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- **Minnesota Department of
Commerce**

**Hampton to Northern Hills
Advisory Task Force Report
Hampton to Rochester to La Crosse
345 kilovolt (kV) Transmission Line**

PUC Docket No. E002/TL-09-1448

June 2010

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Introduction

On January 19, 2010, Xcel Energy (applicant) submitted a route permit application to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) for the Minnesota portion of the CapX 2020 Hampton to Rochester to La Crosse 345 kilovolt (kV) and 161 kV transmission line project (project). The proposed project is comprised of several sections including a section between the Hampton Substation and a proposed North Rochester Substation to be located between Pine Island and Zumbrota, Minnesota, referred to here as the Hampton-North Rochester 345 kV Section and a proposed 161 kV transmission line between the proposed North Rochester Substation and the existing Northern Hills Substation in northwest Rochester, Minnesota. The applicants have identified a preferred and alternate route for both the 345 kV and 161 kV transmission lines. (See Appendix A for a map of the applicant-proposed routes).

On March 16, 2010, the Commission established and charged two geographically-based advisory task forces (ATFs) to assist OES staff in determining the scope of the environmental impact statement (EIS) to be prepared for the proposed project. The Hampton to Northern Hills ATF was charged to (1) assist in determining specific impacts and issues of local concern that should be assessed in the EIS; and (2) assist in determining potential route alternatives that should be assessed in the EIS (See Appendix B).

On April 23, 2010, the OES appointed eleven persons to the Hampton to Northern Hills ATF (See Appendix C).

Methodology

The Hampton to Northern Hills ATF met three times – April 27, May 11, and June 2, 2010. The task force, through a facilitated process, discussed the proposed project and the charge given to the task force. Task force meetings were open to the public, and additional people attended to listen to the discussion.

The first task of the ATF was to determine the impacts and issues that should be evaluated in the EIS for the project. This task was the focus for the first meeting. Task force members, through small and large group discussions, identified general impacts and issues.

At the second meeting, task force members reviewed and prioritized the general impacts and issues identified at the first meeting. Members were asked to vote as to which impacts and issues were most important. Members then took up the second part of their charge – identifying alternative routes for the transmission line. They broke into small “brainstorming” groups and identified alternative routes and route segments. The small groups then reported back to the entire task force.

At the third meeting, the task force reviewed the alternatives identified at the second meeting in the context of the impacts and issues discussed at meetings one and two, listing pros and cons of each alternative. Clarifications, corrections, and variations within a route were discussed. The task force then discussed if there were any routes or route segments proposed by the ATF that the members wanted to remove from consideration.

The task force's work was captured in meeting notes recorded on flip charts by the meeting facilitator. Meeting notes and supporting materials for all meetings are available online: <http://energyfacilities.puc.state.mn.us/resource.html?Id=26581>

Impacts and Issues to Evaluate

Task force members identified impacts and issues by responding to the following question: “What land use planning or other impacts and issues need to be considered in the evaluation of proposed transmission line routes?” The task force identified and prioritized ten impacts and issues to be evaluated in the EIS (See Appendix D).

Top priority impacts and issues to consider were:

- Future development – land use
- Health and happiness
- Environment
- Future development – economic
- Land use – agriculture

Priority impacts and issues to consider were:

- Future development – commercial
- Future development – residential
- Impacts during constructions
- Stanton airport
- Can existing power lines be put on same tower as new lines?

Identification and Review of Alternative Routes and Route Segments

The task force identified seven alternative routes for consideration in the EIS. (See Appendix E for maps of the specific ATF-generated alternatives). The task force identified a total of 12 alternative routes at the second meeting, but five of those routes were removed from consideration by consensus or a vote of the members at the third meeting.

Task force members used their own unique knowledge of the area and other local documents in developing the alternative routes.

The task force reviewed the alternatives generated by the ATF and the applicants' proposed routes, and identified pros and cons for each. This exercise was not intended to be a detailed analysis of each route but rather to determine if a route should be evaluated in the EIS. Pros and cons for each alternative (keyed to map names where appropriate), as well as task force discussion, are noted here:

Applicant preferred 345 kV route

Pros

- Does not disturb roads and homes in Hampton township, goes down U.S. 52
- Shortest route
- Takes less private land; half of route is on U.S. 52
- Cheaper – do not have to buy private land
- Stays out and away from west side of Zumbrota and their economic development area
- Bundled with other lines later on – out of substation area between Zumbrota and Pine Island

Cons

- Highway and businesses impacted in the City of Hampton
- Top four issues and impacts identified by ATF: future land use and future development; health and happiness – most residents impacted; economic – decreased property values; environment
- Major impacts on Cannon Falls and Hampton
- Uses new right-of-way west of Zumbrota
- Runs through planned future land use area north of Pine Island
- Goes over top (north end) of new highway interchange on U.S. 52 in Pine Island
- Greater visual impact for more people as it follows a major highway corridor (U.S. 52)

Applicant alternative 345 kV route

Pros

- Avoids issues with Cannon Falls (does not go through Cannon Falls)
- Avoids issues with Zumbrota, Pine Island, and Hampton (does not go through communities)
- Makes use of substation at proposed substation area between Zumbrota and Pine Island

Cons

- Longer route
- Disrupts farmlands and farm homes
- Top four issue and impacts identified by ATF for the rural area: future land use; health and happiness; economic; and environmental
- Impacts City of Randolph
- Potential impact on west side of Lake Byllesby
- Takes or crosses more private land
- Potentially more expensive; cost to purchase private land

- Lake Byllesby – impacts west end of park on MN 56 (route goes west of Randolph and MN 56)

Applicant preferred 161 kV route

Pros

- Shorter than the alternative 161 route

Cons

- Jogs through northeast corner of Pine Island
- Does not follow existing right-of-way; does follow parcel lines but does not follow property lines; therefore it cuts across a single farm
- Impacts new interchange for Pine Island; construction on interchanges is scheduled to start this summer; also crosses roads leading to interchange (this road does not exist now, but is proposed new county highway, maybe county highway 12 or a combined 12/31/5); it will be the main feeder road for Pine Island from the west
- Impacts planned healthy living center; planned center is west of proposed transmission line and north of new highway; sewer and water have been installed, but land has not been surveyed
- Impacts Douglas area along 60th Avenue; impacts five to six homes in the route

Applicant alternative 161 kV route

Pros

- Follows existing 345 kV line around Pine Island
- Does not go through future land use plan area for Pine Island (However, does impact future planning – more than 20 years – for Pine Island)

Cons

- Follows 3.5 miles of Douglas Trail – hiking biking trail
- Runs next to and/or adjacent to existing 345 kV lines – difficult to repair lines when so close together
- Cuts through New Haven township and generates four issues and impacts identified by ATF – economic, health and happiness, future land use, and environment
- Uses new right-of-way for south portion of route
- Longer route and not as direct

ATF alternative 345 kV route – Group 1 – Alt 1

Pros

- Misses house along U.S. 52

Cons

- Crosses back and forth along U.S. 52 making the line more visible

ATF alternative 161 kV route – Group 1 – Alt 7 (ATF recommends double circuit with existing 345 kV line or placing new 161 kV line west of existing 345 kV and/or double circuit with existing 69 kV line)

Pros

- Places new line farther away from Trophy Lake
- Uses existing poles (or route) to run new line

Cons

(none)

ATF alternative 345 kV route – Group 2 – Alt 1

Pros

- Outside City of Hampton, follows Hampton city limits on east side

Cons

- Top four impacts and issues identified by ATF: environment, economic, future land use, health and happiness
- Splits a single landowner's property
- Longer and therefore more costly than preferred route
- Does not follow existing right-of-way
- Affects houses

ATF alternative 345 kV route – Group 2 – Alt 2

Pros

- Stays in MN 56 right-of-way
- Avoids top four issues and impacts identified by ATF for Cannon Falls

Cons

- Comes close to Stanton airport (private airport with some public use – in area of MN 56 and MN 19)
- Goes through west side of Lake Byllesby Park; bird area
- Goes along city limits of Randolph

[**Note:** The ATF acknowledged an overhead alternative along Highway 56 at Stanton would adversely impact the east-west runway at the Stanton airport. Therefore, they acknowledged the alternative would need to avoid the runway by approximately one mile to be viable as an overhead route, but did not specifically designate the route change. There was discussion that ATF alternative 345 kV route – Group 2 – Alt 2 could join the applicant's alternative route where they intersect north of Randolph and follow the applicant's alternative around the wide side of Stanton. Once sufficiently south of Stanton, the alternative could rejoin Highway 56.]

ATF alternative 345 kV route – Group 2 – Alt 3

Pros

- Stays in MN 56 right-of-way
- Shorter than applicant's alternative route

Cons

- Longer than applicant's preferred route

ATF alternative 345 kV route – Group 2 – Alt 4

Pros

- Stays on County Highway 9
- Shortens by-pass route around Cannon Falls (as opposed to applicant's alternative)

Cons

- Goes through Sogn Valley; potential historical site

ATF alternative partially joint 161 kV and 345 kV routes – Group 2 – Alt 5

Pros

- Follows township lines for new 161 kV part
- Minimal land use impact by combining two routes for part of this alternative
- Misses interchanges and healthy living center
- Follows applicant's preferred 345 kV route for part (as a joint 345 kV and 161kV line) and applicant's preferred 161 routes for another part, routes already studied
- Stays out of Pine Island future land use plans (does go into 20-year-plan area)
- Pushes route farther north and east of Pine Island so impact on projected future growth will be 15-20 years out
- Avoids environmentally sensitive areas near Zumbro River
- Avoids Elk Run Healthy Living Center and BioBusiness Park

Cons

- Proximity of 161 kV route to Oronoco where it splits from 345 kV line
- Oronoco boxed in at north and west by transmission lines
- Increased route length
- Two additional crossings of Zumbro River and adjoining wetland for portion of route that is for 161 kV only
- Proximity of joint 345 and 161 kV route to dairy farm
- 161 kV-only-portion of route does not use existing corridors
- Crosses agriculture land, not zoned industrial or commercial
- Route is located within Pine Island future planned residential and commercial growth areas

ATF alternatives removed from consideration

The ATF reviewed but removed from consideration the following alternatives:

- Group 1: Alternatives 2, 3, 4, 6
- Group 2: Alternative 6

The alternative, Group 1 – Alternative 5, did not exist, being inadvertently skipped when the alternatives were numbered.

Conclusions

- 1. Study all of the alternative line route segments identified by the task force.** A good amount of effort and thought went into the creation of the task force's alternative transmission line route segments. The task force recommends that all alternatives be carried forward in the EIS process with the pros and cons identified by the task force.
- 2. All impacts and issues identified by the task force are important.** The impacts and issues identified by the task force are all important and should be evaluated in the EIS. The prioritization of impacts and issues performed by the task force may be helpful in guiding OES staff in the development of the EIS, but is not intended to diminish the importance of all impacts and issues raised and discussed by the task force.

Appendices

A – Project overview map

B – Advisory Task Force charge

C – ATF members notice of appointment

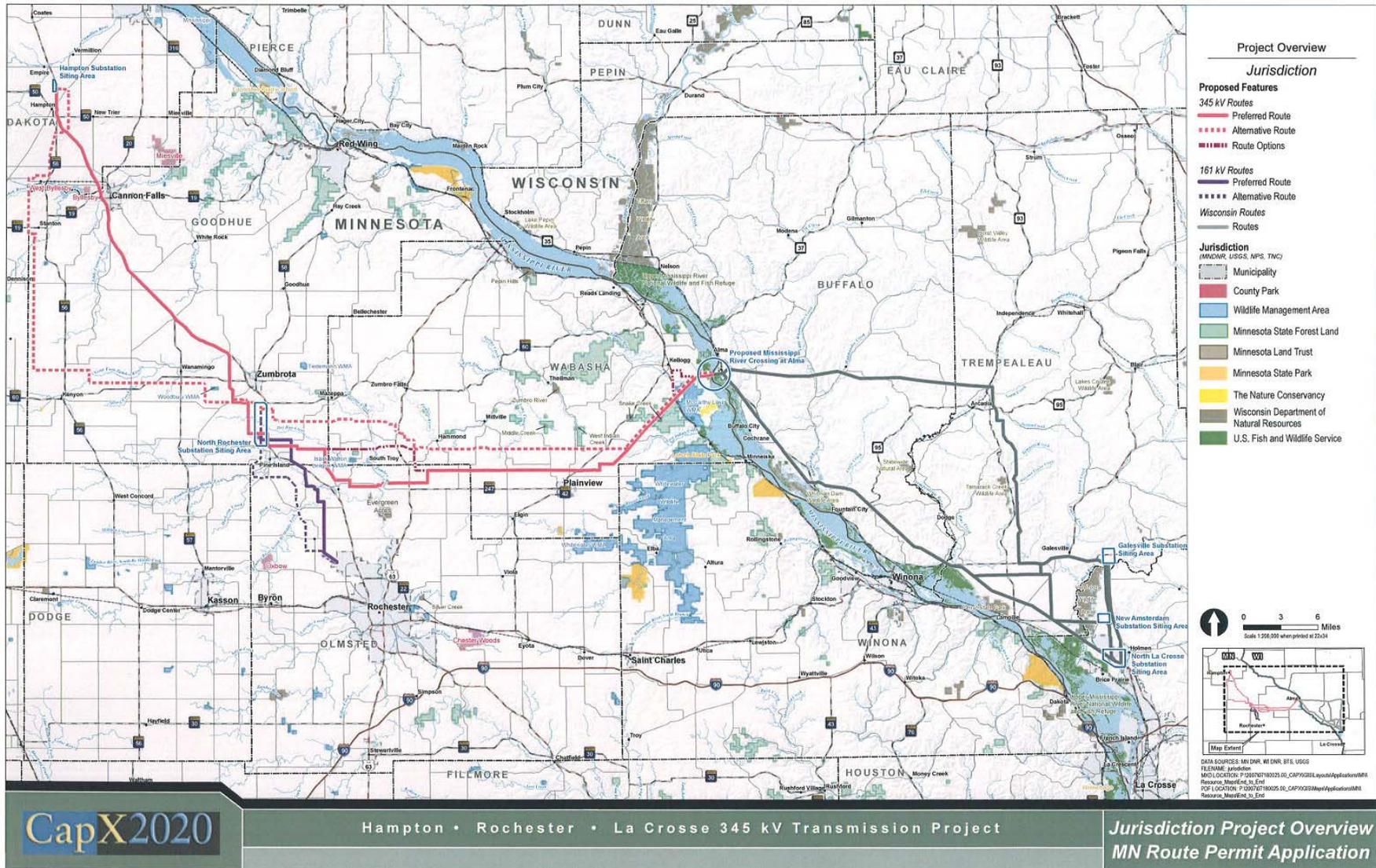
D – Impacts and Issues Table

E – Maps of Alternatives Identified by ATF

E.1 – Map of routes

E.2 – Map with greater detail (Zumbrota, Pine Island, and Oronoco area)

Appendix A – Applicant-proposed Alternatives



CapX2020

Hampton • Rochester • La Crosse 345 kV Transmission Project

Jurisdiction Project Overview
 MN Route Permit Application

1.0-1: Project Overview



In the Matter of the CapX 2020 Route Permit Application for a 345 kV and 161 kV Transmission Line Project from Hampton to Rochester to La Crosse, Wisconsin in Dakota, Goodhue, Olmsted and Wabasha Counties

CAPX 2020 HAMPTON-ROCHESTER -LA CROSSE ADVISORY TASK FORCES DECISION AND CHARGE PUC Docket E002/TL-09-1448

CAPX2020 HAMPTON-ROCHESTER-LA CROSSE ADVISORY TASK FORCES AUTHORIZATION

The above-entitled matter has come before the Office of Energy Security (OES) Director for a decision on the appointment of advisory task forces (ATF) to advise the Public Utilities Commission (Commission) on the application by CapX2020 route permit for the Hampton to Rochester to La Crosse 345 kV and 161 kV Transmission Line Project (Project).

As authorized by the Commission, the OES Director is establishing Advisory Task Forces by this Order to assist in identifying impacts and route alternatives to be evaluated in the environmental impact statement (EIS) prepared by OES Energy Facilities Permitting (EFP) staff for the proposed Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse Transmission Lines Project. One Task Force would focus on the area between the Hampton Substation and the Northern Hills Substation; and another Task Force would focus on the area between the North Rochester Substation and the Mississippi River crossing in Wabasha County. Combined, the two Task Forces would include representatives (as listed below) along the entire length of the project from the Hampton Substation in Dakota County to the Mississippi River crossing in Wabasha County.

ATF members are being solicited, as required by Minn. Stat. 216E.08, Subpart 1, from the following affected governmental units:

Hampton to Northern Hills Advisory Task Force

County	Dakota
County	Goodhue
County	Olmsted
City	Cannon Falls
City	Dennison
City	Hampton
City	Pine Island
City	Randolph
City	Rochester
City	Wanamingo
Township	To be determined
Township	To be determined
Township	To be determined

The ATF will include 13 local government members and up to an additional two representatives of governmental or nongovernmental entities, as appropriate.

North Rochester to Mississippi River Advisory Task Force

County	Goodhue
County	Olmsted
County	Wabasha
City	Kellogg
City	Pine Island
Township	To be determined
Township	To be determined
Township	To be determined

The ATF will include 8 local government members and up to two additional representatives of governmental or nongovernmental entities, as appropriate.

OES herein charges the ATF members to:

1. Assist in determining specific impacts and issues of local concern that should be assessed in the EIS by adding detail to the draft Scoping Document;
2. Assist in determining potential route alternatives that should be assessed in the EIS.

ATF members will be expected to participate with OES staff in up to three meetings and to assist staff with the development of a summary of the task force's work including their preferences or recommendations, if any. Meetings will be facilitated by the Management Analysis Division of the Minnesota Management and Budget Office as engaged by OES staff.

The CapX2020 Hampton to Northern Hills and North Rochester to Mississippi River ATFs will expire upon issuance of the OES Director's EIS Scoping Decision.

THE DIRECTOR MAKES THE FOLLOWING ORDER

WHEREAS, the applicants submitted an application for a route permit for the Project on January 19, 2010; and

WHEREAS, Minn. Stat. 216E.08 provides for the establishment of an ATF to assist the Commission in carrying out its duties; and

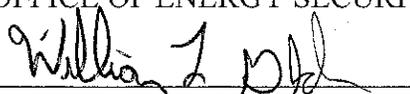
WHEREAS, in its March 16, 2010, Order the Commission authorized OES to establish ATFs and develop a structure and charge for the ATF; and

WHEREAS, Minn. Stat. 216E.08 establishes that an ATF comprise at least one representative from each county and municipal corporation, and at least one town board member from each county in which a route is proposed to be located;

THEREFORE, The OES Director herein establishes the CapX2020 Hampton to Northern Hills and North Rochester to Mississippi River Advisory Task Forces, authorizes OES EFP to appoint members of the ATF and adopts the above determination with regard to its structure and charge.

Signed this 17th day of March, 2010

STATE OF MINNESOTA
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
OFFICE OF ENERGY SECURITY



William Glahn, Director

CapX2020

Executive Summary

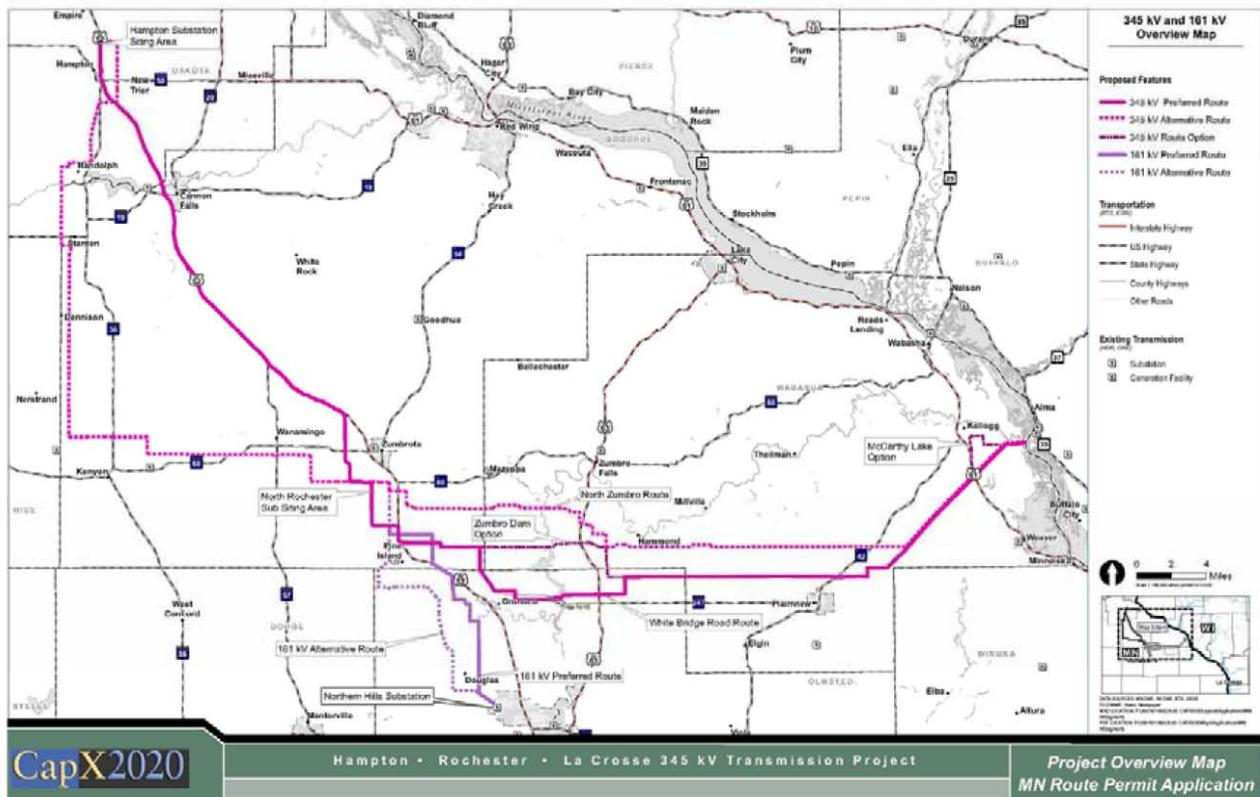


Figure ES-1: Project Overview Map
 Hampton ▪ Rochester ▪ La Crosse 345 kV Transmission Project



STATE OF MINNESOTA
Office of Energy Security



Issued: April 23, 2010
Revised: June 2, 2010

**NOTICE OF APPOINTMENT FOR THE
HAMPTON TO NORTHERN HILLS ADVISORY TASK FORCE**

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

PUC Docket No. E002/TL-09-1448

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the Minnesota Department of Commerce Office of Energy Security (OES) has appointed the following individuals to serve as members of the Hampton to Northern Hills Advisory Task Force (ATF) for the proposed Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse 345 kV transmission line project. Additional or replacement appointments may be made as necessary.

Hampton to Northern Hills Advisory Task Force

Name	Affiliation	Contact
Neil Jensen	City of Zumbrota	njensen@ci.zumbrota.mn.us
Paul Perry / Karen Doll	City of Pine Island	proff72@juno.com
Craig Hanson	Holden Township	cjhanson@cannon.net
John Mertens	Dakota County	john.mertens@co.dakota.mn.us
Aaron Reeves	City of Cannon Falls	areeves@ci.cannon-falls.mn.us
Marlin Reinardy	City of Hampton	mrmr@embarqmail.com
Paul Schluter	Stanton Township	spiritsonghorses@yahoo.com
Douglas Sommer	Minneola Township	507-824-2886
Donna Otto	Hampton Township	dmotto@frontiernet.net
Ralph Stoffel	Vermillion Township	651-437-3500
Ann Fahy	New Haven Township	nhtownship@pitel.net

The ATF will assist OES Energy Facility Permitting (EFP) staff in developing the scope of the environmental impact statement for the proposed project.

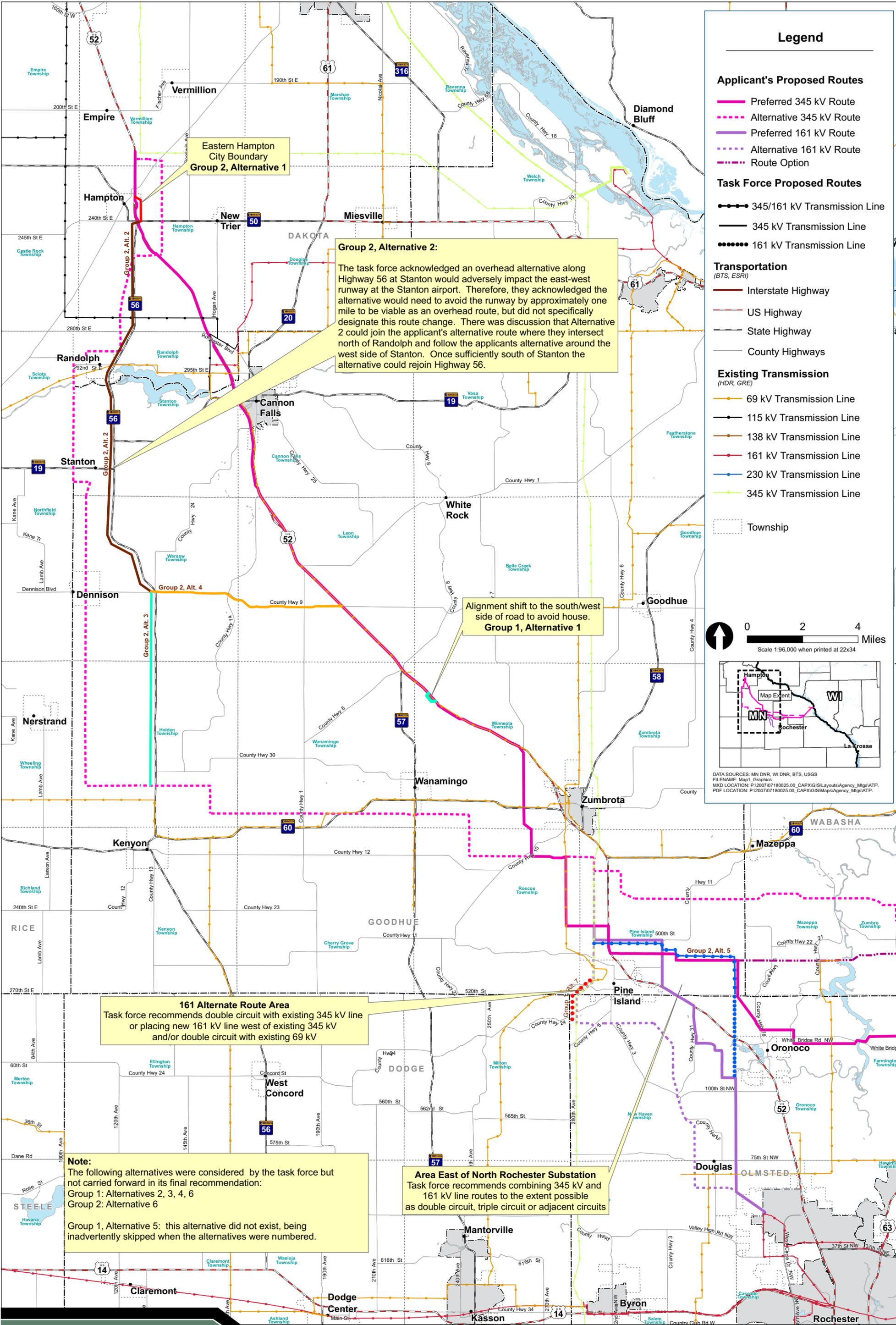
Information about the proposed project can be found on the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission’s website: <http://energyfacilities.puc.state.mn.us/Docket.html?Id=25731>. Questions about the ATF should be directed to Matt Langan (651-296-2096, matthew.langan@state.mn.us) or Ray Kirsch (651-296-7588, raymond.kirsch@state.mn.us), Department of Commerce, Office of Energy Security, 85 7th Place East, Suite 500, St. Paul, MN 55101.

Appendix D – Hampton to Northern Hills Advisory Task Force

May 11, 2010

Identification of Impacts and Issues as prioritized - *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?*

Can existing power lines be put on same tower as new lines?	Environment	Health and Happiness	During construction	Stanton airport	Land use: Agriculture	Future development			
						Economic	Land use	Commercial	Residential
Priority – zero votes	Top priority – four votes	Top priority – five votes	Priority – zero votes	Priority – zero votes	Top priority – three votes	Top priority – four votes	Top priority – six votes	Priority – one vote	Priority – one vote
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Alternative route on west side of Pine Island where towers already exist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Environmental impacts: landscape, wildlife, trails – Cannon Valley Trail on north (345 kV) and Douglas Trail on south (161 kV) ▪ Shoreland zoning: Pine Creek, Cannon River, etc. ▪ Cannon River: aesthetic, environmental (habitat – bird rookery) ▪ Aesthetics: view as approach Cannon Falls, tourism impact, sight lines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Public health – electro-magnetic field effects ▪ Quality of life for residents nearby; health and happiness (aesthetics, landscape impact, and emotional impact) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Road damage ▪ River crossing; how much damage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Along highway 56, may move line further west 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stay on section lines when crossing farmland ▪ Use existing right-of-ways ▪ Farmland: Dakota County easements, operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Land values: current and future ▪ Land value impacts: commercial areas on Hwy 52 in Cannon Falls, around new interchanges ▪ Declining property values – fair compensation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Comprehensive plans ▪ Future land uses proposed; residential, industrial, commercial, wind turbines ▪ Place line outside of city limits in Hampton – move to further eastside ▪ Interchange conflict; Hwy 86 Cannon Falls, south of Cannon Falls, double stop light elimination ▪ Future public land use: churches, schools, parks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Future commercial development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Commercial and residential development, growth conflicts – limit growth to west in Cannon Falls



Legend

Applicant's Proposed Routes

- Preferred 345 kV Route
- - - Alternative 345 kV Route
- Preferred 161 kV Route
- - - Alternative 161 kV Route
- · - · - Route Option

Task Force Proposed Routes

- 345/161 kV Transmission Line
- 345 kV Transmission Line
- · - · - 161 kV Transmission Line

Transportation

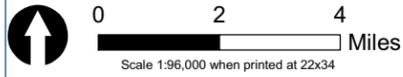
- (BTS, ESRI)*
- Interstate Highway
 - - - US Highway
 - State Highway
 - County Highways

Existing Transmission

- (HDR, GRE)*
- 69 kV Transmission Line
 - 115 kV Transmission Line
 - 138 kV Transmission Line
 - 161 kV Transmission Line
 - 230 kV Transmission Line
 - 345 kV Transmission Line

Township

- Township



DATA SOURCES: MN DNR, WI DNR, BTS, USGS
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Eastern Hampton City Boundary Group 2, Alternative 1

Group 2, Alternative 2:
 The task force acknowledged an overhead alternative along Highway 56 at Stanton would adversely impact the east-west runway at the Stanton airport. Therefore, they acknowledged the alternative would need to avoid the runway by approximately one mile to be viable as an overhead route, but did not specifically designate this route change. There was discussion that Alternative 2 could join the applicant's alternative route where they intersect north of Randolph and follow the applicants alternative around the west side of Stanton. Once sufficiently south of Stanton the alternative could rejoin Highway 56.

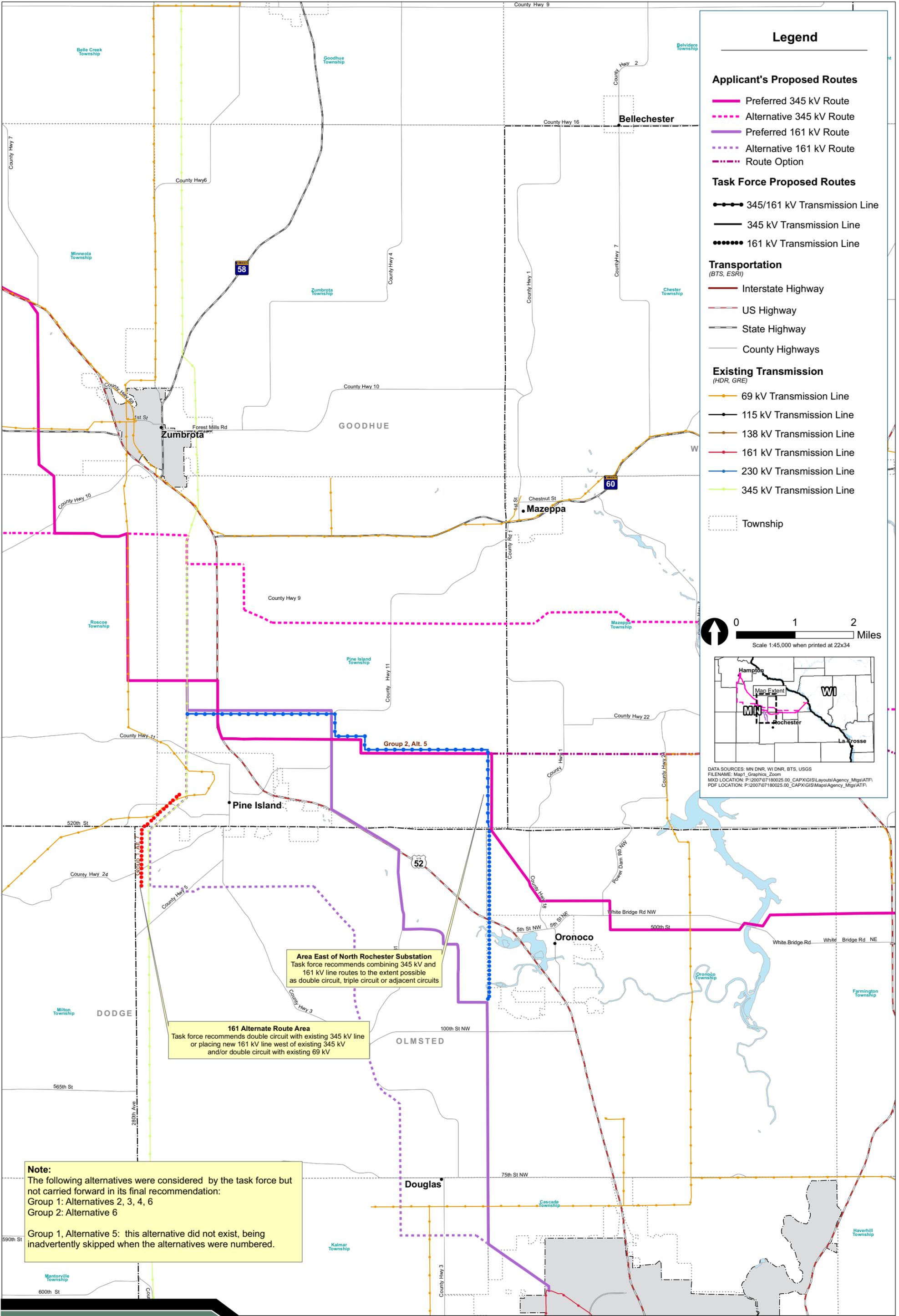
Alignment shift to the south/west side of road to avoid house. Group 1, Alternative 1

161 Alternate Route Area
 Task force recommends double circuit with existing 345 kV line or placing new 161 kV line west of existing 345 kV and/or double circuit with existing 69 kV

Area East of North Rochester Substation
 Task force recommends combining 345 kV and 161 kV line routes to the extent possible as double circuit, triple circuit or adjacent circuits

Note:
 The following alternatives were considered by the task force but not carried forward in its final recommendation:
 Group 1: Alternatives 2, 3, 4, 6
 Group 2: Alternative 6

 Group 1, Alternative 5: this alternative did not exist, being inadvertently skipped when the alternatives were numbered.



Legend

Applicant's Proposed Routes

- Preferred 345 kV Route
- - - Alternative 345 kV Route
- Preferred 161 kV Route
- - - Alternative 161 kV Route
- · - · - Route Option

Task Force Proposed Routes

- 345/161 kV Transmission Line
- 345 kV Transmission Line
- 161 kV Transmission Line

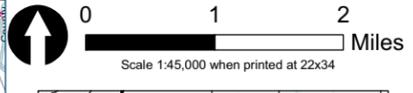
Transportation
(BTS, ESRI)

- Interstate Highway
- US Highway
- State Highway
- County Highways

Existing Transmission
(HDR, GRE)

- 69 kV Transmission Line
- 115 kV Transmission Line
- 138 kV Transmission Line
- 161 kV Transmission Line
- 230 kV Transmission Line
- 345 kV Transmission Line

Township



DATA SOURCES: MN DNR, WI DNR, BTS, USGS
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161 Alternate Route Area
 Task force recommends double circuit with existing 345 kV line or placing new 161 kV line west of existing 345 kV and/or double circuit with existing 69 kV

Note:
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 Group 2: Alternative 6
 Group 1, Alternative 5: this alternative did not exist, being inadvertently skipped when the alternatives were numbered.