



STATE OF MINNESOTA
Office of Energy Security



Issued: February 23, 2010

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

NOTICE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETINGS

In the Matter of the Application for a Route Permit for the Bemidji-Grand Rapids 230kV Transmission Project

PUC Docket Number: E017, E015, ET6/TL-07-1327

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the Minnesota Department of Commerce Office of Energy Security (OES) and United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Utilities Service (RUS) announce the availability of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the proposed Bemidji-Grand Rapids 230kV transmission line project. The OES and RUS will hold public informational meetings to provide an opportunity for the public to comment on the Draft EIS. Ending times reflect the latest the meetings will run. Meetings may conclude earlier where all attendees have had the opportunity to comment and all other business has been concluded.

PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING DATES & LOCATIONS

March 16, 2010 (Tuesday)	March 17, 2010 (Wednesday)	March 18, 2010 (Thursday)
1:00 P.M. – 4:00 P.M. & 6:00 P.M. – 9:00 P.M.	1:00 P.M. – 3:00 P.M.	
Hampton Inn 1019 Paul Bunyan Dr. S, State Highway 197 Bemidji, MN	American Legion Vets Club 12 1 st Street NE Deer River, MN	6:00 P.M. – 9:00 P.M.
	6:00 P.M. – 9:00 P.M.	Leech Lake Tribal College 6945 Little Wolf Road NW Cass Lake, MN
	Senior Center 24 1 st Street SE Blackduck, MN	

Public Information Meeting. The first half hour of each meeting will be an open house. Following the open house, a formal public information and comment meeting will begin with brief presentations on the DEIS by OES and RUS staff. Members of the public will have an opportunity to ask questions and provide comments on the Draft EIS after the OES and RUS presentations. Representatives from the OES, RUS, and the Applicants will be available for both the open house and presentation portion of the meeting to answer questions. A court reporter will also be present during the formal portion of each meeting to transcribe any verbal comments from the public.

The OES will accept written comments on the Draft EIS until **Monday, April 26, 2010**. Please include Docket No. TL-07-1327 on your comments. Comments should be mailed, emailed, or faxed to:

Suzanne Steinhauer
Project Manager
Minnesota Office of Energy Security
85 7th Place East, Suite 500
St. Paul, Minnesota, 55101-2198
Fax: 651-297-7891
Suzanne.steinhauer@state.mn.us

Comments may also be submitted online via the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission's (Commission) energy facility permitting website at: <http://energyfacilities.puc.state.mn.us/publicComments.html>

Project Documents. The Draft EIS discusses the potential human and environmental impacts of the proposed project and evaluates three (3) route alternatives and 20 segment alternatives identified in the EIS scoping decision.

Electronic versions of the Draft EIS and other documents relevant to this matter are available for viewing and downloading on the Commission's website:

<http://energyfacilities.puc.state.mn.us/Docket.html?Id=19344>, and on the Department of Commerce's eDockets website: <https://www.edockets.state.mn.us/EFiling/search.jsp> (enter year "07" and docket number "1327").

Or on the RUS website, under Minnkota Power Cooperative:

<http://www.usda.gov/rus/water/ees/eis.htm#Minnkota%20Electric%20Cooperative,%20Inc.0>

The Draft EIS is also available at public libraries in the cities listed below:

- Bemidji
- Blackduck
- Bovey
- Cass Lake
- Coleraine
- Grand Rapids
- Longville
- Walker

Project Description. Otter Tail Power Company, Minnesota Power, and Minnkota Power Cooperative, Inc. (Applicants) propose to construct and operate a 230 kV transmission line between the Wilton substation just west of Bemidji, Minnesota, and the Boswell Substation in Cohasset, just west of Grand Rapids, Minnesota. The Applicants have proposed two possible routes for the transmission line, and a third route was added for consideration based on input from local, state, and federal agencies and the public. The proposed routes for the transmission line primarily follow existing rights-of-way and cross portions of Beltrami, Hubbard, Cass and Itasca counties.

The Project would include improvements to the Wilton and Boswell substations. Depending upon the route selected, the Project may also include modifications to the existing Cass Lake Substation, construction of a new substation in the Cass Lake area, and construction of a new 115 kV breaker station near Nary, Minnesota.

Review Process. Under the Power Plant Siting Act (Minn. Stat. 216E), a route permit from the Commission is required to build a high voltage transmission line. A route permit application for the project was filed by the Applicants on June 4, 2008. The application was accepted as complete by the Commission on June 30, 2008.

Route permit applications for high voltage transmission lines are subject to environmental review (Minn. Rules 7850). OES staff conducts this review on behalf of the Commission and develops a record upon which a route permit decision can be made by the Commission. In addition to state review, the project is subject to federal environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Utilities Service (RUS) is the lead agency for the federal environmental review with Division of Resource Management of the Leech Lake Reservation, the Chippewa National Forest, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers participating as cooperating agencies. Pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act 36 CFR § 800.2(d)(3), RUS is using its procedures for public involvement under NEPA to meet its responsibilities to solicit and consider the views of the public during Section 106 review. Accordingly, comments submitted on the draft EIS will inform RUS decision making in Section 106 review. OES and RUS have collaborated to create a joint draft EIS for this project. Scoping meetings for the EIS were held in the project area in August, 2008, and public comments were accepted from July 22, 2008, through September 30, 2008. The OES issued an EIS scoping decision on March 31, 2009; this decision was modified on February 5, 2010. RUS issued a Scoping Decision/Report in December, 2009.

On February 23, 2010, OES and RUS released the draft EIS. Comments received during the draft EIS public information meetings and during the draft EIS comment period (February 23, 2010, to April 26, 2010) will be reviewed, responded to, and included in a final EIS. The final EIS will be part of the record upon which the Commission makes a route permit decision. The Federal Agencies will issue a Record of Decision following a 30-day public comment period on the Final EIS.

Public hearings on the Bemidji- Grand Rapids 230kV transmission line route permit will be held in the Project area at a date to be determined, and will be presided over by an administrative law judge (ALJ). A separate notice of these public hearings will be published in newspapers of general circulation throughout the proposed project area. Members of the public will have an opportunity to speak at the hearings, present evidence, ask questions, and submit comments. The ALJ will submit a report to the Commission containing findings of fact, conclusions, and a recommendation on a route permit for the proposed transmission line.

Additional information on the transmission line route permitting process is available on the Commission's energy facility permitting website: <http://www.energyfacilities.puc.state.mn.us/TransmissionLines.html>

Project Mailing List. Persons interested in adding their names to the Department of Commerce mailing list for this project should contact the OES project manager, public advisor, or register online at: <http://www.energyfacilities.puc.state.mn.us/#MailingLists>

Project Contacts. If you have questions or if you would like further information about this project please contact:

Department of Commerce, Office of Energy Security

Suzanne Steinhauer, Project Manager
Energy Facility Permitting
Minnesota Office of Energy Security
85 7th Place East, Suite 500
St. Paul, MN 55101-2198
(651) 296-2888
suzanne.steinhauer@state.mn.us

Raymond Kirsch, Public Advisor
Energy Facility Permitting
Minnesota Office of Energy Security
85 7th Place East, Suite 500
St. Paul, MN 55101-2198
(651) 296-7588
raymond.kirsch@state.mn.us

Rural Utilities Service

Stephanie Strength
Project Manager
USDA Rural Development Utilities Programs
1400 Independence Ave. SW, Stop 1541, Room
2244
Washington, DC 20250
(202) 720-0468
stephanie.strength@wdc.usda.gov

This document can be made available in alternative formats (i.e., large print or audio tape) by calling 651-201-2202 (Voice) or 1-800-627-3529 (TTY relay service).

