ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENT

Xcel Energy and Great River Energy
Hollydale 115 kV Transmission Line Project
PUC Docket No. E002/TL-11-152

May 25, 2012

MINNESOTA
DEPARTMENT OF
COMMERCE

Introduction

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) issued an Order on May 4, 2012, granting a request by Xcel Energy and Great River Energy (GRE) to convert the pending Hollydale 115 kV transmission line route permit proceeding from the alternative permitting process to the full permitting process. As a result, the existing route permit application for the proposed Hollydale 115 kV transmission line project will be reviewed under the full permitting process, pursuant to the Power Plant Siting Act (Minnesota Statues 216E) and Minnesota Rules 7850.1700 to 7850.2700.

The Department of Commerce Energy Facility Permitting (EFP) staff has prepared this draft scoping document for the environmental impact statement (EIS) to be prepared on the proposed Hollydale 115 kilovolt (kV) transmission line project. All issues and route alternatives included in the December 2011 Hollydale Environmental Assessment (EA) Scoping Decision are included in this draft scoping document and will be evaluated in the EIS.

Public information meetings will be held on June 7 and 8, 2012, at Wayzata High School in Plymouth. The purpose of the meetings is to provide information about the proposed project and provide an opportunity for public comment on the scope of the EIS that will be prepared by Department of Commerce EFP staff.

Project Description

As described in the route permit application, Xcel Energy and GRE (applicants) propose removing approximately eight miles of an existing GRE-owned 69 kV overhead transmission line and constructing a new 115 kV overhead transmission line in its place, constructing an additional eight-tenths of a mile of new 115 kV overhead transmission line, constructing a new substation, and modifying associated transmission facilities in the cities of Medina and Plymouth, Hennepin County, Minnesota.

The applicants are requesting a 200 foot wide route where the transmission line is to be rebuilt along the existing 69 kV transmission line route that extends from the existing Medina Substation located southwest of the intersection of Willow Drive and County Road 24, at the intersection of GRE's existing 115 kV transmission line just north of Fernbrook Lane in the city of Plymouth.

A 400 foot route width is being requested for the eight-tenths of a mile of new 115 kV transmission that would run from the intersection of the existing GRE 115 kV transmission line and follow along the north side of the Canadian Pacific Railway east to Cheshire Lane, then south along Cheshire Lane, and east along Schmidt Lake Road to proposed location of Substation Site A (Figure 1).

The proposed transmission line will require a right-of-way of 75 feet (37.5 feet on either side of centerline). The approximately eight miles of existing 69 kV transmission line has a right-of-way between 70 to100 feet depending on the location. The applicants indicate in the route permit application that the new transmission line can be designed to fit within these existing easements, thereby requiring little to no new right-of-way while still satisfying the needs of the project.

The applicants indicate in the route permit application that the proposed project will provide increased distribution capacity and avoid feeder circuit overloads in the Plymouth area distribution delivery system. This includes increased distribution capacity in the Plymouth and Medina areas to better serve current customers and expected load growth. In addition, the applicants explain that system reliability would be enhanced by supplying the existing Hollydale substation with a redundant 115 kV connection.

Process History

The following is a summary of events and milestones that have taken place since the applicants initially filed their route permit application for the proposed Hollydale 115 kV transmission line project.

June 30, 2011 – A high voltage transmission line route permit application for the Hollydale 115 kV transmission line project was filed by the applicants under the alternative permitting process.

August 25, 2011 – The Commission accepted the application as complete under the alternative permitting process.

September 19, 2011 – An advisory task force (ATF) structure and charge was established by the Department of Commerce. The ATF met two times in October and November 2011, and successfully completed its charge and issued a final report on November 23, 2011.

October 12, 2011 – A notice of a public information and scoping meeting was issued by the Department of Commerce and mailed to persons on the project contact list. In addition, the notice was also sent to roughly 2,500 landowners from a list maintained by Xcel Energy. The notice of public information and scoping meeting was also published in the Star Tribune on October 16, 2011, and the South Crow River News on October 13, 2011.

October 26, 2011 – A public information and scoping meeting was held in the city of Plymouth to discuss the project with the public and gather input for the scope. A public comment period, ending on November 9, 2011, provided the public an additional opportunity to submit comments on issues and alternative routes for consideration in the scope.

December 7, 2011 - The Hollydale EA Scoping Decision was issued by the Department of Commerce, and was mailed to persons on the project contact list. A letter providing information about the project was also sent to approximately 3,650 landowners located on one of the 13 alternative routes identified through the scoping process.

February 27, 2012 – In response to a petition filed by certain landowners within the proposed project area, the applicants filed a petition requesting that the Commission covert the pending route permit proceeding for the Hollydale project from the alternative permitting process to the full permitting process.

May 4, 2012 – The Commission issued its Order granting the applicants request to convert the pending route permit proceeding from the alternative permitting process to the full permitting process. The Commission also agreed in its Order that the existing route permit application contains the necessary information required for the full permitting process.[1]

EIS Scoping Process

The scoping process has two primary purposes: 1) to ensure that the public has a chance to participate in determining what routes and issues should be considered for study in the EIS, and 2) to help focus the EIS on the most important issues surrounding the route permit decision. The scope identifies potential human and environmental issues that will be addressed in the EIS. The scope also presents an anticipated schedule of the environmental review process.

[1] Minnesota Public Utilities Commission, *Notice and Order for Hearing Under Minnesota Rules Chapter 1405*, p. 4 Section III.B, May 4, 2012, eDocket No. 20125-74462-01.

Public information meetings will be held on June 7 and 8, 2012, at Wayzata High School in Plymouth. The purpose of the meetings is to provide information to the public about the proposed project, to answer questions, and to allow the public an opportunity to suggest alternatives and impacts that should be considered during preparation of the EIS. Written comments may also be submitted; written comments must be submitted no later than June 22, 2012.

A scoping decision will be made by the deputy commissioner of the Department of Commerce. EFP staff anticipates that the EIS scoping decision will be issued in July, 2012, and that the draft EIS for the project will be released in late summer 2012. A public meeting and comment period on the draft EIS will be held after its release.

Draft Scoping Outline

The Department of Commerce has prepared this draft scoping document based on the EA scoping decision of December 7, 2011, and concerns raised by citizens to date. All issues and route alternatives included in the Hollydale EA Scoping Decision are included in the draft scoping document and will be evaluated in the EIS.

The EIS on the Hollydale 115 kV transmission line project will address and provide information on the following matters:

I. General Description of the Proposal

- A. Project Description
- B. Purpose of the Transmission Line
- C. Project Location
- D. Route Description
- E. Route Width
- F. Right-of-Way
  1. General use of right-of-way (i.e., fire pits, barbeques, filling mowers with gasoline, decks/patios, and vegetation)
  2. Existing easement issues (rebuild portion)
  3. Restoration and maintenance
- G. Project Cost

II. Regulatory Framework

- A. Certificate of Need
- B. High Voltage Transmission Line Route Permits
- C. Environmental Review Process

III. Engineering, Design, and Operation

A. Transmission Line Conductors
B. Transmission Line Structures
C. Design and structure material (wood pole treatments)
D. Structure strength and stability (i.e., structural failure)
E. Substations
F. Undergrounding Transmission Line Facility

IV. Construction

A. Transmission Line and Structures
B. Substations
C. Restoration and Cleanup
D. Property Destruction and Compensation
E. Operation and Maintenance

V. Affected Environment, Potential Impacts, and Mitigation Measures

The EIS will include a discussion of the human and environmental resources potentially impacted by the project and its alternatives. Potential impacts, both positive and negative, of the proposed project and each alternative considered will be described. Based on the impacts identified, the EIS will describe mitigative measures that could reasonably be implemented to reduce or eliminate the identified impacts. The EIS will describe any unavoidable impacts resulting from implementation of the proposed project.

A. Environmental Setting
B. Socioeconomic and Cultural Setting
C. Human Settlement
    1. Noise
    2. Aesthetics
    3. Proximity to homes
    4. Existing utilities (e.g., pipelines, propane tanks, septic systems)
    5. Property values
    6. Federal housing administration (FHA) regulations
    7. Property/right-of-way acquisition and displacement
    8. History of existing 69 kV line and existing residential development
D. Health and Safety
    1. Construction and operation/maintenance
    2. Electric and magnetic fields
    3. Implantable medical devices (e.g., pacemakers)
    4. Stray voltage

5. Induced voltage
6. Air quality associated with the transmission facility

E. Recreation
1. Parks (city, county, state, and federal)
2. Trails

F. Transportation and Public Services
1. Emergency services
2. Airports
3. Railroads
4. Schools
5. Mosquito control (i.e., application via aircraft)

G. Interference
1. Radio (AM/FM and short-wave)
2. Television (satellite and digital)
3. Cellular phone
4. Broadband and wireless internet

H. Archaeological and Historic Resources

I. Land Use (land-based economies)
1. Mining
2. Industrial/commercial
3. Tourism
4. Agriculture
5. Forestry

J. Zoning and Compatibility/Federal, State and Local Government Planning
1. Residential
2. Commercial
3. Rural/agricultural
4. Industrial
5. Transportation
6. Shoreland

K. Water Resources
1. Rivers, lakes, wetlands, and other surface waters
2. Floodplains

L. Soil and Groundwater

M. Flora (plants)
1. Vegetation removal
2. Mature tree removal

N. Fauna (wildlife)
1. Wildlife management areas

2. Scientific and natural areas
3. State and federal parks and forests
4. National wildlife refuge/waterfowl production areas
5. Avian collision and electrocution
6. Threatened/Endangered/Rare and Unique Natural Resources

VI. Alternative Routes and Substation Sites to be Evaluated

In addition to the Proposed Route, the EIS will evaluate the following 14 alternative routes and two substation sites as suggested by the advisory task force (ATF) and through public comment:

- Alternative Route A
- Alternative Route B
- ATF Alternative Route B-1
- Alternative Route C
- Alternative Route D
- ATF Alternative Route E
- Alternative Route F (includes Segments F-1, F-2, and F-3)
- Alternative Route G
- Medina Road Alternative Route
- CSAH 24 Alternative Route
- Providence Academy Alternative Route

- Substation Site A
- Substation Site B

Alternative Route A

The route would use the Proposed Route and incorporate Alternative Route Segment A as described in applicants' route permit application. Alternative Route Segment A begins on the north side of County Road 9 approximately 6.4 miles from the start of the proposed rebuild at the Medina substation. The route then proceeds north parallel to the north side of Rockford Road for 0.9 miles to the County Road 9 and Interstate 494 interchange. The route turns north at the interchange and parallel the existing right-of-way of the Xcel Energy 345 kV Parkers Lake transmission line for 0.25 miles. At this point, a 115 kV GRE transmission line crosses from the east side of Interstate 494 to the west side of the Xcel Energy 345 kV transmission line, requiring Alternative Route Segment A to divert to the west approximately 60 feet. The route would then be aligned along the west side of the existing 115 kV GRE transmission line and continue north for 0.6 miles. The total length of Alternative Route Segment A is 1.75 miles (Figure 2).

Alternative Route B

Alternative Route Segment B as described in the route permit application, begins at the Proposed Route on the eastern side of County Road 101, approximately 4.5 miles from the start of the route at the Medina substation. The route then diverges from the Proposed Route and proceeds north, paralleling County Road 101, for approximately one mile before reaching the Canadian Pacific railroad tracks. At this point, the route proceeds east along the southern side of the Canadian Pacific railroad tracks for 2.3 miles to Substation Site B. Alternative Route Segment B rejoins the existing GRE 69 kV transmission line and the Proposed Route immediately northeast of Providence Academy. The total length of Alternative Route Segment B is 3.3 miles (Figure 3).

ATF Alternative Route B-1

As described in the Hollydale ATF report, ATF Alternative Route Segment B-1 veers from the Proposed Route at the intersection of Old Rockford Road and Peony Lane and follows Old Rockford Road east 0.5 miles to Holly Lane. Route B-1 then travels north along Holly Lane for 0.6 miles reconnecting with Alternative Route B. The total length of ATF Alternative Route Segment B-1 is approximately 1.1 miles (Figure 4).

Alternative Route C

As described in the route permit application, Alternative Route Segment C begins on the east side of Highway 55, approximately 4.9 miles from the start of the route at the Medina substation. The route parallels Highway 55 for 0.5 miles and then turns northeast and parallels the north side of Rockford Road for 0.5 miles. Alternative Route Segment C turns north along the western edge of a small pond for approximately 260 feet and reconnects with the Proposed Route approximately 850 feet west of Vicksburg Lane. The total length of Alternative Route Segment C is approximately one mile (Figure 5).

Alternative Route D

Alternative Route Segment D begins on the eastern side of Cheshire Lane, 8.2 miles from the start of the route at the Medina substation. Alternative Route Segment D diverges from the Proposed Route and travels east along the south side of the Canadian Pacific Railway track for approximately 920 feet. The route then turns south along the western side of Interstate 494 and along the existing GRE Plymouth substation and an existing 345 kV transmission line for approximately 1,000 feet where it rejoins the Proposed Route on the north side of Schmidt Lake Road. The total length of Alternative Route Segment D is approximately 0.4 miles (Figure 6).

ATF Alternative Route E

ATF Alternative Route Segment E begins on the east side of Highway 55, approximately 4.9 miles from the start of the route at the Medina substation. At this point ATF Alternative Route Segment E heads southeast along the south side of Highway 55 for 2.4 miles to the intersection with Interstate 494, crosses over Highway 55 and follows along the west side of Interstate 494 for 1.28 miles to Rockford Road, connecting with Alternative Route Segment A to Substation Site A. The total length of ATF Alternative Route Segment E is approximately 4.2 miles (Figure 7).

Alternative Route F

This alternative route segment was proposed by a citizens group and included three variations (Alternative Route Segments F-1, F-2 and F-3). The three alternatives are largely the same route, sharing a total of two miles except for a small section where each of the three routes break from the Proposed Route and travel north to Medina Road (Figure 8).

Section F-1 of Alternative Route F would follow the Proposed Route that exits the Medina substation north and head east along County Road 24 for 3.1 miles. Segment F-1 would then turn north following along Holy Name Drive 0.3 miles to Medina Road, head east along Medina Road for 0.3 miles to Brockton Lane, reconnecting with Alternative Route F. The total length of Alternative Route Segment F-1 is approximately 0.6 miles.

Section F-2 of Alternative Route F would follow the Proposed Route that exits the Medina substation north and head east along County Road 24 for 3.3 miles. At this point Segment F-2 would travel north 0.4 miles across wetlands and cropland to Medina Road, head east along Medina Road for 0.13 miles to Brockton Lane, reconnecting with Alternative Route F. The total length of Alternative Route Segment F-2 is approximately 0.5 miles.

Section F-3 of Alternative Route F would follow the Proposed Route that exits the Medina substation north and head east along County Road 24 for 2.8 miles. At this point Segment F-3 would travel north 0.3 miles through private land, wooded areas, and cropland, turn east for 0.8 miles and then head north 0.1 mile to Medina Road. Segment F-3 then heads east along Medina Road for 0.5 miles to Brockton Lane, reconnecting with Alternative Route F. The total length of Alternative Route Segment F-3 is approximately 1 mile.

The three sections (F-1, F-2, and F-3) all reconnect with Alternate Route F at the intersection of Medina Road and Brockton Lane. From the intersection of Medina Road and Brockton Lane Alternate Route F travels north along Brockton Lane for 0.95 miles, turning east for 0.07 miles along the south side of the Canadian Pacific Railway tracks to Highway 55. Alternative Route F then follows southeast along Highway 55 for 1.4 miles to a point on Highway 55 approximately 0.15 miles east of Lawndale Avenue North. At this point the route veers west from Highway 55 for 0.2 miles over wetlands and through residential areas where it connects to the existing Hollydale substation.

This 0.2 mile section of the route (between Highway 55 and the Hollydale substation) would need to be a double-circuit 115 KV transmission line in order to meet the purpose of the project. From the east end of the double-circuit 115 kV at Highway 55 the route then reconnects with the Proposed Route. The total length of Alternative Route Segment F varies depending on the alternative section used. Alternative Route Segment F using Section F-1 is approximately 3.4 miles, Alternative Route Segment F using Section F-2 is approximately 3.3 miles, and Alternative Route Segment F using Section F-2 is approximately 4.4 miles.

Alternative Route G

This alternative route segment was proposed by a citizens group. Alternative Route G would follow the Proposed Route that exits the Medina substation north, head east along County Road 24 for 3.3 miles. At this point the route would travel north 0.4 miles across wetlands and crop land to Medina Road and then head east along Medina Road for 0.15 miles to Brockton Lane. At the intersection of Medina Road and Brockton Lane the route turns north and travels along Brockton Lane for 0.4 miles, at this point the route turns east for 0.7 miles crossing crop land, wetlands and forested areas to Highway 55 where it connects with the Preferred Route. The total length of Alternative Route Segment G is approximately 2.4 miles (Figure 9).

Alternative Route G-1

This alternative route segment was proposed by a citizens group. Alternative Route G-1 would follow the Proposed Route that exits the Medina substation north, head east along County Road 24 for 3.3 miles. At this point the route would travel north 0.4 miles across wetlands and crop land to Medina Road and then head east along Medina Road for 0.15 miles to Brockton Lane.

At the intersection of Medina Road and Brockton Lane the route turns north and travels along Brockton Lane for 550 feet, at this point the route turns east and travels through an operating nursery and garden center for 0.7 miles, turning south down Peony Lane and connecting with the Preferred Route before it enters the Hollydale Substation. The total length of Alternative Route Segment G-1 is approximately 1.5 miles (Figure 9).

Medina Road Alternative Route

This alternative route segment was proposed by a citizen. The route would follow the Proposed Route that exits the Medina substation north, head east along CR 24/Medina Road for 3.8 miles connecting with the Proposed Route at the intersection of Medina Road and Troy Lane. The total length of the Medina Road Alternative Route Segment is approximately 3.8 miles (Figure 10).

CSAH 24 Alternative Route

This alternative route segment was proposed by a citizen. The route would follow the Proposed Route that exits the Medina substation north, head east along County Road 24 for 3.9 miles to County Road 101. The route would travel north on County Road 101 for 0.9 miles reconnecting with the Proposed Route where it crosses County Road 101. The total length of the CSAH 24 Alternative Route Segment is approximately 4.8 miles (Figure 11).

Providence Academy Alternative Route

This alternative route segment was proposed by a citizen. The new 115 kV transmission line rebuild alignment and route would be shifted to a conservation easement of east campus and the GRE existing 69 kV transmission line that runs north and south on Providence Academy's campus, between Schmidt Lake Road and the railroad tracks (Figure 12).

Substation Site A

Substation Site A is the applicants preferred location for the new Pomerleau Lake Substation. The site is located approximately 0.2 miles south of Schmidt Lake Road and adjacent to and west of Interstate 494 (Figure 1).

Substation Site B

Substation Site B is located on the former Hampton Hills golf course, north of the Canadian Pacific Railroad between Providence Academy and Fernbrook Lane North (Figure 1).

VII. Identification of Permits

The EIS will include a list and description of permits from other government entities that may be required for the proposed project.

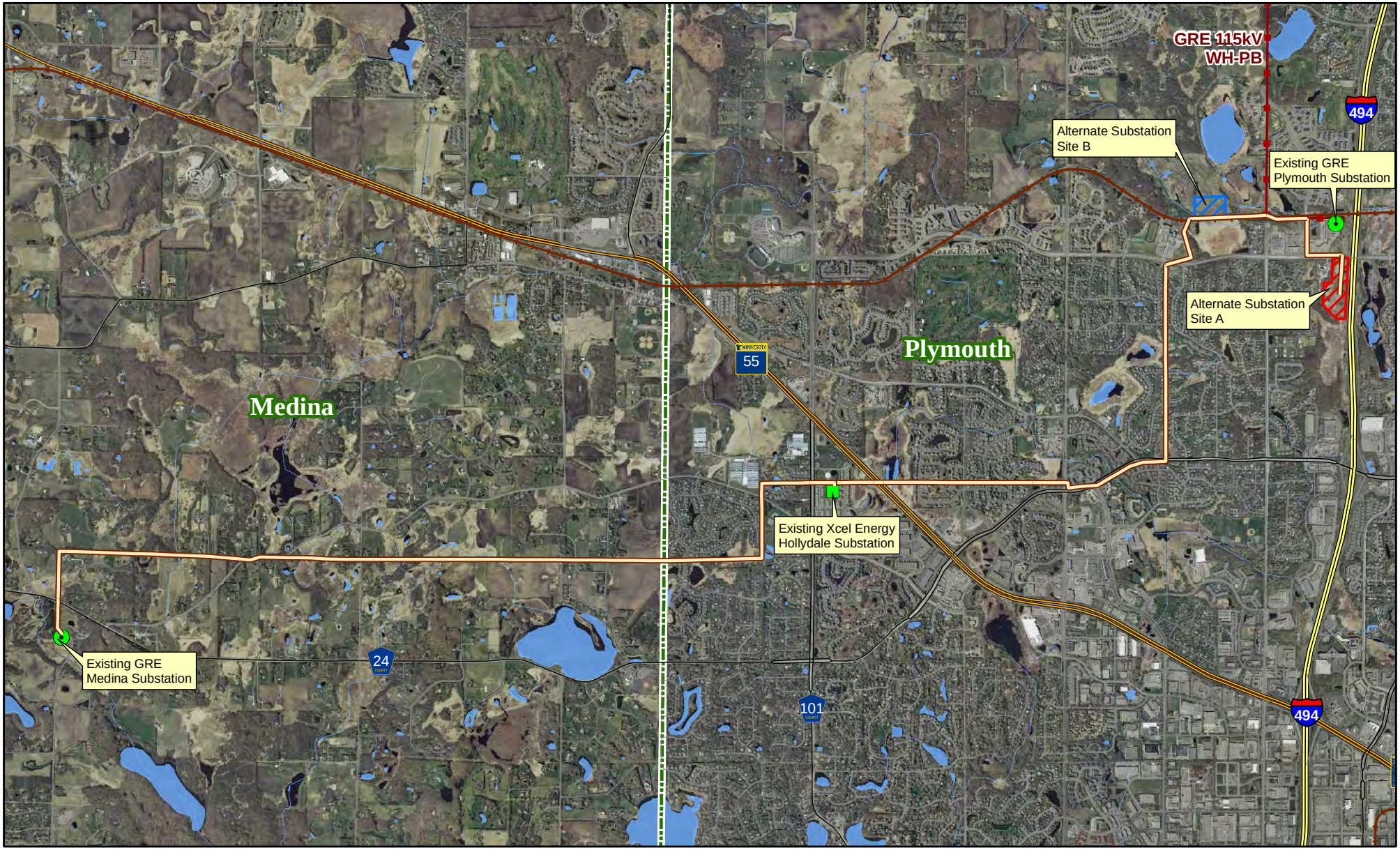
Schedule for Completion of EIS

Upon completion of the draft EIS, EFP staff will notify those persons who have asked to be notified of the completion. In addition, the staff will publish notice of the availability of the draft EIS in the EQB Monitor. The draft EIS will be made available for review and will be posted on the Department of Commerce website and the eDockets website. EFP staff will hold a public meeting in the project area to provide an opportunity for the public to ask questions and to comment on the draft EIS. The public will also have a period of time after the meeting to submit written comments. Comments on the draft EIS will become part of the record in the proceeding for this docket.

Following is the anticipated review schedule:

September 2012 – Draft EIS available
October 2012 – Draft EIS public meeting
December 2012 – Final EIS available

The above outline is not intended to serve as a "Table of Contents" for the EIS document, and as such, the organization (i.e., structure of the document) of the information and the data may not be similar to that appearing in the EIS.



Proposed Route
Substation Site A
Substation Site B
Existing Xcel Energy Substation
Existing GRE Substation
GRE Transmission Line WH-PB
Railroad

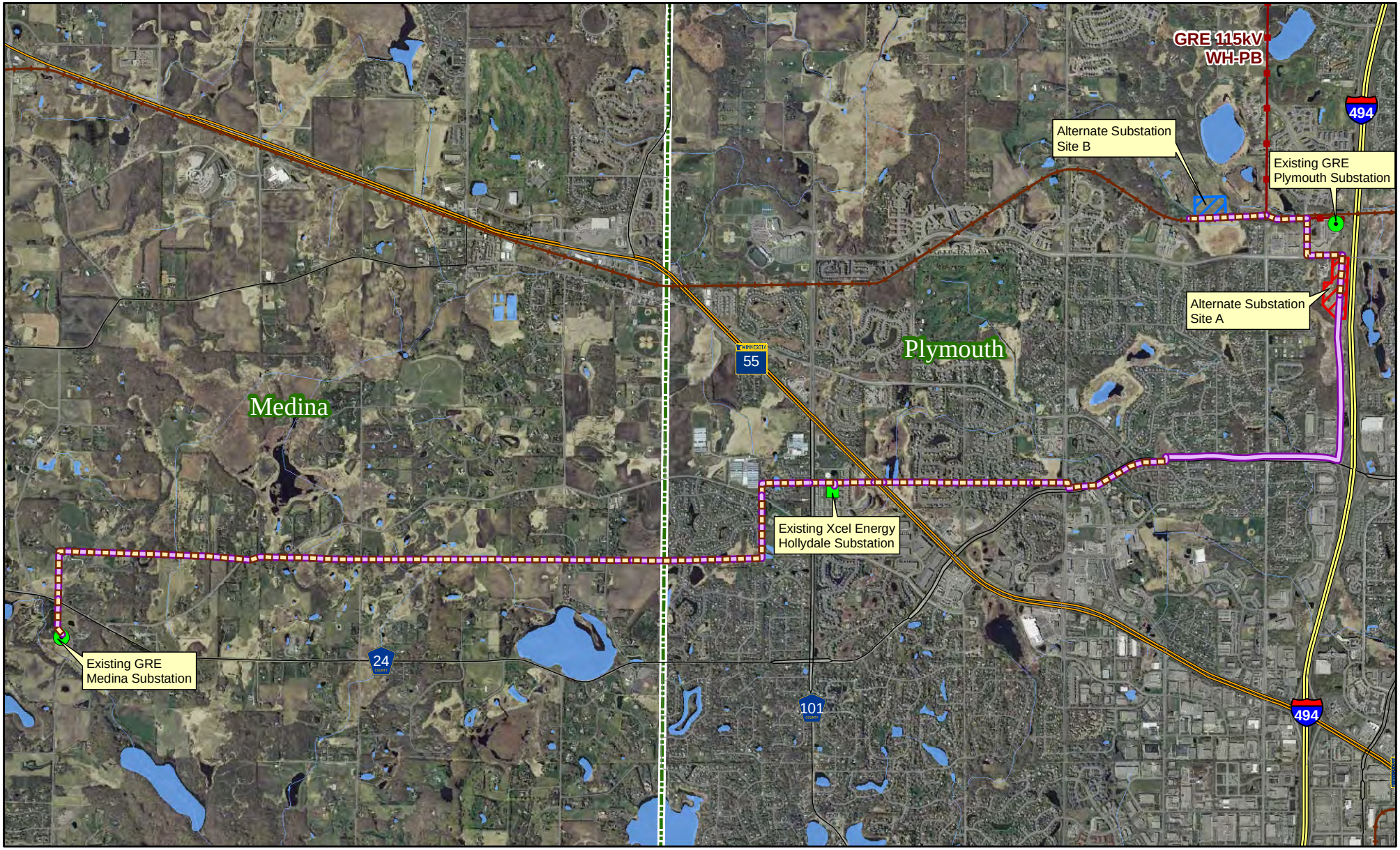
N

Feet
0 3,500 7,000

Figure 1

PROPOSED ROUTE
Hollydale 115 kVProject

Minnesota Department of Commerce



Alternative Route Segment A
Portion of Alternative Route Shared with Proposed Route
Proposed Route
Substation Site A
Substation Site B
Existing Xcel Energy Substation
Existing GRE Substation
GRE Transmission Line WH-PB
Railroad

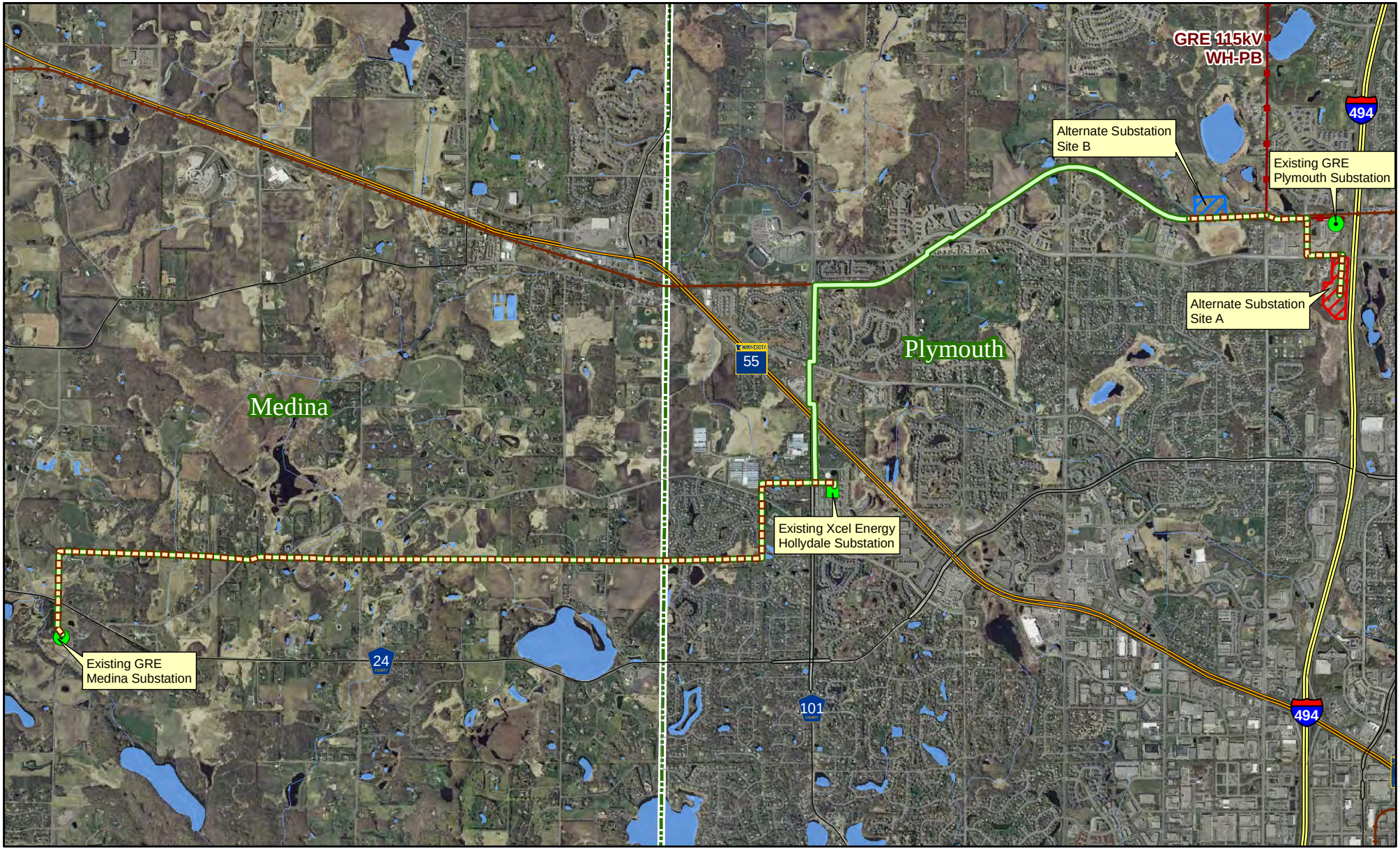
N

Feet
0 3,500 7,000

Figure 2

ALTERNATIVE ROUTE A
Hollydale Project

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



Alternative Route Segment B
Portion of Alternative Route Shared with Proposed Route
Proposed Route
Substation Site A
Substation Site B
Existing Xcel Energy Substation
Existing GRE Substation
GRE Transmission Line WH-PB
Railroad

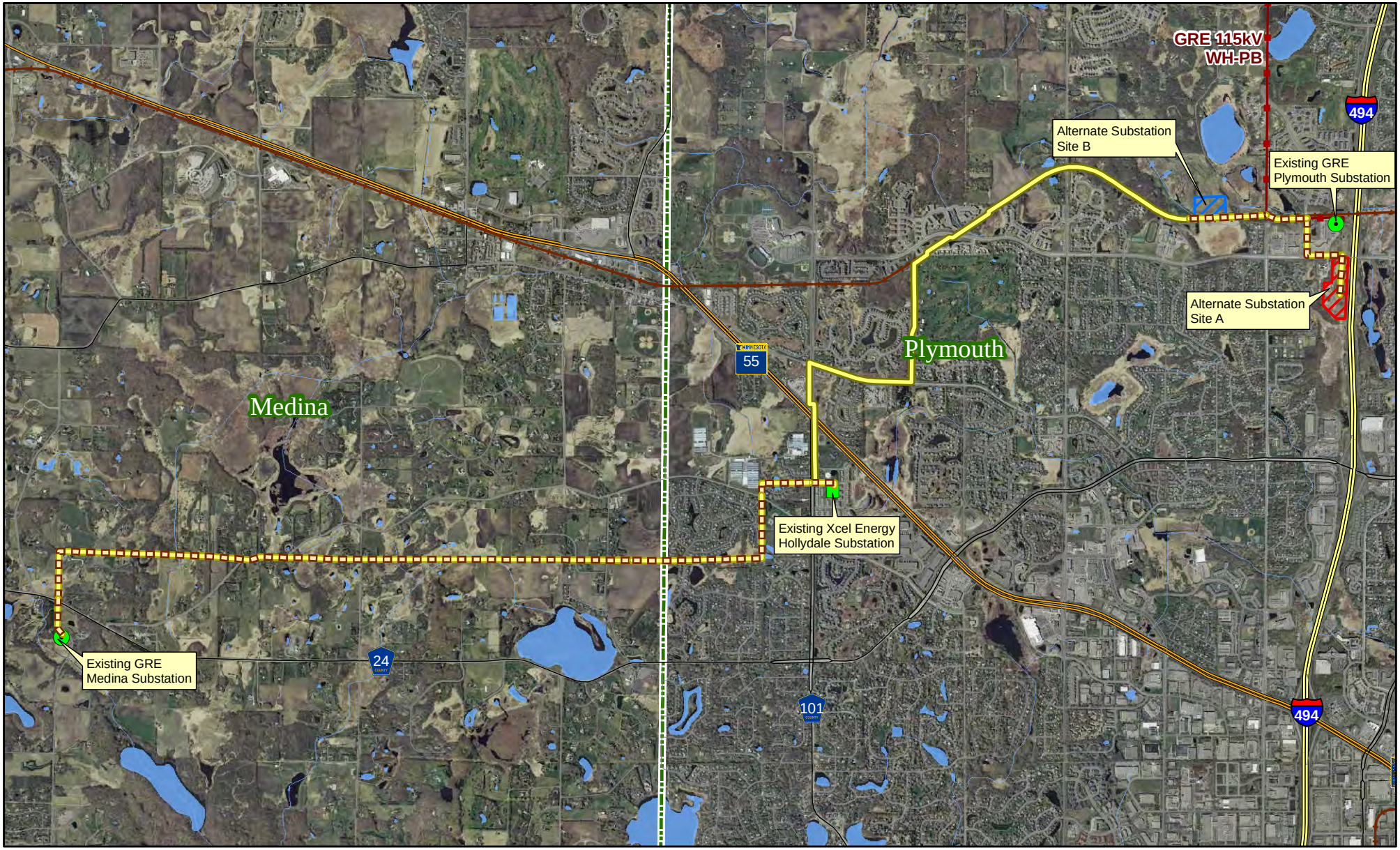
N

Feet
0 3,500 7,000

Figure 3

ALTERNATIVE ROUTE B
Hollydale Project

Minnesota Department of Commerce



ATF Alternative Route Segment B-1
Portion of Alternative Route Shared with Proposed Route
Proposed Route
Substation Site A
Substation Site B
Existing Xcel Energy Substation
Existing GRE Substation
GRE Transmission Line WH-PB
Railroad

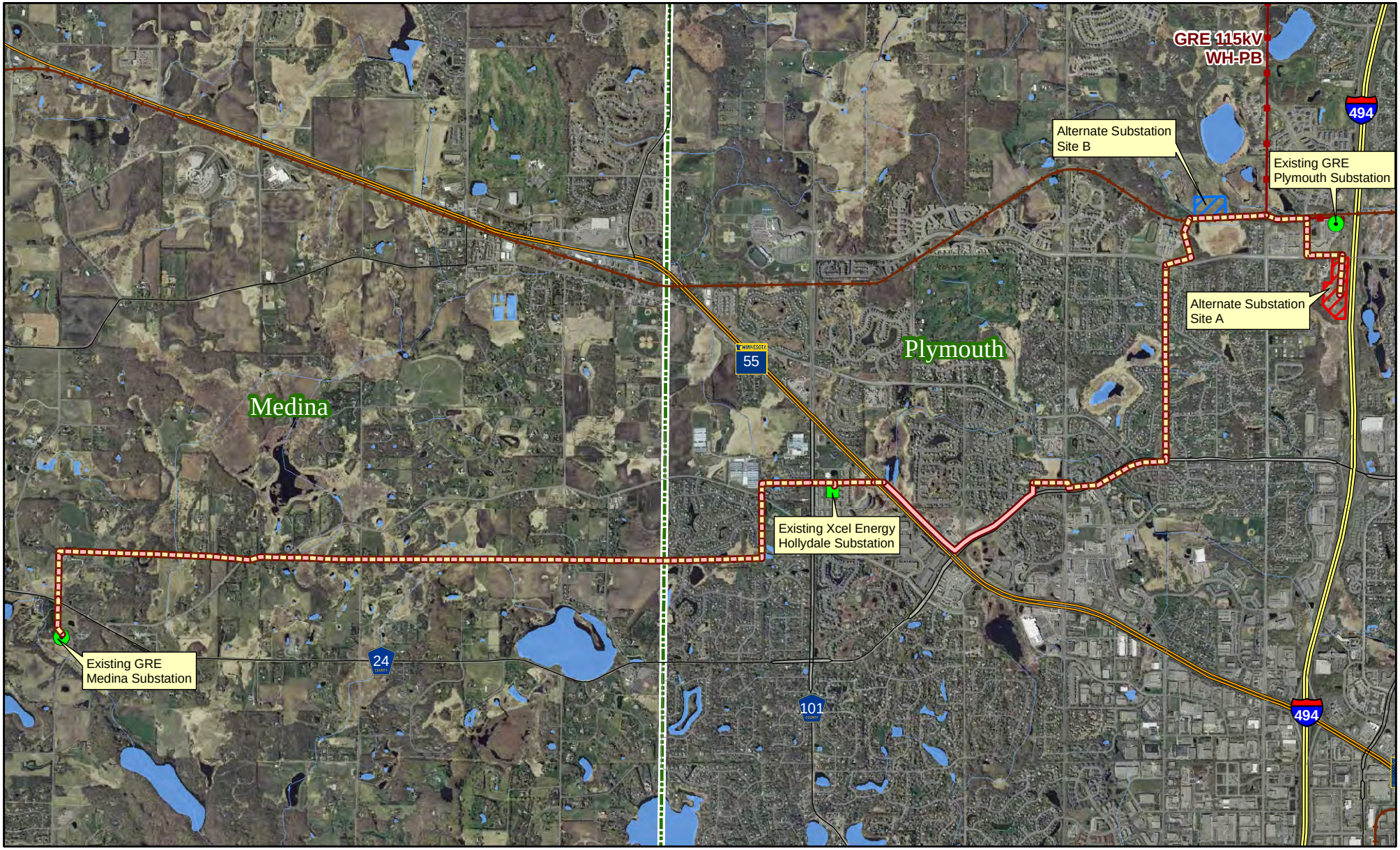
N

Feet
0 3,500 7,000

Figure 4

ATF ALTERNATIVE ROUTE B-1
Hollydale Project

Minnesota Department of Commerce



Alternative Route Segment C
Portion of Alternative Route Shared with Proposed Route
Proposed Route
Substation Site A
Substation Site B
Existing Xcel Energy Substation
Existing GRE Substation
GRE Transmission Line WH-PB
Railroad

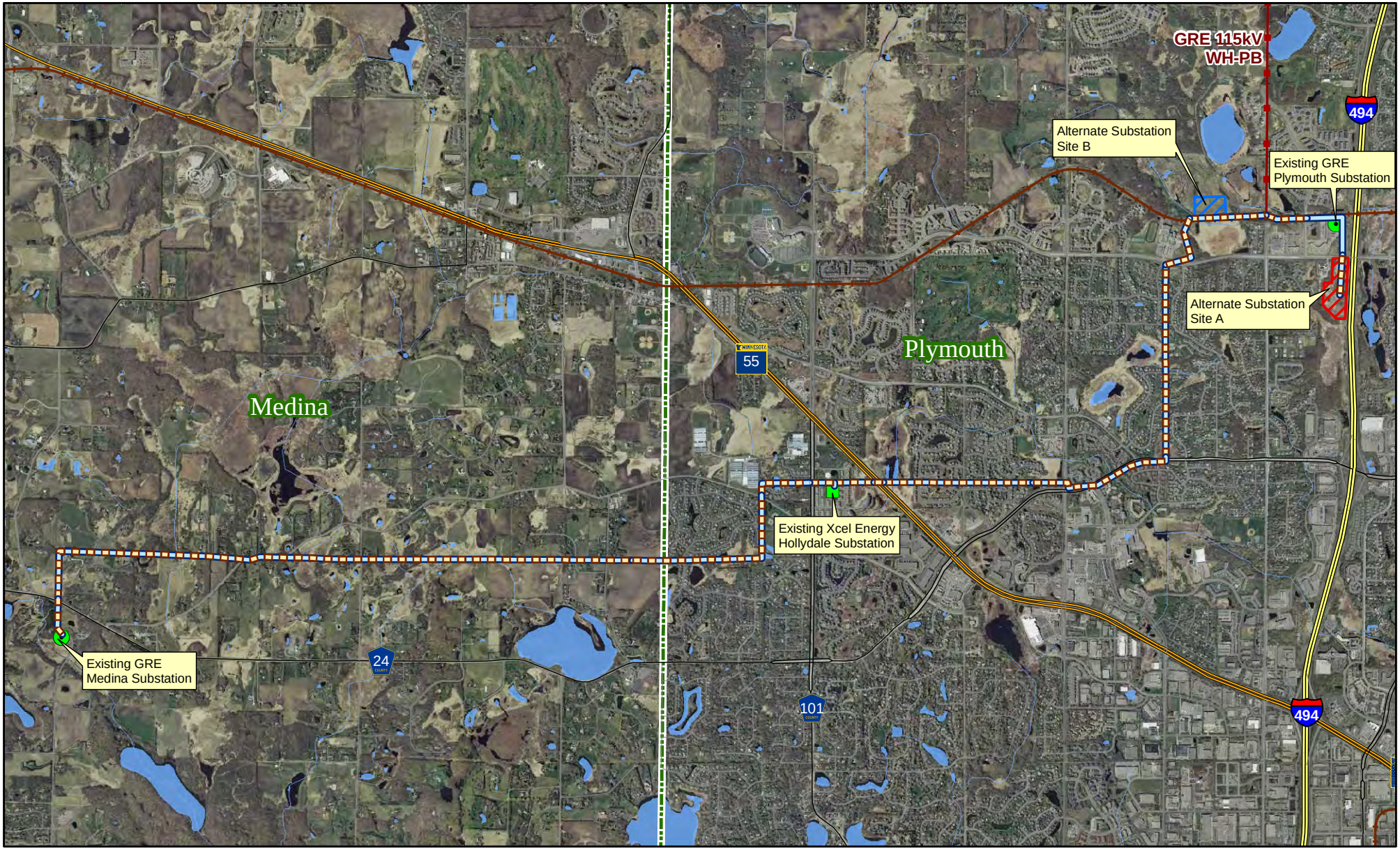
N

Feet
0 3,500 7,000

Figure 5

ALTERNATIVE ROUTE C
Hollydale Project

Minnesota Department of Commerce



Alternative Route Segment D
Portion of Alternative Route Shared with Proposed Route
Proposed Route
Substation Site A
Substation Site B
Existing Xcel Energy Substation
Existing GRE Substation
GRE Transmission Line WH-PB
Railroad

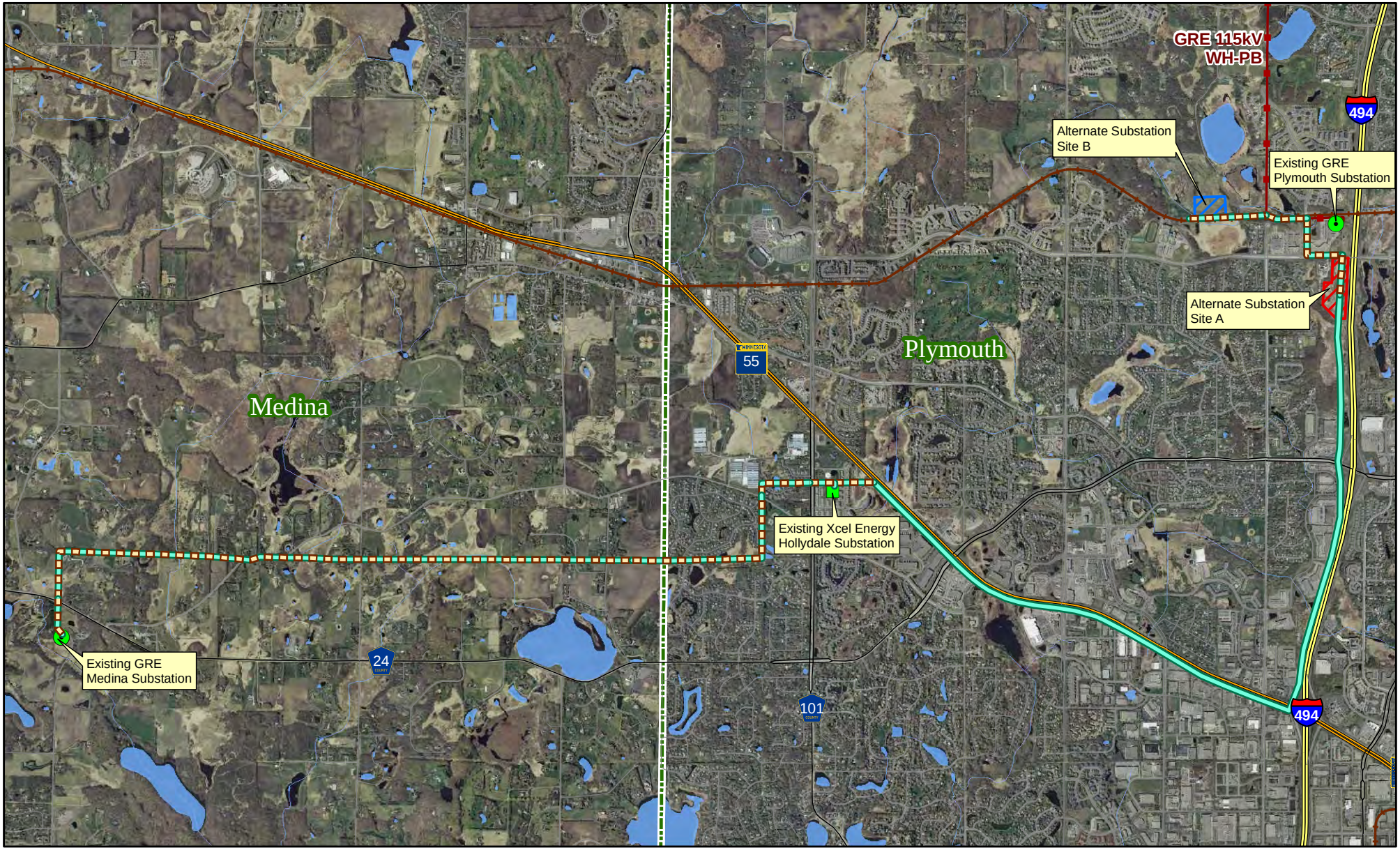
N

Feet
0 3,500 7,000

Figure 6

ALTERNATIVE ROUTE D
Hollydale Project

Minnesota Department of Commerce



ATF Alternative Route Segment E
Portion of Alternative Route Shared with Proposed Route
Proposed Route
Substation Site A
Substation Site B
Existing Xcel Energy Substation
Existing GRE Substation
GRE Transmission Line WH-PB
Railroad

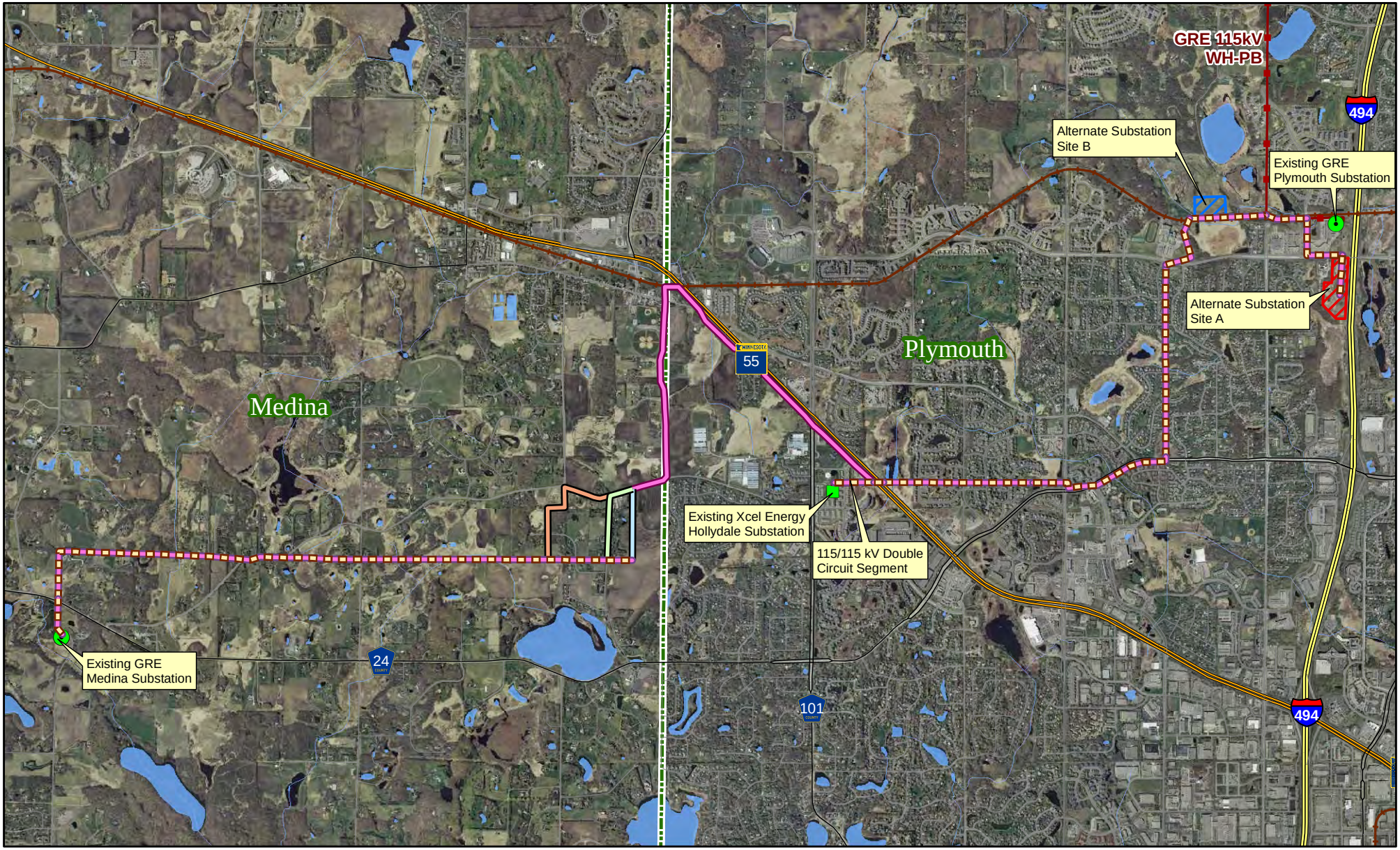
N

Feet
0 3,500 7,000

Figure 7

ATF ALTERNATIVE ROUTE E
Hollydale Project

Minnesota Department of Commerce



Alternative Route Segment F
Alternative Route Segment F-1
Alternative Route Segment F-2
Alternative Route Segment F-3
Portion of Alternative Route Shared with Proposed Route
Proposed Route
Substation Site A
Substation Site B
Existing Xcel Energy Substation
Existing GRE Substation
GRE Transmission Line WH-PB
Railroad

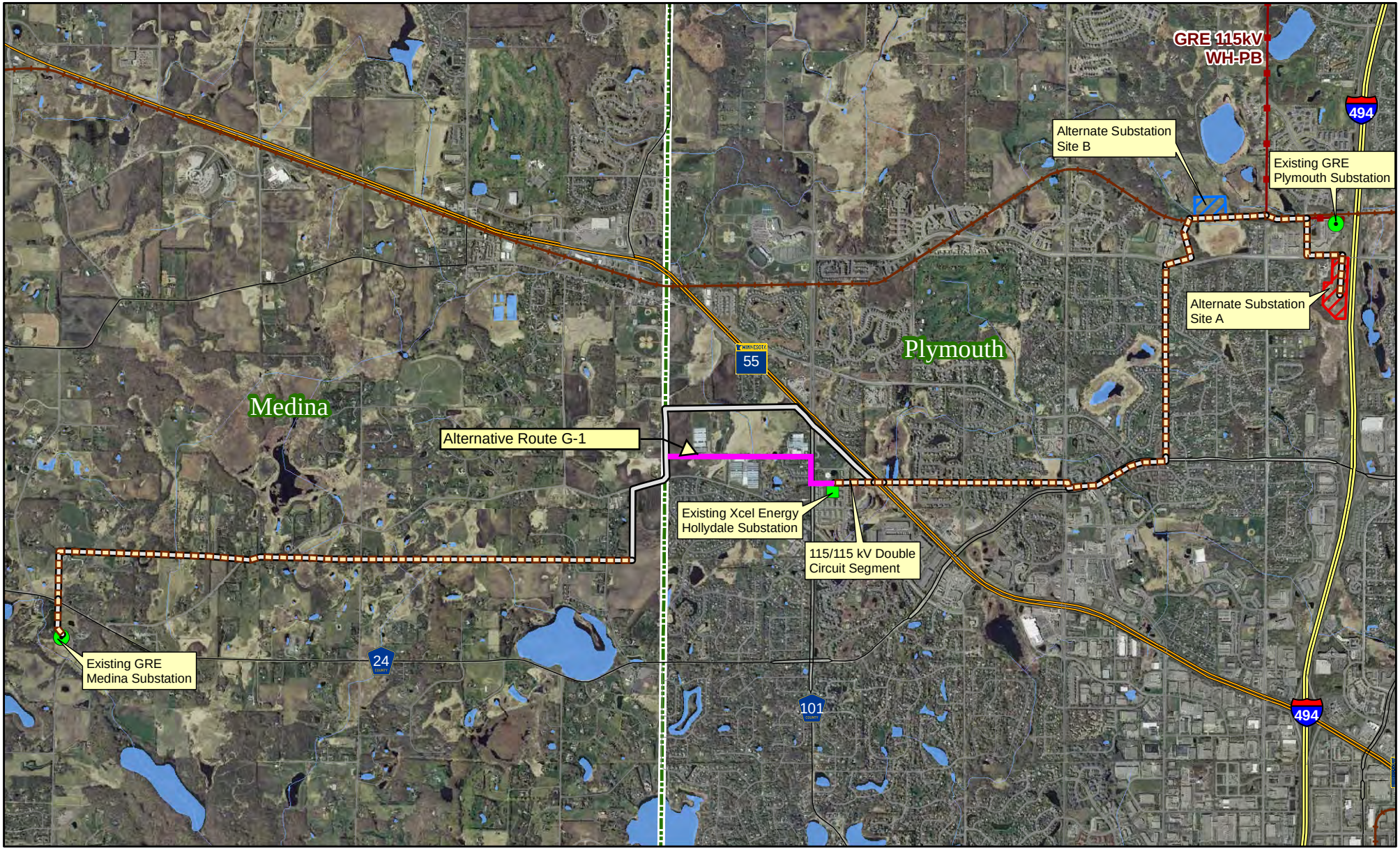
N

Feet
0 3,500 7,000

Figure 8

ALTERNATIVE ROUTE F
Hollydale Project

Minnesota Department of Commerce



Alternative Route Segment G
Portion of Alternative Route Shared with Proposed Route
Proposed Route
Substation Site A
Substation Site B
Existing Xcel Energy Substation
Existing GRE Substation
GRE Transmission Line WH-PB
Railroad
Alternative Route Segment G-1

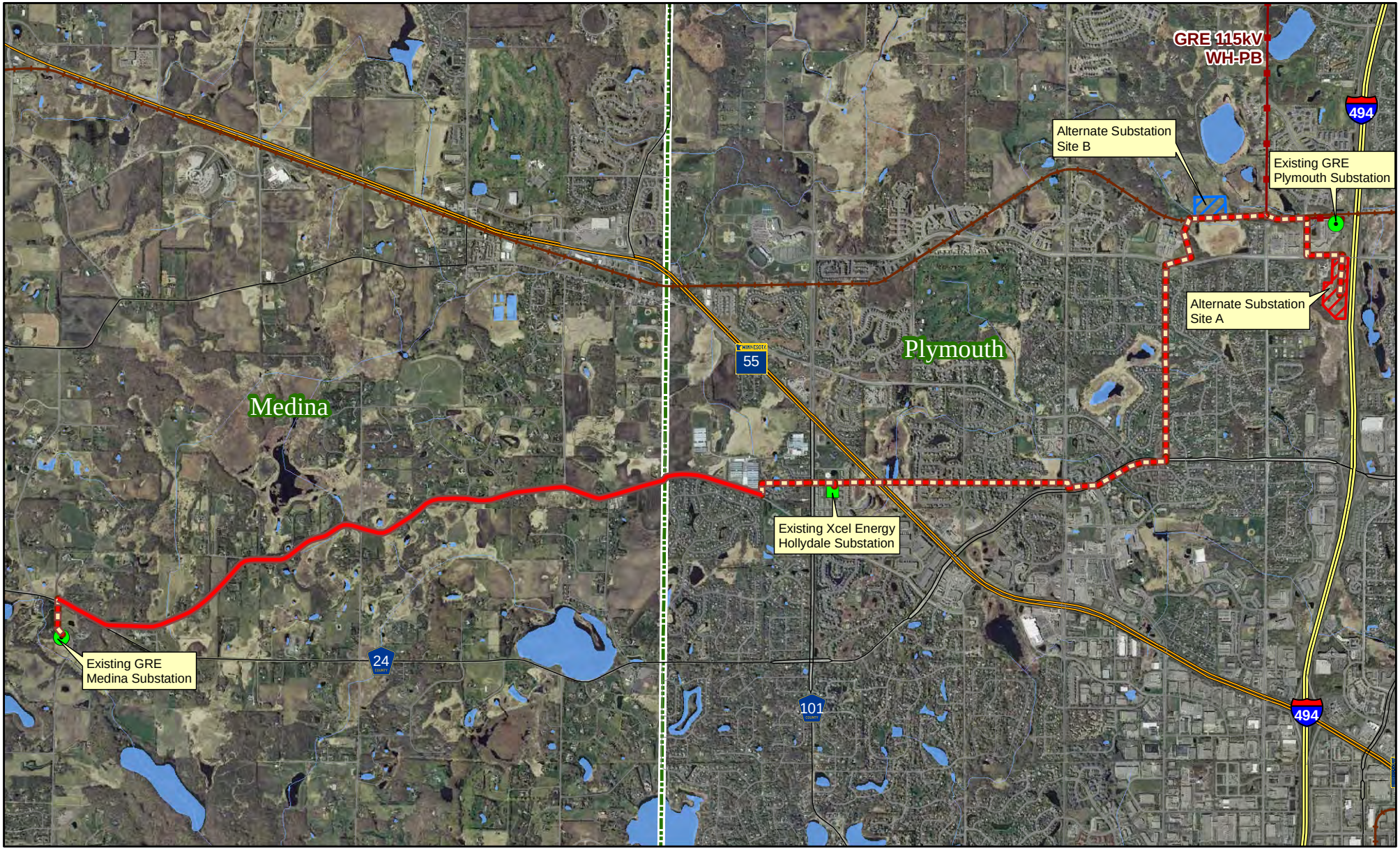
N

Feet
0 3,500 7,000

Figure 9

ALTERNATIVE ROUTE G & G-1
Hollydale Project

Minnesota Department of Commerce



Medina Road Alternative Route Segment
Portion of Alternative Route Shared with Proposed Route
Proposed Route
Substation Site A
Substation Site B
Existing Xcel Energy Substation
Existing GRE Substation
GRE Transmission Line WH-PB
Railroad

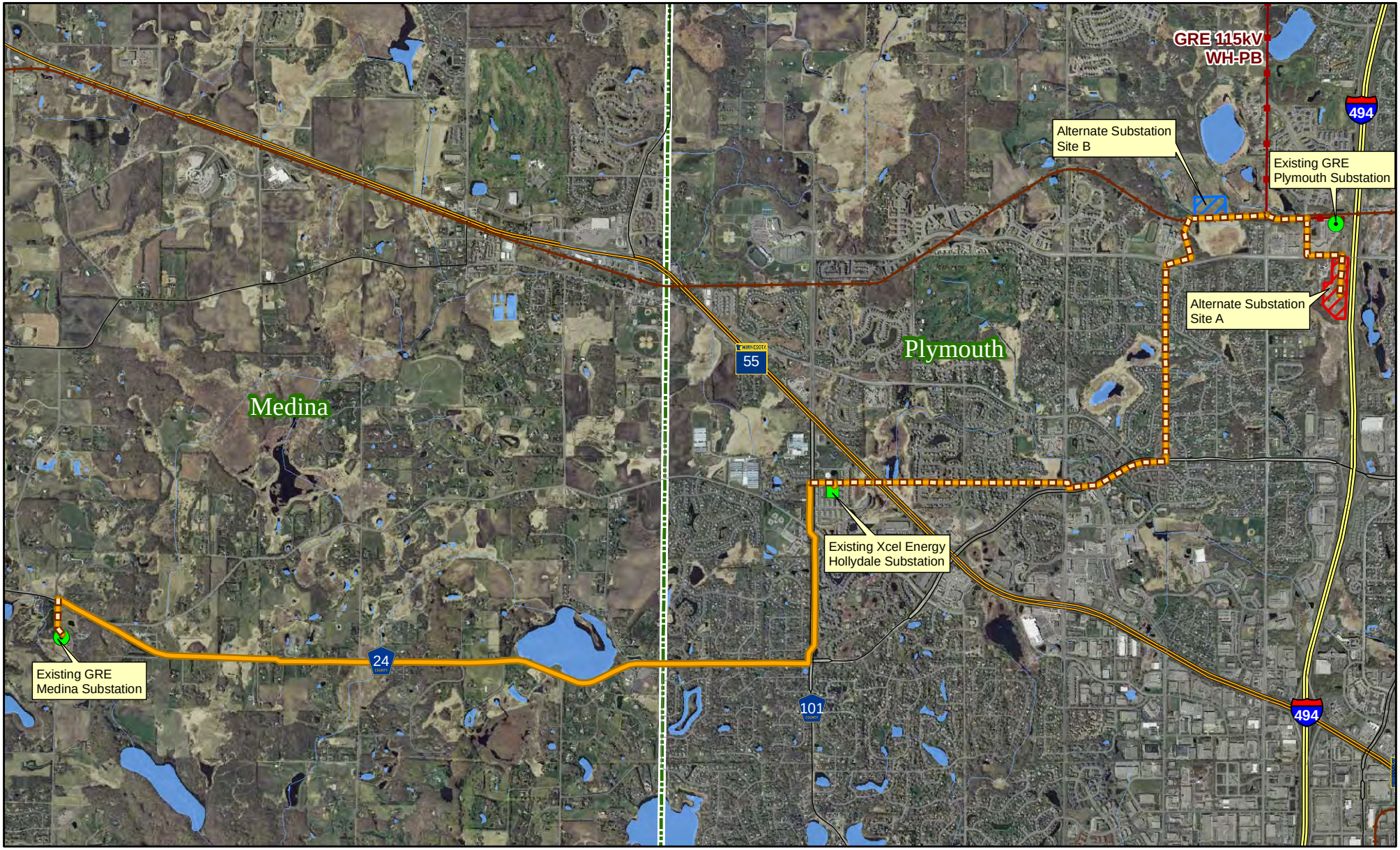
N

Feet
0 3,500 7,000

Figure 10

MEDINA ROAD ALTERNATIVE ROUTE
Hollydale Project

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



CSAH 24 Alternative Route Segment
Portion of Alternative Route Shared with Proposed Route
Proposed Route
Substation Site A
Substation Site B
Existing Xcel Energy Substation
Existing GRE Substation
GRE Transmission Line WH-PB
Railroad

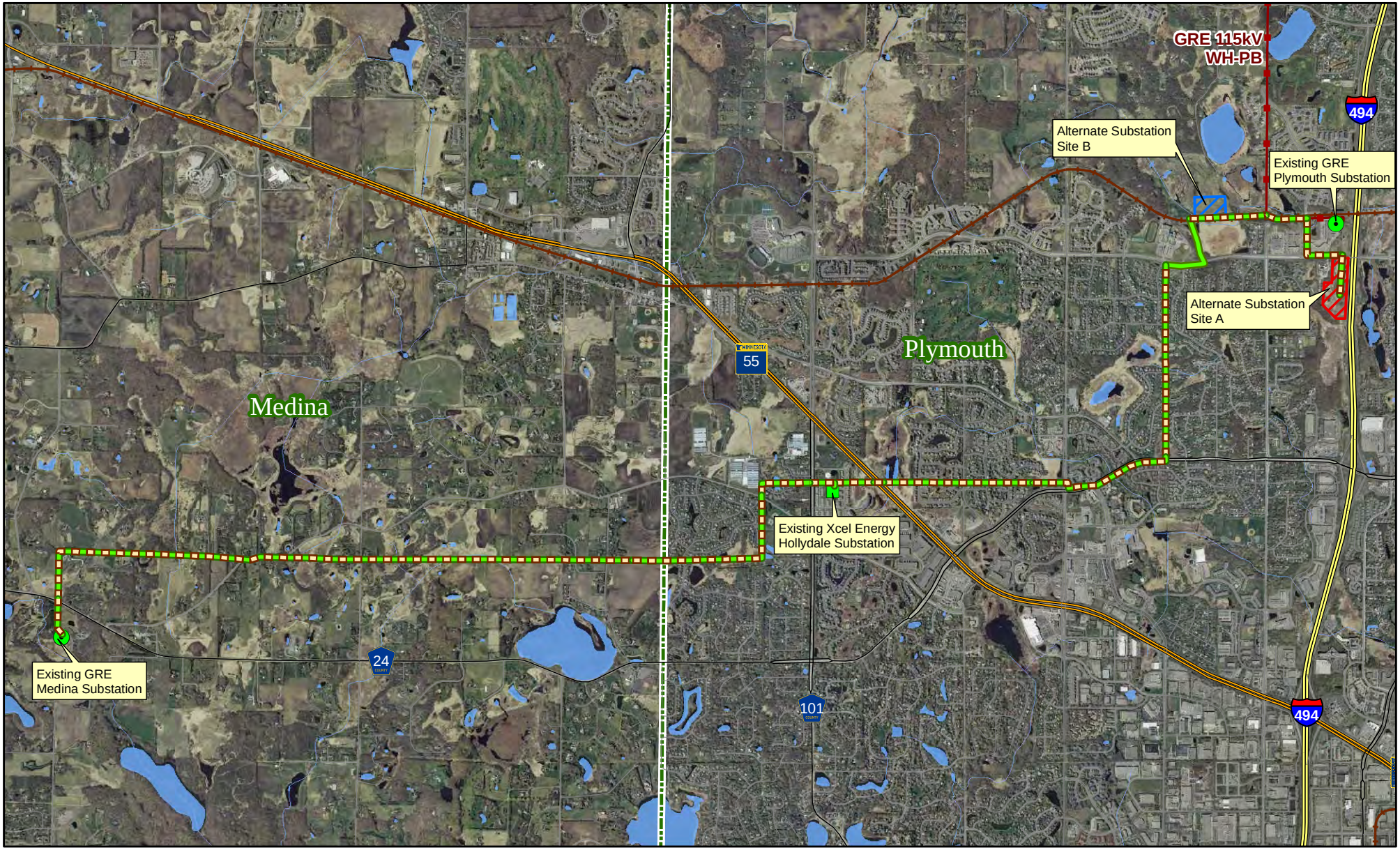
N

Feet
0 3,500 7,000

Figure 11

CSAH 24 ALTERNATIVE ROUTE
Hollydale Project

Minnesota Department of Commerce



Providence Academy Alternative Route Segment
Portion of Alternative Route Shared with Proposed Route
Proposed Route
Substation Site A
Substation Site B
Existing Xcel Energy Substation
Existing GRE Substation
GRE Transmission Line WH-PB
Railroad

N

Feet
0 3,500 7,000

Figure 12

PROVIDENCE ACADEMY ALTERNATIVE ROUTE
Hollydale Project

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