

BEFORE THE MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

Beverly Jones Heydinger  
David C. Boyd  
Nancy Lange  
J. Dennis O'Brien  
Betsy Wergin

Chair  
Commissioner  
Commissioner  
Commissioner  
Commissioner

In the Matter of Xcel Energy's Application for a  
Route Permit for the CapX 2020 Hampton –  
Rochester – La Crosse High Voltage  
Transmission Line

ISSUE DATE: July 17, 2013

DOCKET NO. E-002/TL-09-1448

ORDER APPROVING MINOR  
ALTERATION REQUEST

**PROCEDURAL HISTORY**

On May 30, 2012, the Commission issued an amended route permit, with conditions, for the Hampton – Rochester – La Crosse High Voltage Transmission Line Project, a portion of a larger transmission line project known as CapX 2020.

On May 6, 2013, Northern States Power Company, d/b/a Xcel Energy (Xcel), requested Commission approval of a minor alteration of the approved route. It proposed to locate a 0.4 mile segment outside the approved route to increase the distance from the line to the nearest residence.

On May 9, 2013, the Commission solicited public comments on Xcel's request. The Minnesota Department of Commerce Energy Facility Permitting staff (the Department) recommended approval of the request. Two members of the public commented opposing the alteration, and two commented in support. The commenters opposing Xcel's request contended that the proposal was not a "minor alteration," and asserted that the proposed alignment would increase the route's environmental impact.

On May 31, 2013, Xcel filed reply comments responding to the public comments opposed to the route alteration request. Xcel reiterated its claim that the proposed alteration constitutes a minor alteration under the applicable rule.

On June 27, 2013, the matter came before the Commission.

**FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

Xcel requests Commission approval of a minor alteration to the approved route of the Hampton – Rochester – La Crosse High Voltage Transmission Line Project under Minnesota Rules part 7850.4800. The rule defines a minor alteration as "a change in a large electric power generating plant

or high voltage transmission line that does not result in significant changes in the human or environmental impact of the facility.”

The proposed alteration will diminish human impacts by moving the transmission line away from a residence at the request of the landowner, and with consent of two other affected landowners. And, the line will be shorter, mitigating the line’s total impact. Although the relocated line would cross farmland, the owner of that land does not anticipate that it would impact farming operations.

The requested alteration does not significantly change the environmental impact of the route. Although the alignment would cross agricultural lands and affect 1.08 acres of wetland, the clearing required would involve a very narrow segment of linear wetland that would not bisect core habitat, the impact on species is expected to be nominal, and access to facilities along the route would be similar.

The Commission concludes that the requested route alteration does not result in significant changes in human or environmental impacts, and therefore would constitute a minor alteration to the approved route.

Having reviewed the application and the comments, the Commission agrees with the recommendations of the Department of Commerce. The alteration reasonably incorporates the concerns of landowners whose land the transmission line will cross, and imposes at most *de minimis* impact on other relevant routing considerations. The Commission will therefore approve the minor alteration.

### **ORDER**

1. The requested Minor Alteration for the Pine Island area of the Hampton – Rochester – La Crosse transmission line project is authorized.
2. This Order shall become effective immediately.

BY ORDER OF THE COMMISSION

Burl W. Haar  
Executive Secretary



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