



**Monticello to St. Cloud  
345 kilovolt (kV) Transmission Line Project  
Advisory Task Force**

**Monticello to St. Cloud Advisory Task Force  
First Meeting – June 25 2009**

**DRAFT Meeting Notes**

**Welcome and introductions**

The facilitator for the task force, Charlie Petersen, State of Minnesota, Management Analysis & Development, welcomed task force members and all present. He asked task force members to, in “around the table” fashion, introduce themselves and to relate one expectation that they had for the work of the advisory task force. Expectations included:

- Learn what is the route for the transmission line
- Be careful of the impact on property owners
- Route will minimize the impact on property owners and transportation corridors
- To ensure the environmental process is fair and thorough; clear impacts are defined and the applicant will address impacts
- Current information is available to residents impacted by the line and any road damage from construction of the line is repaired
- The line affects or has minimal restrictions on citizen; vision of growth
- See what the route will be and what part of the city will be impacted
- When will the line become a reality, it has been talked about for a long time
- Where line and sub-station will go and what impact it will have on the community
- Where is the sub-station going in relation to southwest planning area
- This is a meaningful process and not window dressing, we have an opportunity to share ideas and develop route alternatives
- Options discussed on routes to be chosen and design alternatives
- Where the route will go; if it goes through the city, what roads and future development will be impacted

**Why we are here**

Charlie reviewed the charge of the task force and a draft plan for accomplishing the charge over the course of three task force meetings. Charlie described his role as a facilitator and documenter of the task force’s work. He described the summary of work which will be the product of the task force’s work and how it will be developed. Charlie also provided ground rules for meeting logistics. Questions by task force members were discussed and addressed.

## **State route permitting process**

David Birkholz, Office of Energy Security, discussed the state permitting process. He reviewed the criteria used by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission in making a route permitting decision and issues typically covered in an environmental impact statement (EIS). Questions by task force members were discussed and addressed.

## **Project overview**

Darrin Lahr, Xcel Energy, provided an overview of the proposed transmission line project and process used by Xcel Energy to develop the proposed routes and sub-station locations. Questions by task force members were discussed and addressed. Discussion topics included:

- Can the line be underground? What would it cost?
- Where is line with respect to Interstate 94 (I-94)?
- Is MN DOT opposed to using I-94?
- Are there designs that could mitigate impacts?

## **Issues and Impacts Identified**

Charlie led the task force through a small group discussion exercise to identify and categorize impacts and issues that should be considered in the EIS for evaluation of proposed routes and substation locations. The task force members responded to the question: *What land use planning and other impacts and issues need to be considered in the evaluation of proposed transmission line routes and/or substation locations?* The task force identified seven impacts and issue areas to be evaluated in the EIS. These issue areas and specific comments are included in the notes and table below.

Some task force members submitted a “homework” worksheet that had been sent to members prior to the meeting and used to help identify issues and impacts. They noted the comments on the worksheet added additional information. These impacts and issues are included in an attached appendix.

Ron Schabel of Clearwater requested to address the task force to present a route alternative for consideration. He described an alternative that would follow the “Benton County line,” an existing 230 kV transmission line.

Based on discussion of the project with Mr. Lahr and on the issue of “transportation corridors” identified by the task force, several task force members suggested that it would be appropriate to learn more about MN DOT’s role in the route permitting process and its responsibilities.

The issues and impact areas identified include:

### **Cost impact**

- Cost impact on rate payers for alternative vs. preferred
- Minimize cost shifting; local costs for infrastructure or other; state costs for same

## **Restate the need at every step in the process**

### **Impact of stray voltage**

- Stray voltage; don't raise it, prepare to respond to it

### **Minimize transportation corridor impacts**

- Minimize transportation corridor impacts; seek input from local, regional and state agencies regarding existing and planned transportation corridors and facilities
- Protect township roads and right-of-way during construction; reconstruct as necessary; impacts roadway expansion
- Impacts on future road and interchange construction and expansion
- Why is MnDOT not easily allowing the powerline route in or near their right-of-way; land is now non-productive, 75 ft. into prime agland
- Impact to airport fly zone: St. Cloud, Maple Lake, Clearlake

### **Impacts on environmental features (wood, river, wetlands)**

- Environmental concerns
- Impact on water sources; this primary route runs through the City of Clearwater DWSMA, with the north side of I-94 being the emergency response areas and the south side a future emergency response area (future well site for additional development)
- Wild and scenic river and sensitive wetland by Fish Lake, I-94
- Meet regulatory requirements: environmental, permitting; scenic byway, historic and cultural, rest areas, wetlands and water resources, agricultural lands, endangered species
- Rural landscapes of Silver creek and Clearwater marred by zigzag line through townships

### **Impacts to future resident and commercial development**

- Bel Clare Acres potential development area – St. Joe township
- Impact on underdeveloped land – industrial and other; this will impact the marketability of lands
- Alt. route – prime development, residential area (St. Joe Township and Waite Park – along Hwy 137)
- The alt. route south of Clearwater goes through a potential growth area
- Should locate substation to industrial area
- Residential and high density areas most impacted
- Proposed substation is right in middle of growth area

### **Conform to zoning and land use plans**

- Impacts to existing housing
- How about existing plans in the works
- Negative impacts on community aesthetics
- Agland existing right-of-ways least impact
- Impact on existing farming operations

## Monticello to St. Cloud Advisory Task Force

June 25, 2009

**Identification of Impacts and Issues** - *What land use planning or other impacts and issues need to be considered in the evaluation of proposed transmission line routes and/or sub-station locations?*

<b>Cost impact</b>	<b>Restate the need at every step in the process</b>	<b>Impact of stray voltage</b>	<b>Minimize transportation corridor impacts</b>	<b>Impacts on environmental features (wood, river, wetlands)</b>	<b>Impacts to future resident and commercial development</b>	<b>Conform to zoning and land use plans</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cost impact on rate payers for alternative vs. preferred</li> <li>▪ Minimize cost shifting; local costs for infrastructure or other; state costs for same</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Stray voltage; don't raise it, prepare to respond to it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Minimize transportation corridor impacts; seek input from local, regional and state agencies regarding existing and planned transportation corridors and facilities</li> <li>▪ Protect township roads and right-of-way during construction; reconstruct as necessary; impacts roadway expansion</li> <li>▪ Impacts on future road and interchange construction and expansion</li> <li>▪ Why is MnDOT not easily allowing the powerline route in or near their right-of-way; land is now non-productive, 75 ft. into prime agland</li> <li>▪ Impact to airport fly zone: St. Cloud, Maple Lake, Clearlake</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Environmental concerns</li> <li>▪ Impact on water sources; this primary route runs through the City of Clearwater DWSMA, with the north side of I-94 being the emergency response areas and the south side a future emergency response area (future well site for additional development</li> <li>▪ Wild and scenic river and sensitive wetland by Fish Lake, I-94</li> <li>▪ Meet regulatory requirements: environmental, permitting; scenic byway, historic and cultural, rest areas, wetlands and water resources, agricultural lands, endangered species</li> <li>▪ Rural landscapes of Silver creek and Clearwater marred by zigzag line through townships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Bel Clare Acres potential development area – St. Joe township</li> <li>▪ Impact on underdeveloped land – industrial and other; this will impact the marketability of lands</li> <li>▪ Alt. route – prime development, residential area (St. Joe Township and Waite Park – along Hwy 137</li> <li>▪ The alt. route south of Clearwater goes through a potential growth area</li> <li>▪ Should locate substation to industrial area</li> <li>▪ Residential and high density areas most impacted</li> <li>▪ Proposed substation is right in middle of growth area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Impacts to existing housing</li> <li>▪ How about existing plans in the works</li> <li>▪ Negative impacts on community aesthetics</li> <li>▪ Agland existing right-of-ways least impact</li> <li>▪ Impact on existing farming operations</li> </ul>

## Appendix

# Monticello to St. Cloud Advisory Task Force Homework June 25, 2009

### Specific Route Issues and Impacts

Matt Glaesman, City of St. Cloud

**Issue:** Negative impacts on Mississippi River corridor  
**Impact:** Sight and flyways  
**Location:** I-94 and CR 75 near Heatherwood Drive

**Issue:** Housing  
**Impact:** Housing impacts; existing platted lots with some homes  
**Location:** North side of I-94 west of CR 75

**Issue:** Environmental impacts along I-94  
**Impact:** Tree loss, wetland impacts  
**Location:** North and south sides of I-94 west of CR 75

**Issue:** Interchange, new and expansions  
**Impact:** R.O.W needs for future interchanges on I 94  
**Location:** New CR 136, reconstruct at CR 75, crossing at Cooper

**Issue:** Airport fly zones  
**Impact:** Height breaks horizontal plane  
**Location:** SW of St. Cloud Regional Airport

**Issue:** Park land impacts  
**Impact:** 4F test for land acquisition  
**Location:** None in St. Cloud but may be others

**Issue:** Community aesthetics  
**Impact:** Consistency/inconsistency with gateway design goals/regulations  
**Location:** All major interchanges and corridors into cities

Bob Kroll, City of St. Augusta

**Issue:** Line is too close to houses in our area  
**Impact:** Aesthetics, not only are the lines unsightly, they can have an impact on further development of the area  
**Location:** Entire city of St. Augusta

**Issue:** Future development  
**Impact:** Proposed alternate routes go through city of St. Augusta and because of right-of-way required, may make areas undevelopable. Rerouting is not something we think developers should have to burden. Suggest approval of route along I-94.  
**Location:** Entire city of St. Augusta

**Issue:** Farming  
**Impact:** Proposed alternate routes may impact area farmers within the city of St. Augusta. Again suggest only approving I-94 route.  
**Location:** Entire city of St. Augusta

Future roads: will not be able to move poles in future and at what cost?

They can put a pole five feet off of road right-of-way.

Leigh Lenzmeier

**Issue:** At some point, the concept generally referenced as “stray voltage” should be considered. This has been an issue in St. Augusta and sooner or later will be brought up. I don’t think it’s up to the project people to raise but be prepared to respond to the extent current technology allows.

**Issue:** While it seems obvious to those who have been involved in this project for a long time, it makes sense to restate the need at every step of the process.

**Issue:** No matter where the line is placed, it will be a problem for impacted property owners. Like number 2, reiterate the big picture need.

**Issue:** Like number 1, be prepared to give a big picture of the eminent domain process. While not part of the scoping task, this is a valuable opportunity to establish a comfort level.

Jennifer Wothe, Clearwater City

**Issue:** Major environmental concern.

**Impact:** (Within a few years the city will be putting in an additional well on south side of I-94, making that part of the critical emergency response area.) If the route goes along I-94, it will run through and impact the DWSMA (wellhead protection area) in Clearwater. On the north side of I-94 is the emergency response area, and it would run right through it.

**Issue:** Land use, planning

**Impact:** Along I-94 is a large area of undeveloped industrial area. This line would impact the development of that land.

**Issue:** Land use, planning:

**Impact:** Concern over the height of the poles

- Issue:** Substations  
**Impact:** Now agricultural land but future is planned for residential  
**Location:** Area is between two cities, St. Joseph/Waite Park, currently in an orderly annexation area with Waite Park and St. Joseph Township
- Issue:** Alternate route north of 94 along County Road bypasses by future planned residential development
- Issue:** County comprehensive plan protects agricultural land

**CAPX2020**  
**Mn/DOT Monticello to St. Cloud Comments**  
6/25/2009

**Mn/DOT's Role and Responsibilities**

It is in the public interest for utility facilities to be accommodated on the right of way of any highway when such use and occupancy does not interfere with the flow of traffic and the safe operation of vehicles, does not otherwise impair the highway or its visual quality, and does not conflict with provisions of federal, state, or local laws or regulations.

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) operates the state trunk highway system to provide a safe and convenient means for the vehicular transportation of people and goods. Utility owners provide other essential services to the public. Cooperation between these two entities is essential if the public is to be served in the most economical manner consistent with their respective public service needs, obligations, and interests.

**Corridor related concerns**

- Expansion – roadways targeted for these routes connect regional trade centers and carry large volumes of traffic.
  - Location of these lines in close proximity to the right of way limits opportunities for future expansion or reconstruction due to the complex and costly nature of moving the utilities.
    - This area of the state is identified as a high growth potential area and this corridor is the primary arterial that serves the area.
    - See more detailed comments
  - Provision for easements for the “Blow out Zone” transfers the land rights for this area limiting its use for trunk highway purposes in the future.
  - Allowance within the interstate right of way is a violation of federal regulation
- Maintenance
  - Traditional activities to maintain roadways and bridges are impacted if within the blow out zone
  - Weather events that disrupt transmission services and access to the TH system will also impact other targeted uses of the interstate and trunk highway system (large equipment moves, defense, evacuation, emergency landing)
  - Location of the blow out zone will require the removal of or limitation of cost effective snow protection activities such as living snow fence.
- Environmental
  - Scenic Byways will be impacted on segments of all routes identified to date affecting scenic easements, protection of resources, and conformance with prohibitions.
    - See more detailed comments
  - Cultural Resources may be impacted
- Mn/DOT Liabilities with Utilities within the Right of Way
  - System Redundancy
  - Airport Impacts
    - See more detailed comments

- Trails
- Proximity to rest areas

**More detailed comments will be submitted in letter form during the comment period.**

## **MnDOT Worksheet Comments**

MnDOT appreciates the opportunity to comment and commends the applicants for their communication efforts throughout this process. We request that the project: 1) not negatively affect the operations or maintenance of the state trunk highway system and 2) not increase or impose additional costs on the state trunk highway fund.

- Our comments will focus on route alignments that are within 75' of the trunk highway right of way or roadway clear zone and that may encroach on the trunk highway right of way. Any alignments proposed within 75' of the right of way will have encroachment into the right of way either from the blow out zone or aerial intrusion. Alignments closer than 75' to the roadway right of way will have greater impacts. Mn/DOT is particularly concerned about the proximity of proposed transmission lines to trunk highway right of way and how this might affect Mn/DOT's maintenance, reconstruction, or new construction of roads and interchanges.
- Our comments describe the information that we believe is needed to make the route analysis clear and complete, conform to state and federal regulatory and permitting requirements and meet documentation requirements when permits are necessary.
- The commissioner of transportation is required by Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 174, to develop, adopt, revise and monitor a statewide transportation plan that includes all modes of transportation, including highway, rail, air, waterways, transit, trails, bicycles and pedestrians. Therefore, Mn/DOT comments will include information about other transportation services (rail, waterways, airports and scenic enhancements) that could be impacted by the proposed routes.
- It should be noted that alignments proposing aerial or blowout zone encroachment, foundation construction access or encroachment and maintenance access from the trunk highway rights of way will require a permit from Mn/DOT in accordance with Mn/DOT's Utility Accommodation Policy. We request a thorough evaluation of all environmental impacts of the proposed alignments within each route that would involve any use of Mn/DOT right of way.
- As required by 23 CFR 645.215, Mn/DOT has adopted a Utility Accommodation Policy to address utility installations in trunk highway right of way. Part 645.215 also requires advance Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) approval for all proposed utility installations that are on the national highway system (NHS) and not in conformance with Mn/DOT's Utility Accommodation Policy. It should also be noted that aerial or blowout zone encroachment on the Federal-aid highway system that is not in conformance with the Mn/DOT Utility Accommodation Policy will require advance approval from the FHWA. This would be considered a Federal action and as such would need to meet all requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA [42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.]) to be in conformance with Federal regulations.

## **General Comments**

As noted above, it is possible, that both Mn/DOT and FHWA will have a role in permitting and approving the location of these transmission lines given the range of alignments that are being considered. It has been indicated that the environmental process undertaken by the Office of Energy Security will be the only environmental study that is completed. As such, it is unclear what Mn/DOT's role and responsibility will be in ensuring conformance with applicable state and federal regulatory requirements if a permit and federal approval are necessary.

- We strongly recommend an inclusive process that engages federal agencies early in the process to aid in expeditious completion of the required documentation. Specifically, the environmental process should identify any locations that would require interaction by the Federal Highway Administration, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, United States Coast Guard, United States Department of Interior, United States Environmental Protection Agency, Federal Aviation Administration, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Corps of Engineers, Federal Railroad Administration and the United States Department of Energy.
- We request the opportunity to work with you in developing a clear determination of Mn/DOT's role and responsibilities through the environmental process.
- The environmental process and subsequent document will need to evaluate sensitive properties and cultural resource impacts of each proposed route alignment so these can be properly assessed to determine if any resources are within Mn/DOT right of way and would have an impact from the issuance of a Mn/DOT permit.
- We request a thorough evaluation of all environmental impacts of the proposed alignments within each proposed route that would require Mn/DOT to issue a permit for use or encroachment of its right of way.
- It is expected that there may be impacts to non-highway transportation systems in the vicinity of the proposed routes. These systems include riverways and their transportation uses, rail corridors, and airport operations. The environmental process and subsequent document will need to evaluate resource impacts of each proposed route alignment so these can be properly assessed.
- Roadway corridors should be investigated to identify if any of the proposed transmission line routes will impact routes used to move houses or large equipment.
- It is also prudent to identify all requirements for both the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) and NEPA processes in the event a NEPA process is required. The state EIS process may not meet federal regulatory requirements.

## **Airports**

The proposed transmission line routes have the potential to negatively affect airport operations, navigational equipment, and land uses around airports. The commissioner of transportation has general supervision over the statewide system of airports in the state. He must assist political subdivisions, cooperate with federal authorities and promote and protect the utility of all Minnesota public airports and the public investment in them as outlined in Minnesota Statutes, chapter 360. Section 360.063, requires the commissioner to prescribe airport approach and turning standards and authorizes the commissioner to indicate circumstances in which structures would be airport hazards.

The routes proposed are in proximity to a number of public airports. Due to the proximity of an airport, a Notice of Proposed Construction or Alteration to the Federal Aviation Administration will be required. Please review the criteria for which notice must be made at the FAA Website - <http://forms.faa.gov/forms/faa7460-1.pdf>. A "Determination of Hazard" or "No

Hazard” from the FAA is not a permit to construct. Independent of the determination, permits from the local airport zoning authority are required. All public airports within five miles of the project must be notified and given an opportunity to comment on compatibility of transmission lines with airport operations and land use compatibility.

The Mn/DOT Office of Aeronautics establishes, operates and maintains electronic navigation aids to augment the federal system in Minnesota. The Very High Frequency Omnidirectional Radio Range ([VOR](#)) system must be protected. The FAA or MN/DOT Office of Aeronautics must be notified to evaluate potential impacts of the proposed routes within five miles of a VOR.

### **Weather**

It is expected that weather events (tornado, ice or blizzard conditions, heavy winds, lightning, etc) that disrupt transmission services due to down lines could disrupt access to the trunk highway system. This could also impact other uses such as emergency access, large equipment moves, defense actions, evacuation, and emergency landings. In 1998 a severe tornado hit St. Peter, Minnesota and major roadways were closed due to power lines that were down. A similar event that affected Nicollet and St. Peter occurred in 2006 and again required closure of major roadways due to lines on the ground. A third event that affected Hugo required closure of TH 61 to secure the area. The environmental study should collect information on the history of transmission line disruption including specific information on how often lines are down and why to better understand the possible impacts to the transportation system. This would also be helpful in evaluating impacts to the rail corridors and other transportation services that are within the proposed routes.

The location of the blowout zone and/or aerial encroachment may require the removal of or limitation of cost effective snow protection activities such as living snow fences. The study should address specific limitations to vegetation related to the trunk highway use into the future.

Some of the transmission line routes that have been proposed are in the vicinity of transportation corridors that have limited options for alternate highway routes. The environmental study should address impacts to trunk highway system redundancy resulting from transmission line outages that affect the use of the transportation corridors.

### **Maintenance**

Traditional activities to maintain roadways and bridges could be impacted if the work area is within the blowout zone. The study process should include specific information regarding limitations to the trunk highway use if there is aerial or blowout zone encroachment. Items to address should include the use of heavy equipment, construction activities and vertical clear zone requirements to ensure safety.

The location of the blowout zone or aerial encroachment relative to longitudinal ditch sections should be investigated in proposed parallel installations. Mn/DOT uses large equipment for ditch dredging operations; horizontal reach on the equipment can be as long as 60 feet, with a vertical dimension up to 35 feet.

### **Permits**

State law prohibits locating or servicing utility facilities on state highway right of way without first obtaining a permit from the commissioner of transportation. Freeways are a special case; state law requires that utility facilities be located outside the control of access lines, preferably on private property. Control of access is the condition where the rights of owners or occupants of land abutting highways is fully or partially controlled by public authority. This means that preference is given to through traffic by providing access connections with selected public roads and by prohibiting crossings at grade or direct private driveway connections. The Department of Transportation has adopted a utility accommodation policy that governs the

location and installation of utility facilities. If the department departs from the policy with respect to the location of a utility facility on a freeway, MNDOT must obtain the prior approval of the Federal Highway Administration. In all cases, the location of utility facilities on federal-aid highway right of way must not adversely affect highway or traffic safety, impair the present or future use of the highway, impair its aesthetic qualities or conflict with federal laws and rules governing the use of highway right of way.

### **Safety Impacts**

Mn/DOT has the responsibility to maintain and preserve Minnesota highways so they are safe, structurally sound, convenient to use and aesthetically pleasing. Location of lines in close proximity to the right of way may impose hazards to construction and maintenance operations such as; mowing, sign placement or replacement, bridge inspection, ditch cleaning and other operations. Many construction and maintenance activities use large equipment that requires large overhead clearances for safe operation. Elimination of these clear areas may not conform to Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requirements and may pose a safety hazard for workers within the trunk highway right of way.

Location of lines in close proximity to the right of way may impose hazards to the travelers on the trunk highway system. In areas where the rights of way are narrow, aerial and blow out zone encroachment could extend over the driving lanes limiting the use of the space above the roadway for other transportation purposes.

Location of poles within the clear zone is a safety hazard as the poles for these facilities are fixed objects that would be within the recovery area for vehicles that leave the roadway.

The studies should evaluate risk and overall system safety impacts that may be imposed on Mn/DOT and subsequently the State of Minnesota in the event that poles, lines, aerial encroachment, blowout zone, and access are allowed within the Mn/DOT right of way.

### **Economic Impact to the Transportation System**

Location of lines in close proximity to the right of way limits opportunities for future expansion or reconstruction of highways due to the complex and extremely costly nature of moving the transmission lines. This should be part of the economic assessment of the alignments within the routes proposed.

The studies should evaluate risk and overall system and trunk highway funding liabilities that may be imposed on Mn/DOT and the trunk highway fund and subsequently the state of Minnesota in the event that poles, lines, aerial encroachment, blowout zone, and access are allowed within the Mn/DOT right of way.

### **We are still collecting specific comments for the following:**

**State and National Scenic Byways**

**Rest Areas**

**Rail Corridors**

**Detailed Comments by Districts**