



STATE OF MINNESOTA
Department of Commerce



**NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING AND
AVAILABILITY OF ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

**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 a public hearing will be held on behalf of the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) on the route permit application and the certificate of need application submitted by Great River Energy (GRE) and Minnesota Power (MP) for the proposed Savanna Project, a 115 kV Transmission Line Rebuild and new Savanna Switching Station.

This notice provides the date, starting time and location for public hearing for two matters over which the Commission has jurisdiction. In this consolidated proceeding, the hearing will address: (a) whether the proposed transmission line is needed and in the public interest, and (b) the costs, benefits and impacts of various alternative routes for the proposed transmission line.

This notice also provides additional detail about the public hearings and the procedural requirements of the Office of Administrative Hearings for public hearing on large energy facilities. If you have an interest in this project, please read this notice carefully. If you have questions about the project or upcoming hearings, please contact the appropriate person identified in this notice.

The hearing will run no later than 9:30 p.m. and may conclude earlier if all attendees have had the opportunity to comment and all other business has been completed.

Public Hearing

Tuesday, November 15, 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

Conduct of Hearing. The public hearing will be conducted in accordance with the requirements of Minnesota Statute 216B.243, subd. 4, Minnesota Statute 216E.04, subdivision 6, and Minnesota Rule

7850.3800. Members of the public will have an opportunity to ask questions of Department staff and the Applicants, and to offer oral and written comments and submit material into the record. The Honorable Bruce Johnson, Administrative Law Judge, will preside over the hearing.

Comment period. The record will remain open until **4:30 p.m., Tuesday, November 29, 2011**, for interested persons to submit written comments to the Administrative Law Judge. Comments must be submitted directly to Judge Johnson at:

The Honorable Bruce Johnson
Office of Administrative Hearings
P.O. Box 64620
St. Paul, Minnesota 55164-0620
(651) 361-7900
Bruce.Johnson@state.mn.us

The Administrative Law Judge will prepare a written summary of testimony given at the hearing along with comments received during the prescribed comment period for the Commission. The Commission will make a final decision on the route permit application after receipt of the complete record.

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.

Regulatory Review Process. Two separate Commission approvals are required to build the Savanna 115 kV transmission line rebuild project – a certificate of need (Minnesota Statute § 216B.243, subd. 2) and a route permit (Minnesota Statute 216E.02, subd. 2). The Applicants submitted a combined certificate of need (CN) and high voltage transmission line (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.

Environmental Assessment. Department of Commerce, Energy Facility Permitting (EFP) staff is responsible for conducting the environmental review for CN 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 CN application and one for the route permit application – Department staff elected to combine the environmental review for the two applications (Minn. Rules 7849.1900). The environmental assessment (EA), which was prepared to meet the requirements of both review processes, is available.

Electronic versions of the EA and other documents relevant to this matter are available for viewing and download on the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission website or the eDockets website at:

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

or

<https://www.edockets.state.mn.us/EFiling/search.jsp> (Search “10” Year and “1307” Number).

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

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

Project Contacts. The Department has designated staff member Bill Storm (651-296-9535, bill.storm@state.mn.us) as State Permit Manager and Suzanne Steinhauer (651-296-2888, suzanne.steinhauer@state.mn.us) as Public Advisor. You may contact them at: Department of Commerce, Division of Energy Resources, 85 7th Place East, Suite 500, St. Paul, MN 55101-2198.

Public Utilities Commission. If you would like additional information about the CN process or Commission practice and procedure, please contact Commission staff member Michael Kaluzniak (651-201-2257, Fax: 651-297-7073, mike.kaluzniak@state.mn.us). Mr. Kaluzniak 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 Schmidt (763-445-5214, cschmidt@greenergy.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 Minnesota Power. You can direct questions to Dam 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 651.296.0391 (voice). Persons with hearing or speech disabilities may call us through Minnesota Relay at 1.800.627.3529 or by dialing 711.