



STATE OF MINNESOTA
Department of Commerce



Issued: May 24, 2011

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

In the Matter of the Application by Xcel Energy for a Route Permit for the Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse 345 kV and 161 kV Transmission Line Project

PUC Docket Number: E002/TL-09-1448; OAH Docket No. 3-2500-21181-2

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that a public hearing will be held on behalf of the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) on the Xcel Energy route permit application for the Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse 345 kV and 161 kV transmission line project. The public hearing will be held at the times and locations noted below. Ending times reflect the latest a public hearing will run. Hearings may conclude earlier where all attendees have had the opportunity to comment and all other business has been concluded.

PUBLIC HEARING DATES AND LOCATIONS

Hearings will be held from **1:30 – 4:30 p.m. and 6:30 – 9:30 p.m.** at each venue. Each hearing will offer the same information and opportunity to comment, so interested persons need attend only one of the hearings.

<p>June 14, 2011 Plainview American Legion 215 3rd Street SW</p>	<p>June 15, 2011 Pine Island American Legion 108 1st Avenue SE</p>	<p>June 16, 2011 Cannon Falls High School Auditorium 820 E Minnesota Street</p>
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The evidentiary hearing will convene on June 20, 2011, at the Public Utilities Commission in Saint Paul, and will continue through June 24, 2011, as necessary to complete the hearing.

Public Hearing. The purpose of the public hearing is to receive comments from members of the public and to compile the record for the Commission to consider in making a final decision on the transmission line route permit request. The Administrative Law Judge will write a report and make a recommendation to the Commission on which route to authorize and on any appropriate permit conditions. The Commission will make a final decision on the route permit at a subsequent Commission meeting.

Administrative Law Judge. Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) Kathleen D. Sheehy will preside at the hearings. Her address and contact information is: Office of Administrative Hearings, P.O. Box 64620, 600 North Robert Street, St. Paul, Minnesota 55164-0620, Phone: (651) 361-7848, Fax: (651) 361-7936.

Written Comments. Written comments regarding the route permit should be submitted directly to Judge Sheehy. Comments may be submitted by U.S. Mail, fax or email. **Comments will be accepted through June 30, 2011,** and should include the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) Docket Number 3-2500-21181-2. Mailed comments must be postmarked by that date. Emails should be sent to routecomments.oah@state.mn.us. Faxed, emailed, and delivered comments must be received by 4:30 p.m. on that date.

Office of Administrative Hearing Rules. The ALJ will conduct the contested case hearings in accordance with Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 14, and the Office of Administrative Hearings procedural rules for the Commission's energy facility permitting process (Minnesota Rules, Chapter 1405). The applicable statutes and rules are available on the Office of the Revisor of Statutes webpage at: <https://www.revisor.mn.gov>. Statutes and rules may also be purchased at Minnesota's Bookstore, 660 Olive St., St. Paul, Minn. 55155, or telephone at (651) 297-3000.

Conduct of Hearing. At the start of each hearing session, the ALJ will explain the procedural rules for the hearing, including the sequence for providing testimony and questioning witnesses. Members of the public may participate without the necessity of intervening as a party. Representation by legal counsel is permitted but not required. Participation includes: a) offering direct testimony; b) offering testimony or other material in written form at or following the hearing; and c) questioning witnesses.

Any person who wishes to question a witness, but does not want to ask the questions, may submit questions in writing to the ALJ, who will then question the witness. Questions may be submitted during the hearing or may be sent to the ALJ in advance of the hearing. Upon completion of the hearings, a transcript of the proceedings will be available at local libraries.

Continuation of Hearing. The ALJ may elect to recess the hearing and set additional days for hearing, if necessary.

Request for Accommodation. Any person who needs an accommodation for a disability in order to participate in the hearing, and any person who requires an interpreter, including a foreign language interpreter, should promptly notify the Office of Administrative Hearings, P.O. Box 64620, 600 North Robert Street, St. Paul, Minnesota 55164-0620, Phone: (651) 361-7900 (voice) or (651) 361-7878 (TDD).

Route Permit. Under the Power Plant Siting Act (Minn. Statute 216E.03, subd. 2), a route permit from the Commission is required to build a high-voltage transmission line. A high-voltage transmission line is a conductor of electric energy and associated facilities designed for and capable of operation at a nominal voltage of 100 kilovolts (kV) or more and is greater than 1,500 feet in length. A route permit application for the proposed 345 kV and 161 kV transmission line project was filed by the applicant on January 19, 2010, and was accepted as complete by the Commission on March 9, 2010. Department of Commerce, Energy Facility Permitting (EFP) staff prepared a draft environmental impact statement (EIS) on the proposed project. The draft EIS discusses potential impacts of the project, evaluates alternatives, and suggests mitigation.

Electronic versions of the route permit application, draft EIS, and other documents relevant to this matter are available for viewing or download at the Commission website at:

<http://energyfacilities.puc.state.mn.us/Docket.html?Id=25731> or eDockets at: <https://www.edockets.state.mn.us/EFiling/search.jsp> ("09" year and "1448" number).

Project Description. Xcel Energy, on behalf of itself and regional utilities that are part of the CapX2020 initiative, is proposing to construct and operate a new 345 kV high voltage transmission line (HVTL), approximately 90 miles in length in Minnesota, connecting an existing substation near Hampton, Minn., to a proposed North Rochester Substation between Zumbrota and Pine Island, Minn., and continuing eastward to cross the Mississippi River near Kellogg, Minn. The line would continue in Wisconsin an additional 50 miles to a new substation in the La Crosse, Wis., area. In addition, the project includes a new 161 kV line, approximately 15 miles in length, between the proposed North Rochester Substation and the existing Northern Hills Substation in northwest Rochester.

The proposed 345 kV transmission line would be constructed primarily with single-pole steel structures, ranging in height from 130 to 175 feet, with an average span of 1,000 feet between poles. The structures

would be “double circuit capable,” meaning that a second 345 kV circuit could be placed on the structures in the future if warranted. The typical right-of-way (ROW) for the 345 kV transmission line would be 150 feet.

The proposed 161 kV transmission line would be constructed primarily with single-pole steel structures, ranging in height from 70 to 105 feet, with an average span of 400 to 700 feet between poles. The typical ROW for the 161 kV transmission line would be 80 feet.

The proposed project includes construction of a new substation, in an area between Zumbrota and Pine Island, Minnesota, and modifications at two existing substations. The new “North Rochester Substation” would require the acquisition and development of 40 acres for substation infrastructure. Project construction is expected to begin in the second quarter of 2012 and be completed and in service by the fourth quarter of 2015.

Identified Parties. The parties to this proceeding identified on the date of this notice are as follows:

Applicants

Xcel Energy, Thomas Hillstrom, 414 Nicollet Mall, MP-8A, Minneapolis, MN 55401, 1-800-238-7968, lacrosseinfo@capx2020.com.

Intervenors

By the intervention deadline of May 2, 2011, the following parties had intervened in the proceeding and now have party status:

Oronoco Township, Philip R. Krauss, Rachel R. Myers, and Timothy J. Keane, Malkerson Gunn Martin LLP, 1900 U. S. Bank Plaza South Tower, 220 South Sixth Street, Minneapolis, MN 55402.

American Transmission Company, LLC, and ATC Management, Inc., Brian M. Meloy, Leonard Street and Dienard, 150 South Fifth Street, Suite 2300, Minneapolis, MN 55402.

NoCapX 2020, United Citizens Action Network (U-CAN), and the North Route Group, Carol A. Overland, Attorney at Law, P.O. Box 176, Red Wing, MN 55066.

Project Contacts. If you have questions or would like further information about this project please contact Department of Commerce staff. Matthew Langan (matthew.langan@state.mn.us, (651) 296-2096) is the State Permit Manager and Ray Kirsch (raymond.kirsch@state.mn.us, (651) 296-7588) is the Public Advisor. The public advisor is available to answer questions about the permitting procedures and how to effectively participate in the process, but does not provide legal advice. The address for staff is: Minnesota Department of Commerce, Energy Facilities Permitting, 85 7th Place East, Suite 500, St. Paul, MN 55101-2198.

Minnesota Department of Commerce Legal Counsel. Karen Finstad Hammel, Minnesota Attorney General’s Office, 1400 Bremer Tower, 445 Minnesota Street, St. Paul, MN 55101-2127, Phone (651) 757-1248, Fax (651) 297-1138, karen.hammel@state.mn.us.

This document can be made available in alternative formats (i.e., large print or audio) by calling 651-296-0391 (voice.) Persons with hearing or speech disabilities may call us through Minnesota Relay at 1-800-627-3529 or by dialing 711.