



## **DRAFT PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN**

### **BROOKINGS COUNTY – HAMPTON 345 kV TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT DOCKET No. ET2/TL 08-1474**

#### **GOAL**

The goal of this public participation plan is effective public participation in the route permitting process (Minn. Stat. § 216E.08, subd. 2).

The plan establishes a model for public involvement that provides meaningful and effective participation opportunities to the public and helps Energy Facility Permitting (EFP) staff identify relevant community concerns.

#### **OUTCOMES**

Public participation is effective when the following outcomes are achieved for citizens and local units of government:

- **Awareness.** The public is aware of the permitting process.
- **Education.** The public has timely information about the proposed project and state permitting process. The public knows how to participate in the permitting process.
- **Ease of Participation.** It is relatively easy for the public to participate in the permitting process. It is easy for citizens to relate and submit comments and suggestions.
- **Ability to Discuss and Clarify.** The public has opportunities to ask questions and clarify issues.

EFP staff will use these outcomes<sup>1</sup> to guide the development and implementation of public participation strategies.

---

<sup>1</sup> Miskowiak, D. *Meaningful to Citizens – Functional for Planning: Using Public Participation*. The Land Use Tracker, Vol. 3., No. 3, Winter 2003.

## STRATEGIES

Strategies that will be used to bring about public participation outcomes for the Brooking County – Hampton 345 kV transmission line project include:

### *Awareness*

Successful public participation begins with awareness. Citizens cannot participate if they do not know about the project or are unaware of their ability to participate. The goal of awareness is to stimulate interest and provide information on the who, what, where, and when of the project.

The following awareness strategies will be used to generate public awareness of the project and opportunities to participate:

- Notice of public meetings will be sent to those individuals whose names are on the project contact list for this project (Minn. R. 7849.5260, subp. 2).
- Public meeting notices will also be published in legal newspapers in the areas where the public meetings are to be held (Minn. R. 7849.5260, subp. 2).
- EFP staff will encourage LGUs, regional planning organizations, and Minnesota legislators to raise awareness and help citizens participate in the permitting process. EFP staff will provide informational and educational material with resources and contact information by mail.
- EFP staff will field telephone calls and emails from citizens and help inform them of the project and the state's transmission line routing process. Citizens will be made aware of future public meetings and encouraged to add their name to the project contact list for this project. Individuals will also be directed to the PUC's EFP project website.
- A project webpage has been set up on the PUC EFP website at <http://energyfacilities.puc.state.mn.us/Docket.html?Id=19860>. The webpage includes a summary of the project, the route permit application, and links to information on the state's transmission line routing process. The webpage also includes links for citizens to receive permitting process information electronically and by mail.
- Alternatives to the proposed route may be identified during the routing process. Landowners and local governments will be notified by letter that they may be located within or near a newly proposed alternative. Letters will include information on the project to date as well as that of the transmission line routing process.

### ***Education***

Educational strategies are designed to provide timely information about the proposed project and route permitting process. The goal is to build citizen capacity to become further involved in the project.

- EFP staff will conduct public information/scoping meetings along the proposed routes. The number of public meetings will be commensurate with the extent of the project and will provide ample opportunities for public participation along the proposed routes. Meetings will be scheduled in the larger cities located along the route, possible cities include, but are not limited to, Hendricks, Marshall, Granite Falls, Redwood Falls, Winthrop/Gaylord, Le Sueur, New Prague, Elko/New Market, and Hampton. Additional meeting will be scheduled based on public interest and citizen's needs for convenience and ease of participation.
- Public meeting agendas will be informal and created to allow for a more hands-on feel. An open house session will start and end the public meetings and would include stations manned by technical experts and include displays and handouts used to inform the public about the project. The areas would also serve as an opportunity for the public to ask questions, express concerns, and provide feedback on the project. A semi-formal presentation by EFP staff followed by a presentation by the applicants and a public question and answer session would be scheduled between the open house sessions.
- EFP staff will provide quality hand-outs and materials describing the project and route permitting process. Materials will also provide information on how to participate in the permitting process, including how to submit comments and concerns and suggest alternatives.
- EFP staff will provide user-friendly comment forms that include examples and pre-printed information blocks that ensure submission of information that is sometimes missing.
- EFP staff will create a station at the public meetings where citizens can provide their address to meeting staff and have a map of the area printed out, allowing them to view the proposed transmission line route, develop alternative route segments right on the map, and submit them.

### ***Ease of Participation***

Several strategies will be developed and used to make it easy for citizens to provide input to the permitting process – including citizens who can attend public meetings and those who cannot. The goal is to provide everyone interested a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed project. The comments are important in helping EFP staff identify relevant and specific community needs and concerns.

- During public meetings, EFP staff will ensure that a court reporter is available to 1) transcribe comments made during the scheduled question and answer session and 2) transcribe comments at a designated comment station to be available during the open house portions of the public meeting(s).
- EFP staff will provide user-friendly comment forms that include examples and pre-printed information blocks that ensure submission of information that is sometimes missing.
- EFP staff will provide commenting tools that enhance the ability of citizens to participate in the permitting process electronically, including:
  - PDF fill-in comment forms that can be completed and submitted electronically and that match the format of those supplied at public meetings;
  - Detailed instructions and examples (print and electronic) for email submissions;
  - Enhanced website notice with links to electronic commenting tools.

### *Ability to Discuss and Clarify*

EFP staff will provide opportunities for the open exchange of information and expertise between citizens, local and county officials, state and federal agencies, and the applicants. These opportunities are expected to result in greater citizen input, a well informed scoping decision document, and a broader set of route alternatives to examine in the environmental impact statement (EIS).

- EFP staff will convene focus groups to discuss, develop, and clarify issues and route alternatives to be studied in the EIS. Focus groups will be developed as needed, based on staff assessment of known or anticipated geographical or technical issues along the routes. Focus groups will be drawn from local governmental units (“LGUs;” cities, townships, counties) and citizens who have expressed interest in the project by signing up for the project mailing list. EFP staff will solicit LGUs for questions and unresolved issues that might indicate the need for a focus group.
- Focus groups are anticipated to meet 1-3 times during the scoping process. Meetings will be facilitated and offer mapping capabilities for participants to develop route alternatives. Focus groups are also anticipated to meet and discuss the draft EIS for the project. If possible, groups will provide recommendations on route alternatives and issues to be addressed.
- Based on questions and comments from the public to date, EFP staff will be convening an initial focus group for the region between the Lake Marion substation and the proposed Hampton Corner substation (the south metro area from Elko-New Market to Hampton).