

# **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

## **DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENT**

**XCEL ENERGY/GREAT RIVER ENERGY**

**MONTICELLO TO ST. CLOUD**

**345 kV TRANSMISSION PROJECT**

**PUC DOCKET No. E002, ET2/TL-09-246**

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**Prepared by**



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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

On April 8, 2009, Xcel Energy and Great River Energy (Applicants) submitted a high voltage transmission line (HVTL) Route Permit application to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) for the proposed Monticello to St. Cloud 345 kV Transmission Line Project (Project).

Minnesota Statutes Section 216E.03, subd. 2 provide that no person may construct a high voltage transmission line without a route permit from the Commission. An HVTL is defined as a transmission line of 100 kV or more and greater than 1,500 feet in length in Minnesota Statutes Section 216E.01, subd. 4. The 345 kV transmission line proposed here is an HVTL and therefore a route permit is required prior to construction.

The application was submitted pursuant to the provisions of the Full Permitting Process outlined in Minnesota Rules 7849.5200 to 7849.5340. Minnesota Statute Section 216B.243, subd. 2 states that no large energy facility shall be sited or constructed in Minnesota without the issuance of a Certificate of Need by the Commission.

A large energy facility is defined to include transmission lines between 100 kV and 200 kV if they are more than 10 miles long (Minnesota Statute 216B.2421, subd. 2(2) and (3)). The 345 kV transmission lines proposed for the Project qualifies as a large energy facility and requires a Certificate of Need. A Certificate of Need for the CapX 2020 projects, of which this application is a part, was issued by the Commission on May 22, 2009.

The review process began with the determination by the Commission in its May 22, 2009, Order that the application is complete. The Commission has one year to reach a final decision on the route permit application from the date the application is determined to be complete. The Commission may extend this limit for up to three months for just cause or upon agreement of the applicant (Minn. Rule 7849.5340).

## 2.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Xcel Energy and Great River Energy are making this Application to construct and operate a new 345 kV HVTL between the existing Monticello Substation and a new Quarry Substation west of St. Cloud.

- Monticello Substation - Modifications will be made at the existing Monticello Substation to accommodate the proposed 345 kV transmission Line.
- Monticello to St. Cloud 345 kV Transmission Line - The proposed 28-mile line will be constructed primarily on single-pole, double-circuit capable, self-weathering or galvanized steel structures.
- Quarry Substation - The proposed Quarry Substation will be located west of the city of St. Cloud. The substation is proposed to be a 345/115 kV substation, ultimately up to 15 acres in size, to allow for the interconnection of the proposed 345 kV transmission line, an existing 115 kV transmission line and future high voltage transmission lines.

### **3.0 EIS SCOPING PROCESS**

The purpose of the scoping process is to provide the public with an opportunity to participate in the development of the scope of the EIS by holding a public meeting and soliciting public comment.

On Thursday, July 2, 2009, the Office of Energy Security (OES) Energy Facility Permitting staff (EFP) will hold public information meetings at the Clearwater Town Hall. The meetings will start at 1:00 pm and 6:00 pm. The purpose of the meeting is to provide information to the public about the proposed project, to answer questions, and to allow the public an opportunity to suggest alternatives and impacts that should be considered during preparation of the environmental review document. Written comments may also be submitted; written comments must be submitted no later than Friday, July 25, 2009.

Written comments should be mailed to David Birkholz ([david.birkholz@state.mn.us](mailto:david.birkholz@state.mn.us)), Minnesota Department of Commerce, Office of Energy Security, 85 7<sup>th</sup> Place, Suite 500, St. Paul, Minnesota 55101-2198; or fax 651.297.7891.

The scoping process also includes the convening of an advisory task force (ATF). The ATF members will assist the OES in determining specific impacts and issues of local concern that should be evaluated in the EIS. The ATF will focus primarily on land use planning issues and impacts. ATF members will also assist the OES in determining potential route alternatives that should be assessed in the EIS.

Persons who want to be advised of the OES scoping decision can register their names with the OES EFP staff at the public meeting, on the Public Utilities Commission's website or contact David Birkholz at (651) 296-2878. The final scoping decision will also be posted on the Public Utilities Commission's website.

### **4.0 COMMENTS**

This section will address substantive comments received during the scoping process. The scoping document will discuss here the questions and comments received and approaches to addressing those questions envisioned for the EIS.

The section will also address possible alternatives raised by the public and the advisory task force. It will explain here which alternative routes or line segments will be included in the environmental impact statement.

### **5.0 DRAFT SCOPING OUTLINE**

The Environmental Impact Statement on the Monticello to St. Cloud 345 kV Transmission Line Project will address and provide information on the following matters:

#### **A. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL**

1. Purpose of the Purposed Transmission Line.

2. Regulatory Framework
3. Project Location and Setting
4. Project Description/Engineering and Operation Design
  - Transmission Line and Structures
  - Transmission Capacity
  - Construction Procedures
  - ROW Requirements

## **B. ALTERNATIVES TO BE ADDRESSED IN THE EIS**

At this time the OES EFP staff is not recommending that any additional routes, other than those presented in Xcel Energy's HVTL Route Permit Application, be evaluated in the EIS. However, alternatives may arise through the public comment and advisory task force processes.

## **C. 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
  - Electric and Magnetic Fields (EMF)
  - Stray Voltage
16. Potential for radio, television and cell phone interference from transmission lines

## **6.0 SCHEDULE FOR COMPLETION OF EIS**

The Environmental Impact Statement on the HVTL will be completed by December 2009.

Upon completion of the draft EIS, the OES EFP staff will notify those persons who have asked to be notified of the completion. In addition, the DOC EFP staff will publish notice of the availability of the draft EIS in the EQB Monitor (the bi-weekly newsletter of the EQB). The draft EIS will be made available for review and will be posted on the Public Utilities Commission's webpage. The DOC EFP staff will hold a public meeting in the project area to provide an opportunity for the public to ask questions and to comment on the draft EIS. The public will also have a period of time (at least 10 days) after the hearing to submit written comments.

Comments on the draft EIS shall become part of the record in the proceeding for this docket.

Applications for high voltage transmission line route permits under the full permitting process require a contested-case hearing upon completion of the draft EIS pursuant to Minn. R. 7849.5330. The hearing must be conducted by an administrative law judge from the Office of Administrative Hearings pursuant to the contested case procedures of Minnesota Statutes, chapter 14. Notice of the hearing must be given in accordance with Minnesota Statutes, section 216E.03, subdivision 6. A portion of the hearing will be held in the area where the proposed project would be located.

### 7.0 IDENTIFICATION OF PERMITS

The Environmental Impact Statement will include a list of permits that will be required for the project proposers to construct this project. The following permits have been identified as potential requirements for the project:

| Agency/Department                                                                           | Permit/Approval                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Federal</b>                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service                                                              | Endangered Species Act Coordination/Consultation<br>Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Eagle Protection Act Coordination/Consultation                                                                         |
| U.S. Army Corps of Engineers                                                                | Section 404 Regional General Permit                                                                                                                                                                      |
| U.S. Federal Aviation Administration                                                        | 17 C.F.R. Part 77 Review                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| U.S. Department of the Treasury, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives        | Explosive User's Permit                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>State</b>                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Minnesota Pollution Control Agency                                                          | National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System – General Permit Authorization to Discharge Stormwater Associated with Construction Activity<br>Section 401 Clean Water Act, Water Quality Certification |
| Minnesota Department of Natural Resources                                                   | Minnesota Endangered Species Act Coordination/Consultation<br>License to Cross Public Waters or State Lands                                                                                              |
| Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office                                                | Section 106 Consultation, National Historical Preservation Act                                                                                                                                           |
| Minnesota Department of Transportation                                                      | Utility Permit                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Local</b>                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Minnesota Board of Soil and Water Resources – Local Governmental Units                      | Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act Compliance                                                                                                                                                            |
| Affected County and Local Jurisdiction or Planning Department, Department of Transportation | Roadway Access, Crossing, or Encroachment Permits<br>Over-Weight/Width Permits                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Other</b>                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| State or Federal Conservation Easement Programs                                             | Coordination or approval to cross enrolled lands                                                                                                                                                         |