limit future development of the Interstate 494 and Rockford Road interchange would be conducted.

Mn/DOT also suggests the environmental document should assess the relationship of the placement of the proposed utility poles and the location of the highway activities for both the current traveled way and the future traveled way.

With respect to Alternative Route E, Mn/DOT expressed that all of the considerations identified above would apply to this route. The much longer distance that Alternative Route E would run parallel to Interstate 494 and parallel to Highway 55 would require correspondingly more evaluation of whether and where the occupation of the highway right-of-way can be permitted. Mn/DOT explains that it prepared an environmental assessment in 2008 concerning the future expansion of Highway 55 from the Crow River to Interstate 494, and that it should be reviewed in the environmental document for any routes that would cross or run parallel to Highway 55.

Having reviewed the matter, consulted with EFP staff, and in accordance with Minnesota Rules 7850.2500, I hereby make the following scoping decision:

MATTERS TO BE ADDRESSED

The issues outlined below will be identified and described in the EIS for the proposed Hollydale 115 kV project. The EIS will describe the project and current setting of the proposed project area. It will also provide information on the potential impacts the proposed project could have as they relate to the topics outlined in this scoping decision document, including possible mitigation for identified impacts, identification of irrevocable commitment of resources, and identification of permits from other government units that may be required.

The applicants' route permit application describes their route analysis and contains the information required by Minnesota Rules 7850.1900, subpart 2, as determined by the Commission. The EIS will summarize the process the applicants' used to identify, evaluate, and select the routes. The EIS will also verify and supplement information provided in the route permit application and will incorporate the information by reference as appropriate.

I. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

- A. Project description
- B. Purpose of the transmission line
- C. Project location
- D. Route description
- E. Route width
- F. Right-of-way
 - 1. Allowable uses (fire pits, barbeques, filling mowers with gasoline, and future and existing vegetation, and location of decks/patios).

2. Existing easement (69 kV line) and characterization, including the location of existing/future structures (homes, garages, decks, and sheds).
 3. Restoration and maintenance practices.
- G. Project cost

II. REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

- A. Certificate of need
- B. High voltage transmission line route permits
- C. Environmental review process

III. ENGINEERING, DESIGN, AND OPERATION

- A. Transmission line conductors
- B. Transmission line structures
- C. Structure design and composition (*e.g.*, wood pole treatments)
- D. Structure strength and stability (structural failure)
- E. Substations
- F. Operation and maintenance
- G. Undergrounding of transmission line facilities

IV. CONSTRUCTION

- A. Transmission line construction methods, including removal practices associated with the existing 69 kV line.
- B. Substation construction
- C. Restoration and cleanup
- D. The potential for destruction to property and methods of compensation.
- E. Vegetation removal and maintenance practices.

V. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT, POTENTIAL IMPACTS, AND MITIGATION MEASURES

The EIS will include a discussion of the human and environmental resources that may potentially be impacted by the project and its alternatives. Potential impacts, both positive and negative, of the proposed project and each alternative considered will be described. Based on the impacts identified, the EIS will describe mitigative measures that could reasonably be implemented to reduce or eliminate the identified impacts. The EIS will describe any unavoidable impacts resulting from implementation of the proposed project.

- A. Environmental setting
- B. Socioeconomic and cultural setting

- C. Human settlement
 - 1. Noise
 - 2. Aesthetics
 - 3. Proximity to homes
 - 4. Existing utilities (pipelines, propane tanks, septic systems)
 - 5. Property values
 - 6. Federal housing administration (FHA) regulations
 - 7. Property/right-of-way acquisition and displacement
 - 8. History of the existing 69 kV line and residential development.
- D. Health and safety
 - 1. Construction and operation/maintenance
 - 2. Electric and magnetic fields (EMF)
 - 3. Implantable medical devices (*e.g.*, pacemakers and insulin pumps)
 - 4. Stray voltage
 - 5. Induced voltage
 - 6. Air quality associated with the transmission facility
- E. Recreation
 - 1. Parks (city, county, state, and federal); plans for Substation Site A
 - 2. Trails (walking, bicycle, and snowmobile)
- F. Transportation and public services
 - 1. Emergency services
 - 2. Airports
 - 3. Railroads
 - 4. Schools and childcare centers
 - 5. Mosquito control (application via aircraft)
- G. Interference
 - 1. Radio (AM/FM and short-wave)
 - 2. Television (satellite and digital)
 - 3. Cellular phone
 - 4. Broadband and wireless internet
 - 5. Global positioning systems (GPS)
- H. Archaeological and historic resources
- I. Land use (land-based economies)
 - 1. Mining
 - 2. Industrial and commercial (*e.g.*, Park Nicollet)
 - 3. Tourism
 - 4. Agriculture
 - 5. Forestry
- J. Zoning and compatibility (federal, state and local government planning)
 - 1. Residential

2. Commercial
 3. Rural and agricultural
 4. Industrial
 5. Transportation
 6. Recreational
 7. Shoreland
- K. Water resources
1. Lakes
 2. Surface flows (rivers and streams)
 3. Wetlands
 4. Floodplains
- L. Soil and groundwater
- M. Flora (plants)
1. Vegetation removal
 2. Mature tree removal
- N. Fauna (wildlife)
1. Wildlife management areas
 2. Scientific and natural areas
 3. State and federal parks and forests
 4. Three Rivers Park District site
 5. National wildlife refuge/waterfowl production areas
 6. Avian collision and electrocution
 7. Threatened/Endangered/Rare and Unique Natural Resources

VI. ALTERNATIVE ROUTES AND SUBSTATION SITES TO BE EVALUATED

In addition to the Proposed Route, the EIS will evaluate the following alternative routes and substation sites as suggested by the advisory task force (ATF) and through public comment. The alternative routes and substation sites are described below and illustrated in Figures 1 to 13.

Alternative Route A (Route Permit Application)

Alternative Route A as described in the route permit application, begins on the north side of County Road 9 approximately 6.4 miles from the start of the Proposed Route at the Medina substation. The route then proceeds north parallel to the north side of Rockford Road for 0.9 miles to the County Road 9 and Interstate 494 interchange. The route turns north at the interchange and follows along Interstate 494 0.7 miles to Substation Site A. The total length of Alternative Route A is 8.0 miles (Figure 2).

Alternative Route B (Route Permit Application)

Alternative Route B as described in the route permit application, begins at the Proposed Route on the eastern side of County Road 101, approximately 4.5 miles from the start of the route at the Medina substation. The route then diverges from the Proposed Route and proceeds north, paralleling County Road 101, for approximately one mile before reaching the Canadian Pacific railroad tracks. At this point, the route proceeds east along the southern side of the Canadian Pacific railroad tracks for 2.3 miles to Substation Site B. Alternative Route B rejoins the existing GRE 69 kV transmission line and the Proposed Route immediately northeast of Providence Academy. The total length of Alternative Route B is 8.9 miles (Figure 3).

Alternative Route B-1 (ATF Report)

As described in the Hollydale ATF Report, Alternative Route B-1 veers from the Proposed Route at the intersection of Old Rockford Road and Peony Lane and follows Old Rockford Road east 0.5 miles to Holly Lane. Route B-1 then travels north along Holly Lane for 0.6 miles reconnecting with Alternative Route B. The total length of Alternative Route B-1 is approximately 9.1 miles (Figure 4).

Alternative Route C (Route Permit Application)

As described in the route permit application, Alternative Route C begins on the east side of Highway 55, approximately 4.9 miles from the start of the Proposed Route at the Medina Substation. The route parallels Highway 55 for 0.5 miles and then turns northeast and parallels the north side of Rockford Road for 0.5 miles. Alternative Route C turns north along the western edge of a small pond for approximately 260 feet and reconnects with the Proposed Route approximately 850 feet west of Vicksburg Lane. The total length of Alternative Route C is approximately 9.1 miles (Figure 5).

Alternative Route D (Route Permit Application)

As described in the route permit application, Alternative Route D begins on the eastern side of Cheshire Lane, 8.2 miles from the start of the Proposed Route at the Medina Substation. Alternative Route D diverges from the Proposed Route and travels east along the south side of the Canadian Pacific Railway track for approximately 920 feet. The route then turns south along the western side of Interstate 494 and along the existing GRE Plymouth Substation and an existing 345 kV transmission line for approximately 1,000 feet where it rejoins the Proposed Route on the north side of Schmidt Lake Road. The total length of Alternative Route D is approximately 8.8 miles (Figure 6).

Alternative Route E (ATF Report)

As described in the Hollydale ATF report, Alternative Route E begins on the east side of Highway 55, approximately 4.9 miles from the start of the Proposed Route at the Medina Substation. At this point Alternative Route E heads southeast along the south side of Highway 55 for 2.4 miles to the intersection with Interstate 494, crosses over Highway 55 and follows along the west side of Interstate 494 for 1.28 miles to Rockford Road, connecting with Alternative Route A to Substation Site A. The total length of Alternative Route E is approximately 9.3 miles (Figure 7).

Alternative Route F (Ablack)

This alternative route segment includes three variations (Segments F-1, F-2 and F-3). The three alternatives are largely the same route, sharing a total of two miles except for a small section where each of the three routes break from the Proposed Route and travel north to Medina Road (Figure 8).

Segment F-1 of Alternative Route F would follow the Proposed Route that exits the Medina substation north and then heads east for approximately 3.1 miles. Segment F-1 would then turn north following along Holy Name Drive 0.3 miles to Medina Road, head east along Medina Road for 0.3 miles to Brockton Lane, reconnecting with Alternative Route F. The total length of Alternative Route F-1 is approximately 10.3 miles.

Segment F-2 of Alternative Route F would follow the Proposed Route that exits the Medina substation north and then heads east for approximately 3.3 miles. At this point Segment F-2 would travel north 0.4 miles across wetlands and cropland to Medina Road, head east along Medina Road for 0.13 miles to Brockton Lane, reconnecting with Alternative Route F. The total length of Alternative Route F-2 is approximately 10.4 miles.

Segment F-3 of Alternative Route F would follow the Proposed Route that exits the Medina substation north and then heads east for approximately 2.8 miles. At this point Segment F-3 would travel north 0.3 miles through private land, wooded areas, and cropland, turn east for 0.8 miles and then head north 0.1 mile to Medina Road. Segment F-3 then heads east along Medina Road for 0.5 miles to Brockton Lane, reconnecting with Alternative Route F. The total length of Alternative Route F-3 is approximately 10.4 miles.

The three sections (F-1, F-2, and F-3) all reconnect with Alternate Route F at the intersection of Medina Road and Brockton Lane. From the intersection of Medina Road and Brockton Lane Alternate Route F travels north along Brockton Lane for 0.95 miles, turning east for 0.07 miles along the south side of the Canadian Pacific Railway tracks to Highway 55. Alternative Route F then follows southeast along Highway 55 for 1.4 miles to a point on Highway 55 approximately 0.15 miles east of Lawndale Avenue North. At this point the route veers west from Highway 55 for 0.2 miles over wetlands and through residential areas where it connects to the existing Hollydale substation. This 0.2 mile section of the route (between Highway 55 and the Hollydale substation) would need to be a double-circuit 115 KV transmission line in order to meet the purpose of the project. From the east end of the double-circuit 115 kV at Highway 55 the route then reconnects with the Proposed Route. The total length of Alternative Route Segment F varies depending on the alternative section used.

Alternative Route G (Ablack)

Alternative Route G would follow the Proposed Route that exits the Medina substation north and then heads east for approximately 3.3 miles. At this point the route would travel north 0.4 miles across wetlands and crop land to Medina Road and then head east along Medina Road for 0.15 miles to Brockton Lane. At the intersection of Medina Road and Brockton Lane the route turns north and travels along Brockton Lane for 0.4 miles, at this point the route turns east for 0.7 miles crossing crop land, wetlands and forested areas to Highway 55. Alternative Route G then follows along Highway 55 southeast for approximately 0.5 miles. At this point the route veers west from Highway 55 for 0.2 miles over wetlands and through residential areas where it connects to the existing Hollydale substation. This 0.2 mile section of the route (between Highway 55 and the Hollydale substation) would need to be a double-circuit 115 KV transmission line in order to meet the purpose of the project. The total length of Alternative Route G is approximately 9.5 miles (Figure 9).

Alternative Route G-1 (Ablack)

Alternative Route G-1 would follow the Proposed Route that exits the Medina substation north and then heads east for approximately 3.3 miles. At this point the route would travel north 0.4 miles across wetlands and crop land to Medina Road and then head east along Medina Road for 0.15 miles to Brockton Lane.

At the intersection of Medina Road and Brockton Lane the route turns north and travels along Brockton Lane for 550 feet, at this point the route turns east and travels through an operating nursery and garden center for 0.7 miles, turning south down Peony Lane and connecting with the Preferred Route before it enters the Hollydale Substation. The total length of Alternative Route G-1 is approximately 9.0 miles (Figure 10).

Alternative Route H (Huston)

The route would follow the Proposed Route that exits the Medina substation north, head east along CR 24/Medina Road for 3.8 miles connecting with the Proposed Route at the intersection of Medina Road and Troy Lane. The total length of Alternative Route H is approximately 9.2 miles (Figure 11).

Alternative Route I (Huston)

The route would follow the Proposed Route that exits the Medina substation north, head east along County Road 24 for 3.9 miles to County Road 101. The route would travel north on County Road 101 for 0.9 miles reconnecting with the Proposed Route where it crosses County Road 101. The total length of Alternative Route I is approximately 8.6 miles (Figure 12).

Alternative Route J (Providence Academy)

The new 115 kV transmission line rebuild alignment and route would be shifted to a conservation easement east of campus and the GRE existing 69 kV transmission line that runs north and south on Providence Academy's campus, between Schmidt Lake Road and the railroad tracks. The total length of Alternative Route J is approximately 8.9 miles (Figure 13).

Substation Site A (Route Permit Application)

Substation Site A is the applicants preferred location for the new Pomerleau Lake Substation. The site is located approximately 0.2 miles south of Schmidt Lake Road and adjacent to and west of Interstate 494 (Figure 1).

Substation Site B (Route Permit Application)

Substation Site B is located on the former Hampton Hills golf course, north of the Canadian Pacific Railroad between Providence Academy and Fernbrook Lane North (Figure 1).

VII. ALTERNATIVE ROUTE SEGMENTS

Twelve alternative route segments suggested through public comments will be evaluated in the EIS and are described below and illustrated in Figure 14.

Alternative Route Segment A (Wright)

This route segment would follow the Proposed Route that exits the Medina substation north and then heads west following County Road 24 for 0.1 mile to Willow Drive. The route heads north following along Willow Drive for approximately 1.3 miles to the intersection with County Road 115 (Hamel Road). The route would head east from the intersection of Willow Drive and County Road 115 following survey lines and natural division lines for approximately 1 mile. At this point the route would head directly north continuing to follow survey and natural division lines for 0.3 miles, crossing County Road 115 and then following along County Road 118 (Arrowhead Drive) for 0.2 miles to Highway 55. The route then heads south-southeast along Highway 55 for approximately 3.6 miles, then veers west from Highway 55 for 0.2 miles over wetlands and through residential areas where it connects to the existing Hollydale Substation. This 0.2 mile section of the route (between Highway 55 and the Hollydale substation) would need to be a double-circuit 115 KV transmission line in order to meet the purpose of the project.

Alternative Route Segment B (Minea)

This route segment follows the Proposed Route for approximately 0.9 miles after it exists the Medina Substation. At the 0.9 mile point the route veers directly north from the Proposed Route following survey and natural division lines for approximately 1 mile where it turns east for 0.5 miles, and then north for 0.35 miles to the intersection of County Road 115 and County Road 118. At this point the route would follow along County Road 118 for 0.7 miles to Highway 55. The route then heads south-southeast along Highway 55 for approximately 3.6 miles, then veers west from Highway 55 for 0.2 miles over wetlands and through residential areas where it connects to the existing Hollydale Substation. This 0.2 mile section of the route (between Highway 55 and the Hollydale substation) would need to be a double-circuit 115 KV transmission line in order to meet the purpose of the project.

Alternative Route Segment C (Onken)

This route segment follows the Proposed Route for approximately 0.9 miles after it exists the Medina Substation. At the 0.9 mile point the route veers directly north from the Proposed Route following survey and natural division lines for approximately 0.5 miles where it turns east for 0.5 miles, and then north for 0.8 miles to the intersection of County Road 115 and County Road 118. At this point the route would follow along County Road 118 for 0.7 miles to Highway 55. The route then heads south-southeast along Highway 55 for approximately 3.6 miles, then veers west from Highway 55 for 0.2 miles over wetlands and through residential areas where it connects to the existing Hollydale Substation. This 0.2 mile section of the route (between Highway 55 and the Hollydale substation) would need to be a double-circuit 115 KV transmission line in order to meet the purpose of the project.

Alternative Route Segment D (Onken)

This route segment begins at a point along the proposed route approximately 3.3 miles east of where it exists the Medina Substation. At this 3.3 mile point the route veers north from the Proposed Route for 0.5 miles through wetlands and cropland and across Medina Road. At this point the route heads east crossing Brockton Lane and travels through an operating nursery and garden center for 0.65 miles, heads north 0.1 mile, then east 0.3 miles to Highway 55. The route then heads southeast along Highway 55 for 0.35 miles, then veers west from Highway 55 for 0.2 miles over wetlands and through residential areas where it connects to the existing Hollydale Substation. This 0.2 mile section of the route (between Highway 55 and the Hollydale substation) would need to be a double-circuit 115 KV transmission line in order to meet the purpose of the project.

Alternative Route Segment E (Onken)

This route segment begins at a point along the proposed route approximately 3.37 miles east of where it exists the Medina Substation. At this 3.37 mile point the route veers north from the Proposed Route for 0.38 miles through wetlands and cropland to Medina Road. From Medina Road the route turns east along Medina Road for 0.10 miles to Brockton Lane, then north 0.1 miles along Brockton Lane, heads east and travels through an operating nursery and garden center for 0.65 miles, heads north 0.1 mile, then east 0.3 miles to Highway 55. The route then heads southeast along Highway 55 for 0.35 miles, then veers west from Highway 55 for 0.2 miles over wetlands and through residential areas where it connects to the existing Hollydale Substation. This 0.2 mile section of the route (between Highway 55 and the Hollydale substation) would need to be a double-circuit 115 KV transmission line in order to meet the purpose of the project.

Alternative Route Segment F (Zeroni)

This route segment starts at the intersection of Medina Road and Brockton Lane and heads north following Brockton Lane for approximately 0.6 miles. The route heads east through wetlands and cropland for 0.25 miles, turns north for 0.2 miles to Highway 55. The route then heads southeast along Highway 55 for 1.15 miles, then veers west from Highway 55 for 0.2 miles over wetlands and through residential areas where it connects to the existing Hollydale Substation. This 0.2 mile section of the route (between Highway 55 and the Hollydale substation) would need to be a double-circuit 115 KV transmission line in order to meet the purpose of the project.

Alternative Route Segment G (Zeroni)

This route segment starts at the intersection of Medina Road and Brockton Lane and heads north following Brockton Lane for approximately 0.56 miles. The route heads east through wetlands and cropland for 0.25 miles, north 200 feet, east 0.1 mile, and then north 0.5 mile to Highway 55. The route then heads southeast along Highway 55 for 0.98 mile, then veers west from Highway 55 for 0.2 miles over wetlands and through residential areas where it connects to the existing Hollydale Substation. This 0.2 mile section of the route (between Highway 55 and the Hollydale substation) would need to be a double-circuit 115 KV transmission line in order to meet the purpose of the project.

Alternative Route Segment H (Zeroni)

This route segment would follow the Proposed Route that exits the Medina substation north and then heads west following County Road 24 for 0.1 mile to Willow Drive. The route heads north following along Willow Drive for approximately 1.3 miles to the intersection with County Road 115 (Hamel Road), heads east following County Road 115 for approximately 0.4 miles where the route reconnects with Willow Drive and heads north along Willow Drive for approximately 1.5 miles to Highway 55. The route then heads south-southeast along Highway 55 for approximately 4.9 miles, then veers west from Highway 55 for 0.2 miles over wetlands and through residential areas where it connects to the existing Hollydale Substation. This 0.2 mile section of the route (between Highway 55 and the Hollydale substation) would need to be a double-circuit 115 KV transmission line in order to meet the purpose of the project.

Alternative Route Segment I (Zeroni)

This route segment starts at the intersection of County Road 115 and Willow Drive and heads east following County Road 115 approximately 1.2 miles to its intersection with Tamarack Drive.

Alternative Route Segment J (Zeroni)

This route heads north from County Road 24 at a point 0.5 miles west of the intersection of County Road 24 and Tamarack Drive. This route heads north for approximately 1.85 miles through cropland, wetland, and at times bisecting residential property to County Road 115. The route then continues north crossing County Road 115 and following along Arrowhead Drive 0.7 miles to Highway 55.

Alternative Route Segment K (Zeroni)

This route segment starts at the intersection of Tamarack Drive and County Road 24 and heads north following Tamarack Drive for 1.4 miles, continuing north for 0.6 miles through wetland and cropland eventually reconnecting with Tamarack Drive and proceeding north 0.4 miles to Highway 55.

Alternative Route Segment L (Zeroni)

This route segment starts at the intersection of Tamarack Drive and Blackfoot Trail and heads west following Blackfoot Trail for 0.6 miles.

VIII. IDENTIFICATION OF PERMITS

The EIS will include a list and description of permits from other government entities that may be required for the proposed project.

ISSUES OUTSIDE THE SCOPE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

The Hollydale 115 kV EIS will not consider the following:

- No-build alternative regarding the high voltage transmission line facility.
- Issues related to project need, size, type, or timing; questions of alternative system configurations, or questions of voltage (Minnesota Statutes 216E.02, subdivision 2).
- Any route or substation alternative not specifically identified in this scoping decision document.
- Policy issues surrounding whether utilities or local-government should be liable for the cost to relocate utility poles when roadways are widened.
- The manner in which land owners are paid for transmission rights-of-way easements.

SCHEDULE

Upon completion of the Draft EIS, EFP staff will notify those persons who have asked to be notified of the completion. In addition, the staff will publish notice of the availability of the Draft EIS in the EQB Monitor. The Draft EIS will be made available for review and will be posted on the Department of Commerce website and the eDockets website. EFP staff will hold a public meeting in the project area to provide an opportunity for the public to ask questions and to comment on the Draft EIS. The public will also have a period of time after the meeting to submit written comments. Comments on the Draft EIS will become part of the record in the proceeding for this docket.

Following is the anticipated review schedule:

September 2012 – Draft EIS available
October 2012 – Draft EIS public meeting
December 2012 – Final EIS available

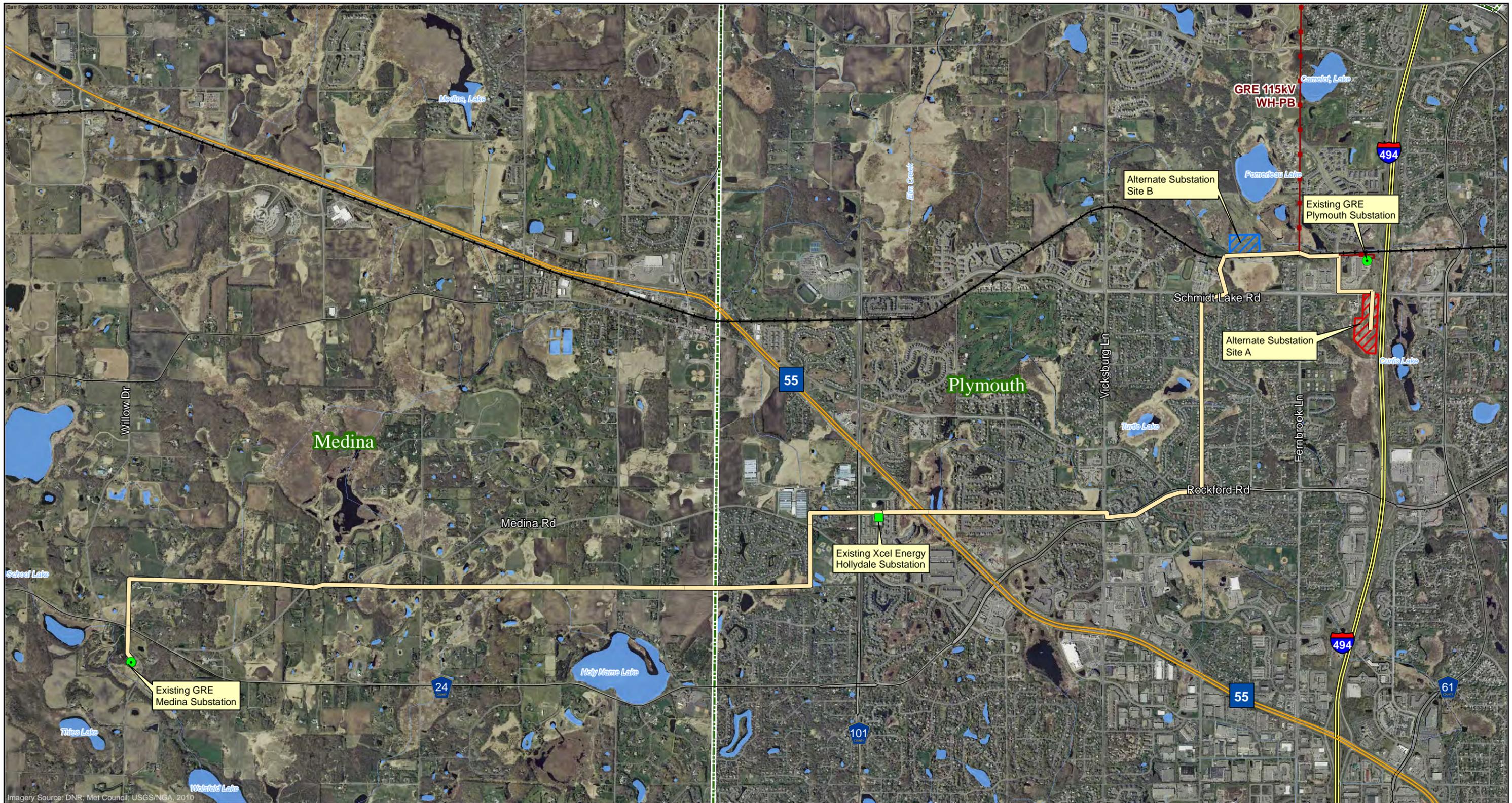
The organization (*i.e.*, structure of the document) of the information and the data presented in the above outline may not be similar to that appearing in the EIS.

Signed this 31st day of July, 2012

STATE OF MINNESOTA
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



William Grant, Deputy Commissioner



-  Proposed Route
-  Substation Site A
-  Substation Site B
-  Existing Xcel Energy Substation
-  Existing GRE Substation
-  GRE Transmission Line WH-PB
-  Railroad

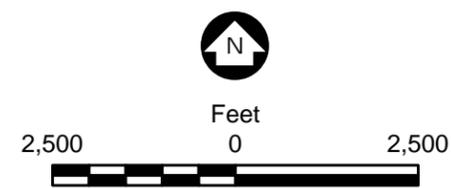
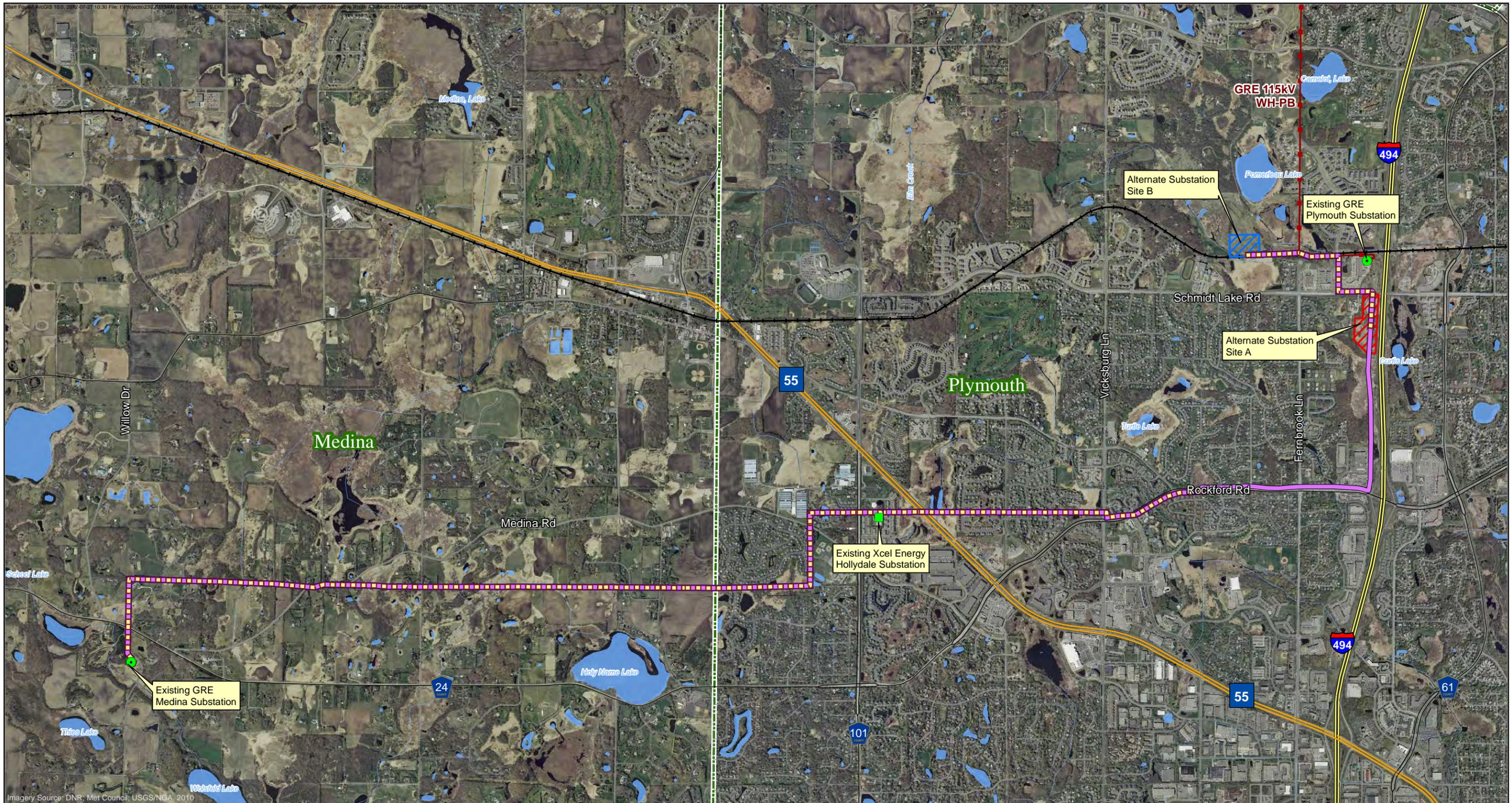


Figure 1

**PROPOSED ROUTE
Hollydale Project**





-  Alternative Route A
-  Portion of Alternative Route Shared with Proposed Route
-  Substation Site A
-  Substation Site B
-  Existing Xcel Energy Substation
-  Existing GRE Substation
-  GRE Transmission Line WH-PB
-  Railroad

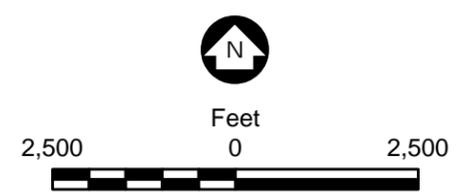
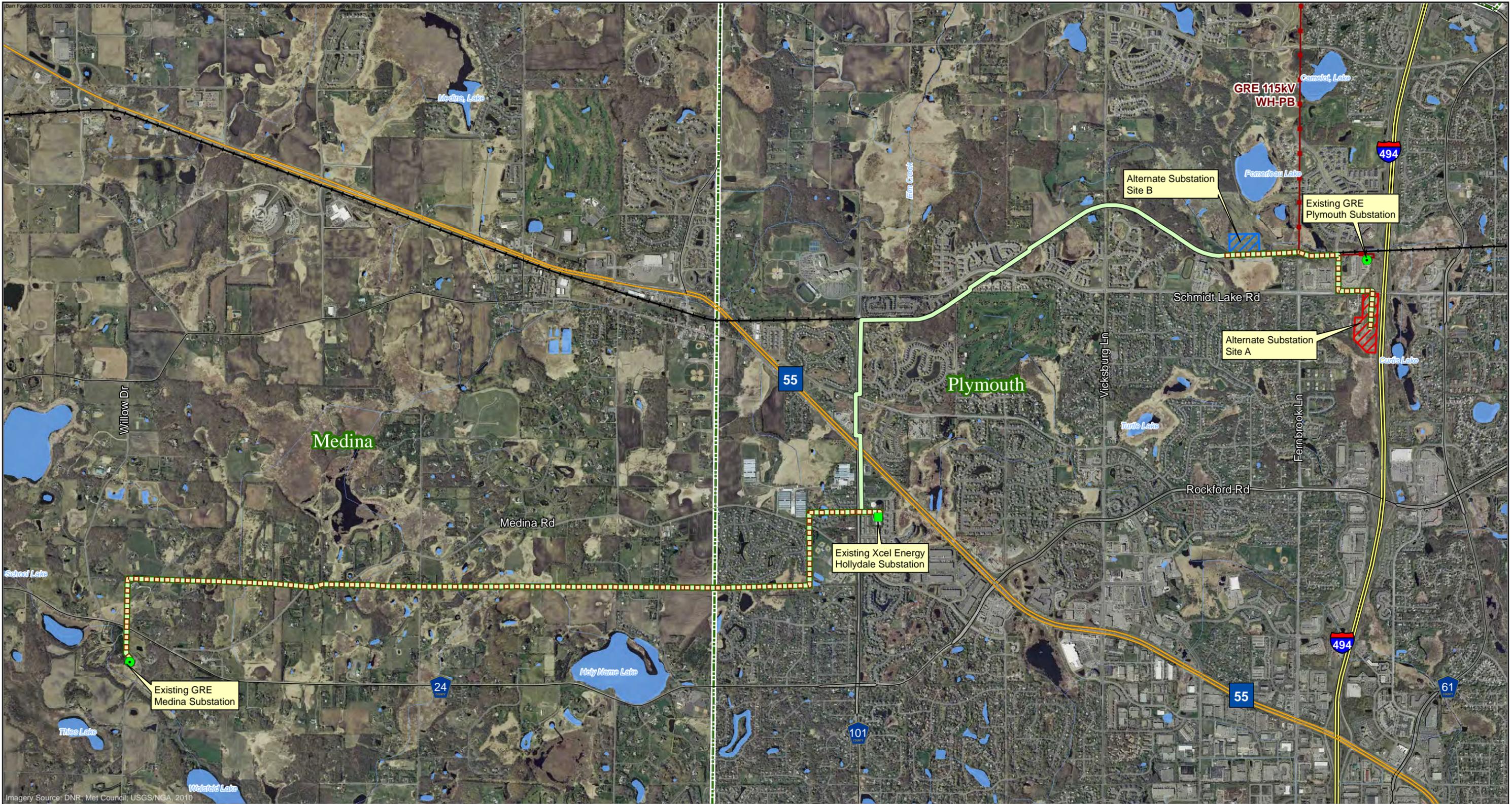


Figure 2

**ALTERNATIVE ROUTE A
Hollydale Project**





-  Alternative Route B
-  Portion of Alternative Route Shared with Proposed Route
-  Substation Site A
-  Substation Site B
-  Existing Xcel Energy Substation
-  Existing GRE Substation
-  GRE Transmission Line WH-PB
-  Railroad

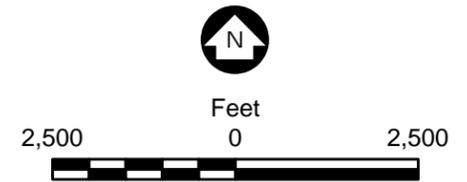
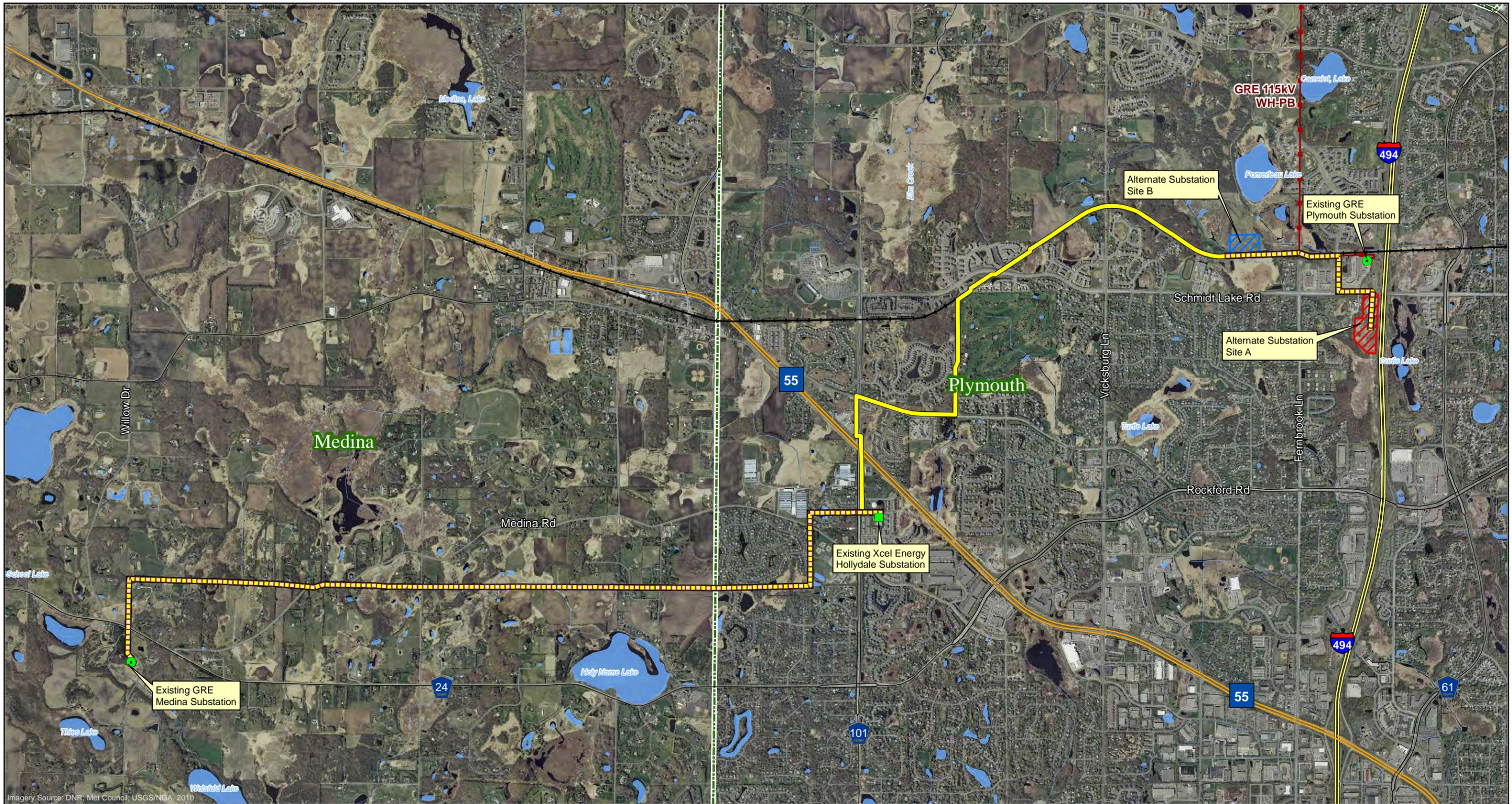


Figure 3

**ALTERNATIVE ROUTE B
Hollydale Project**





-  Alternative Route B-1
-  Portion of Alternative Route Shared with Proposed Route
-  Substation Site A
-  Substation Site B
-  Existing Xcel Energy Substation
-  Existing GRE Substation
-  GRE Transmission Line WH-PB
-  Railroad

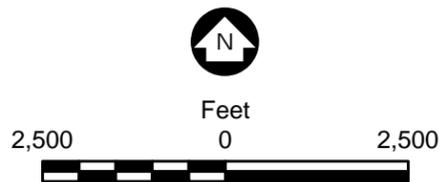
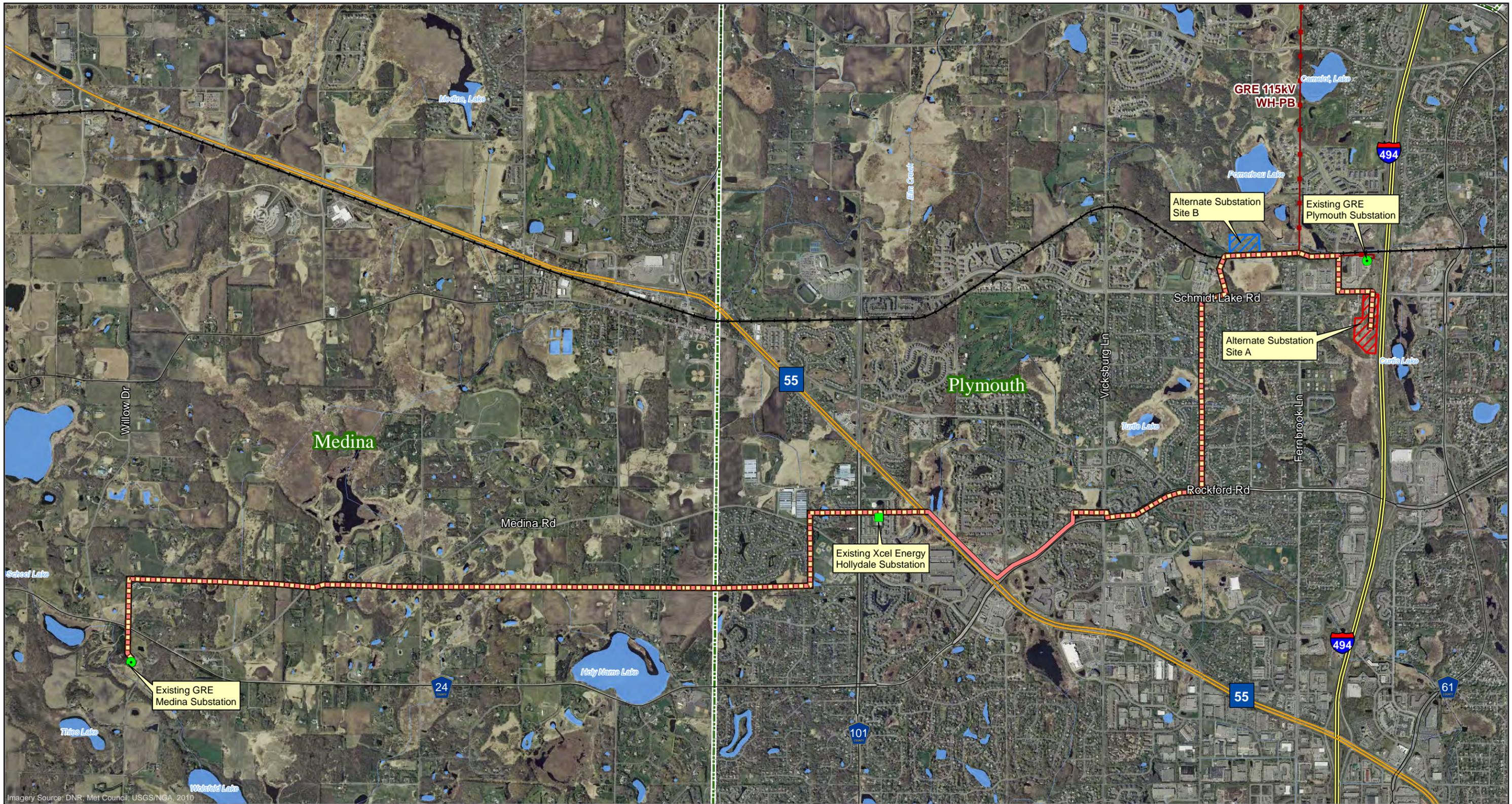


Figure 4

**ALTERNATIVE ROUTE B-1
Hollydale Project**





-  Alternative Route C
-  Portion of Alternative Route Shared with Proposed Route
-  Substation Site A
-  Substation Site B
-  Existing Xcel Energy Substation
-  Existing GRE Substation
-  GRE Transmission Line WH-PB
-  Railroad

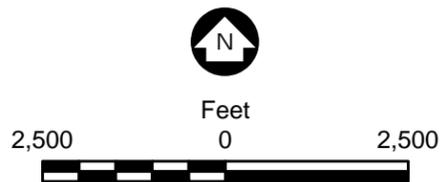
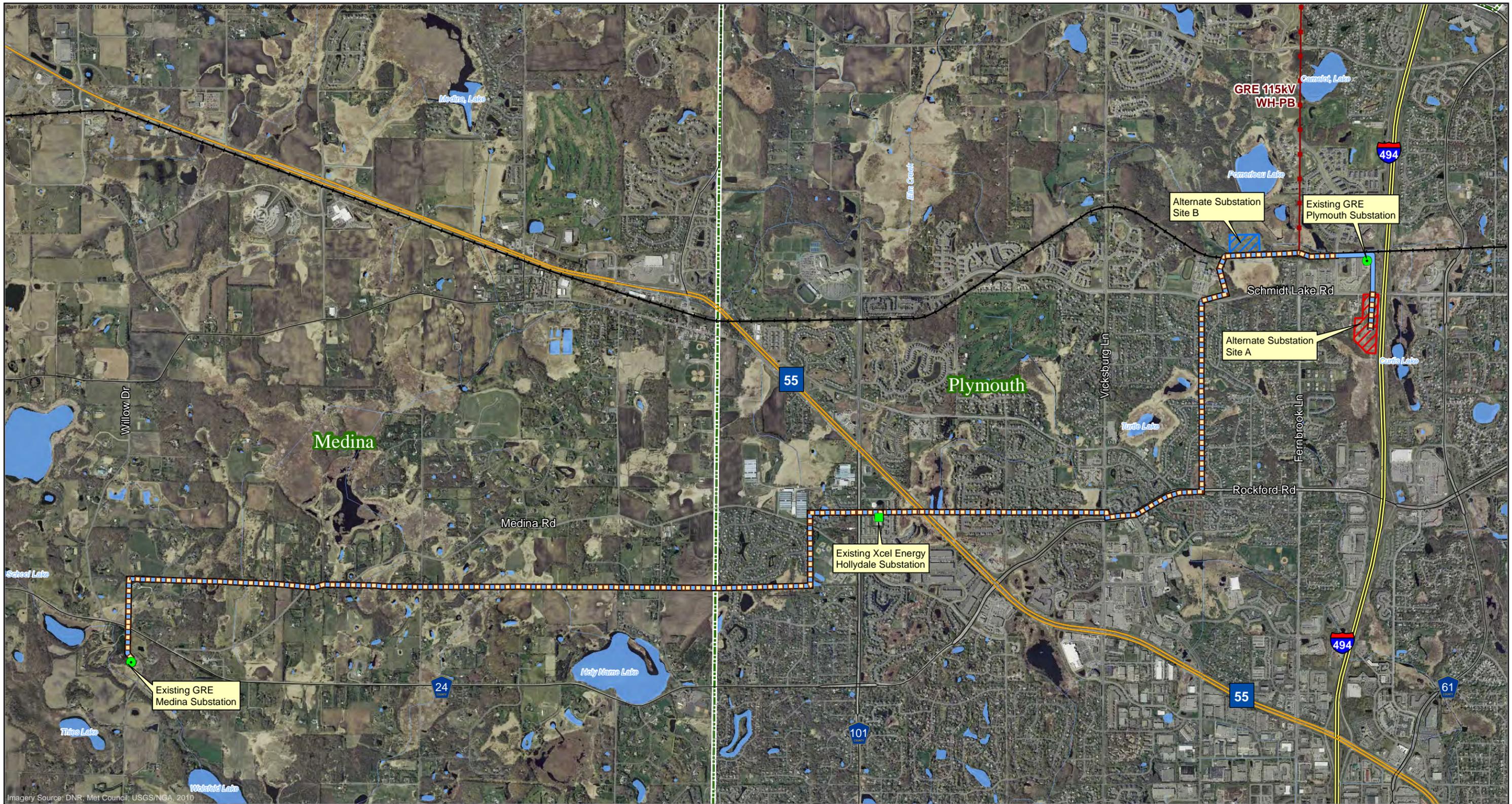


Figure 5

**ALTERNATIVE ROUTE C
Hollydale Project**





-  Alternative Route D
-  Portion of Alternative Route Shared with Proposed Route
-  Substation Site A
-  Substation Site B
-  Existing Xcel Energy Substation
-  Existing GRE Substation
-  GRE Transmission Line WH-PB
-  Railroad

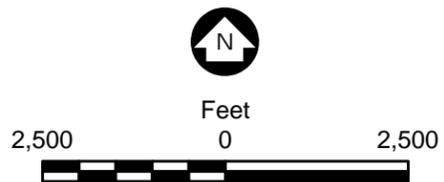
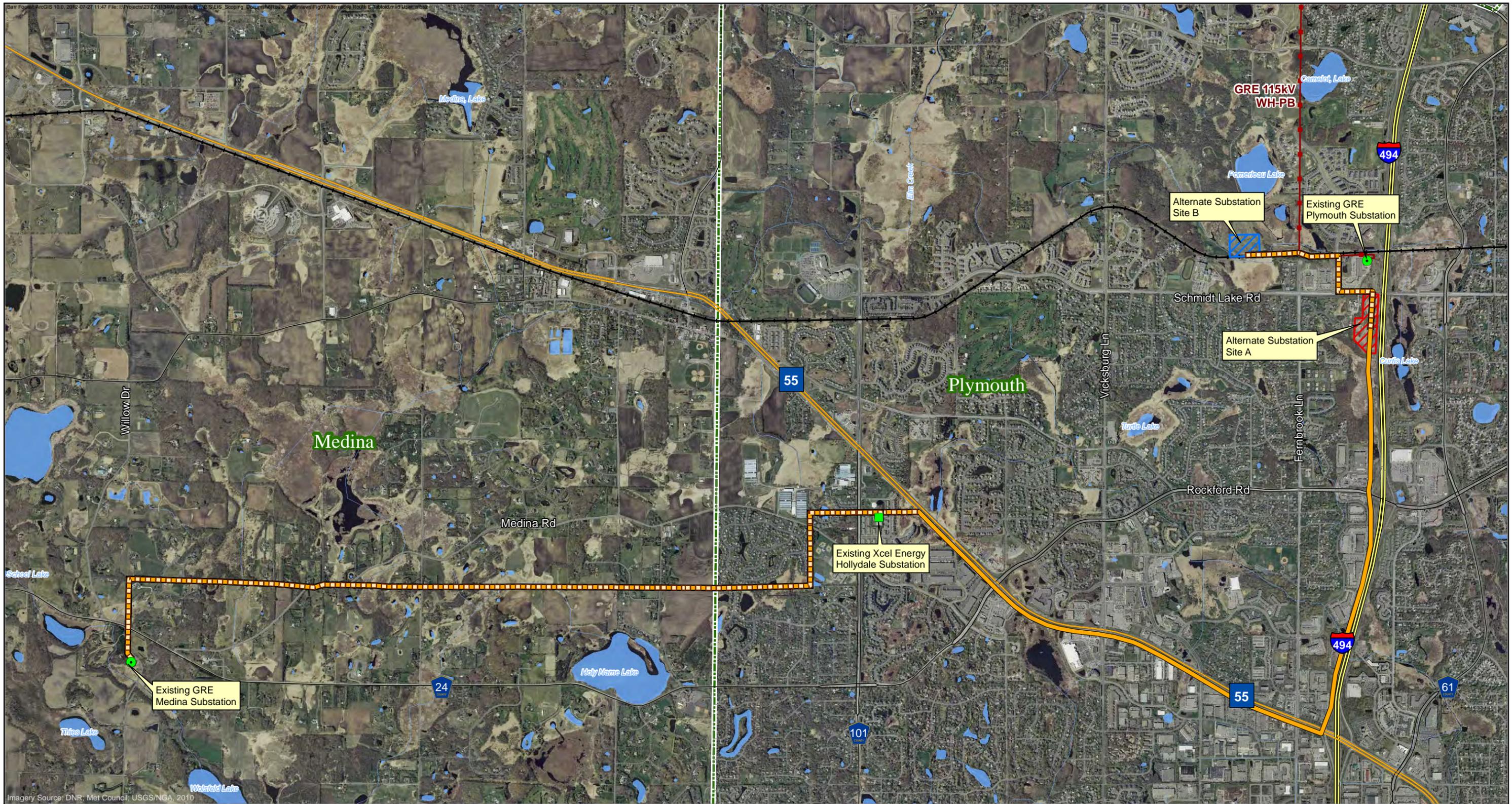


Figure 6

**ALTERNATIVE ROUTE D
Hollydale Project**





-  Alternative Route E
-  Portion of Alternative Route Shared with Proposed Route
-  Substation Site A
-  Substation Site B
-  Existing Xcel Energy Substation
-  Existing GRE Substation
-  GRE Transmission Line WH-PB
-  Railroad

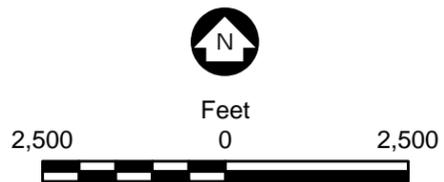


Figure 7

**ALTERNATIVE ROUTE E
Hollydale Project**



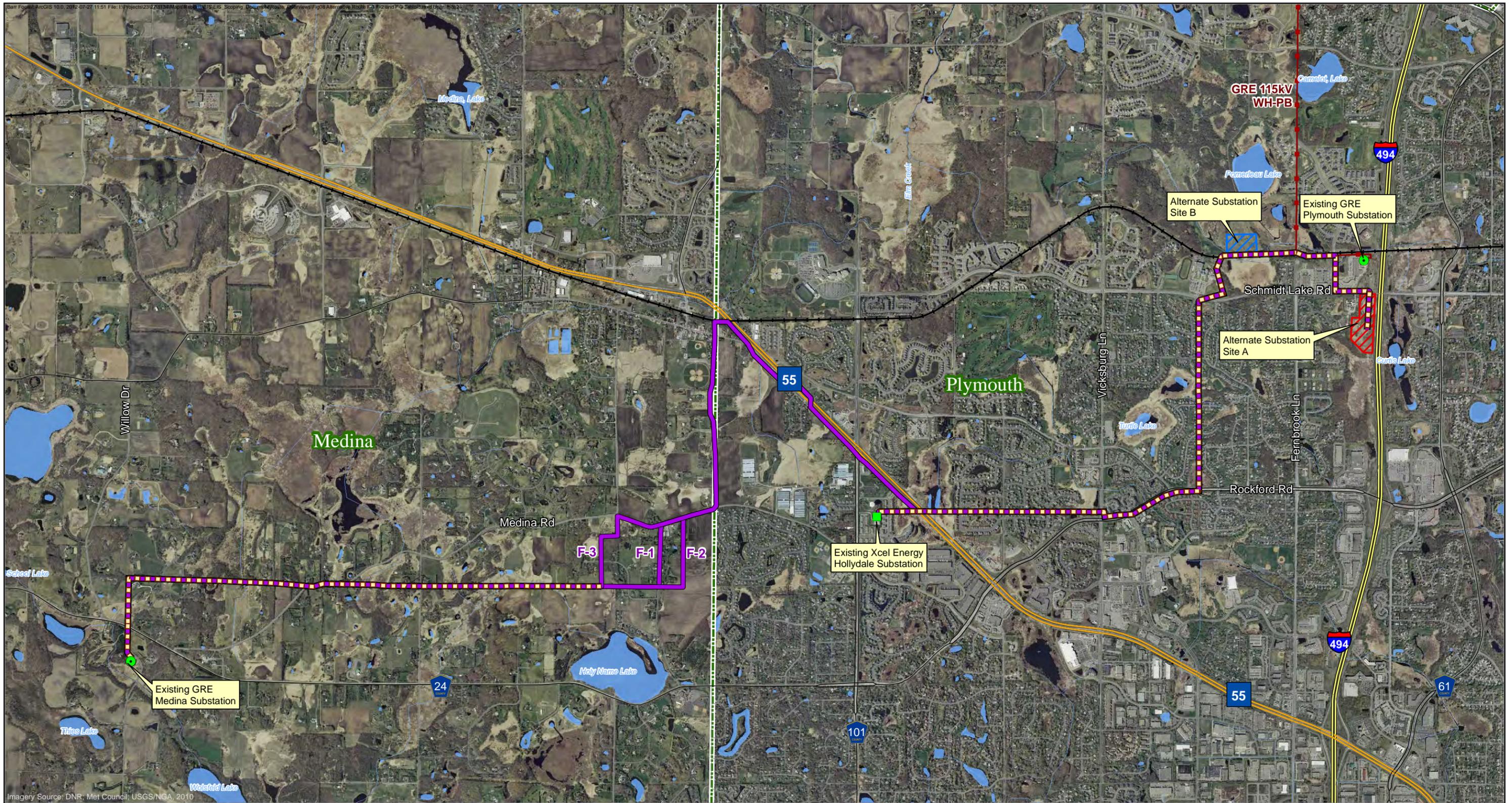
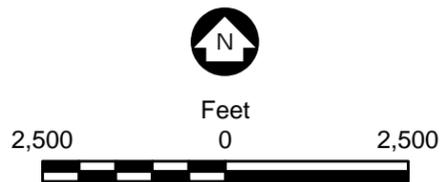
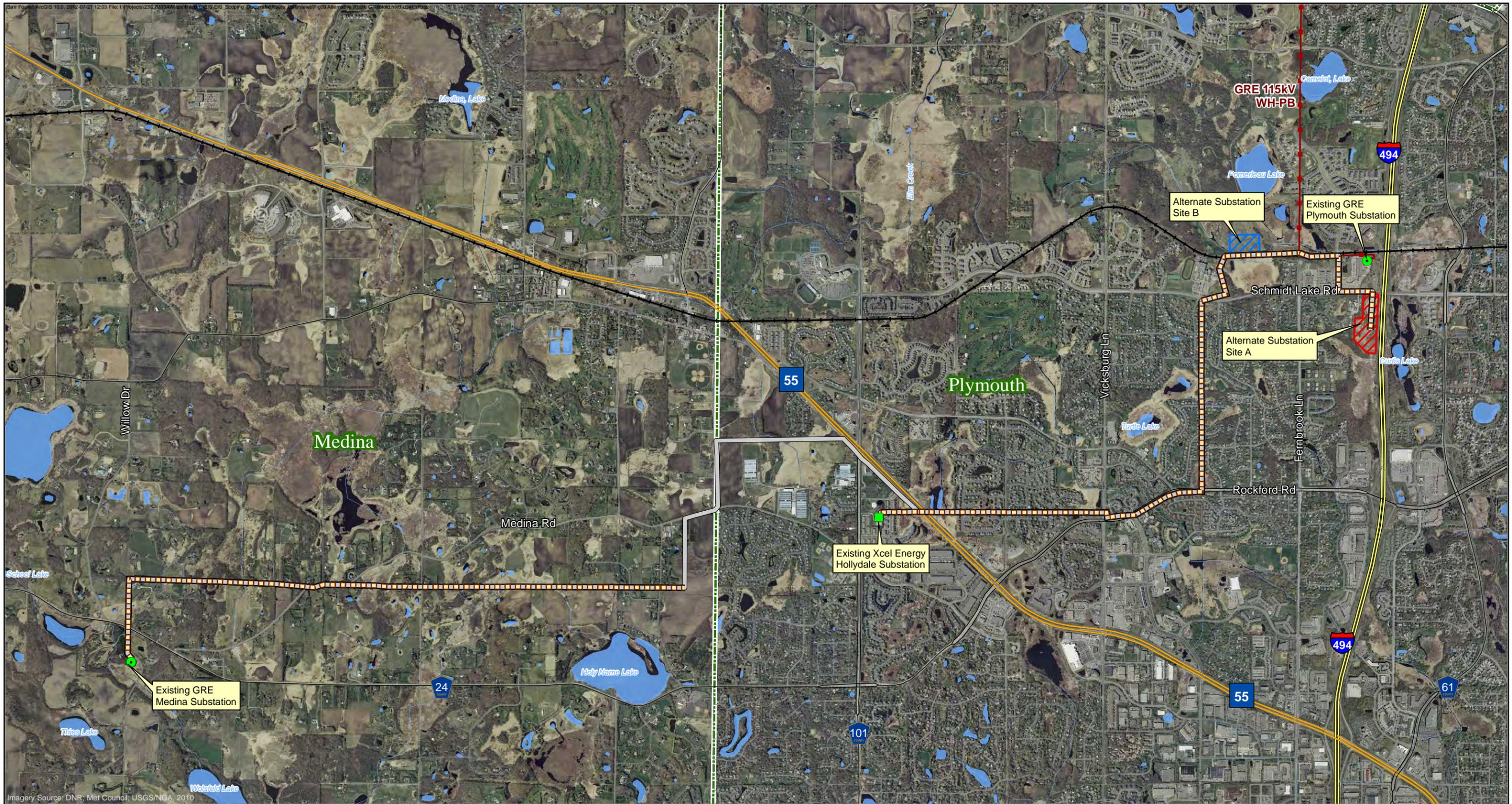


Figure 8

**ALTERNATIVE ROUTE
F-1, F-2, AND F-3
Hollydale Project**

-  Alternative Route F-1, F-2, and F-3
-  Portion of Alternative Route Shared with Proposed Route
-  Substation Site A
-  Substation Site B
-  Existing Xcel Energy Substation
-  Existing GRE Substation
-  GRE Transmission Line WH-PB
-  Railroad





-  Alternative Route G
-  Portion of Alternative Route Shared with Proposed Route
-  Substation Site A
-  Substation Site B
-  Existing Xcel Energy Substation
-  Existing GRE Substation
-  GRE Transmission Line WH-PB
-  Railroad

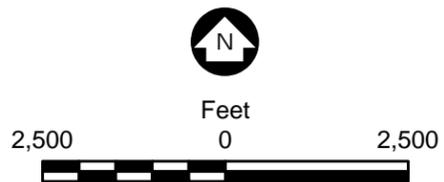
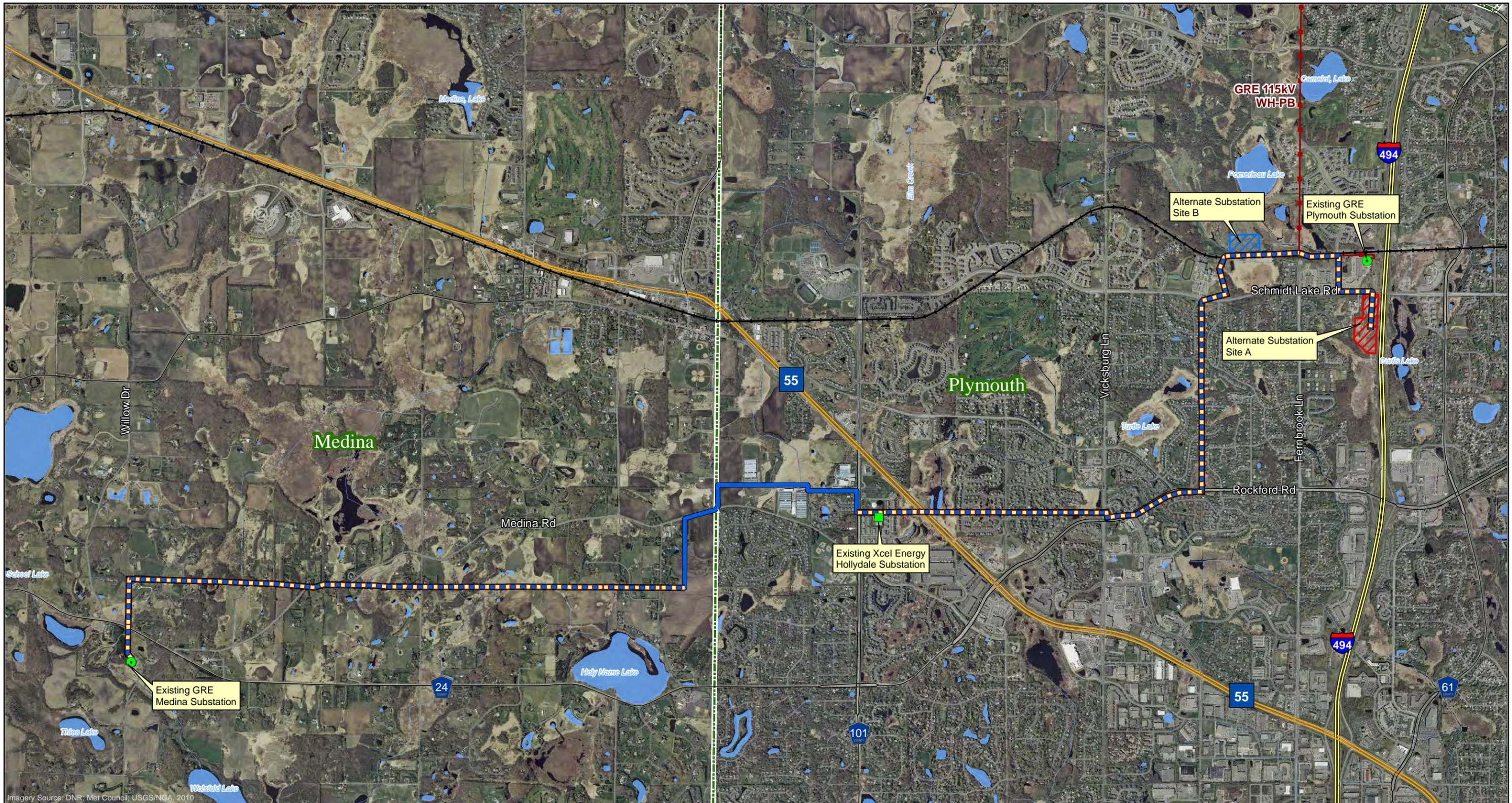


Figure 9

**ALTERNATIVE ROUTE G
Hollydale Project**





-  Alternative Route G-1
-  Portion of Alternative Route Shared with Proposed Route
-  Substation Site A
-  Substation Site B
-  Existing Xcel Energy Substation
-  Existing GRE Substation
-  GRE Transmission Line WH-PB
-  Railroad

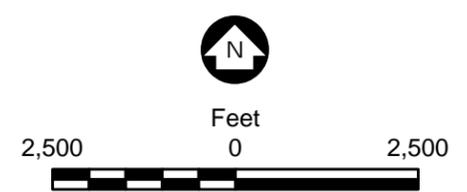
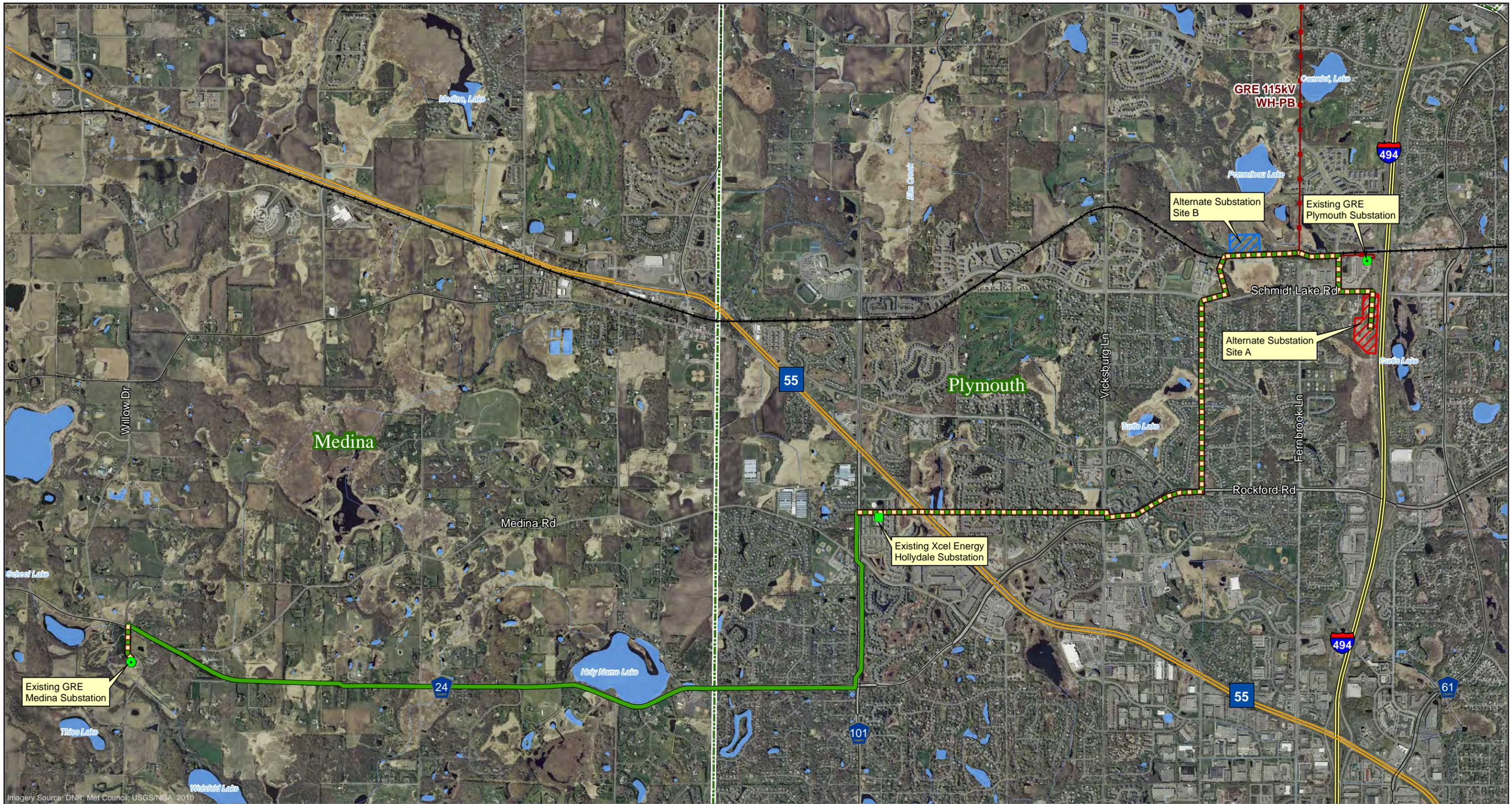


Figure 10

**ALTERNATIVE ROUTE G-1
Hollydale Project**





- Alternative Route H
- Portion of Alternative Route Shared with Proposed Route
- Substation Site A
- Substation Site B
- Existing Xcel Energy Substation
- Existing GRE Substation
- GRE Transmission Line WH-PB
- Railroad

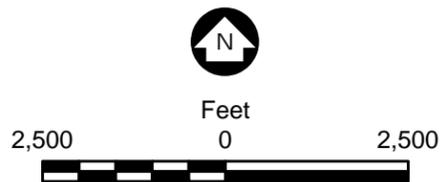
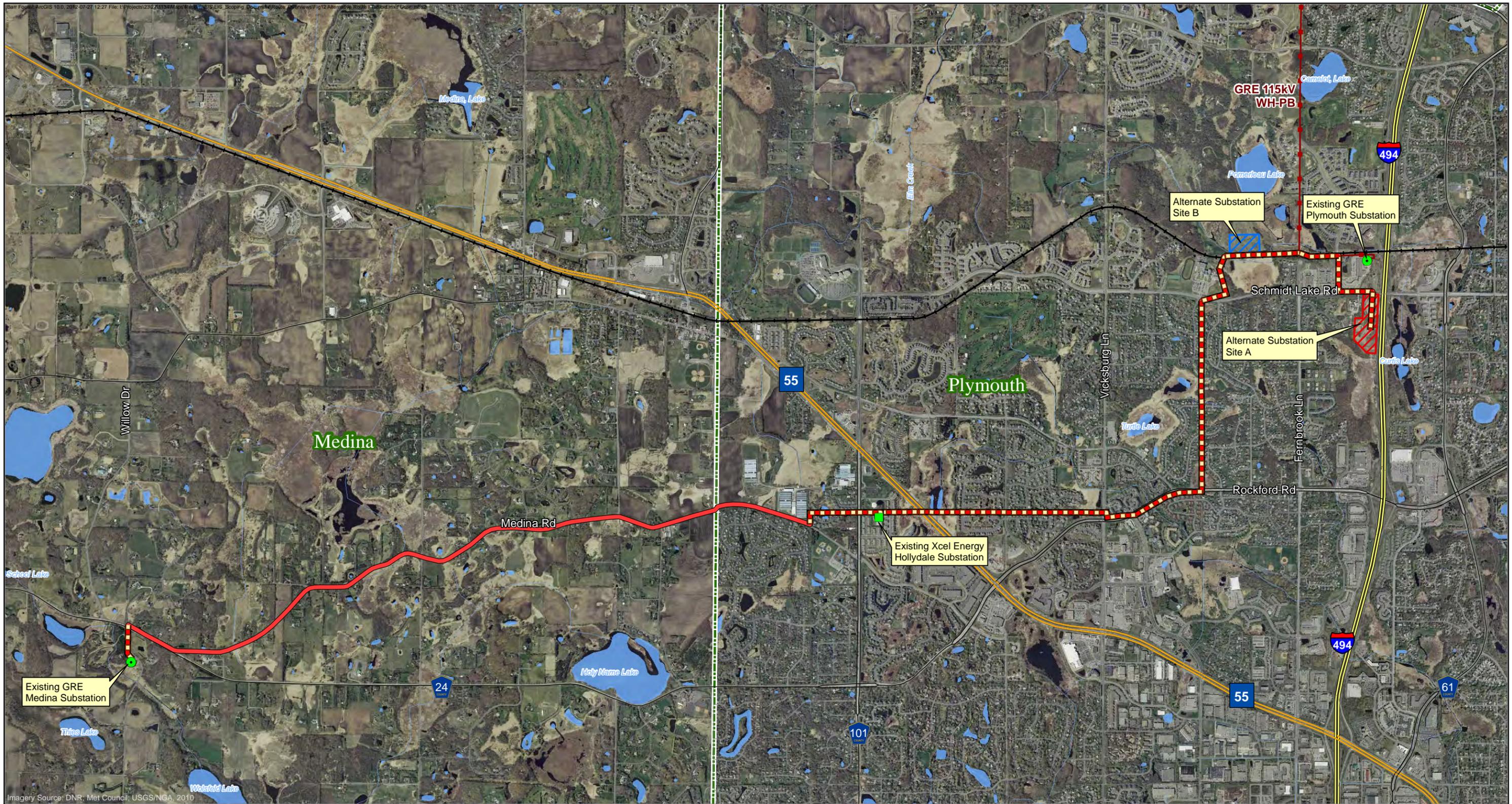


Figure 11

**ALTERNATIVE ROUTE H
Hollydale Project**



-  Alternative Route I
-  Portion of Alternative Route Shared with Proposed Route
-  Substation Site A
-  Substation Site B
-  Existing Xcel Energy Substation
-  Existing GRE Substation
-  GRE Transmission Line WH-PB
-  Railroad

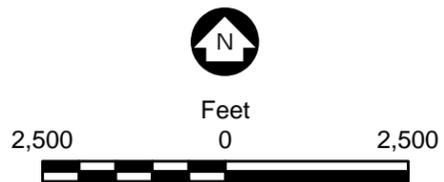
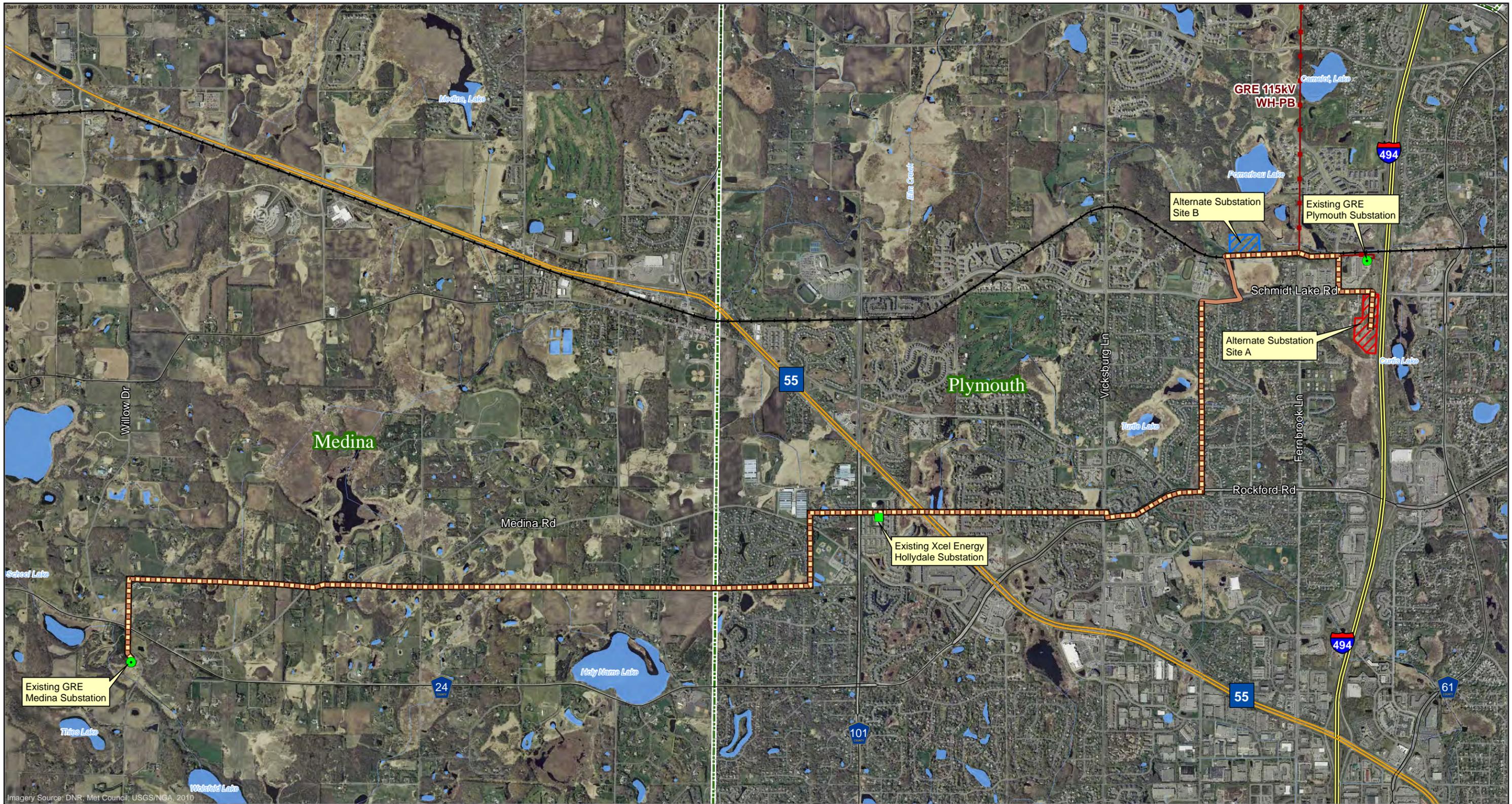


Figure 12

**ALTERNATIVE ROUTE I
Hollydale Project**



-  Alternative Route J
-  Portion of Alternative Route Shared with Proposed Route
-  Substation Site A
-  Substation Site B
-  Existing Xcel Energy Substation
-  Existing GRE Substation
-  GRE Transmission Line WH-PB
-  Railroad

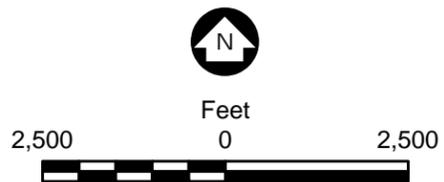
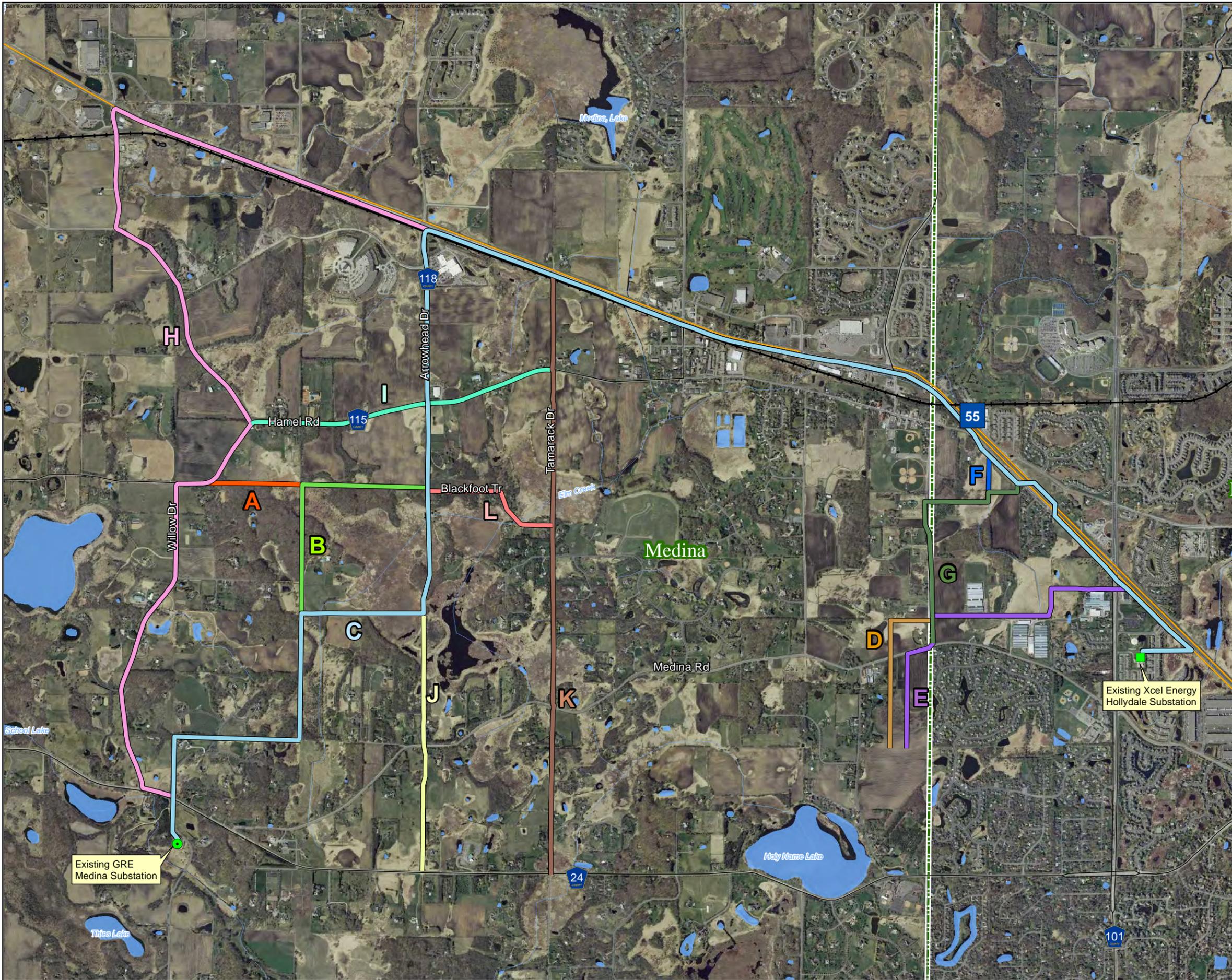


Figure 13

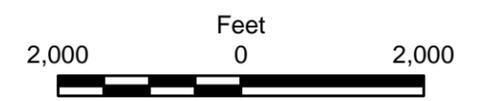
**ALTERNATIVE ROUTE J
Hollydale Project**





- Alternative Route Segment A
- Alternative Route Segment B
- Alternative Route Segment C
- Alternative Route Segment D
- Alternative Route Segment E
- Alternative Route Segment F
- Alternative Route Segment G
- Alternative Route Segment H
- Alternative Route Segment I
- Alternative Route Segment J
- Alternative Route Segment K
- Alternative Route Segment L
- Existing Xcel Energy Substation
- Existing GRE Substation
- Railroad

Imagery Source: DNR; Met Council; USGS/NGA, 2010



Existing Xcel Energy
Hollydale Substation

Existing GRE
Medina Substation

Figure 14

**ALTERNATIVE ROUTE SEGMENTS
Hollydale Project**

