

Notice of Public Information Meetings

In the Matter of the Application for a Certificate of Need and a Route Permit for Two New High Voltage Transmission Lines in Western Minnesota (Big Stone Transmission Project)

MPUC Docket Number E-017/TR-05-1275

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the Minnesota Department of Commerce (DOC) will conduct public information meetings in the locations listed below, concerning a proposal by seven utilities to construct two new transmission lines between the Big Stone Substation in South Dakota and different termination points in Minnesota (the Project). The purposes of the meetings are to provide information to the public about the proposed project, answer questions, and scope an Environmental Impact Statement to be prepared by the Department addressing potential impacts and alternatives.

Public Information Meeting Dates

Benson DS Lageson's 300 14 th St. S.	Tuesday, January 24 4:00-7:00 pm	The open house will start at 4:00 pm. A short presentation will begin at 5:30 pm.
Morris Prairie Inn Hwy. 28	Wednesday, January 25 12:00-3:00 pm	The open house will start at 12:00 pm. A short presentation will begin at 12:30 pm.
Ortonville Matador Supper Club 778 US Hwy. 75	Wednesday, January 25 4:00-7:00 pm	The open house will start at 4:00 pm. A short presentation will begin at 5:30 pm.
Canby Council Chambers 110 Oscar Ave.	Thursday, January 26 12:00-3:00 pm	The open house will start at 12:00 pm. A short presentation will begin at 12:30 pm.
Granite Falls Minnesota West College 1593 11 th Ave. Rm. 107	Thursday, January 26 4:00-7:00 pm	The open house will start at 4:00 pm. A short presentation will begin at 5:30 pm.

The Applicants

Seven utilities (collectively the Applicants) have submitted an Application for a Certificate of Need and an Application for a Route Permit to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission for two new high voltage transmission lines (HVTLs). The utilities include: Otter Tail Power Company (Project lead), Great River Energy, Central Minnesota Municipal Power Agency, Heartland Consumers Power District, Montana-Dakota Utilities Co., Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency and Western Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (as represented by Missouri River Energy Services).

Project Description

The Applicants are proposing to construct two new high voltage transmission lines in Western Minnesota. The new transmission lines will serve two purposes: (1) provide an outlet for power to be generated at a proposed new 600 megawatt unit to be constructed at the Big Stone Power Plant in South Dakota and (2) increase the transmission capacity and improve reliability of the electric transmission system in the Buffalo Ridge area in Minnesota and South Dakota.

One new transmission line would run from the Big Stone Substation to the Morris Substation near Morris, Minnesota, a total of approximately 48 miles, about 43 miles of which are in Minnesota. The other transmission line would run from Big Stone Substation to the Granite Falls Substation in Granite Falls, Minnesota, a distance of approximately 90 miles, 54 miles of which would be in Minnesota. The Morris line would be constructed at 230 kilovolts. The Granite Falls line would be constructed at 345 kV but operated initially at 230 kV. In addition, modification of several substations and existing transmission facilities will also be required as part of the Project. Also, in its Certificate of Need Application the Applicants identified an alternative to the Morris line – a 230 kV line to the Willmar Substation at Willmar, Minnesota. This line would be approximately 80 miles long.

The Applicants have identified both a preferred route for each transmission line and at least one alternative route. Two different border crossings have been identified for the Granite Falls line. A map showing the routes under consideration is attached.

In accordance with their authority under state law, the Applicants may be required to exercise the power of eminent domain.

PUC Review Process

On October 3, 2005, the Applicants submitted an Application to the PUC for a Certificate of Need for the two new transmission lines. On November 10, 2005, the PUC decided to consolidate the certificate of need proceeding with the upcoming route permit proceeding. The Applicants submitted the Route Permit Application on December 9, 2005.

The rules applicable to the processing of the Route Permit Application are found in Minn. Rules Chapter 4400. These rules were originally promulgated by the Environmental Quality Board, but effective July 1, 2005, the Legislature transferred the authority over routing of new transmission lines to the PUC. In addition, the Minnesota DOC has been assigned the responsibility to conduct environmental review of proposed transmission lines.

The DOC will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) before the PUC may determine the need for the project and approve a specific route for each transmission line. The EIS will consider issues relating both to the need for the Project, such as size, type, timing, voltage and system configurations, and also to issues related to routing, such as construction impacts, environmental features, use of existing rights-of-way, and impacts on homeowners. To help determine what impacts and alternatives to study in the EIS, these five public meetings are being held to solicit public input.

The meetings will follow an open-house format. The public is invited to review the Applications and proposed routes, learn more about the PUC process and ask questions. These meetings will also serve as EIS “scoping” meetings where the public can propose additional routes to be considered for the new transmission lines and comment on what issues should be addressed in the EIS. Members of the public are welcome anytime during the hours of the open-house meetings. There will be a short presentation shortly after the start of the meeting. The DOC will also accept written comments on the Project and the scope of the EIS until February 13, 2006. Written comments should be mailed or e-mailed to the Sharon Ferguson, Docket Manager, at 85 7th Place East, Suite 500, Saint Paul, Minnesota, 55101-2198.

After completion of the EIS, the PUC will hold a public hearing presided over by an administrative law judge. Notice of that public hearing will be published in local newspapers and mailed to persons who register their names with the Department. Persons interested in adding their names to the mailing list should contact the project manager or register on the webpage cited below. By statute, the PUC has one year from November 4, 2005, to make a final decision on the certificate of need and one year from December 20, 2005, to make a final decision on the route permit.

Copies of both Applications and other relevant documents, including Minnesota Rules governing the process, are available at:

<http://energyfacilities.puc.state.mn.us/TransmissionLines.html>

or

<http://energyfacilities.puc.state.mn.us/Docket.html?Id=18215>

Project Contacts and Information

The Commission has designated DOC staff member David Birkholz as project manager and Deborah Pile as the public advisor in this matter. Inquiries about this project and the review process should be directed to Mr. Birkholz (Tel: 651-296-2096 or david.birkholz@state.mn.us) or Ms. Pile, (Tel: 651-297-2375 or deborah.pile@state.mn.us) Department of Commerce, 85 7th place East, Suite 500, Saint Paul, Minnesota 55101-2198. Other contact information: Toll-Free Tel: 1-800-657-3794, Fax: 651-297-7891 or TTY: Minnesota Relay Service, 800-627-3529, and ask for the DOC.

Current information about the Project and the Applications is also available online at <http://www.bigstoneii.com/>. Click on the “Big Stone Transmission Project” link on the home page. Copies of the CON Application and the Route Permit Application are also available at the following public libraries:

Benson Public Library 200 13 th St. S. Benson, MN 56215	Canby Public Library 110 Oscar Ave. Canby, MN 56220
Granite Falls Public Library 155 7 th Ave. Granite Falls, MN 56241	Madison Public Library 401 6 th Ave. Madison, MN 56256
Morris Public Library 102 East 6 th St. Morris, MN 56267	Ortonville Public Library 412 2 nd St. NW Ortonville, MN 56278
Willmar Public Library 410 5 th St. SW Willmar, MN 56201	

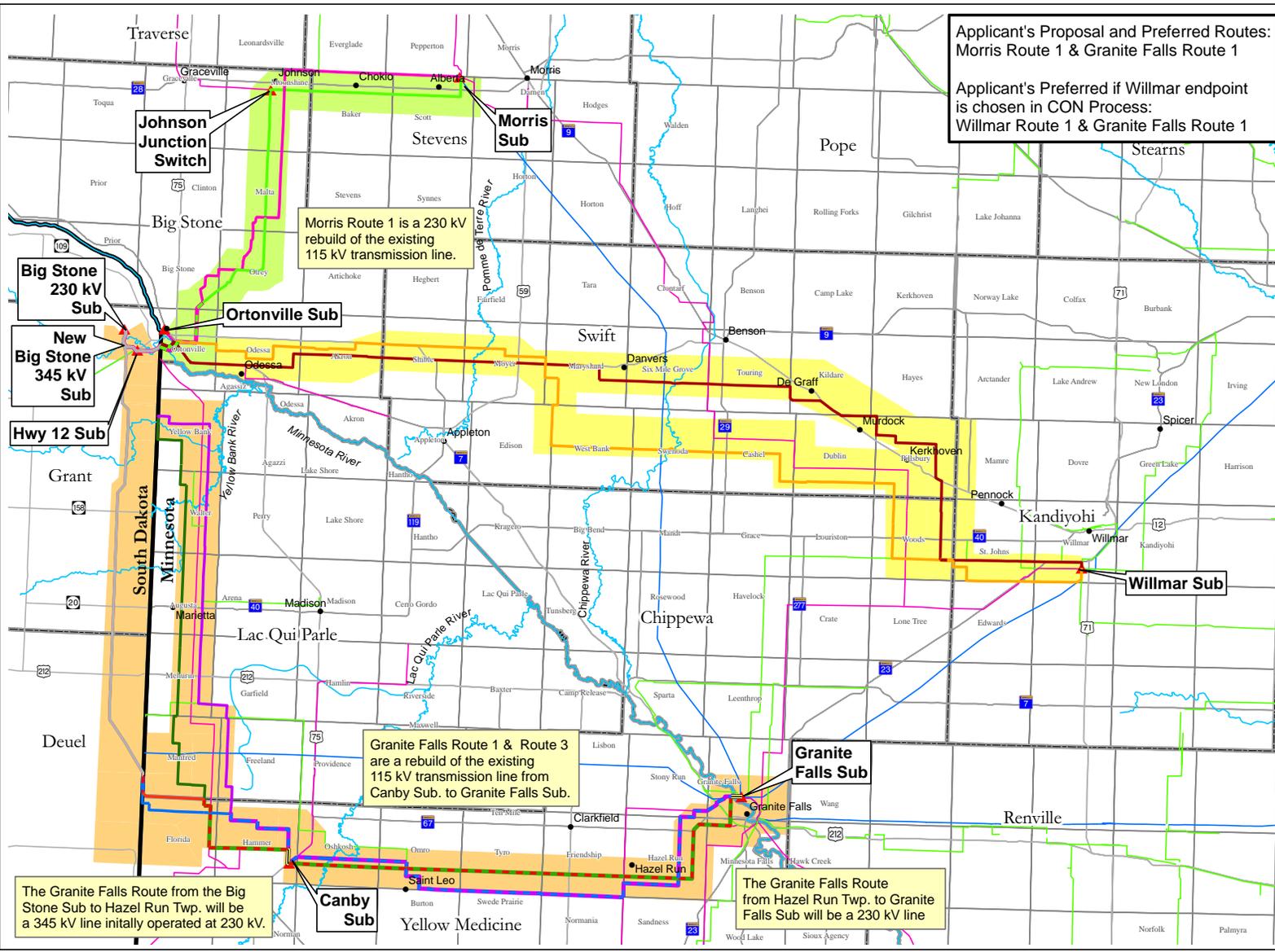
General project information may also be obtained by emailing sschultz@otpc.com or writing to Mr. Steve Schultz, Big Stone Public Relations Manager, at Otter Tail Power Company, 215 South Cascade Street, Fergus Falls, Minnesota 56538 or by calling Mr. Schultz at Tel: 218-739-8916.



Project Overview Map
Big Stone Transmission Project
PUC Route Application

Applicant's Proposal and Preferred Routes:
Morris Route 1 & Granite Falls Route 1

Applicant's Preferred if Willmar endpoint
is chosen in CON Process:
Willmar Route 1 & Granite Falls Route 1



Legend

- ▲ Existing Substations

Study Corridors

- Morris Corridor
- Willmar Corridor
- Granite Falls Corridor

Proposed Routes

- Granite Falls Route 1
- Granite Falls Route 2
- Granite Falls Route 3
- Granite Falls Route 4
- Granite Falls Routes 1 & 2
- Granite Falls Routes 1 & 3
- Granite Falls Routes 2 & 4
- Granite Falls Routes 1, 2, 3 & 4
- Morris Route 1
- Morris Route 2
- Willmar Route 1
- Willmar Route 2
- Willmar Route 1 & 2
- Morris and Willmar Routes
- Proposed Routes in South Dakota

Existing Transmission Lines

- 69 kV
- 115 kV
- 230 kV

Data Sources: MN DNR DataDeli, LMIC, MnDOT

0 2.5 5 10 Miles

Map Document: N:\bigstone\01\charts\22595\medium_route_app\bigstone_notice_map.mxd
12/20/2005 - 2:25:45 PM

Morris Route 1 is a 230 kV rebuild of the existing 115 kV transmission line.

Granite Falls Route 1 & Route 3 are a rebuild of the existing 115 kV transmission line from Canby Sub. to Granite Falls Sub.

The Granite Falls Route from the Big Stone Sub to Hazel Run Twp. will be a 345 kV line initially operated at 230 kV.

The Granite Falls Route from Hazel Run Twp. to Granite Falls Sub will be a 230 kV line