



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

**Freeport to St. Cloud Advisory Task Force  
First Meeting – January 22, 2010**

**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:

- Impacts are minimized on citizens of Stearns County
- No matter where you place the line, 50% won't like it and 50% don't mind
- Our concern and possibilities are taken seriously at the next level; these meetings will not be a waste of time
- Minimize the impact on agriculture and farmers; our voices are heard
- We make recommendations that have an impact on the ultimate decision
- Environmental issues and agriculture issues are considered; underground option is explored
- Come up with reasonable solutions to the siting issue
- The process of evaluation will have a level of comparative transparency
- All points are taken into consideration and issues are represented fairly and evenly
- Protect the welfare and interests in the area
- Complete the charge of the advisory task force
- Balance of issues and needs expressed
- Balance and equilibrium; what is best for Stearns County

**Why we are here**

Charlie reviewed with the task force, 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 and the role of the advisory task force. He discussed 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. He discussed the difficulties that Xcel Energy perceived in routing along the Interstate 94 corridor between Freeport and St. Cloud. These difficulties included: forested areas, service roads, the interstate exchange at Avon, Spunk Lake and associated homes, Minnesota Department of Transportation rest areas, and the City of Albany and its golf course. Questions by task force members were discussed and addressed.

## **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 environmental impact statement (EIS) for evaluation of proposed routes. 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 eight impacts and issue areas to be evaluated in the EIS. These issue areas and specific comments are included in the notes and table below.

The issues and impact areas identified include:

### **Design considerations**

- “State of the art” project: option to go underground and address aesthetics, some environmental concerns, public health and safety, impact on residents, and greater security from weather
- Follow existing public use corridors
- Avoid proliferation of new corridors

### **Environmental impacts**

- Environmental Impacts: 150 ft. swath, trees, significant natural resources in the area – bogs, lakes, wetlands, woodlands; bio-impact survey
- Least environmental impact
- Avoid wetlands, flood plains and all environmentally sensitive areas
- Preserve wetlands and woodlands
- Wildlife; designated areas, wildlife survey, production areas, recreational areas

## **Economic impact**

- Avoid agriculture land with irrigation systems; loss of productive land, nuisance of electro-magnetic fields on agricultural operations
- Irrigation potential
- Avoid disrupting farmland by not criss-crossing farmland, only follow road rights-of-way
- Minimize economic impact; preserve jobs and businesses, consider businesses ability to expand, preserve farmland, avoid impacts on farm operations

## **Impacts on residents** (direct and indirect)

- **Public health and safety**
  - Impacts on residents, loss of homes and living next to the line
  - Public health and safety, electromagnetic fields, impacts on current or newer electronic devices, e. g. pacemakers
  - Health both human and animal; magnetic fields, electrical induction issue, stray voltage issue
- **Aesthetics**
  - Aesthetics, visual
  - Have a large buffer between power lines and residential dwellings
  - Large tract acres vs. small tract areas
- **Electronic interference**
  - TV and radio reception

## **Historical Implications**

- Historical implications; century farms and others – churches, cemeteries
- Century farms; 100 years in business, emotion, family farms, historical, heritage character
- Large tract acres vs. small tract areas

## **Zoning impacts**

- Avoid city limits and defined/annexed potential city growth areas
- Annexed future residential development along County Road 138 between Waite Park and County Road 121
- Southwest beltway corridor between Waite Park and St. Joseph cities
- Affect on property value

Task force members also identified impacts and issues through a second means – completion of a worksheet, which was “homework” for the first meeting of the task force. These impacts and issues are included in Appendix A.

## Freeport to St. Cloud Advisory Task Force

### January 22, 2010

**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?*

Design considerations	Environmental impacts	Economic impact	Impacts on residents (direct and indirect)			Historical Implications	Zoning impacts
			Public health and safety	Aesthetics	Electronic interference		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ “State of the art” project: option to go underground and address aesthetics, some environmental concerns, public health and safety, impact on residents, and greater security from weather</li> <li>▪ Follow existing public use corridors</li> <li>▪ Avoid proliferation of new corridors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Environmental Impacts: 150 ft. swath, trees, significant natural resources in the area – bogs, lakes, wetlands, woodlands; bio-impact survey</li> <li>▪ Least environmental impact</li> <li>▪ Avoid wetlands, flood plains and all environmentally sensitive areas</li> <li>▪ Preserve wetlands and woodlands</li> <li>▪ Wildlife; designated areas, wildlife survey, production areas, recreational areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Avoid agriculture land with irrigation systems; loss of productive land, nuisance of electro-magnetic fields on ag operation</li> <li>▪ Irrigation potential</li> <li>▪ Avoid disrupting farmland by not criss-crossing farmland, only follow road right-of-ways</li> <li>▪ Minimize economic impact; preserve jobs and businesses, consider businesses ability to expand, preserve farmland, avoid impacts on farm operations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Impacts on residents, loss of homes and living next to the line</li> <li>▪ Public health and safety, electromagnetic fields, impacts on current or newer electronic devices, e. g. pacemakers</li> <li>▪ Health both human and animal; magnetic fields, electrical induction issue, stray voltage issue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Aesthetics, visual</li> <li>▪ Have a large buffer between power lines and residential dwellings</li> <li>▪ Large tract acres vs. small tract areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ TV and radio reception</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Historical implications,, century farms and others – churches, cemeteries</li> <li>▪ Century farms; 100 years in business, emotion, family farms, historical, heritage character</li> <li>▪ Large tract acres vs. small tract areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Avoid city limits and defined/annexed potential city growth areas</li> <li>▪ Annexed future residential development along County Road 138 between Waite Park and County Road 121</li> <li>▪ Southwest beltway corridor between Waite Park and St. Joseph cities</li> <li>▪ Affect on property value</li> </ul>

## **Next steps**

Charlie reminded task force members that their homework for the next meeting was to come prepared to discuss and draw route alternatives that might address the impacts and issues identified in the first meeting.

Task force members discussed meeting dates and times for future meetings. Meetings will be held in Avon. Meetings dates are February 4, 9:00 AM – 12:30 PM and February 25, 9:00 AM – 12:30 PM.

Task force members discussed maps that would be helpful for formulating route alternatives at the second meeting. Members agreed to bring along maps depicting growth plans and/or comprehensive plans for their governmental units.

## Appendix A - Homework

In determining whether to issue a permit for a high voltage transmission line, the commission shall consider the following:

- A. effects on human settlement, including, but not limited to, displacement, noise, aesthetics, cultural values, recreation, and public services;
- B. effects on public health and safety;
- C. effects on land-based economies, including, but not limited to, agriculture, forestry, tourism, and mining;
- D. effects on archaeological and historic resources;
- E. effects on the natural environment, including effects on air and water quality resources and flora and fauna;
- F. effects on rare and unique natural resources;
- G. application of design options that maximize energy efficiencies, mitigate adverse environmental effects, and could accommodate expansion of transmission or generating capacity;
- H. use or paralleling of existing rights-of-way, survey lines, natural division lines, and agricultural field boundaries;
- I. use of existing large electric power generating plant sites;
- J. use of existing transportation, pipeline, and electrical transmission systems or rights-of-way;
- K. electrical system reliability;
- L. costs of constructing, operating, and maintaining the facility which are dependent on design and route;
- M. adverse human and natural environmental effects which cannot be avoided; and
- N. irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources.

**Minn. R. 7850.4100**

Scoping Category	Scoping Consideration	Evaluation Metric	Selection Criteria	Weight	Applicant Route Alternative South	Applicant Route Alternative Center	Applicant Route Alternative North	ATF Route Alternative
<b>Environmental factors</b>	Conservation Easements							
	Biological Survey Sites							
	Wildlife Management Areas							
	Public/protected waters							
	Existing mitigation							
	Water courses							
	Wetlands							
	Woodlands							
	Prairie							
	Steep slopes, erosive soils							
<b>Physical Factors</b>	Length of Route							
	Area Impacted							
	Impacts within existing ROW							
	Interstate Highway							
	US Highway							
	State Trunk Highway							
	County State Aid Highway							

Scoping Category	Scoping Consideration	Evaluation Metric	Selection Criteria	Weight	Applicant Route Alternative South	Applicant Route Alternative Center	Applicant Route Alternative North	ATF Route Alternative
	County Road							
	Township Road							
	Cartway							
	Impacts parallel existing transmission corridors							
	Concurrent projects/ Construction activities							
<b>Zoning factors</b>	Existing local zoning restrictions							
	Joint Planning/ Orderly Annexation areas							
	Development utilities (Sewer, water, roads)							
	Non-conformities created							
	Consistency with long-range development patterns/plans							
	Residences Displaced							
	Building/construction rights lost							
<b>Agricultural Factors</b>	Prime Soils							

Scoping Category	Scoping Consideration	Evaluation Metric	Selection Criteria	Weight	Applicant Route Alternative South	Applicant Route Alternative Center	Applicant Route Alternative North	ATF Route Alternative
	Interference with irrigation							
<b>Economic/Social factors</b>	Mineral Extraction							
	Aviation Sites							
	Antenna/Radio Transmission							
	Cemeteries							
	Churches							
	Schools/Child Care							
	Recreational/open space/parkland							
	Archaeological Sites							
	Century/heritage farms							
	Historical Sites							
Cultural Sites								