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September 15, 2009

Dear Landowner,

You are receiving this letter because your property may be directly or indirectly affected by route alternatives for the proposed Brookings County, South Dakota, to Hampton, Minnesota, 345 kilovolt (kV) transmission line project. The route alternatives will be evaluated in an environmental impact statement (EIS), which is being prepared by the Minnesota Department of Commerce (DOC), Office of Energy Security (OES).

This letter provides you with information on the transmission line project, the route permitting process, and future opportunities to participate in the process. I encourage you to familiarize yourself with the proposed project, sign up for the project mailing list, and participate in the route permitting process.

### ***Project and Process***

On December 29, 2008, Great River Energy and Xcel Energy (applicants) filed a route permit application with the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) to construct and operate a 345 kV transmission line, beginning at the state's western border near Hendricks, Minnesota, and ending south of the Twin Cities metro area near Hampton, Minnesota. The applicants are proposing two possible routes for the transmission line, a preferred route and an alternate route. The project also includes the construction of four new substations and the expansion of four existing substations.

The applicants' route permit application is subject to environmental review in accordance with Minnesota Rules 7849.5200 to 7849.5340 (full permitting process). The first step in this process is developing the scope of the EIS for the project. The scoping process, which has already been completed, has two primary purposes: (1) to identify issues that are important to communities along the proposed routes for study in the EIS, and (2) to solicit suggestions for route alternatives, beyond those proposed by the applicants, to study in the EIS.

The OES held twelve public meetings, between March 30 and April 9, 2009, to gather public input on the proposed project and routes. At these meetings, the public had the opportunity to propose route alternatives for consideration in the EIS. Comments were also accepted outside of the public meetings through letters and emails. OES staff received more than 900 comments during the comment period. As part of this public comment process, several new route alternatives were submitted by landowners, local governments, and other stakeholders. **Property records indicate you are located near, or own property on, one or more of these route alternatives.** These new route alternatives, which will be evaluated in the EIS, can be found in the June 30, 2009, EIS scoping decision for this project.

A draft EIS is currently being prepared by the OES; it will evaluate the potential environmental, economic, social, and human impacts for all of the route alternatives. The draft EIS is scheduled to be issued in October 2009. Once issued, OES staff will hold public meetings to gather comments and questions on the draft EIS. Comments and responses will be incorporated into a final EIS.

In addition to these public meetings, there will be public hearings conducted along the proposed route(s) in late 2009. These hearings will be conducted by an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) from the Minnesota Office of Administrative Hearings. Anyone may speak at the public hearings, present evidence, ask questions of the applicants and OES staff, and submit comments on the proposed project. The ALJ will make a recommendation on a route permit to the Commission. A decision on the route permit by the Commission is not expected before January 2010.

### ***Participation***

Information about this project and the route permitting process is available on the Commission's website: <http://energyfacilities.puc.state.mn.us/Docket.html?Id=19860>, and on the Department of Commerce's eDockets website: <https://www.edockets.state.mn.us/EFiling/search.jsp> (enter the docket number year "08" and number "1474").

- **Project Mailing List.** Notice of public meetings and public hearings will be published in local newspapers and mailed to persons who register their names on the OES project mailing list. Persons interested in adding their names to the mailing list for this project should contact the OES project manager or public advisor, or register online at: <http://www.energyfacilities.puc.state.mn.us/#MailingLists>
- **Maps.** Maps of the applicants' proposed routes and of the route alternatives identified during the scoping process are available on the Commission's website: <http://energyfacilities.puc.state.mn.us/Docket.html?Id=19860>. Route alternatives are included in the "Scoping Decision Document" dated June 30, 2009.

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

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Sincerely,



Scott Ek, Project Manager