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MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

In the Matter of the Certificate of Need and Route Permit Applications by ITC Midwest LLC for the Minnesota to Iowa 345 kV Transmission Line Project and Associated Facilities in Jackson, Martin, and Faribault Counties

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT SCOPING DECISION

PUC DOCKET NO. ET6675/CN-12-1053
PUC DOCKET NO. ET6675/TL-12-1337

The above matter has come before the deputy commissioner of the Department of Commerce (Department) for a decision on the scope of the environmental impact statement (EIS) to be prepared for the Minnesota to Iowa 345 kV transmission line project proposed by ITC Midwest LLC in Jackson, Martin, and Faribault counties.

Project Description

ITC Midwest LLC (ITCM) proposes to: (1) construct approximately 75 miles of new 345 kV transmission line eastward from the Lakefield substation near Lakefield, Minn., to a new Huntley substation near Winnebago, Minn. and then southward to the Iowa border, (2) expand the existing Lakefield substation and construct a new substation (the Huntley substation) which will replace the existing Winnebago substation, and (3) relocate and reconfigure several segments of existing 161 kV and 69 kV transmission line which currently terminate at the Winnebago substation such that they will terminate at the new Huntley substation upon completion of the project.

ITCM requested a 1,000 foot route width for the 345 kV portion of the project, with a larger route width in select areas. ITCM indicates that the new 345 kV line will require a right-of-way (easement) of 200 feet. ITCM requested a 500 foot route width for the 161 kV portions of the project, with a right-of-way of 150 or 250 feet depending on the location of the 161 kV lines. ITCM has proposed two possible routes for the project – designated in its route permit application as Routes A and B.

Project Purpose

ITCM indicates in its certificate of need and route permit applications that the proposed project is needed to enhance regional electrical reliability, to increase transmission capacity to support additional generation, and to reduce congestion on the electrical grid. The project was studied by the Midcontinent Independent Transmission System Operator (MISO) and was approved by MISO in the 2011 MISO Transmission Expansion Plan as a multi-value project.

Regulatory Background

ITCM's proposed project requires two separate approvals from the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) – a certificate of need (CN) and route permit. A certificate of need application for the project was submitted to the Commission by ITCM on March 22, 2013, and accepted as complete by the Commission on June 27, 2013. A route permit application was submitted to the Commission on March 28, 2013, and was also accepted as complete on June 27, 2013.

Department of Commerce, Energy Environmental Review and Analysis (EERA) staff is responsible for conducting environmental review for CN and route permit applications submitted to the Commission.[1] As two concurrent environmental reviews are required – one for the CN application and one for the route permit application – the Department has elected to combine the environmental review for the two applications.[2] An environmental impact statement (EIS) will be prepared to meet the requirements of both review processes.

Scoping Process

Scoping is the first step in the development of the EIS for the project. The scoping process has two primary purposes: (1) to gather public input as to the impacts, mitigation measures, and alternatives to study in the EIS, and (2) to focus the EIS on those impacts, mitigation measures, and alternatives that will aid in the Commission's decisions on the CN and route permit applications.

EERA staff gathered input on the scope of the EIS through six public meetings and an associated comment period. EERA staff also facilitated input on the scope of the EIS through an advisory task force. This scoping decision identifies the impacts and mitigation measures that will be analyzed in the EIS, including route, alignment, and site alternatives for the project. Additionally, this scoping decision identifies alternatives to the project itself that will be analyzed in the EIS.

Public Scoping Meetings

Commission staff and EERA staff held joint public information and environmental impact statement scoping meetings on July 16, 17, and 18, 2013, in the cities of Fairmont, Jackson, and Blue Earth. Total attendance at these meetings was approximately 200 persons. Comments were received from several persons at these meetings; comments included impacts and mitigation measures to study in the EIS, including specific route alternatives.[3] Specific impacts suggested for study included impacts to agriculture, residences, airstrips, and human health.[4]

Public Comments

A comment period, ending on August 2, 2013, provided the public an opportunity to submit comments on issues, route alternatives, and system alternatives for consideration in the scope of the EIS. Comments were received from three agencies,[5] three local units of government,[6] the applicant,[7] and from approximately 220 citizens.[8] These comments included a range of impacts and mitigation measures to study in the EIS, including specific route and alignment alternatives. The issues and impacts proposed for study in the EIS are summarized here in Table 1.

[1] Minnesota Rule 7849.1200; Minnesota Rule 7850.2500.
[2] Minnesota Rule 7849.1900.
[3] Oral Comments from Public Information and EIS Scoping Meetings, July 16-18, 2013, eDockets Number 20138-90314-01.
[4] Id.
[5] Written Agency Comments on Scope of EIS, eDockets Number 20138-90433-01 [hereinafter Agency Comments].
[6] Written LGU Comments on Scope of EIS, eDockets Number 20138-90433-02 [hereinafter LGU Comments].
[7] Written Applicant Comment on Scope of EIS, eDockets Number 20138-90433-03 [hereinafter Applicant Comments].
[8] Written Public Comments on Scope of EIS, eDockets Numbers 20138-90434-01, 20138-90434-02, 20138-90434-03, 20138-90434-04, 20138-90434-05, 20138-90434-06, 20138-90434-07, 20138-90434-08, 20138-90434-09, 20138-90434-10 [hereinafter Public Comments].

Table 1. Issues and Impacts Proposed for Study in the EIS[9]

Issues	Number of Times Mentioned	Percentage of Commenters Who Raised the Issue
Public Health / Electric and Magnetic Fields	190	76%
Property Values / Aesthetics	181	73%
Impacts to Farming Operations	41	16%
Impacts to Airstrips	8	3%
Impacts to Trees and Windbreaks	7	3%
Impacts to Wildlife and Birds	7	3%
Impacts to Springs and Wells	3	1%
Stray Voltage	3	1%
Decommissioning of Concrete Footings	1	–
Undergrounding	1	–

Of the 220 written comments received, 159 of them included a form letter from the "worshippers and friends" of the Assembly of God church in Sherburn, Minnesota.[10] The form letter noted that Route A as proposed in the route permit application prevented possible expansion of the church and threatened the congregants with adverse public health and property value impacts. In addition to the form letter, several citizens of Sherburn and congregants of the church proposed that the transmission line be placed north of Interstate 90 near Sherburn or that Route B be used for the project. Other comments were also received indicating a preference for Route A or Route B in a particular area of the project. Two written comments were received that related past experiences with ITCM or the State of Minnesota's permitting process. One comment letter suggested the use of undergrounding to mitigate potential impacts of the project.

Of the 220 written comments received, 22 of them proposed a route or alignment alternative to mitigate potential impacts of the project. These alternatives are discussed further below.

[9] Issues and impacts proposed in oral and written public comments on the scope of the EIS.
[10] See, e.g., Written Comment of Ms. Denise Allen, Public Comments.

Agency Comments
The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers commented that the transmission line routes proposed by ITCM were not anticipated to affect any existing Corps projects.[11]

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) noted its accommodation policy for the placement of utilities along highway rights-of-way. MnDOT recommended that the EIS evaluate a route alternative that would proceed along the north side of Interstate 90 near the city of Sherburn.[12]

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) recommended that the EIS evaluate several route alternatives. Among these, DNR recommended evaluation of a route alternative that crossed Lake Charlotte following the existing 161 kV line and analysis of removing this line from the lake and co-locating it with the proposed 345 kV line. DNR noted its recent purchase of land for the Center Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Martin County – land which is within ITCM's proposed Route B. DNR noted that it likely would not license a crossing of this WMA. DNR commented on federal funding that may be associated with potential WMA crossings. Finally, DNR requested analysis of the criteria proposed to locate bird diverters along ITCM's proposed transmission line.[13]

Comments from Local Units of Government
The city of Jackson noted that it owns and operates a municipal airport two miles north of the city – the Jackson Municipal Airport. The city indicated that it has an airport layout plan and has no objection to the routes proposed by ITCM as long as these routes are determined by the Federal Aviation Administration not to be a hazard to aviation at the Jackson Municipal Airport.[14]

The city of Sherburn noted that ITCM's proposed Route A would adversely affect the health and welfare of the city. The city recommended that the Commission select a route for the project north of Interstate 90 in the Sherburn area.[15]

Rutland Township noted potential adverse impacts of ITCM's proposed Route A near Lake Charlotte, including health concerns and loss of property value. The township also noted the potential for damage to drainage tile within the township as a result of the project.[16]

Applicant Comments
ITCM submitted route alternatives to amend Route B near the Center Creek WMA. ITCM also submitted revised structure drawings and revised map sheets, with such sheets indicating the proposed placement of the existing 161 kV line at the Faribault Substation in Faribault County.[17]

[11] Agency Comments.
[12] Id.
[13] Id.
[14] LGU Comments.
[15] Id.
[16] Id.
[17] Applicant Comments.

Advisory Task Force
The advisory task force for the project – authorized by the Commission to aid the Department in developing the scope of EIS – identified seven issue areas and seven route alternatives for analysis in the EIS.[18] The route alternatives are discussed further below.

Alternatives to the Project
No comments were received during the scoping process that proposed an alternative to ITCM's transmission line project that could meet the project's stated need.

Commission Review
After close of the public comment period, EERA staff conferred with ITCM, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) on the alternatives proposed for study in the EIS. On September 6, 2013, EERA staff provided the Commission with a summary of the EIS scoping process.[19] The summary discussed the route and alignment alternatives that were proposed during the scoping process and those alternatives that the Department intended to recommend for inclusion in the scope of the EIS. On September 24, 2013, the Commission considered what action, if any, it should take with respect to the route alternatives to be considered in the EIS. The Commission took no action.

HAVING REVIEWED THE MATTER, consulted with Department staff, and in accordance with Minnesota Rule 7850.2500, I hereby make the following scoping decision:

MATTERS TO BE ADDRESSED

The issues outlined below will be analyzed in the EIS for the proposed Minnesota to Iowa 345 kV transmission line project. The EIS will describe the project and the human and environmental resources of the project area. It will provide information on the potential impacts of the project as they relate to the topics outlined in this scoping decision, including possible mitigation measures. It will identify impacts that cannot be avoided and irretrievable commitments of resources, as well as permits from other government entities that may be required for the project. The EIS will discuss the relative merits of the route alternatives studied in the EIS using the routing factors found in Minnesota Rule 7850.4100.

The EIS will include a description and analysis of the human and environmental impacts of the proposed project and alternatives to the project that would have otherwise been required by Minnesota Rule 7849.1500 in an environmental report for a certificate of need. This includes evaluating matters of size, type, and timing that would not normally be included in an EIS for a route permit application.

[18] Minnesota to Iowa 345 kilovolt (kV) Transmission Line Advisory Task Force Report, August 2013, eDockets Number 20138-90358-01 [hereinafter Advisory Task Force Report].
[19] Department of Commerce, Comments and Recommendations on EIS Scoping Process, September 6, 2013, eDockets Numbers 20139-91036-01, 20139-91036-02, 20139-91036-03 [hereinafter Department Comments and Recommendations].

I. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

A. Project Description
B. Project Purpose
C. Route Description
   1. Route Width
   2. Right-of-Way
D. Substation Description
E. Project Costs

II. REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

A. Certificate of Need
B. High Voltage Transmission Line Route Permit
C. Environmental Review Process

III. ENGINEERING AND DESIGN

A. Transmission Line Structures
B. Transmission Line Conductors
C. Lake Crossings
D. Substations
E. Undergrounding

IV. CONSTRUCTION

A. Right-of-Way Acquisition
B. Construction
   1. Transmission Line
   2. Substation
C. Restoration
D. Damage Compensation
E. Operation and Maintenance
F. Decommissioning

V. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT, POTENTIAL IMPACTS, AND MITIGATIVE MEASURES

The EIS will include a discussion of the human and environmental resources potentially impacted by the proposed project and the route, alignment and site alternatives described herein (Section VI). Potential impacts, both positive and negative, of the project and each alternative will be described. Based on the impacts identified, the EIS will describe mitigation 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. Socioeconomics
C. Human Settlements
   1. Noise
   2. Aesthetics

3. Displacement
4. Property Values
5. Public Services
    a) Roads and Highways
    b) Utilities
    c) Emergency Services
6. Electronic Interference
    a) Radio
    b) Television
    c) Wireless Phone / Internet Services

D. Public Health and Safety
1. Electric and Magnetic Fields
2. Implantable Medical Devices
3. Stray Voltage
4. Induced Voltage
5. Air Quality

E. Land Based Economies
1. Agriculture
    a) Compaction
    b) Tile Damage
    c) Aerial Spraying
    d) GPS Systems / Real Time Kinetic Systems
    e) Structure Foundations
2. Forestry
3. Mining
4. Recreation and Tourism

F. Archaeological and Historic Resources

G. Natural Environment
1. Water Resources
    a) Surface Waters
    b) Groundwater
    c) Wetlands
2. Soils
3. Flora
4. Fauna

H. Threatened / Endangered / Rare and Unique Natural Resources

I. Zoning and Land Use Compatibility
1. Use of Existing Rights-of-Way

J. Electric System Reliability

K. Operation and Maintenance Costs that are Design Dependent

L. Adverse Impacts that Cannot be Avoided

M. Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources

VI. ROUTES AND SITES TO BE EVALUATED IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

The EIS will evaluate the routes, sites, and associated facilities proposed in ITCM's route permit application – these are Routes A and B; the Jackson Municipal Airport West and Jackson Municipal Airport East connector segments, the Fox Lake West connector, and the Pilot Grove Waterfowl Production Area connectors; expansion of the Lakefield substation; construction of a new Huntley substation; and associated facilities that will be rerouted to terminate at the new Huntley substation. The EIS will evaluate Route B as amended by ITCM's proposed alternatives near the Center Creek WMA (see M15-R, M16-A, and M17-A below).

In addition, the following route, alignment, and substation site alternatives will be evaluated in the EIS (see description below and attached maps). Alternatives are presented here in a west-to-east fashion – from Jackson County through Martin County to Faribault County. Alternatives are referenced with an initial for the county in which the alternative occurs, an identifying number, and an indicator of whether the alternative is a route alternative (R) or an alignment alternative (A). The only exception to this nomenclature is the route alternative proposed to proceed along Interstate 90 (I-90), which is denoted as I-90-R.

Jackson County

Map Sheet 1

J1-R and J3-A. This route and alignment alternative parallel a north-south segment of Route A in Section 3 of Des Moines Township.

J2-R and J4-A. This route and alignment alternative parallel, on the north side, an east-west segment of Route A, through Sections 34, 35, and 36 of Belmont Township.

Martin County

Fox Lake (Map Sheet 2)

M1-R. This route alternative connects Routes A and B west of Fox Lake along 40th Ave., along Sections 27, 28, 33, and 34 in Elm Creek Township and Sections 3 and 4 in Jay Township.

M2-R. This route alternative connects Routes A and B east of Fox Lake along 130th Ave., along Sections 13 and 24 in Fox Lake Township and Sections 18 and 19 in Fraser Township.

M3-R. This route alternative follows the existing 161 kV transmission line from Route B – as Route B proceeds on 140th St. on the north side of Fox Lake – northward and then turning eastward until connecting with Route A in Section 14 of Fox Lake Township.

M4-R. This route alternative follows the existing 161 kV transmission line from Route A, north of the city of Sherburn, along the north side of I-90, across Fox Lake, ending at Route B on 140th St. on the north side of Fox Lake.

The EIS will evaluate paralleling and double circuiting the existing 161 kV line across Fox Lake. In addition, the EIS will evaluate routing options that remove the 161 kV line from the lake.

M5-R. This route alternative proceeds from Route A, north of the city of Sherburn, along the north side of I-90 following, in part, existing 161 and 69 kV transmission lines, until rejoining Route A in Section 3 of Manyaska Township. The route width for this alternative widens to follow the existing 161 kV transmission line to the Fox Lake Substation and to allow for analysis of routing options that remove the 161 kV line from the lake.

M6-R (Map Sheets 2 and 3). This route alternative begins at Route A in Section 35 of Fraser Township, proceeds eastward along an existing 69 kV line and along I-90, until ending at its intersection with Highway 15 north of the city of Fairmont.

M7-R. This route alternative begins at Route A north of I-90 near the city of Sherburn, proceeds on the north side of I-90, and then crosses south of I-90 to rejoin Route A.

Lake Charlotte (Map Sheet 3)

M8-R. This route alternative connects Routes A and B, west of Lake Charlotte, in Sections 13 and 24 of Fraser Township.

M9-R. This route alternative begins at Route A, west of Lake Charlotte, proceeds south on the section line between Sections 13 and 14 in Fraser Township, then turns eastward following an existing 69 kV line and proceeding south of Lake Charlotte on 160th St., then turning northward along field lines in Section 16 of Rutland Township, and then connecting with the existing 161 kV line and turning eastward to rejoin Route A.

M10-R. This route alternative begins at Route A, west of Lake Charlotte, and follows the existing 161 kV line across Lake Charlotte, past the Rutland substation, and reconnecting with Route A in Section 16 of Rutland Township.

The EIS will evaluate paralleling and double circuiting the existing 161 kV line across Lake Charlotte. In addition, the EIS will evaluate routing options that remove the 161 kV line from the lake.

M11-R. This route alternative begins at Route A, at the intersection of Route A on 196th Ave. and an existing 69 kV line, on the border of Sections 18 and 19 in Rutland Township. From this point, the alternative proceeds eastward following an the existing 69 kV line and passes south of Lake Charlotte on 160th St. to an intersection with Highway 15 where it rejoins Route A.

M12-R. This route alternative begins north of the city of Fairmont at the termination of M6-R, and then proceeds northward along Highway 15 until intersecting Routes A and B in Section 21 of Rutland Township.

M13-R. This route alternative begins at Route A, west of Lake Charlotte in Section 18 of Rutland Township. The alternative proceeds south along field lines, then eastward along an existing 69 kV line, passing south of Lake Charlotte on 160th St., then turning northward along field lines in Section 16 of Rutland Township, and then connecting with the existing 161 kV line and turning eastward to rejoin Route A.

M14-R. This route alternative will be evaluated as a 161 kV transmission line route to facilitate interconnection with the Rutland substation. This alternative begins at the common section of Routes A and B south of Lake Charlotte, at the border of Sections 20 and 21 in Rutland Township. The alternative proceeds northward along the section line and 210th Ave., following an existing 69 kV line to the Rutland substation.

Center Creek WMA (Map Sheet 4)

M15-R. This route alternative replaces a segment of Route B northwest of the city of Granada in Sections 20 and 29 of Center Creek Township.

M16-A and M17-A. These alignment alternatives are within route alternative M15-R. Both proceed from Route B along the center line of Section 20 in Center Creek Township southward to the southern section line of Section 20 and along 150th St. eastward until rejoining Route B. M16-A proceed southward along field lines; M17-A proceeds southward on the west side of 265th Ave.

Faribault County

Huntley Substation (Map Sheet 5)

F1-R. This alternative will be evaluated as a 345/161 kV double circuit alternative. The alternative heads south from ITCM's proposed Huntley substation site and parallels Route A on its west side in Section 23 of Verona Township, rejoining Routes A and B at the south section line.

South to Iowa (Map Sheets 6 and 7)

F2-A. This alignment alternative runs across fields along the eastern edge of Route A in Section 26 of Jo Daviess Township.

F3-R. This route alternative is a variation on Route B in Section 36 of Blue Earth Township and Section 1 of Elmore Township. The alternative proceeds across fields, from Route B, west, then south, then back east to rejoin Route B.

F4-A. This alignment alternative runs southward along field lines across Sections 26 and 35 of Pilot Grove Township, near the Iowa border, before turning eastward along the border to the existing 161 kV line within Route A.

Interstate 90

Map Sheets 8-16

I-90-R. This route alternative begins, on its western end, with a connection to Route A or B along 570th Ave. and the section lines of Sections 4, 5, 8, and 9 in Wisconsin Township, Jackson County. The line proceeds eastward along I-90 following generally the existing 161 kV line to the city of Sherburn, proceeding on the north side of I-90 in the Fox Lake area, and then following an existing 69 kV line and I-90 to the city of Fairmont. From Fairmont, the line proceeds eastward along I-90 until connecting with Routes A and B.

As part of I-90-R, the EIS will evaluate four (4) routing options, including an alternate southern site for the Huntley substation, to facilitate the transmission line connections proposed in ITCM's route permit application:

Option 1. This routing option sites the Huntley substation at an alternate southern location near I-90 in Section 2 of Jo Daviess Township, and introduces new 161 kV transmission line routes in the area to connect with the Huntley substation. The routes are west and east of the existing north-south 161 kV line and also include a 161 kV line running eastward from the Huntley substation (double circuited with a 69 kV line).

The western 161 kV line runs near the western section line of Sections 15, 22, 27, and 34 in Verona Township, Faribault County. The eastern 161 kV line runs along the western section line of Sections 16, 21, 28, and 33 in Prescott Township, Faribault County. The 161 kV line eastward from the Huntley substation runs across fields and across the Blue Earth River and Highway 169 to a connection with an existing 69 kV line in Section 5 of Blue Earth Township, Faribault County.

Option 2. This routing option sites the Huntley substation at an alternate southern location in Section 2 of Jo Daviess Township, and runs all of the connecting 161 kV and 69 kV lines southward following the existing north-south 161 kV line in Sections 14, 23, 26, and 35 in Verona Township, Faribault County.

Option 3. This routing option sites the Huntley substation at the location proposed in ITCM's route permit application and utilizes a separate route segment to run the 345 kV line northward from I-90 to the substation site, with a 345/161 kV double circuit line then following Route A or B south to Iowa.

The 345 kV route segment begins at I-90-R in Section 4 of Jo Daviess Township, Faribault County. The segment proceeds northward through Sections 33, 28, and 21 of Jo Daviess Township and then turns eastward to connect with the common section of Routes A and B that proceeds along 160th St. to the substation site. With this routing option, that portion of Route A in Section 15 of Verona Township would be evaluated solely for a 161 kV line.

Option 4. This routing options sites the Huntley substation at the location proposed in ITCM's route permit application with the 345 kV line following the existing north-south

161 kV line northward from I-90 to the substation site, and then following Route A or B back south to Iowa as a 345/161 kV double circuit line. With this routing option, Route A and the common section of Routes A and B in Sections 15 and 14 of Verona Township would be evaluated solely for a 161 kV line.

VII. ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT

The EIS, in accordance with Minnesota Rule 7849.1500, will describe and analyze the feasibility of the following system alternatives, and the human and environmental impacts and potential mitigation measures associated with each:

A. No-build Alternative
B. Demand Side Management
C. Purchased Power
D. Transmission Line of a Different Size
E. Upgrading of Existing Facilities
F. Generation Rather Than Transmission
G. Use of Renewable Energy Sources

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 EIS for the Minnesota to Iowa 345 kV transmission line project will not consider the following:

A. Any route or site alternative not specifically identified for study in this scoping decision.
B. Any system alternative (an alternative to the proposed transmission line project) not specifically identified for study in this scoping decision.
C. Policy issues concerning whether utilities or local governments should be liable for the cost to relocate utility poles when roadways are widened.
D. The manner in which land owners are paid for transmission line right-of-way easements.
E. Of the alternatives proposed during the scoping process to mitigate potential impacts of the project, three alignment alternatives and three route alternatives will not be included for further study in the EIS.

Alignments
Two alignment alternatives were proposed within route alternative J2-R, in addition to J4-A. These alternatives would have greater aesthetic and economic impacts relative to J4-A and would address fewer routing concerns. Accordingly, these alignment alternatives would not aid in the Commission's decision on the route permit application.

An alignment alternative was proposed within route alternative M15-R along the Center Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Martin County. The DNR indicated that this alignment alternative would compromise future WMA expansion and wetland restoration and recommended that the alternative not be included for study in the EIS.[20] Accordingly, this alternative would not aid in the Commission's decision on the route permit application.

Routes

A route alternative was suggested to proceed directly south from the Lakefield substation to Iowa. This alternative does not meet the applicant's stated need for the project – i.e., it does not connect two substations in Minnesota (Lakefield and Huntley) before proceeding southward to Iowa. Accordingly, this route alternative would not aid in the Commission's decision on the route permit application.

A route alternative was suggested around the northwest edge of the Fox Lake Game Refuge in Martin County. The alternative would utilize Route A and the Fox Lake West connector and would then proceed cross country in a northeasterly direction through Section 25 of Elm Creek Township, Sections 30, 20, and 29 of Fox Lake Township, and through the Seymour Lake WMA to connect with the existing 161 kV line.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) indicated that this route alternative has the potential to impact wetlands and public waters.[21] DNR noted that it is not likely to issue a license to cross Seymour Lake WMA given that reasonable and feasible alternatives exist for avoiding the WMA and has recommended that the route alternative not be included in the scope of the EIS.[22] Additionally, the impacts that this route alternative sought to mitigate can be mitigated by other route alternatives (M3-R, M4-R, Fox Lake West connector, Route B) that utilize or could connect with the existing 161 kV line and do not proceed cross country or impact the Seymour Lake WMA. Accordingly, this alternative would not aid in the Commission's decision on the route permit application.

A route alternative was suggested by landowners near the proposed Huntley substation site in Faribault County. This alternative would begin at Route A, where it would leave the existing 161 kV line in Section 15 of Verona Township, and proceed in a southeasterly direction across Sections 15 and 14 of Verona Township, and across the Blue Earth River to the substation site.

DNR indicated that this route alternative includes two public watercourse crossings and has the potential to significantly impact wetland, riparian, and forest habitat.[23] DNR noted that it is unlikely to license the public water crossings for this alternative when reasonable and feasible alternatives exist and has recommended that the alternative not be

[20] Department Comments and Recommendations
[21] Id.
[22] Id.
[23] Id.

included in the scope of the EIS.[24] Accordingly, this alternative would not aid in the Commission's decision on the route permit application.

SCHEDULE

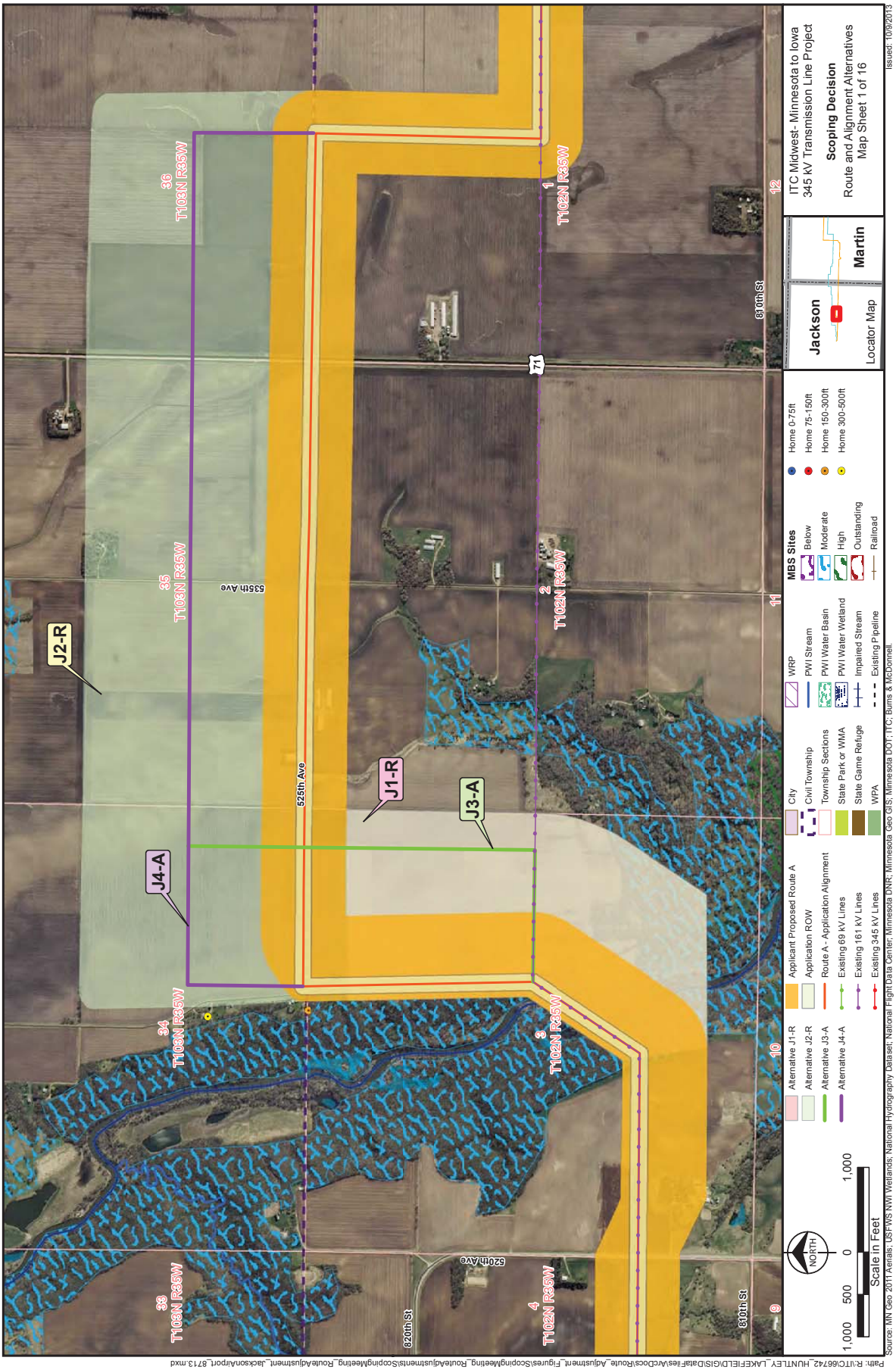
The draft EIS is anticipated to be completed and available in February 2014. Public meetings and a comment period on the draft EIS will follow. Timely and substantive comments on the draft EIS will be responded to in a final EIS. Public hearings will be held in the project area after issuance of the draft EIS and are anticipated to occur in April 2014.

Signed this 14th day of October, 2013

STATE OF MINNESOTA
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

William Grant, Deputy Commissioner

[24] Id.


ITC Midwest- Minnesota to Iowa
345 kV Transmission Line Project
Scoping Decision
Route and Alignment Alternatives
Map Sheet 1 of 16
Issued: 10/9/2013
Jackson
Martin
Locator Map
J1-R
J2-R
J3-A
J4-A
525th Ave
535th Ave
620th Ave
820th St
810th St
71
T103N R36W
T102N R36W
Alternative J1-R
Alternative J2-R
Alternative J3-A
Alternative J4-A
Applicant Proposed Route A
Application ROW
Route A - Application Alignment
Existing 69 kV Lines
Existing 161 kV Lines
Existing 345 kV Lines
City
Civil Township
Township Sections
State Park or WMA
State Game Refuge
WPA
WRP
PWI Stream
PWI Water Basin
PWI Water Wetland
Impaired Stream
Existing Pipeline
MBS Sites
Below
Moderate
High
Outstanding
Railroad
Home 0-75ft
Home 75-150ft
Home 150-300ft
Home 300-500ft
NORTH
Scale in Feet
1,000 500 0 1,000
Source: MN Geo 2011 Aerials; USFWS NWI Wetlands; National Hydrography Dataset; National Flight Data Center; Minnesota DNR; Minnesota Geo GIS; Minnesota DOT; ITC; Burns & McDonnell.
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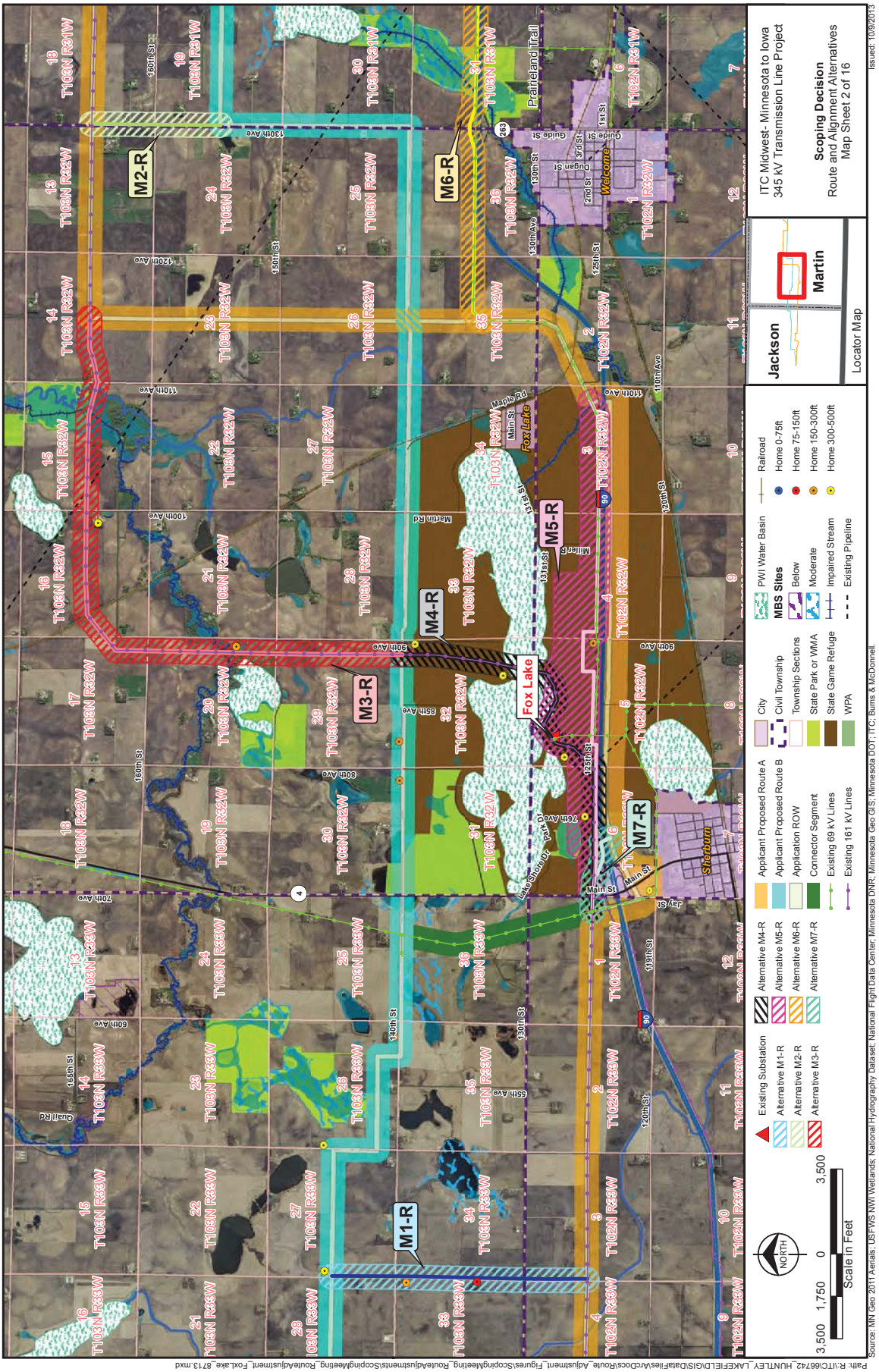
M1-R
M2-R
M3-R
M4-R
M5-R
M6-R
M7-R
Fox Lake
Sherburn
Prairieland Trail
Jackson
Martin
Locator Map
ITC Midwest- Minnesota to Iowa
345 kV Transmission Line Project
Scoping Decision
Route and Alignment Alternatives
Map Sheet 2 of 16
Issued: 10/8/2013
Existing Substation
Alternative M1-R
Alternative M2-R
Alternative M3-R
Alternative M4-R
Alternative M5-R
Alternative M6-R
Alternative M7-R
Applicant Proposed Route A
Applicant Proposed Route B
Application ROW
Connector Segment
Existing 69 kV Lines
Existing 161 kV Lines
City
Civil Township
Township Sections
State Park or WMA
State Game Refuge
WPA
PWI Water Basin
MBS Sites
Below
Moderate
Impaired Stream
Railroad
Home 0-75ft
Home 75-150ft
Home 150-300ft
Home 300-500ft
Existing Pipeline
NORTH
Scale in Feet
3,500 1,750 0 3,500
Source: MN Geo 2011 Aerials; USFWS NWI Wetlands; National Hydrography Dataset; National Flight Data Center; Minnesota DNR; Minnesota Geo GIS; Minnesota DOT; ITC; Burns & McDonnell.
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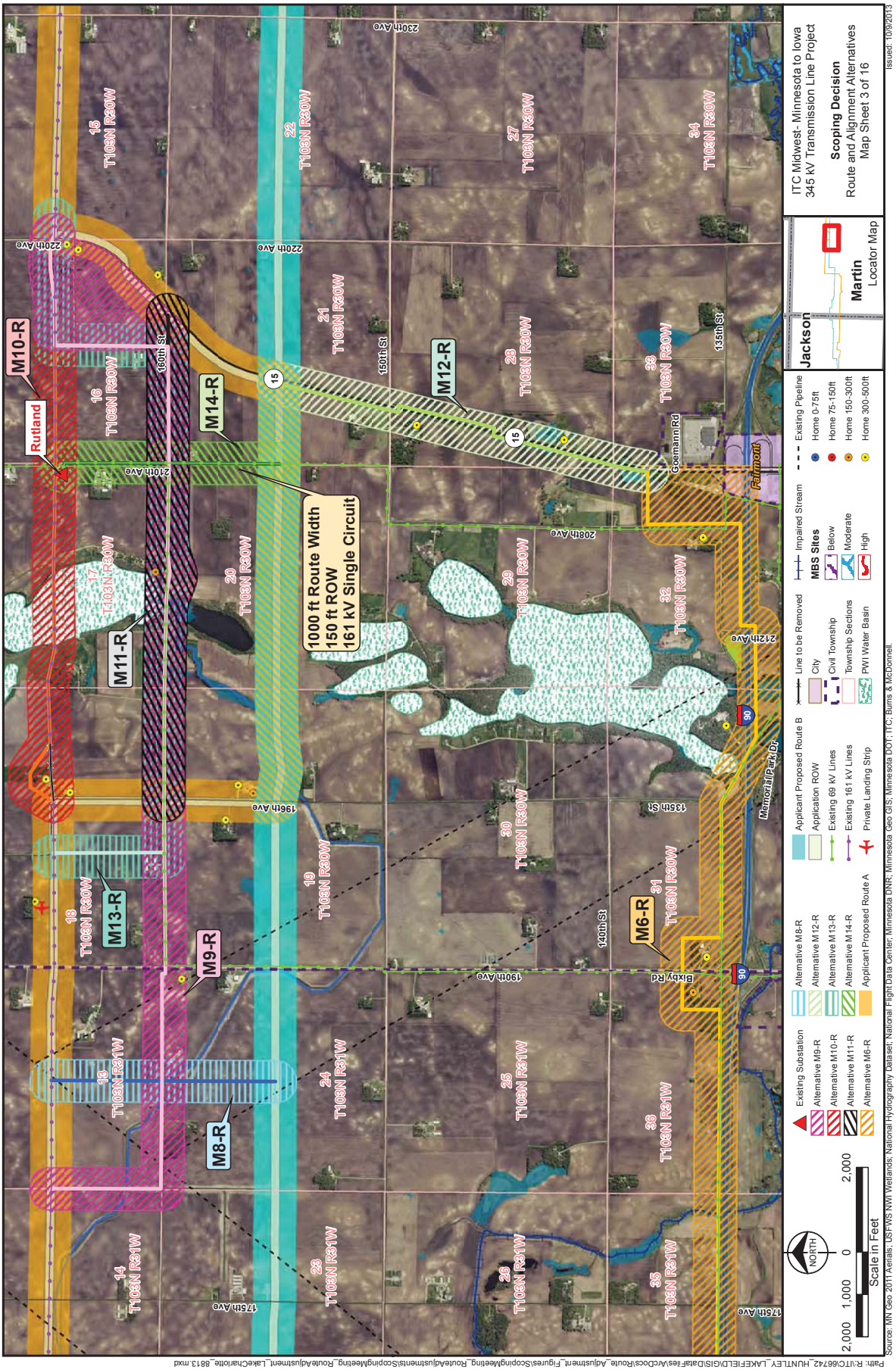
M10-R
M14-R
M12-R
M11-R
M13-R
M9-R
M8-R
M6-R
1000 ft Route Width
150 ft ROW
161 kV Single Circuit
Rutland
Fairmont
Jackson
Martin
Locator Map
ITC Midwest- Minnesota to Iowa
345 kV Transmission Line Project
Scoping Decision
Route and Alignment Alternatives
Map Sheet 3 of 16
Issued: 10/9/2013
Existing Substation
Alternative M9-R
Alternative M10-R
Alternative M11-R
Alternative M6-R
Alternative M8-R
Alternative M12-R
Alternative M13-R
Alternative M14-R
Applicant Proposed Route A
Applicant Proposed Route B
Application ROW
Existing 69 kV Lines
Existing 161 kV Lines
Private Landing Strip
Line to be Removed
City
Civil Township
Township Sections
PWI Water Basin
Impaired Stream
MBS Sites
Below
Moderate
High
Existing Pipeline
Home 0-75ft
Home 75-150ft
Home 150-300ft
Home 300-500ft
NORTH
Scale in Feet
2,000 1,000 0 2,000
Source: MN Geo 2011 Aerials; USFWS NWI Wetlands; National Hydrography Dataset; National Flight Data Center; Minnesota DNR; Minnesota Geo GIS; Minnesota DOT; ITC; Burns & McDonnell.
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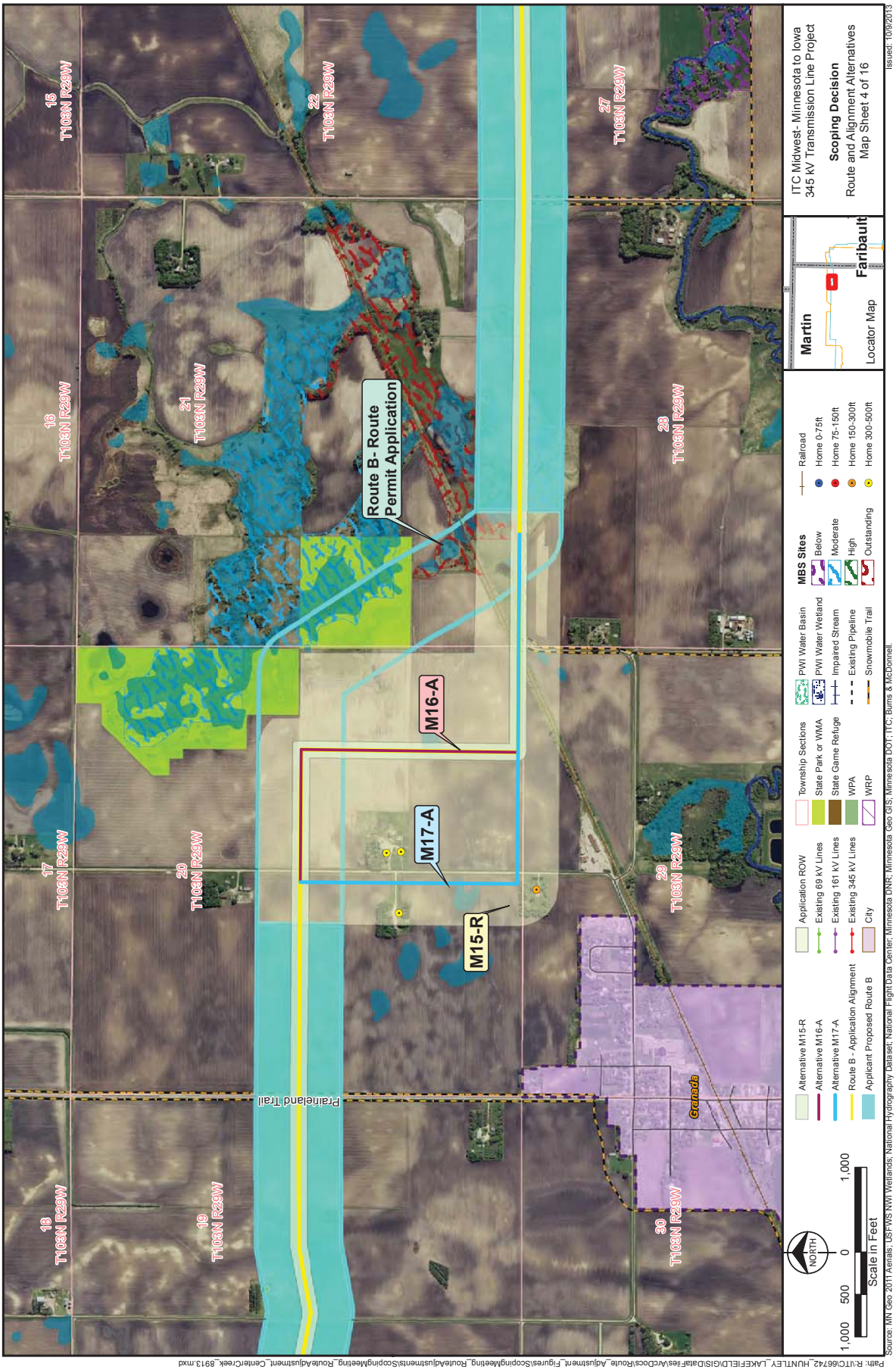
Route B- Route Permit Application
M16-A
M17-A
M15-R
Prairieland Trail
Granada
15 T103N R29W
16 T103N R29W
17 T103N R29W
18 T103N R29W
19 T103N R29W
20 T103N R29W
21 T103N R29W
22 T103N R29W
27 T103N R29W
28 T103N R29W
29 T103N R29W
30 T103N R29W
Alternative M15-R
Alternative M16-A
Alternative M17-A
Route B - Application Alignment
Applicant Proposed Route B
Application ROW
Existing 69 kV Lines
Existing 161 kV Lines
Existing 345 kV Lines
City
Township Sections
State Park or WMA
State Game Refuge
WPA
WRP
PWI Water Basin
PWI Water Wetland
Impaired Stream
Existing Pipeline
Snowmobile Trail
MBS Sites
Below
Moderate
High
Outstanding
Railroad
Home 0-75ft
Home 75-150ft
Home 150-300ft
Home 300-500ft
NORTH
1,000 500 0 1,000
Scale in Feet
Martin
Faribault
Locator Map
ITC Midwest- Minnesota to Iowa 345 kV Transmission Line Project
Scoping Decision
Route and Alignment Alternatives
Map Sheet 4 of 16
Issued: 10/9/2013
Source: MN Geo 2011 Aerials; USFWS NWI Wetlands; National Hydrography Dataset; National Flight Data Center; Minnesota DNR; Minnesota Geo GIS; Minnesota DOT; ITC; Burns & McDonnell.
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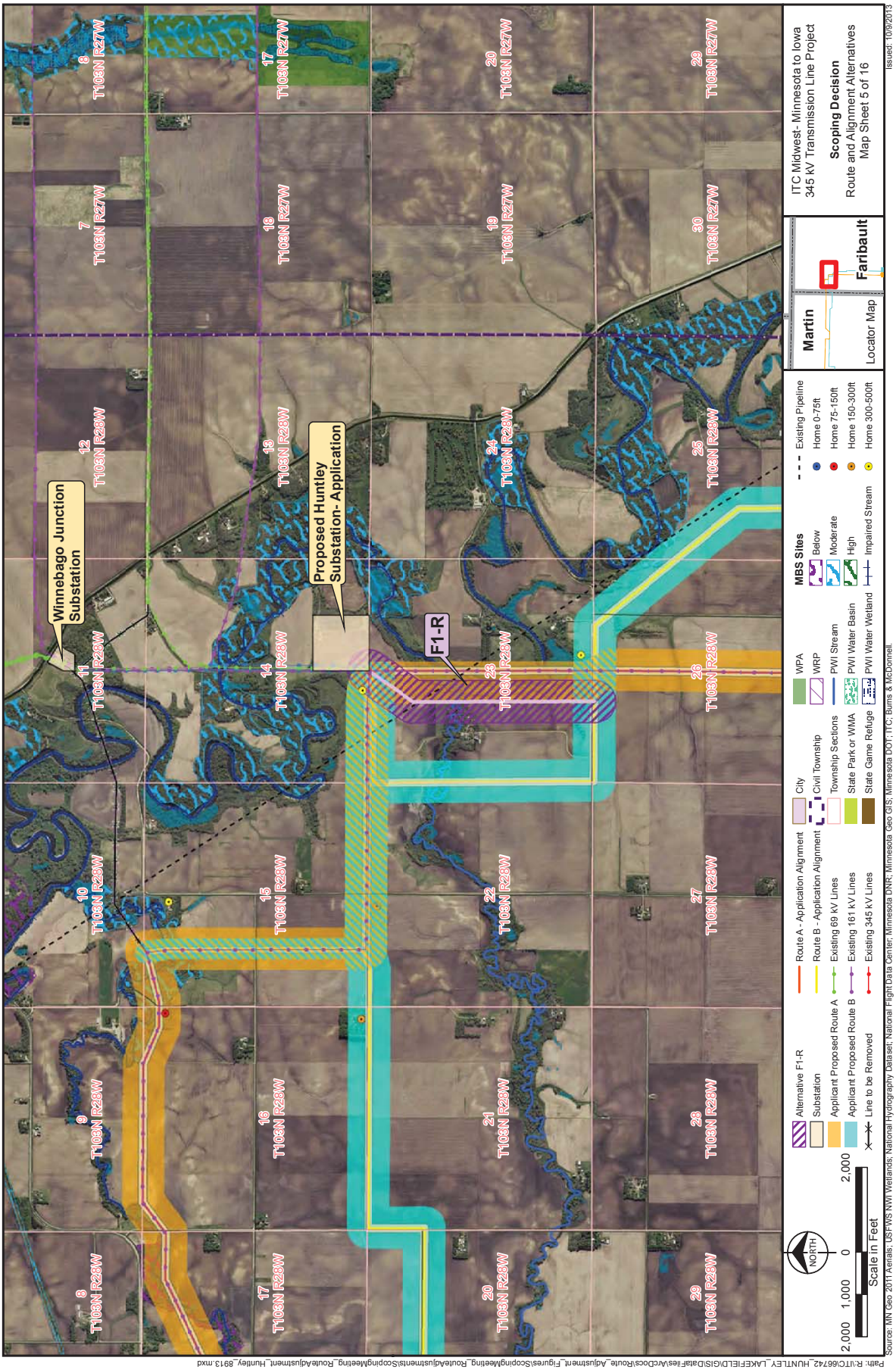
Winnebago Junction Substation
Proposed Huntley Substation- Application
F1-R
Alternative F1-R
Substation
Applicant Proposed Route A
Applicant Proposed Route B
Line to be Removed
Route A - Application Alignment
Route B - Application Alignment
Existing 69 kV Lines
Existing 161 kV Lines
Existing 345 kV Lines
City
Civil Township
Township Sections
State Park or WMA
State Game Refuge
WPA
WRP
PWI Stream
PWI Water Basin
PWI Water Wetland
MBS Sites
Below
Moderate
High
Impaired Stream
Existing Pipeline
Home 0-75ft
Home 75-150ft
Home 150-300ft
Home 300-500ft
NORTH
2,000 1,000 0 2,000
Scale in Feet
Martin
Faribault
Locator Map
ITC Midwest- Minnesota to Iowa 345 kV Transmission Line Project
Scoping Decision
Route and Alignment Alternatives
Map Sheet 5 of 16
Issued: 10/9/2013
Source: MN Geo 2011 Aerials; USFWS NWI Wetlands; National Hydrography Dataset; National Flight Data Center; Minnesota DNR; Minnesota Geo GIS; Minnesota DOT; ITC; Burns & McDonnell.
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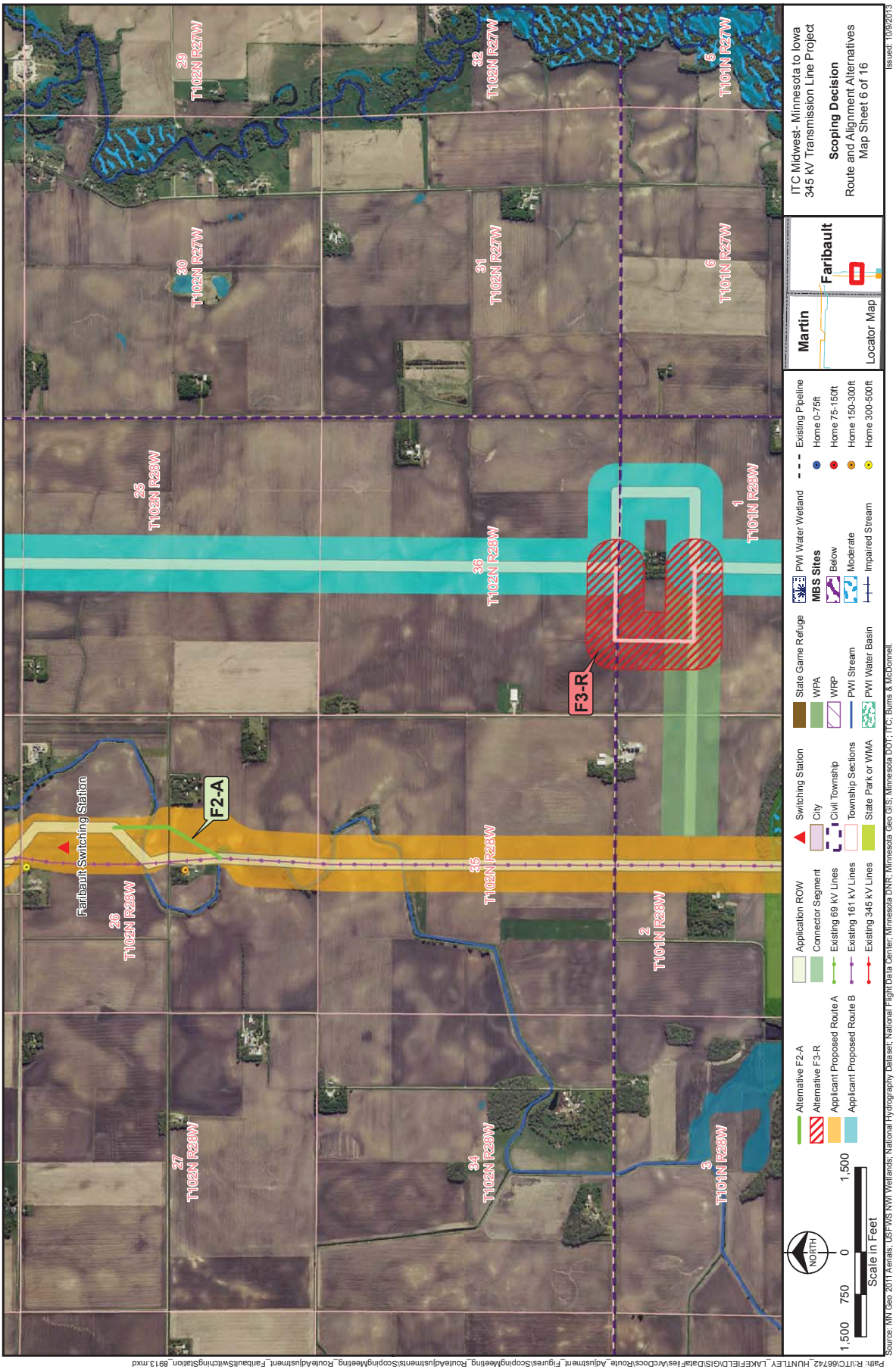
ITC Midwest- Minnesota to Iowa
345 kV Transmission Line Project
Scoping Decision
Route and Alignment Alternatives
Map Sheet 6 of 16
Issued: 10/9/2013
Martin
Faribault
Locator Map
F2-A
F3-R
Faribault Switching Station
Alternative F2-A
Alternative F3-R
Applicant Proposed Route A
Applicant Proposed Route B
Application ROW
Connector Segment
Existing 69 kV Lines
Existing 161 kV Lines
Existing 345 kV Lines
Switching Station
City
Civil Township
Township Sections
State Park or WMA
State Game Refuge
WPA
WRP
PWI Stream
PWI Water Basin
PWI Water Wetland
MBS Sites
Below
Moderate
Impaired Stream
Existing Pipeline
Home 0-75ft
Home 75-150ft
Home 150-300ft
Home 300-500ft
NORTH
Scale in Feet
1,500
750
0
1,500
Source: MN Geo 2011 Aerials; USFWS NWI Wetlands; National Hydrography Dataset; National Flight Data Center; Minnesota DNR; Minnesota Geo GIS; Minnesota DOT; ITC; Burns & McDonnell.
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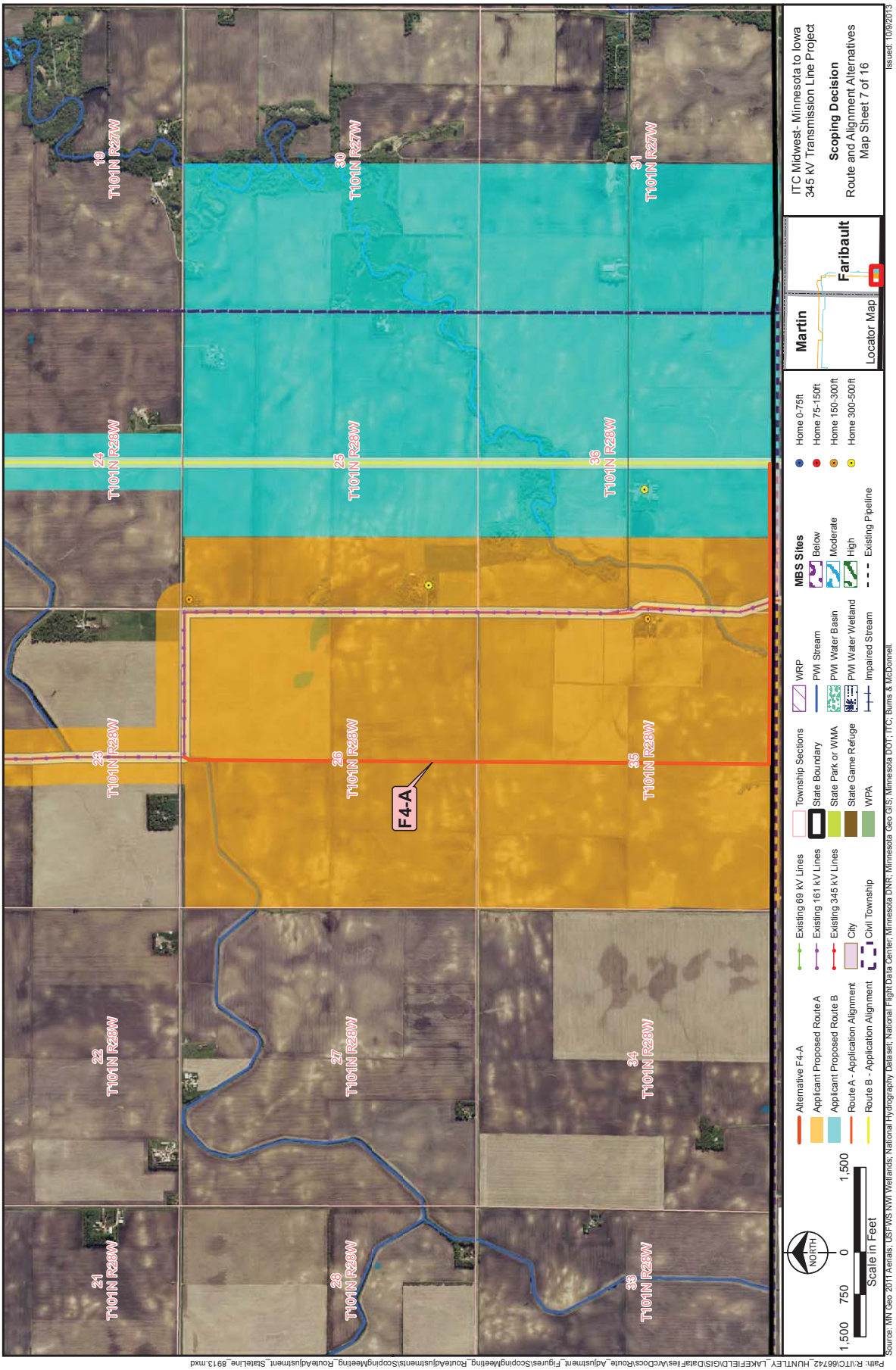
ITC Midwest- Minnesota to Iowa
345 kV Transmission Line Project
Scoping Decision
Route and Alignment Alternatives
Map Sheet 7 of 16
Issued: 10/9/2013
Martin
Faribault
Locator Map
F4-A
Alternative F4-A
Applicant Proposed Route A
Applicant Proposed Route B
Route A - Application Alignment
Route B - Application Alignment
Existing 69 kV Lines
Existing 161 kV Lines
Existing 345 kV Lines
City
Civil Township
Township Sections
State Boundary
State Park or WMA
State Game Refuge
WPA
WRP
PWI Stream
PWI Water Basin
PWI Water Wetland
Impaired Stream
MBS Sites
Below
Moderate
High
Existing Pipeline
Home 0-75ft
Home 75-150ft
Home 150-300ft
Home 300-500ft
NORTH
Scale in Feet
1,500 750 0 1,500
Source: MN Geo 2011 Aerials; USFWS NWI Wetlands; National Hydrography Dataset; National Flight Data Center; Minnesota DNR; Minnesota Geo GIS; Minnesota DOT; ITC; Burns & McDonnell.
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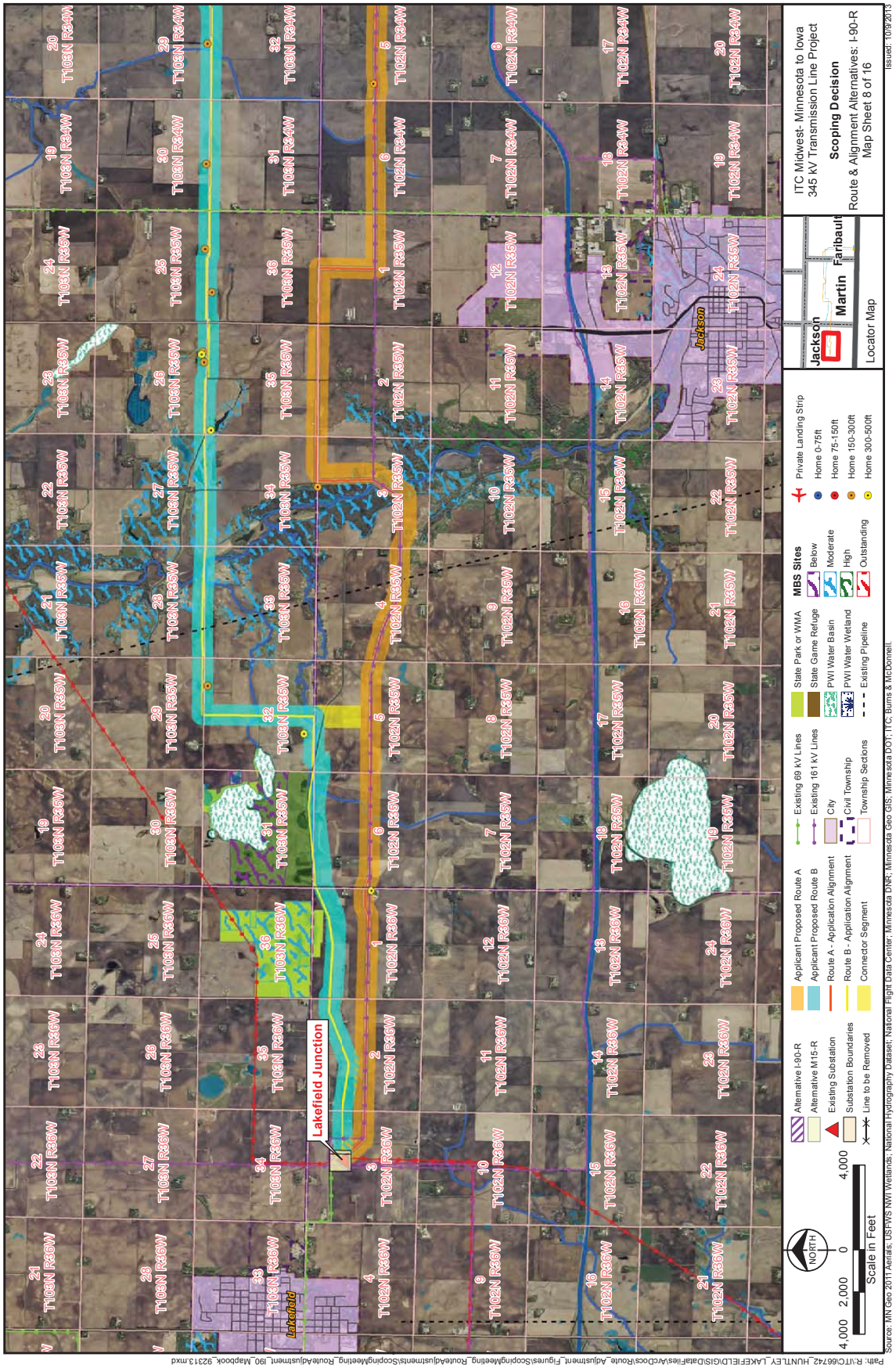
Lakefield Junction
Jackson
Lakefield
Alternative I-90-R
Alternative M15-R
Existing Substation
Substation Boundaries
Line to be Removed
Applicant Proposed Route A
Applicant Proposed Route B
Route A - Application Alignment
Route B - Application Alignment
Connector Segment
Existing 69 kV Lines
Existing 161 kV Lines
City
Civil Township
Township Sections
State Park or WMA
State Game Refuge
PWI Water Basin
PWI Water Wetland
Existing Pipeline
MBS Sites
Below
Moderate
High
Outstanding
Private Landing Strip
Home 0-75ft
Home 75-150ft
Home 150-300ft
Home 300-500ft
NORTH
4,000 2,000 0 4,000
Scale in Feet
Jackson
Martin
Fairbault
Locator Map
ITC Midwest- Minnesota to Iowa
345 kV Transmission Line Project
Scoping Decision
Route & Alignment Alternatives: I-90-R
Map Sheet 8 of 16
Issued: 10/9/2015
Source: MN Geo 2011 Aerials; USFWS NWI Wetlands; National Hydrography Dataset; National Flight Data Center; Minnesota DNR; Minnesota Geo GIS; Minnesota DOT; ITC; Burns & McDonnell.
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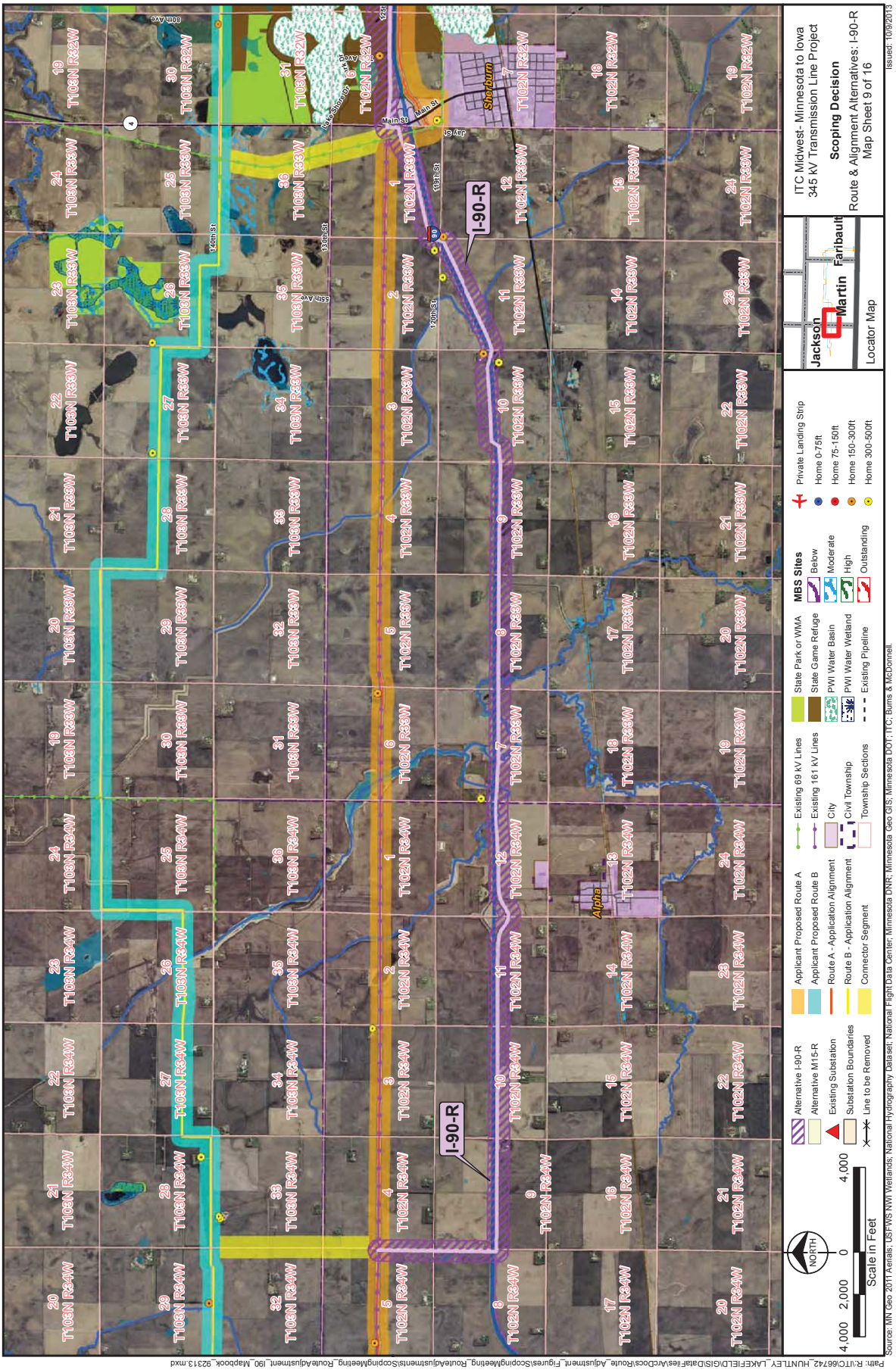
I-90-R
Sherburn
Alpha
Main St
Jackson
Martin
Faribault
Locator Map
ITC Midwest- Minnesota to Iowa
345 kV Transmission Line Project
Scoping Decision
Route & Alignment Alternatives: I-90-R
Map Sheet 9 of 16
Alternative I-90-R
Alternative M15-R
Existing Substation
Substation Boundaries
Line to be Removed
Applicant Proposed Route A
Applicant Proposed Route B
Route A - Application Alignment
Route B - Application Alignment
Connector Segment
Existing 69 kV Lines
Existing 161 kV Lines
City
Civil Township
Township Sections
State Park or WMA
State Game Refuge
PWI Water Basin
PWI Water Wetland
Existing Pipeline
MBS Sites
Below
Moderate
High
Outstanding
Private Landing Strip
Home 0-75ft
Home 75-150ft
Home 150-300ft
Home 300-500ft
NORTH
4,000 2,000 0 4,000
Scale in Feet
Source: MN Geo 2011 Aerials; USFWS NWI Wetlands; National Hydrography Dataset; National Flight Data Center; Minnesota DNR; Minnesota Geo GIS; Minnesota DOT; ITC; Burns & McDonnell.
Issued: 10/9/2013
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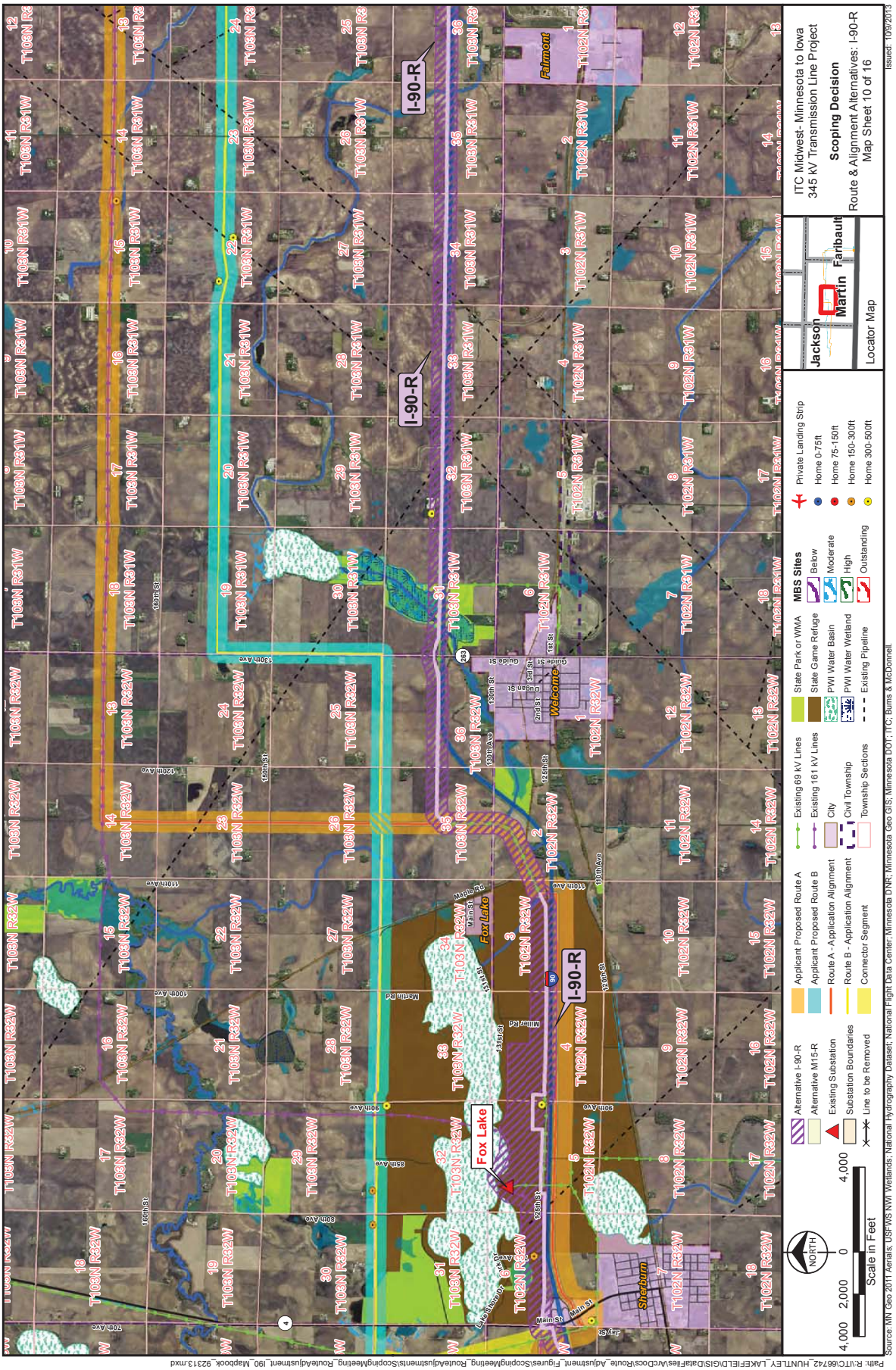
ITC Midwest- Minnesota to Iowa
345 kV Transmission Line Project
Scoping Decision
Route & Alignment Alternatives: I-90-R
Map Sheet 10 of 16
Locator Map
Jackson
Martin
Faribault
Fox Lake
Sherburn
Welcome
Fairmont
I-90-R
Alternative I-90-R
Alternative M15-R
Existing Substation
Substation Boundaries
Line to be Removed
Applicant Proposed Route A
Applicant Proposed Route B
Route A - Application Alignment
Route B - Application Alignment
Connector Segment
Existing 69 kV Lines
Existing 161 kV Lines
City
Civil Township
Township Sections
State Park or WMA
State Game Refuge
PWI Water Basin
PWI Water Wetland
Existing Pipeline
MBS Sites
Below
Moderate
High
Outstanding
Private Landing Strip
Home 0-75ft
Home 75-150ft
Home 150-300ft
Home 300-500ft
NORTH
Scale in Feet
4,000 2,000 0 4,000
Sources: MN Geo 2011 Aerials; USFWS NWI Wetlands; National Hydrography Dataset; National Flight Data Center; Minnesota DNR; Minnesota Geo GIS; Minnesota DOT; ITC; Burns & McDonnell
Issued: 10/9/2013
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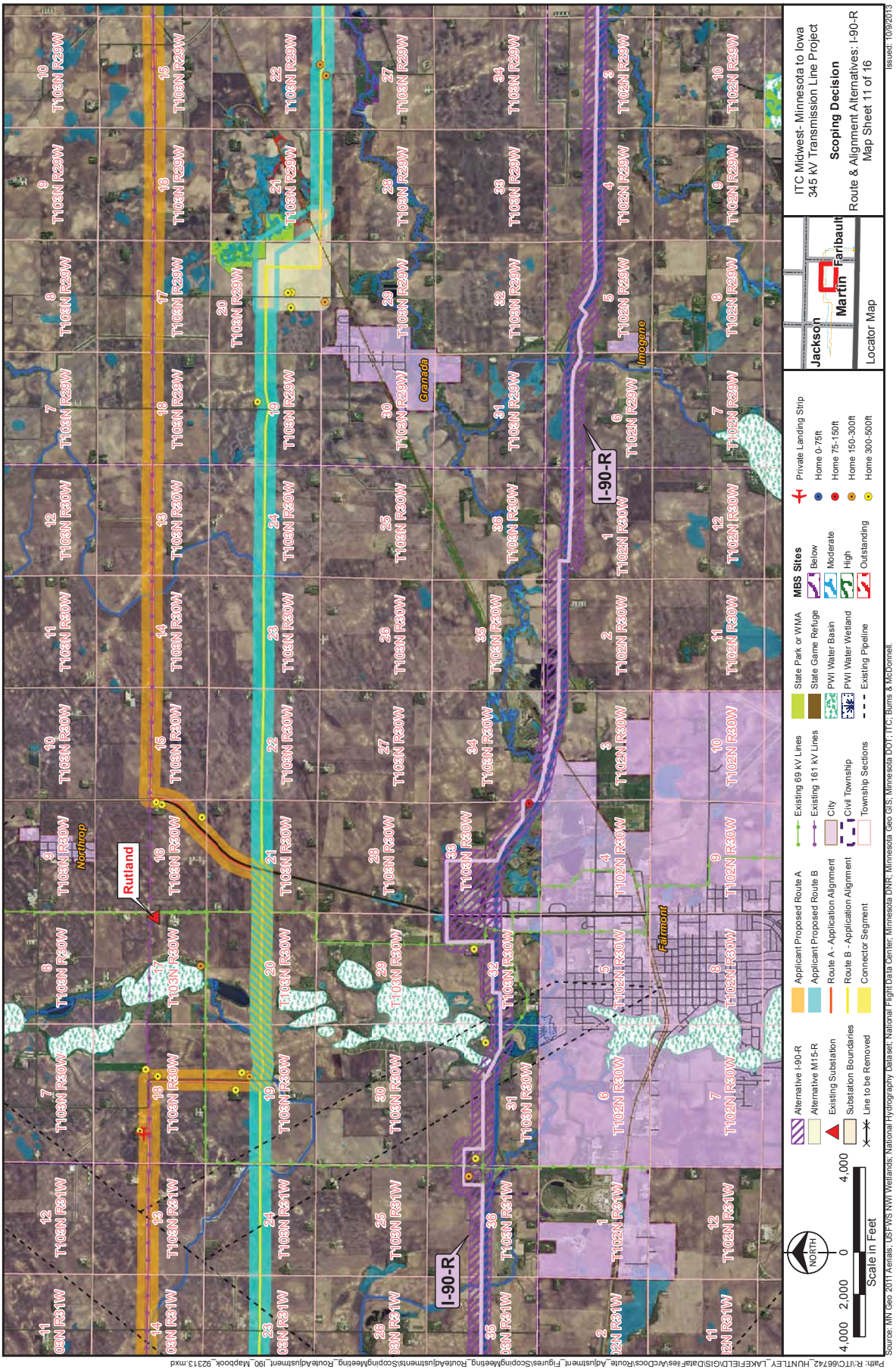
Rutland
Northrop
Granada
Imogene
Fairmont
I-90-R
Alternative I-90-R
Alternative M15-R
Existing Substation
Substation Boundaries
Line to be Removed
Applicant Proposed Route A
Applicant Proposed Route B
Route A - Application Alignment
Route B - Application Alignment
Connector Segment
Existing 69 kV Lines
Existing 161 kV Lines
City
Civil Township
Township Sections
State Park or WMA
State Game Refuge
PWI Water Basin
PWI Water Wetland
Existing Pipeline
MBS Sites
Below
Moderate
High
Outstanding
Private Landing Strip
Home 0-75ft
Home 75-150ft
Home 150-300ft
Home 300-500ft
NORTH
4,000 2,000 0 4,000
Scale in Feet
Jackson
Martin
Faribault
Locator Map
ITC Midwest- Minnesota to Iowa
345 kV Transmission Line Project
Scoping Decision
Route & Alignment Alternatives: I-90-R
Map Sheet 11 of 16
Issued: 10/9/2013
Source: MN Geo 2011 Aerials; USFWS NWI Wetlands; National Hydrography Dataset; National Flight Data Center; Minnesota DNR; Minnesota Geo GIS; Minnesota DOT; ITC; Burns & McDonnell.
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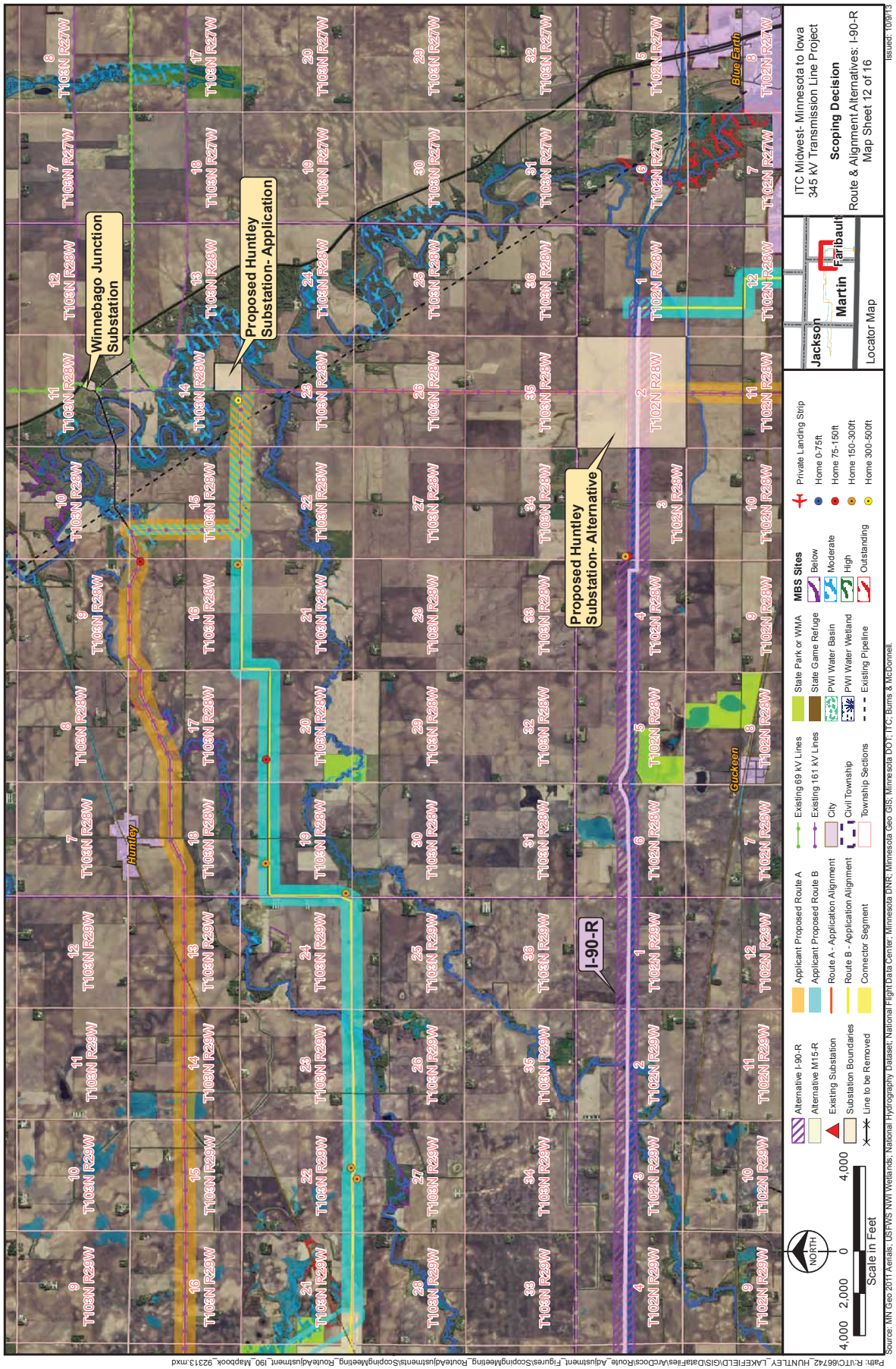
Winnebago Junction Substation
Proposed Huntley Substation- Application
Proposed Huntley Substation- Alternative
I-90-R
Huntley
Guckeen
Blue Earth
Alternative I-90-R
Alternative M15-R
Existing Substation
Substation Boundaries
Line to be Removed
Applicant Proposed Route A
Applicant Proposed Route B
Route A - Application Alignment
Route B - Application Alignment
Connector Segment
Existing 69 kV Lines
Existing 161 kV Lines
City
Civil Township
Township Sections
State Park or WMA
State Game Refuge
PWI Water Basin
PWI Water Wetland
Existing Pipeline
MBS Sites
Below
Moderate
High
Outstanding
Private Landing Strip
Home 0-75ft
Home 75-150ft
Home 150-300ft
Home 300-500ft
NORTH
Scale In Feet
4,000 2,000 0 4,000
Jackson
Martin
Faribault
Locator Map
ITC Midwest- Minnesota to Iowa
345 kV Transmission Line Project
Scoping Decision
Route & Alignment Alternatives: I-90-R
Map Sheet 12 of 16
Issued: 10/9/13
Source: MN Geo 2011 Aerials; USFWS NWI Wetlands; National Hydrography Dataset; National Flight Data Center; Minnesota DNR; Minnesota Geo GIS; Minnesota DOT; ITC; Burns & McDonnell.
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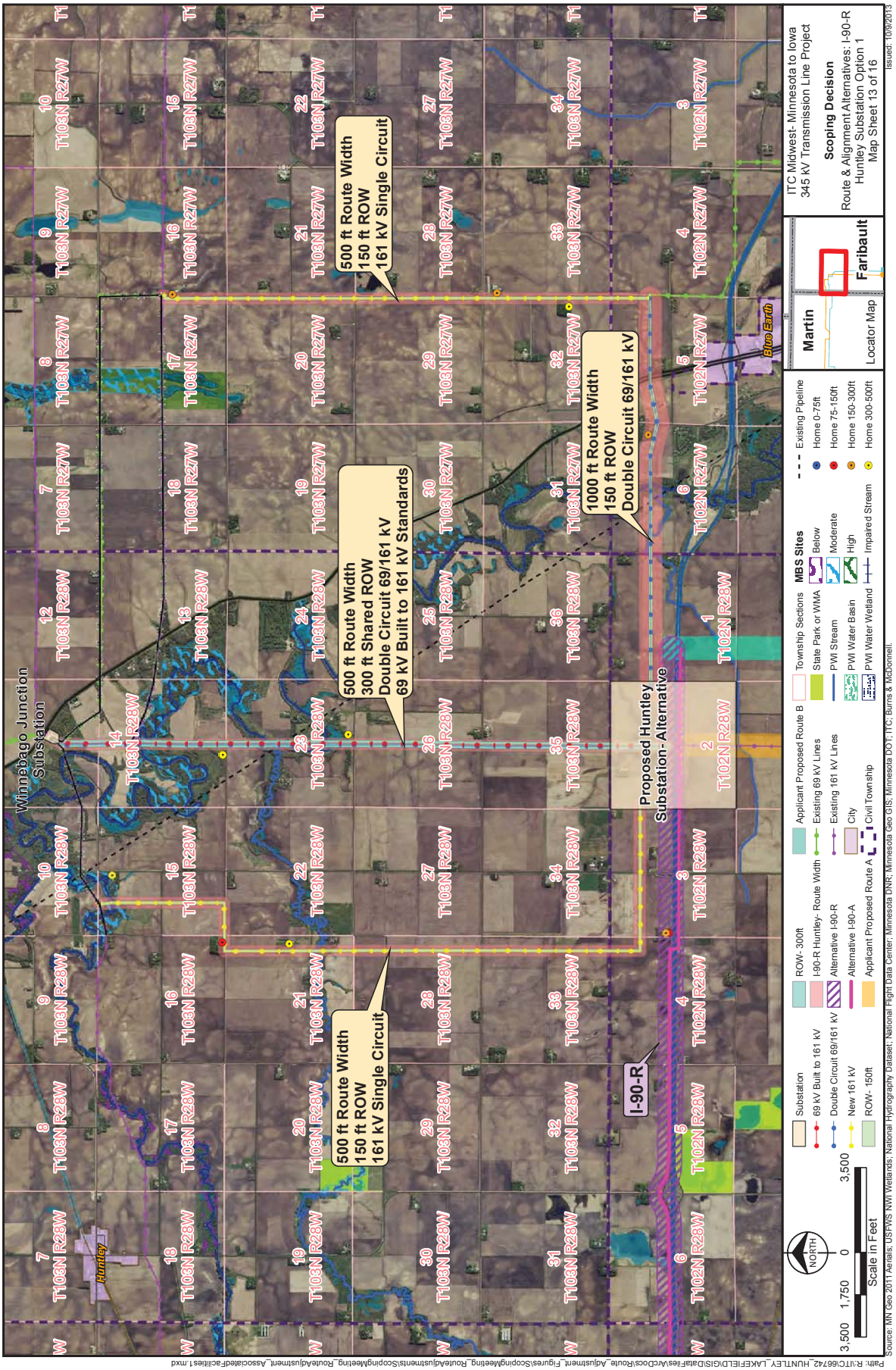
Winnebago Junction Substation
Huntley
Blue Earth
Martin
Faribault
Locator Map
I-90-R
Proposed Huntley Substation- Alternative
500 ft Route Width
150 ft ROW
161 kV Single Circuit
500 ft Route Width
300 ft Shared ROW
Double Circuit 69/161 kV
69 kV Built to 161 kV Standards
1000 ft Route Width
150 ft ROW
Double Circuit 69/161 kV
500 ft Route Width
150 ft ROW
161 kV Single Circuit
Substation
69 kV Built to 161 kV
Double Circuit 69/161 kV
New 161 kV
ROW- 150ft
ROW- 300ft
I-90-R Huntley- Route Width
Alternative I-90-R
Alternative I-90-A
Applicant Proposed Route A
Applicant Proposed Route B
Existing 69 kV Lines
Existing 161 kV Lines
City
Civil Township
Township Sections
State Park or WMA
PWI Stream
PWI Water Basin
PWI Water Wetland
MBS Sites
Below
Moderate
High
Impaired Stream
Existing Pipeline
Home 0-75ft
Home 75-150ft
Home 150-300ft
Home 300-500ft
NORTH
Scale in Feet
3,500 1,750 0 3,500
ITC Midwest- Minnesota to Iowa
345 kV Transmission Line Project
Scoping Decision
Route & Alignment Alternatives: I-90-R
Huntley Substation Option 1
Map Sheet 13 of 16
Issued: 10/9/2013
Source: MN Geo 2011 Aerials; USFWS NWI Wetlands; National Hydrography Dataset; National Flight Data Center; Minnesota DNR; Minnesota Geo GIS; Minnesota DOT; ITC; Burns & McDonnell.
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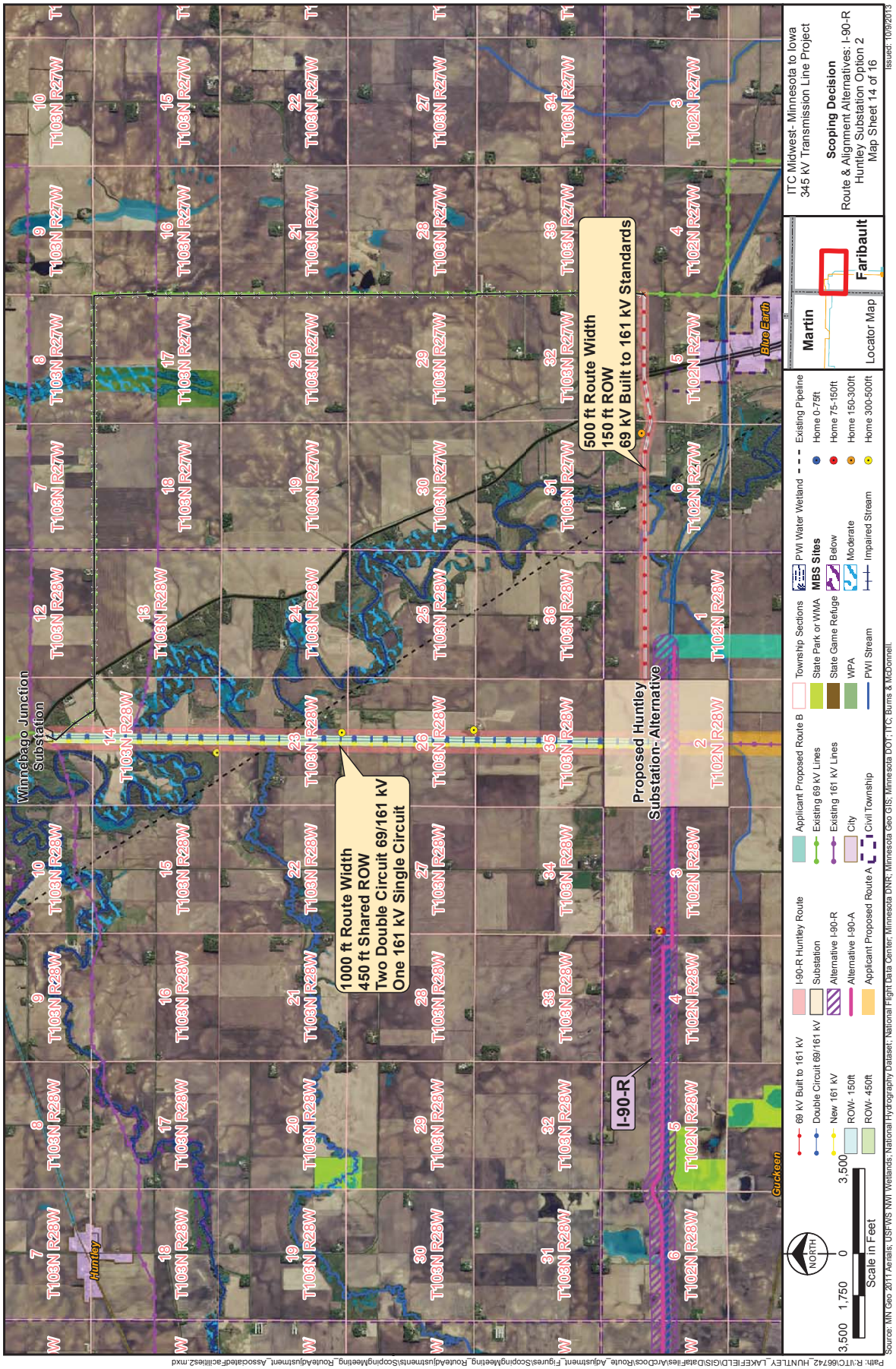
Winnebago Junction Substation
1000 ft Route Width
450 ft Shared ROW
Two Double Circuit 69/161 kV
One 161 kV Single Circuit
Proposed Huntley Substation- Alternative
500 ft Route Width
150 ft ROW
69 kV Built to 161 kV Standards
I-90-R
Huntley
Gurckeen
Blue Earth
Faribault
Martin
Locator Map
ITC Midwest- Minnesota to Iowa
345 kV Transmission Line Project
Scoping Decision
Route & Alignment Alternatives: I-90-R
Huntley Substation Option 2
Map Sheet 14 of 16
Issued: 10/9/2013
Scale in Feet
3,500 1,750 0 3,500
NORTH
69 kV Built to 161 kV
Double Circuit 69/161 kV
New 161 kV
ROW- 150ft
ROW- 450ft
I-90-R Huntley Route
Substation
Alternative I-90-R
Alternative I-90-A
Applicant Proposed Route A
Applicant Proposed Route B
Existing 69 kV Lines
Existing 161 kV Lines
City
Civil Township
Township Sections
State Park or WMA
State Game Refuge
WPA
PWI Stream
PWI Water Wetland
MBS Sites
Below
Moderate
Impaired Stream
Existing Pipeline
Home 0-75ft
Home 75-150ft
Home 150-300ft
Home 300-500ft
Source: MN Geo 2011 Aerials; USFWS NWI Wetlands; National Hydrography Dataset; National Flight Data Center; Minnesota DNR; Minnesota Geo GIS; Minnesota DOT; ITC; Burns & McDonnell.
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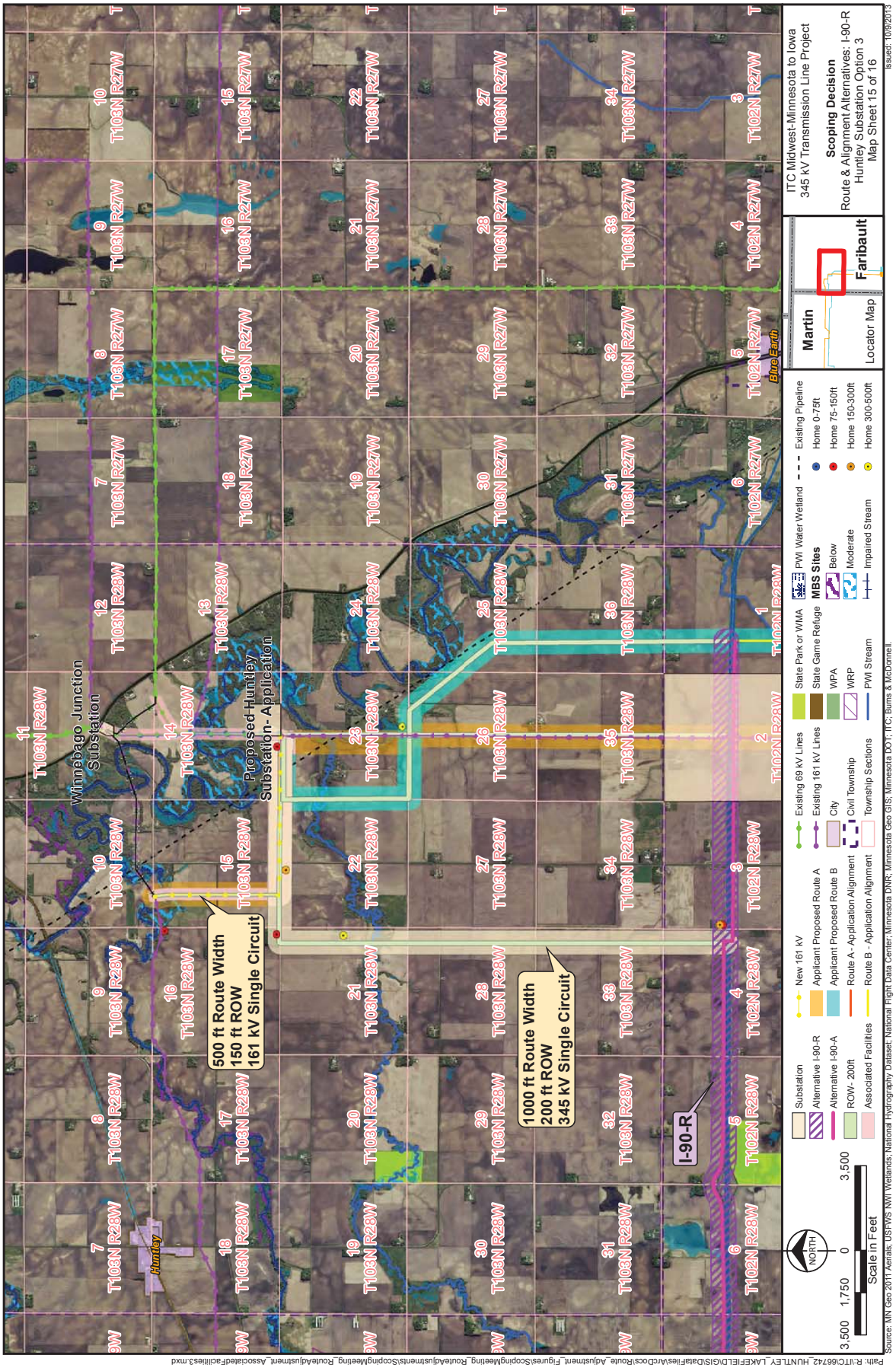
Winnebago Junction Substation
Proposed Hunley Substation- Application
500 ft Route Width
150 ft ROW
161 kV Single Circuit
1000 ft Route Width
200 ft ROW
345 kV Single Circuit
I-90-R
Hunley
Blue Earth
Substation
Alternative I-90-R
Alternative I-90-A
ROW- 200ft
Associated Facilities
New 161 kV
Applicant Proposed Route A
Applicant Proposed Route B
Route A - Application Alignment
Route B - Application Alignment
Existing 69 kV Lines
Existing 161 kV Lines
City
Civil Township
Township Sections
State Park or WMA
State Game Refuge
WPA
WRP
PWI Stream
PWI Water Wetland
MBS Sites
Below
Moderate
Impaired Stream
Existing Pipeline
Home 0-75ft
Home 75-150ft
Home 150-300ft
Home 300-500ft
Martin
Faribault
Locator Map
ITC Midwest-Minnesota to Iowa
345 kV Transmission Line Project
Scoping Decision
Route & Alignment Alternatives: I-90-R
Huntley Substation Option 3
Map Sheet 15 of 16
Issued: 10/9/2013
NORTH
Scale in Feet
3,500 1,750 0 3,500
Source: MN Geo 2011 Aerials; USFWS NWI Wetlands; National Hydrography Dataset; National Flight Data Center; Minnesota DNR; Minnesota Geo GIS; Minnesota DOT; ITC; Burns & McDonnell.
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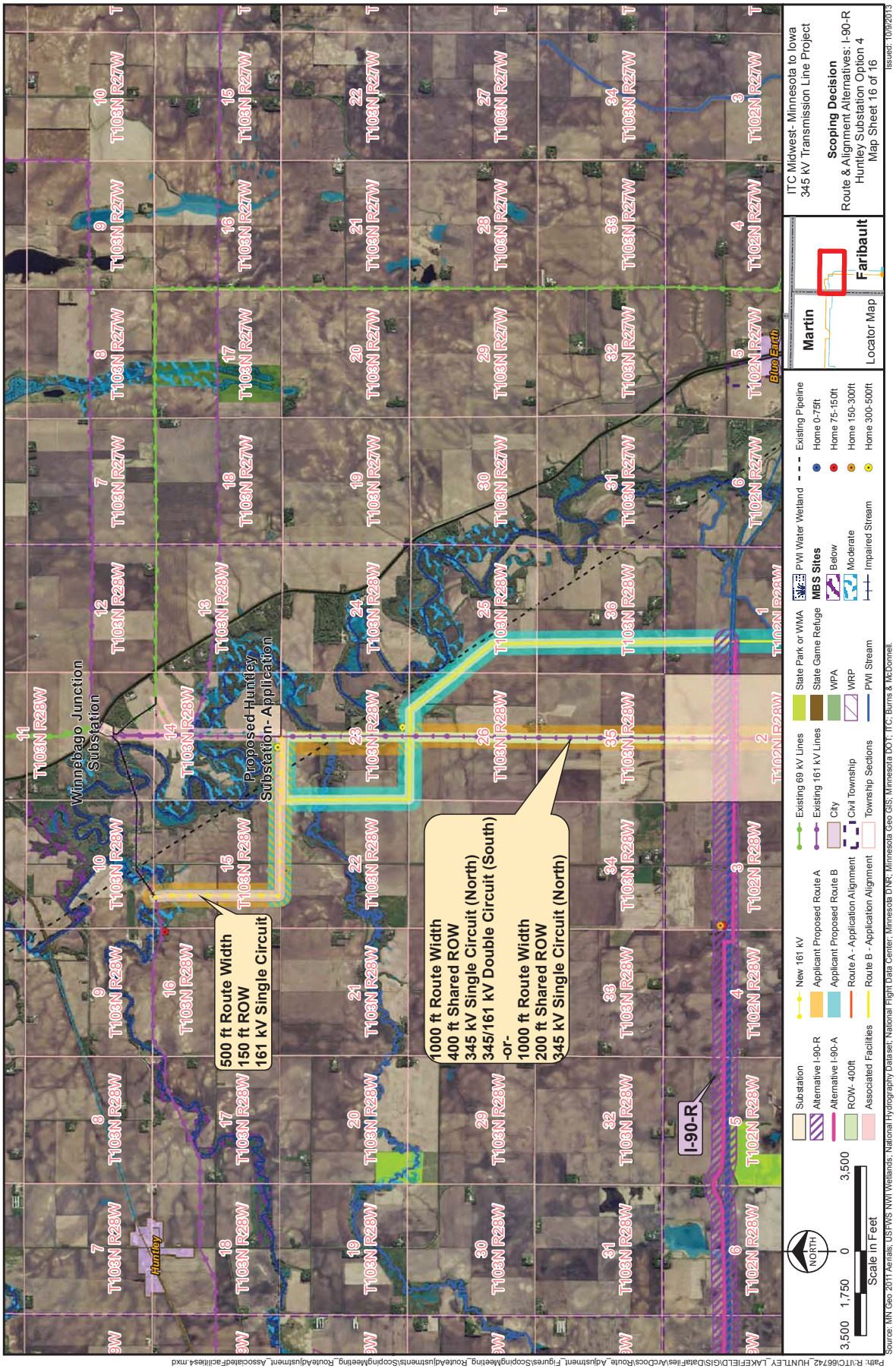
Winnebago Junction Substation
Proposed Huntley Substation- Application
500 ft Route Width
150 ft ROW
161 kV Single Circuit
1000 ft Route Width
400 ft Shared ROW
345 kV Single Circuit (North)
345/161 kV Double Circuit (South)
-or-
1000 ft Route Width
200 ft Shared ROW
345 kV Single Circuit (North)
I-90-R
Huntley
Blue Earth
Substation
Alternative I-90-R
Alternative I-90-A
ROW- 400ft
Associated Facilities
New 161 kV
Applicant Proposed Route A
Applicant Proposed Route B
Route A - Application Alignment
Route B - Application Alignment
Existing 69 kV Lines
Existing 161 kV Lines
City
Civil Township
Township Sections
State Park or WMA
State Game Refuge
WPA
WRP
PWI Stream
PWI Water Wetland
MBS Sites
Below
Moderate
Impaired Stream
Existing Pipeline
Home 0-75ft
Home 75-150ft
Home 150-300ft
Home 300-500ft
NORTH
Scale in Feet
3,500 1,750 0 3,500
Martin
Faribault
Locator Map
ITC Midwest- Minnesota to Iowa
345 kV Transmission Line Project
Scoping Decision
Route & Alignment Alternatives: I-90-R
Huntley Substation Option 4
Map Sheet 16 of 16
Issued: 10/9/2013
Source: MN Geo 2011 Aerials; USFWS NWI Wetlands; National Hydrography Dataset; National Flight Data Center; Minnesota DNR; Minnesota Geo GIS; Minnesota DOT; ITC; Burns & McDonnell.
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