STATE OF MINNESOTA
Department of Commerce

NOTICE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION AND SCOPING MEETINGS

In the Matter of the Applications for a Route Permit and Certificate of Need for the 115 kV Savanna Rebuild Project

PUC Docket Numbers: ET-2, E015/TL-10-1307 and ET-2, E015/CN-10-973

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the Minnesota Department of Commerce Energy Facility Permitting (EFP) will conduct public information and environmental assessment (EA) scoping meetings at the times and location listed below, on the route permit application and the certificate of need application submitted by Great River Energy (GRE) and Minnesota Power (MP) to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) for the proposed 115 kV Savanna transmission line rebuild project. The purpose of the meetings is to provide information to the public about the project and to identify issues and alternatives to study in an EA that will be prepared by EFP staff.

Public Information and Scoping Meetings

Wednesday, May 18, 2011
Afternoon Session – 2:00 p.m.
Evening Session – 6:00 p.m.

Fine Lakes Township Hall
3726 Prairie Lake Road
Wright, MN 55798-8017
218-476-2003

During the meetings, EFP staff will give a presentation about the state's high voltage transmission line (HVTL) permitting process, certificate of need process, the proposed project, and how the public can participate. GRE and MP will have representatives at the public meetings who can answer general questions about the proposed project. Members of the public will have an opportunity to ask questions, present comments, and propose issues, impacts and alternatives to be studied in the EA.

Review copies of the route permit application, certificate of need application, permitting process flowcharts, and comment forms will be available at the meetings. Each meeting will offer the same process and information, so interested persons need attend only one of the meetings.

The EFP will accept written comments on the scope of the EA until Wednesday, June 1, 2011. Please include PUC Docket No. TL-10-1307 on all comments. Comments should be mailed, emailed, or faxed to:
Bill Storm
State Permit Manager

Minnesota Department of Commerce
Energy Facility Permitting
85 7th Place East, Suite 500
St. Paul, Minnesota, 55101-2198
Fax: 651-297-7891
bill.storm@state.mn.us

Comments may also be submitted on the Commission's energy facility permitting website: http://www.energyfacilities.puc.state.mn.us.

Project Description. The Applicants propose that the new lines follow the same alignment 150 feet either side of the existing transmission line centerline that the existing Great River Energy 69 kV lines presently follow and have requested a route width of 300 feet. The proposed plan includes:

- Construct the new Savanna 115 kV Switching Station in Section 32 of Van Buren Township.
- Rebuild approximately seven miles of existing Great River Energy 69 kV transmission line to single circuit 115 kV between Lake Country Power's existing Cedar Valley Substation in Cedar Valley Township and the new Savanna Switching Station.
- Rebuild approximately nine miles of existing Great River Energy 69 kV transmission line to single circuit 115 kV between the new Savanna Switching Station and Lake Country Power's existing Gowan Substation in Floodwood Township.
- Rebuild approximately 21 miles of existing Great River Energy 69 kV transmission line to double circuit 115/69 kV between the Lake Country Power Gowan Substation and Great River Energy's existing Cromwell Substation in Kalevala Township.
- Modify the Lake Country Power Cedar Valley Substation and Great River Energy Cromwell Substation to accommodate the 115 kV transmission lines.

The transmission lines lie entirely in Minnesota in St. Louis and Carlton counties. Single-pole wood structures with horizontal post insulators will be used for most of the rebuild. Laminated wood poles or steel poles may be required in some locations (angle poles or areas where soil conditions are poor and guying is not practical), and two pole H-Frame structures maybe used in some areas. Typical pole heights will range from 60-85 feet above ground and the average span would be 350 to 400 feet for single pole structures and 600 to 800 feet for H-Frame structures.

Small sections of the existing line near the two St. Louis River crossings have distribution under-build, which would be attached to the new 115 kV transmission line structures. The average span for these structures would be approximately 250 to 350 feet.

The Applicants propose that the majority of the new lines would follow the alignment of the existing 69 kV lines. A 15-foot offset from the existing pole locations may be required in some areas. The necessary permanent easement width is 50 feet on each side of the transmission centerline; however, in areas where the line follows an existing distribution line or roadway, the easement may overlap with

existing easements and/or the road right-of-way. Great River Energy has existing easements for the majority of the 69 kV line and anticipates that only minimal additional property will be required when the line is upgraded to 115 kV. Great River Energy intends to enter into new easements or amendments of the existing easements with landowners to update the language to reflect typical provisions included in today's easements.

The Project will cost approximately $29 million dollars.

Review Process. Two separate Commission approvals are required to build the Savanna transmission line project – a certificate of need (CON) and a HVTL route permit. The Applicants submitted a combined CON and HVTL route permit application to the Commission on February 10, 2011. The applications were accepted as complete by the Commission via Orders released on April 4, 2011 and April 13, 2011.

EFP Review – Environmental Assessment. EFP staff is responsible for conducting the environmental review for CON applications submitted to the Commission (Minn. Rules 7849.1200). EFP staff prepares an environmental report (ER) prior to the Commission's determination of need for a proposed project. An ER examines the potential human and environmental impacts of a proposed project, alternatives to the project, and potential mitigative measures.

EFP staff is also responsible for conducting the environmental review for route permit applications submitted to the Commission (Minn. Rules 7850.3700). Environmental review for a project of this size requires the preparation of an environmental assessment (EA). An EA examines the potential human and environmental impacts of a proposed project, alternative routes for the project, and potential mitigative measures.

As two concurrent environmental reviews are required – one for the CON application and one for the route permit application – DER EFP staff has elected to combine the environmental review for the two applications (Minn. Rules 7849.1900). Thus, an environmental assessment (EA) will be prepared to meet the requirements of both review processes.

Public Hearing. After completion of the EA, a public hearing will be held. The hearing will be presided over by an administrative law judge from the Office of Administrative Hearings. Members of the public will have an opportunity to speak at the hearing, present evidence, ask questions, and submit comments. Notice of the public hearing will be published in local newspapers and mailed to persons who register their names on the EFP project mailing list (see below).

Upon completion of the environmental review and hearing process, the records compiled for each proceeding (CON, route permit) will be presented to the Commission for final decisions. This review process is the only process during which alternatives to the project will be considered, including the "no build" alternative and alternatives related to the size, type, timing, and configuration of the project.

Eminent Domain. If issued a route permit by the Commission, the Applicants may exercise the power of eminent domain to acquire land for this project pursuant to Minnesota Statute 216E.12.

Project Mailing List. Persons should contact the state permit manager or public advisor (noted below) or register online at: www.energyfacilities.puc.state.mn.us to get their name on the project

mailing list. Persons on the mailing list will receive notices of meetings/hearings and notices of document availability for this project. **If you do not register to be on the mailing list you will not receive correspondence regarding this project after this notice.** Registration to the project mailing list is voluntary and may be done at any time.

Project Documents. A more detailed description of the proposed project is contained in the certificate of need and route permit applications. Electronic versions of these documents are available on the Commission's energy facility permitting website:

http://energyfacilities.puc.state.mn.us/Docket.html?Id=31883

Additionally, these documents are available on the Commission's eDockets system: https://www.edockets.state.mn.us/EFiling/search.jsp (enter the year "10" and the number "1307" for the route permit application and enter the year "10" and the number "973" for the CON application).

The CON and route permit applications are also available at the public libraries noted below:

Cloquet Public Library 320 14th Street Cloquet, MN 55720	Duluth Public Library 520 West Superior Street Duluth, MN 55802

Project Contacts. The EFP has designated staff member Bill Storm (651-296-9535, bill.storm@state.mn.us) as Project Manager and Suzanne Steinhauer (651-296-2888, suzanna.steinhauer@state.mn.us) as Public Advisor. You may contact them at: Department of Commerce, Energy Facility Permitting, 85 7th Place East, Suite 500, St. Paul, MN 55101-2198. Other contact information: Toll-Free: 1-800-657-3794, Fax: 651-297-7891 or TTY: Minnesota Relay Services, 1-800-627-3529, and ask for the Department of Commerce.

Public Utilities Commission. If you would like additional information about the CON process or Commission practice and procedure, please contact Commission staff member Bret Eknes (651-201-2236, Fax: 651-297-7073, bret.eknes@state.mn.us). Mr. Eknes may be contacted in writing at: Minnesota Public Utilities Commission, 121 7th Place E., Suite 350, St. Paul, MN 55101-2147.

Great River Energy. Information about this project is available from GRE. You can direct questions to Carole L. Schmidt (763-445-5214, cschmidt@grenergy.com). Ms. Schmidt may be contacted in writing at: Great River Energy, 12300 Elm Creek Blvd., Maple Grove, MN 55369.

Minnesota Power. Information about this project is available from MP. You can direct questions to Dan McCourtney (218-355-3515, dmccourtney@allete.com). Mr. McCourtney may be contacted in writing at: Minnesota Power, 30 West Superior Street, Duluth, MN 55802.

This document can be made available in alternative formats (i.e., large print or audio) by calling 651.296.00391 (voice). Persons with hearing or speech disabilities may call us through Minnesota Relay at 1.800.627.3529 or by dialing 711.

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