

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

In the Matter of the Xcel Energy and Great River Energy Certificate of Need
Application for Three 345 kV Transmission Lines in Minnesota

PUC Docket ET-2, E-002/CN-06-1115



PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (MPUC) will hold public hearings in this matter at the dates, times and locations listed below. The purpose of these proceedings is to determine whether the proposed high voltage electric transmission lines are needed and in the public interest.

Proposed Project Description

Xcel Energy and Great River Energy, on behalf of 11 transmission-owning utilities known as the CapX 2020 applicants (applicants), have jointly applied to the MPUC for a Certificate of Need for three 345 kilovolt (kV) and two 161 kV electric transmission lines. The applicants' projects, referred to cumulatively as the CapX 2020 transmission expansion initiative (CapX 2020) proposes transmission lines to connect substations in the following general locations:

- A 250-mile, 345 kV line between Fargo, North Dakota and Monticello, Minnesota.
- A 200-mile, 345 kV line between Brookings, South Dakota and Dakota County (Hampton), Minnesota; including a related 345 kV line between Marshall, Minnesota and Granite Falls, Minnesota.
- A 150-mile, 345 kV line from Dakota County (Hampton), Minnesota, to Rochester, Minnesota and continuing to La Crosse, Wisconsin; including two connecting 161kV lines near Rochester, Minnesota.

The applicants state that the transmission lines are part of a long-term plan intended to strengthen the transmission network to meet demand for electrical power anticipated in Minnesota and surrounding states by 2020, in part to increase access to renewable energy sources. In addition, the project is intended to address service reliability concerns in several communities including Rochester, St. Cloud, the Alexandria area and the Red River Valley.

Purpose and Conduct of Public Hearings

Xcel Energy and Great River Energy, on behalf of the applicants, applied to the MPUC for a Certificate of Need on August 16, 2007. Before any high voltage transmission line project(s) can be constructed in Minnesota, the MPUC must determine that the project(s) is necessary and in the best interest of the state. The Certificate of Need process includes a limited environmental review, public hearings, and evidentiary hearings. The review process typically requires at least 12-months to complete. The public hearings are the only opportunity for the public to appear in person, in Minnesota, to: 1) provide their input on the necessity of this project, 2) provide input on the no-build alternative, and 3) address alternatives (non-route related) for the MPUC to consider (see below for information on written comments). The criteria that the MPUC must address when rendering a final decision are found in Minnesota Statutes 216B.243, Subd.3 & 3a, and Minnesota Rules 7849.0120.

SCHEDULE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS

Moorhead, MN

Tuesday, June 17, 2008
5 pm
Horizon Middle School Cafetorium
3601 12th Avenue South

Fergus Falls, MN

Wednesday, June 18, 2008
10 am
MN State Community and
Technical College
Science Lecture Hall, Room S450
1414 College Way

Alexandria, MN

Wednesday, June 18, 2008
5 pm
Alexandria Technical College
Auditorium 205, Main Building
1601 Jefferson Street

Melrose, MN

Thursday, June 19, 2008
10 am
Melrose Area High School Auditorium,
Door 13
546 North 5th Avenue East

Clearwater, MN

Thursday, June 19, 2008, 5 pm
Friday, June 20, 2008, 9 am
Clearwater Township Hall
15015 State Highway 24

Marshall, MN

Monday, June 23, 2008, 5 pm
Tuesday, June 24, 2008, 10 am
Marshall High School Auditorium
400 Tiger Drive

Redwood Falls, MN

Tuesday, June 24, 2008
5 pm
Redwood Falls High School Auditorium
100 George Ramseth Drive

Arlington, MN

Wednesday, June 25, 2008
10 am
Arlington Community Center, Room 2
204 Shamrock Drive

New Prague, MN

Wednesday, June 25, 2008
5 pm
New Prague High School Commons
221 12th Street N.E.

Lakeville, MN

Thursday, June 26, 2008
1 pm and 5 pm
Lakeville South High School
Auditorium
21135 Jacquard Avenue

Cannon Falls, MN

Monday, June 30, 2008
1 pm and 7 pm
Cannon Falls Elementary School
1020 E. Minnesota Street

Winona, MN

Tuesday, July 1, 2008
1 pm and 7 pm
Tau Conference Center
Winona State University West Campus
511 Hilbert Street

Rochester, MN

Wednesday, July 2, 2008
1 pm and 7 pm
John Adams Middle School
Auditorium
1525 31st Street N.W.

Public Hearing

An Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) from the Minnesota Office of Administrative Hearings will hold public hearings for the MPUC to establish a complete and accurate record regarding the need for the proposed CapX 2020 electric transmission line projects. Any person who would like to comment on this matter can do so at any of the scheduled public hearings (above) or in writing to the ALJ (see address below). If you need any reasonable accommodation to enable you to fully participate in these public hearings (i.e. sign language or foreign language interpreter, wheel chair accessibility, or large-print materials) please contact the MPUC at (651) 201-2202 or (800) 657-3782 at least one week in advance of the hearing.

Written Public Comment Period Deadline

In order to be considered, written public comments should be filed with the Administrative Law Judge on or before 4:30 p.m. on August 22, 2008. Comments may be filed by U.S. mail (see address below), fax (651) 361-7936, or e-mail to capx.oah@state.mn.us. Written comments are most effective when the following items are included:

1. The section of the CapX proposal you are addressing.
2. Your specific recommendation.
3. The reason for your recommendation.

Administrative Law Judge

Judge Beverly Jones Heydinger will preside at the hearing; written comments can be mailed to her at:

Office of Administrative Hearings
Attn: Beverly Jones Heydinger
P.O. Box 64620
St. Paul, MN, 55164-0620

Upon completion of all hearings, the Judge will forward the record of the proceedings (including oral and written public comments), a summary report of the facts in the record, and a recommendation to the MPUC. Thereafter, the MPUC will schedule a final public hearing, likely in the winter of 2008-2009, to determine whether a Certificate of Need should be granted or denied.

Evidentiary Hearing

Time: Monday, July 14, 2008 at 10:00 am (CST)
Location: Minnesota Public Utilities Commission
Large Hearing Room (3rd Floor)
121 7th Place East
St. Paul, MN 55101-2147

Following the public hearings as described above, Judge Heydinger will convene the evidentiary hearing, which will continue until all formal Parties to the case have completed presentations of evidence and examined witnesses pursuant to Minn. Rules Chapter 1400. It is anticipated that the evidentiary hearing may continue at the MPUC for three to four weeks. The public is welcome to observe the hearing. Only testimony from formal Parties will be heard at the evidentiary hearing; no public testimony will be taken.

Becoming a Party

Any person who desires to intervene in this matter and be granted Party status must submit a written petition (request to intervene) to Judge Heydinger by July 3, 2008. Persons interested in becoming a Party should review Minn.

Rules 1400.6200 governing intervention. Petitions to intervene received after July 3, 2008 will be considered, but the scope of participation may be limited. Persons who are not Parties may, upon request, be granted the opportunity for limited participation, including the opportunity to testify, offer exhibits and question other parties' witnesses, but will not be deemed a Party by reason of such participation. Persons who are not Parties are encouraged to provide their testimony and exhibits at the public hearings.

Materials Available for Review

All official public materials relating to this matter can be viewed on 'edockets' the MPUC's electronic documents system. To access information in this matter by computer, go to the MPUC's webpage at www.puc.state.mn.us, click 'CapX 2020' under Quick Links, and follow the guidance for accessing edockets. The Application (received date 8/16/07) and the Environmental Report (received date 3/31/08) are key documents describing the proposed project. The Environmental Report describes the human and environmental impacts of the proposed project, alternatives to the project and methods to mitigate anticipated adverse impacts. Persons without internet access may contact the MPUC staff listed below to request documents of interest or assistance in identifying appropriate documents. Reasonable efforts will be made to provide such documents by mail. The Application, Environmental Report, applicable procedural rules, and the pre-filed testimony of all parties will be available for public review at the hearings.

The applicable agency rule in this matter, Minn. Rule Chapter 7849, is available to review online at <https://www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/pubs/>, and will be available at the public hearings.

Inquiries, Project Contact

The Commission has designated Bret Eknas of the MPUC staff as its public advisor in this matter. He may be contacted by phone at (651) 201-2236, by email at bret.eknas@state.mn.us, or in writing to: Minnesota Public Utilities Commission, 121 7th Place E., Suite 350, Saint Paul, MN 55101-2147. The public advisor has been appointed to assist and advise persons interested in taking part in the proceedings. However, the public advisor is not authorized to give legal advice. Public comments on this matter should be sent to the ALJ as described above.

Forthcoming Route Permit Application and Routing Process

Please note, that specific routes the proposed transmission lines may follow have not yet been proposed by the CapX 2020 utilities. The transmission line routes will be reviewed through a separate MPUC permitting process expected to begin in the fall of 2008. Additional public hearings on routing of the lines will be announced when the route applications have been filed with the MPUC. The public hearings that are the subject of this notice are not intended to address routing related issues. A route permit cannot be issued until the project is determined to be in the public's interest and needed by the PUC.

Eminent Domain Authority

If the PUC issues a Certificate of Need in this current matter, and also issues a route permit, Xcel Energy and Great River Energy may exercise the power of eminent domain to acquire the land necessary for the project pursuant to Minnesota Statute 216E.12 and Minnesota Statute 117.