



**In the Matter of the Application for a Route  
Permit for the Mary Lake 115 kilovolt  
Transmission Line Project**

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
SCOPING DECISION  
PUC Docket No. E002/TL-07-1365**

The above matter has come before the Director of the Department of Commerce Office of Energy Security (OES) for a decision on the scope of the Environmental Assessment (EA) to be prepared for the proposed Xcel Energy Mary Lake 115 kilovolt (kV) Transmission Line Project in Wright County, Minnesota.

Xcel Energy proposes to build approximately five miles of new 115 kV high voltage transmission line (HVTL) between the Buffalo Power – Maple Lake 69 kV transmission line and the Mary Lake – Dickinson 69 kV transmission line in Wright County. Except for a half-mile section crossing an agricultural field near the Mary Lake Substation, the entire proposed route runs parallel to state, county and city road rights-of-way.

The OES Energy Facilities Permitting (EFP) staff held a public information and EA scoping meeting on March 11, 2008, in Buffalo, Minnesota, to discuss the project with the public and to solicit input into the scope of the EA to be prepared. Approximately 18 persons attended the public meeting. A public comment period on the scope of the EA closed on March 26, 2008. A total of six written comments were received by the end of the public comment period. Of these comments, three proposed alternatives to the route proposed by Xcel Energy in their application.

Having reviewed the matter, consulted with the EFP staff, and in accordance with Minnesota Rule 7849.5700, I hereby make the following Scoping Decision:

**MATTERS TO BE ADDRESSED**

The Environmental Assessment on the Mary Lake Transmission Project will address and provide information on the following matters:

**A. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL**

- 1 Purpose of the Transmission Line
- 2 Project Location and Environmental Setting
- 3 Engineering and Operation Design
  - a. Transmission Line and Structures

- a. Transmission Line and Structures
- b. Transmission Capacity
- c. Construction Procedures
- d. Right-of-Way Maintenance

## **B. IMPACTS AND MITIGATIVE MEASURES**

1. Human Settlements
2. Noise
3. Aesthetics
4. Recreation
5. Transportation
6. Land Use
7. Prime Farmland
8. Soils and Geology
9. Flora
10. Fauna
11. Archaeological and Historic Features
12. Air Quality
13. Surface Water
14. Wetlands
15. Human Health and Safety to include Electric and Magnetic Fields (EMF)
16. Potential for radio, television and cell phone interference from transmission lines

## **C. ALTERNATIVES TO BE ADDRESSED IN THE EA**

In its Application, Xcel Energy described several alternative route segments that were evaluated and rejected as potential routes for various reasons. Several members of the public have requested that the EFP staff further investigate some of these rejected routes. EFP staff believe that it is reasonable to evaluate additional route alternatives to determine each alternative's impact compared to the impact of the route proposed by Xcel Energy. Therefore, in addition to the route proposed by Xcel Energy, the EA will also address two route alternatives, the "Modified Railroad Alternative," and the "Calder Avenue Alternative."

The "Modified Railroad Alternative," would head west along 10<sup>th</sup> Street SE from the Mary Lake Switch located east of the Mary Lake Substation. The route would then turn north along Calder Avenue SE for slightly more than one mile until it reaches the Canadian Pacific Railroad tracks where it would follow northwest along the south side of the railroad until reaching 1<sup>st</sup> Street NE. At 1<sup>st</sup> Street NE, the route would cross to the north side of the tracks and continue northwest along the railroad until it turns north at 2<sup>nd</sup> Street NE. The route would then follow 2<sup>nd</sup> Street NE to the Maple Lake Switch location outside the Buffalo Power Substation.

The "Calder Avenue Alternative," would follow the same alignment as the first portion of the "Modified Railroad Alternative," running west along 10<sup>th</sup> Street SE and then north along Calder Avenue. This route would continue north along Calder Avenue until reaching CSAH 35 where it would turn west and follow the same alignment as Xcel Energy's proposed route along CSAH 35 and 8<sup>th</sup> Street NE to the Maple Lake Switch location outside the Buffalo Power Substation.

#### **D. IDENTIFICATION OF PERMITS**

The Environmental Assessment will include a list of permits that will be required for construction of this project.

#### **ISSUES OUTSIDE THE SCOPE OF THE EA**

The Environmental Assessment will not consider the following matters:

1. The manner in which land owners are paid for transmission right-of-way easements, as that is outside the PUC jurisdiction.
2. Any alternatives not described specifically in this Scoping Decision.

#### **SCHEDULE**

The EA shall be completed and available in May 2008. A public hearing will be held in the Buffalo area after the EA has been issued and notice served.

Signed this 9 day of April, 2008

STATE OF MINNESOTA  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
OFFICE OF ENERGY SECURITY

  
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Edward A. Garvey, Director