North Rochester to Mississippi River Advisory Task Force
First Meeting – April 28, 2010

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:

- The participation for the siting of the transmission line is full and the need is recognized to its fullest extent
- Minimize the negative impact of the transmission line
- Do what is best for the environment and society as a whole
- Communication to get the word out to the public
- Find a place for the transmission line that creates the lease impact
- To have the transmission line be least disruptive as possible
- Fair in how transmission line is sited and has the least impact to people in the area

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 report 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.

Task force members discussed meeting dates and times for future meetings. Meetings will be held in Plainview at Plainview City Hall (same locations as meeting #1). Meetings dates are:

- May 12, 2010, 1:00 – 4:30 PM
- June 3, 2010, 1:00 – 4:30 PM.

State route permitting process

Matt Langan, 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

Tom Hillstrom, 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 two routes identified by the applicant and some of the issues faced at the location the transmission line cross the Mississippi River. He also noted the "North Rochester Substation" was initially located closer to Rochester (hence the name) but during siting discussions it has been moved farther north to a location between Zumbrota and Pine Island. This has caused some confusion while discussing the siting of the transmission line.

The application can also be found at:
http://energyfacilities.puc.state.mn.us/resource.html?Id=25750

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:

Environmental and natural resources: impacts nature and impacts people

- Save wildlife habitat
- Environmental impacts: wildlife, natural beauty of the area
- Environment: critical and rare – habitat and biodiversity
- Migratory flyway (birds, bats, butterflies) located on United States Fish and Wildlife Service land; Department of Natural Resources land; close to Nature Conservancy land
- Bluffland, watershed, wetland, water quality: destruction and decreased quality from construction and maintenance
- Effects on rare and unique resources; i.e. wild/scenic bird roosting sites
- Save woodlands in stewardship project, especially hardwoods
- Recreation/Aesthetics: loss and hindrance of
- Good stewardship
- Intrinsic qualities required to maintain National Scenic Byway: cultural/heritage, environment, agriculture and recreation area, marketing (these are federal highway department criteria)

Property values (under private ownership)

- Property valuations: fair compensations for property owners (future use)
- Home/Property values; aesthetics of powerline could decrease existing values

- Side by side structures double negative impacts for landowners (Pine Island's 161 kV lines would be separate)
- Most economical: river crossing, easements, private property impact

Health and safety

- Safety; increase of stray voltage affecting cattle and electromagnetic fields (EMF) affecting humans
- Health concerns: stray voltage – wildlife and agriculture; EMF – humans
- Health issues; human, animal emotional distress caused

Rural and agriculture land-use impacts

- Farming; destruction of crops during construction and maintenance of lines
- Land-use: both of plan implementation, productions, growth and income (both individual and community)
- Sight "looks" – duplication of lines, waste of agriculture land

Potential option from new technology

- Land use – sustainability and green usage – future technologies (options for new technologies to create electricity, impacts on local economy)

Use existing corridors

- No existing environmental corridors; need to clear-cut areas, proposed transmission lines creates fragmentation of property and habitat
- Use public property (road right-of-way) rather than private property

Conflicts with land use options

- City of Pine Island; proposed 345 and 161 kV lines will be built in areas the city has designated for future residential growth and development

Economic cost of construction and maintenance of line

Task force members were also asked to identify impacts and issues through a second means – completion of a worksheet, which was "homework" between the first and second meeting of the task force. These impacts and issues will be included in the meeting notes of the second meeting.

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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?*

Environmental and natural resources: impacts nature and impacts people	**Property values (under private ownership)**	**Health and safety**	**Rural and agriculture land-use impacts**	**Potential option from new technology**	**Use existing corridors**	**Conflicts with land use options**	**Economic cost of construction and maintenance of line**
• Save wildlife habitat • Environmental impacts: wildlife, natural beauty of the area • Environment: critical and rare – habitat and biodiversity • Migratory flyway (birds, bats, butterflies) located on United States Fish and Wildlife Service land, Department of Natural Resources land, close to Nature Conservancy land • Bluffland, watershed, wetland, water quality: destruction and decreased quality from construction and maintenance • Effects on rare and unique resources; i.e. wild/scenic bird roosting sites • Save woodlands in stewardship project, especially hardwoods • Recreation/Aesthetics: loss and hindrance of • Good stewardship • Intrinsic qualities required to maintain National Scenic Byway: cultural/heritage, environment, agriculture and recreation area, marketing (these are federal highway department criteria)	• Property valuations: fair compensations for property owners (future use) • Home/Property values; aesthetics of powerline could decrease existing values • Side by side structures double negative impacts for landowners (Pine Island's 161 lines would be separate) • Most economical: river crossing, easements, private property impact	• Safety; increase of stray voltage affecting cattle and electromagnetic fields (EMF) affecting humans • Health concerns: stray voltage – wildlife and agriculture; EMS – humans • Health issues; human, animal emotional distress caused	• Farming; destruction of crops during construction and maintenance of lines • Land-use: both of plan implementation, productions, growth and income (both individual and community) • Sight "looks" – duplication of lines, waste of agriculture land	• Land use – sustainability and green usage – future technologies (options for new technologies to create electricity, impacts on local economy)	• No existing environmental corridors; need to clear-cut areas, proposed transmission lines creates fragmentation of property and habitat • Use public property (road right-of-way) rather than private property	• City of Pine Island; proposed 345 and 161 kV lines will be built in areas the city has designated for future residential growth and development	

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. He also invited members to complete their issues and impacts worksheet and submit them at the second meeting.