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- **Minnesota Department of
Commerce**

Hollydale Advisory Task Force Report

Hollydale 115 kV Transmission Line Project

PUC Docket No. E002/TL-11-152

November 2011

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Introduction

On June 30, 2011, Xcel Energy and Great River Energy (applicants) submitted an application to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) for a route permit to: (1) rebuild eight miles of existing 69 kV transmission line to 115 kV and construct approximately 0.8 miles of new 115 kV transmission line, (2) construct a new 115 kV substation (Pomerleau Lake Substation), and (3) modify associated transmission facilities located in cities of Medina and Plymouth in Hennepin County. The application was accepted as complete by the Commission on August 25, 2011, under the alternative permitting process.

The applicant states that the project will provide increased distribution capacity and avoid feeder circuit overloads in the Plymouth area distribution delivery system. They note the project will address area distribution needs which include increased distribution capacity in the Plymouth and Medina areas to better serve current customers and expected load growth.

On September 19, 2011, the Commission authorized the Department of Commerce Energy Facility Permitting (EFP) to establish an advisory task force (ATF) to assist EFP staff in determining the scope of the environmental assessment to be prepared for the proposed project. The Hollydale ATF was charged with (1) identifying specific impacts and issues of local concern that may be included in the scoping decision document and evaluated in the environmental assessment, and (2) identifying potential alternative transmission line routes or route segments and alignments that may maximize positive impacts and minimize or avoid negative impacts of the project in the specific area of concern and may be included in the scoping decision document and evaluated in the environmental assessment (See Appendix A).

On October 13, 2011, the EFP appointed nine people to the Hollydale ATF (See Appendix B). The task force included the following members: Judy Johnson, City of Plymouth; Dale Cooney (alternate for Dusty Finke), City of Medina; Janet Clarke, Holly Creek Village Townhome Association; Daniel Callahan, multiple homeowner associations in area; Gregory Gibson, Quail Ridge Homeowners Association; Derek Roek (Jeff Johnson, Alternate), Kingsview Heights Homeowners Association; Peter Savage, West Branch Fourth Homeowners Association; John Sullivan, Parkview Ridge Homeowners Association; Lance Stenda, Conor Meadows Homeowners Association.

Methodology

The Hollydale ATF met twice – October 18 and November 1, 2011. The task force, through a facilitated process, discussed the proposed project and the charge given to the task force. Task force meetings were open to the public, and additional people attended to listen to the discussion.

The first task of the ATF was to determine the impacts and issues that should be included in the scoping decision document for environmental assessment. This task was conducted at the first meeting. Task force members, through small and large group discussions, identified general impacts and issues. Further, task force members prioritized the general impacts and issues. Members were asked to prioritize the impacts and issues that were most important.

Task force members then took up the second part of their charge – identifying alternative routes for the transmission line. They broke into small “brainstorming” groups and identified alternative routes and route segments. The small groups then reported back to the entire task force.

At the second meeting, the task force reviewed the alternatives identified at the first meeting. The task force listed pros and cons for each alternative. Clarifications, corrections and variations within a route were discussed. The task force then discussed if there was a route (or more than one route) for which the task force wanted to indicate a preference.

The task force’s work was captured in meeting notes recorded on flip charts by the meeting facilitator. Meeting notes and supporting materials for all meetings are available online: <http://energyfacilities.puc.state.mn.us/resource.html?Id=32256>

Impacts and Issues to Evaluate

Task force members identified impacts and issues by responding to the following question: *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?* The task force identified and prioritized six impacts and issues to be included in the scoping decision document (See Appendix C).

Top priority impacts and issues to consider were:

- Health and safety issues;
- Property values; and
- Proximity to homes.

Priority impacts and issues to consider were:

- Environmental impacts;
- Right-of-way impacts; and
- Cultural & aesthetic values.

Identification and Review of Alternative Routes and Route Segments

The task force identified two alternative route segments (alternative route segments B1 and E) for consideration in the scoping decision document. Task force members used their knowledge of the area and other local documents in developing the alternative route segments. The task force reviewed the alternatives identified in the application and those developed by the task force at its first meeting. They identified pros and cons for each route, route segment, and substation location. This exercise was not intended to be a detailed analysis of each route or route segment but rather to determine if a route or segment should be included in the scoping decision document.

During this discussion, the task force removed two routes from consideration, both identified by the task force at its initial meeting (alternative route segments B2 and F). These routes were removed because they substantially increased the difficulty of connecting to the existing Hollydale substation and likely did not meet their intended goal of reducing impacts to residents. See Appendix D for a map of the specific routes, route segments, and substation alternatives considered. Pros and cons for the alternatives are noted here:

Applicant's proposed route (route defined in application – available at: <http://energyfacilities.puc.state.mn.us/resource.html?Id=32122>)

Pros

- The route follows an existing transmission line right-of-way, it is an easy option for Xcel;
- Funds have already been spent in preparation of right-of-way;
- There has been 30 to 40 years of tree growth to camouflage the line;
- A transmission line already exists along the route; “got a pole, get a pole;”
- Easier for Xcel to upgrade transmission line;
- Significantly fewer new impacts; and
- Those impacted along the proposed route had greater notice of the new line and been most engaged.

Cons

- Structures (buildings/homes) have been built in existing right-of-way since it was established;
- Multiple homes impacted that are within the 20 to 30 foot right-of-way;
- New/upgrade transmission line will have negative impacts on property values along right-of-way;
- Route goes through and/or impacts parks and trails and crosses more open wetlands than other alternatives;
- Health and safety concerns because of transmission line;
- Significant increase of impact to homes along route;
- Change in expectations (of homeowners in area) in higher voltage line and allowance of metal poles (current right-of-way does not permit metal poles);
- Right-of-way owners have not maintained open access to poles; brush has not been cleared under existing line;
- Alternative routes presented do not impact as many homes as the proposed route; this route impacts the most homes within 200 feet of right-of-way center line;
- Route goes on east side of Providence Academy and impacts future playfield and building expansion;
- High voltage powerline by school;
- Increased impact on existing powerline (line has not operated since 2006/2007);
- Proposed substation A is close to homes;

- Comments have been made by homeowner in the corridor that if the line is built, they will move; and
- For homeowners association in area: concern of foreclosure of homes and non-payment of dues to association; homeowners move; homeowners cannot sell home; and/or, homeowners sell home at a lower value.

Alternative route segment A (route defined in application)

Pros

- Impacts fewer homes and parks than proposed route;
- Uses Interstate 494 corridor for about half of route;
- Shorter than proposed route;
- Avoids Providence Academy (school);
- Ties more directly to preferred substation site A;
- Follows major roads (Rockford Road and I-494) rather than going through residential (homes) area; and
- Avoids Niagara Lane and Turtle Lake area (area amenities include parkland and natural amenities).

Cons

- Still goes through some residential areas;
- Pits neighborhood against neighborhood;
- Health and safety concern for residents in impacted neighborhood;
- “Pile on” Rockford Road impact (a lot of infrastructure already along the road); and
- Alternative route areas have had limited engagement from homeowners and business-owners impacted because these alternatives have surfaced more recently and may or may not be deemed feasible.

Alternative route segments B and B-1 (alternative route segment B defined in application; alternative route segment B-1 – segment that turns east off alternative route segment B following Old Rockford Road then turns north following Holly Lane to re-connect with alternative route segment B)

Pros

- Reduces some of the impact on residential areas (but includes others);
- Impacts fewer homes than the proposed route; and
- Follows existing right-of-way (railroad and streets) rather than through neighborhoods and between homes.

Cons

- Transmission line becomes someone else's problem;
- Impact on greatest number of homes and businesses than any other alternative;
- Pits neighborhood against neighborhood;
- No shared sacrifice on transmission line placement; piles on right-of-ways for railroad, Old Rockford Road, and Peony Lane;
- Goes by elementary school;
- New/upgrade transmission line will have negative impacts on property values along right-of-way;
- Route goes through and/or impacts parks and trails and crosses more open wetlands than other alternatives;
- Health and safety concerns because of transmission line;
- Significant increase of impact to homes along route;
- High voltage powerline by school;
- Comments have been made by homeowner in the corridor that if the line is built, they will move;
- For homeowners association in area: concern of foreclosure of homes and non-payment of dues to association; homeowners move; homeowners cannot sell home; and/or, homeowners sell home at a lower value; and
- Alternative route areas have had limited engagement from homeowners and business-owners impacted because these alternatives have surfaced more recently and may or may not be deemed feasible.

Alternative route segment C (route defined in application)

Pros

- No house impacts nearer than 50 feet;
- Significantly fewer homes impacted within 200 feet;
- Fewer wetlands impacted (some ATF members felt significantly fewer impacted);
- Wetlands that are impacted are primarily along the roadways and have already negatively been impacted by runoff and other pollutants;
- Fewer aesthetic impacts, including wetland areas; Easier access for mosquito control;
- There is a precedent that metal transmission poles already exist on Rockford Road, extending from Vicksburg Lane N. to between Old Rockford Rd. and Minnesota Lane N.; and
- Easier to mitigate the visual impact of the line.

Cons

- Pits neighborhood against neighborhood;
- Of the homes impacted, 12 of 19 are within 100 feet with zero separation from road;
- New impact to Sugarhills development;
- Pile on County Road 9 corridor;

- New/upgrade transmission line will have negative impacts on property values along right-of-way;
- Health and safety concerns because of transmission line;
- Significant increase of impact to homes along route; and
- Alternative route areas have had limited engagement from homeowners and business-owners impacted because these alternatives have surfaced more recently and may or may not be deemed feasible.

Alternative route segment D (route defined in application)

Pros

- Less complicated routing of line;
- Does not use Cheshire Lane; and
- Uses Interstate 494 corridor.

Cons

- Closer to residential area than proposed route.

Alternative route segment E (veers south where applicants proposed route crosses Highway 55 following on south side of Highway 55 to Interstate 494, goes north along 494 to preferred substation site A)

Pros

- At the first task force meeting, the task force members broke into three groups to identify possible route alternatives. All three groups identified this alternative route segment;
- This route alternative was overwhelmingly endorsed by members of the public who attended the scoping meeting on October 26, 2011;
- The Plymouth City Council has officially taken action in support of this route segment;
- The route impacts the least number of homes of all routes;
- It also impacts the least number of parks, trails, schools and wetlands; and
- Route segment uses existing right-of-way and easements: highways, interstates, transmission lines.

Cons

- Impacts housing behind post office (Cavanaugh addition);
- Follows commercial corridor and have not heard from businesses that might be impacted;
- This route is longer than proposed route;
- Along west side of Interstate 494 there is a stand of trees that the City of Plymouth owns, negotiation of sale may be an issue; and
- Transmission line along roadways; potential MnDOT and Federal Highway Administration issues.

Preferred substation site A (location defined in application)

Pros

- Close to Interstate 494 and accessible;
- Least impact to homes;
- Close to existing powerlines;
- Interstate 494 “white noise” already exists therefore the noise from the substation will not be as noticeable; and
- Alternate substation site A has a lesser negative impact on future development than does substation site B.

Cons

- Impact on wetlands; and
- Question mark on funds to City of Plymouth for some of the land.

Alternate substation site B (location defined in application)

Pros (none identified)

Cons

- More lines from Interstate 494 into residential area.
- Site would prevent alternative route segment E from being viable;
- Impact future development at location; and
- Impacts Providence Academy

Recommendations

- 1. Include all of the route segment and substation alternatives identified and reviewed by the task force in the scoping decision document.** These include:

Route Segments

- Applicant’s proposed route (automatically included in scoping decision document)
- Alternative route segment A
- Alternative route segment B and B-1
- Alternative route segment C
- Alternative route segment D
- Alternative route segment E

Substations

- Preferred substation site A
- Alternate substation site B

A good amount of effort and thought went into the creation of the task force's alternative route segments. The task force recommends that all alternatives be carried forward in the scoping decision document with the pros and cons identified by the task force.

2. **Strongly consider permitting alternative route segment E.** The task force voted unanimously to indicate a strong preference for alternative route segment E. Cognizant that a decision on a route permit for the project will ultimately be made by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission after a hearing and the development of a robust public record, the task force recommends to the Commission at this time that it strongly consider permitting alternative route segment E.
3. **Consider burying the transmission line, where necessary, to reduce impacts to neighborhoods.**
4. **The impacts and issues identified by the task force are all important and should be included in the scoping decision document.** The prioritization of impacts and issues performed by the task force may be helpful in guiding EFP staff in the development of the scoping decision document, but is not intended to diminish the importance of all impacts and issues raised and discussed by the task force.

Appendices

A – Advisory Task Force charge

B – ATF members notice of appointment

C – Impacts and Issues Table

**D – Maps of routes, route segments, and substation locations reviewed
by task force**

Appendix A – Advisory Task Force charge



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September 15, 2011

TO: William Grant, Deputy Commissioner

THROUGH: Deborah Pile, Supervisor, Energy Facility Permitting *Deb Pile*

FROM: Scott Ek, State Permit Manager, Energy Facility Permitting

RE: Advisory Task Force Structure and Charge for the Hollydale 115 kV
Transmission Line Project
PUC Docket No. E002/TL-11-152

ACTION REQUIRED. The signature of the deputy commissioner on the attached advisory task force (ATF) structure and charge. Once signed Energy Facility Permitting (EFP) staff will solicit and appoint ATF members and begin work on the designated charge.

BACKGROUND. On June 30, 2011, Xcel Energy and Great River Energy (GRE) filed a joint route permit application under the alternative permitting process for the rebuilding of approximately 8 miles of 69 kV transmission line to 115 kV, constructing approximately 0.8 miles of new 115 kV transmission line, constructing a new 115 kV substation (Pomerleau Lake Substation), and modifying associated transmission facilities located in the cities of Medina and Plymouth in Hennepin County, Minnesota.

The Public Utilities Commission (Commission) accepted the route permit application as complete on August 25, 2011. In its order, the Commission also authorized EFP staff to establish an ATF with the EFP proposed structure and charge for the task force.

The application is being reviewed under the alternative permitting process described in Minnesota Rules 7850.2800 to 7850.3900. For this project, EFP staff will prepare an environmental assessment (EA). Minnesota Statute 216E.08, subdivision 1, authorizes the Commission to appoint an ATF to assist staff with identifying impacts, issues and alternatives to be evaluated in the EA. The ATF terminates upon issuance of the EA scoping decision.

As described in the route permit application, the proposed 8.8 mile transmission line would run through the cities of Medina and Plymouth from the existing Medina Substation to a newly proposed substation (Pomerleau Lake Substation). The applicants propose to remove approximately 8 miles of the existing GRE 69 kV "BD" transmission line and rebuild to a 115 kV transmission line. The applicants are requesting a 200 foot route width where the transmission line is to be rebuilt along the existing 69 kV route and a 400 foot route width for the 0.8 miles of new 115 kV transmission line.

The setting for the project is densely populated rural residential and urban areas in the cities of Medina and Plymouth. Approximately 19 residential and non-residential buildings would be located within 0-35 feet from the proposed centerline, with the closest residential structure located 20 feet from the proposed centerline. EFP staff has received a number of phone calls and comment letters regarding the project with many expressing concern about the location of the existing 69 kV line and preference for routes that were rejected in the route permit application. In addition, EFP staff understands that there are at least 15 different homeowners associations and potentially more located within the project area that may be impacted by the proposed project.

Based on the reasons above, staff concluded that an ATF was warranted in this case.



In the Matter of the Route Permit
Application for the Hollydale 115 kV
Transmission Line Project in the Cities of
Plymouth and Medina, Hennepin County.

HOLLYDALE 115 kV PROJECT
ADVISORY TASK FORCE
STRUCTURE AND CHARGE
DOCKET NO. E002/TL-11-152

WHEREAS, the applicants submitted a route permit application for the proposed Hollydale 115 kV transmission line project on June 30, 2011.

WHEREAS, the Commission, under Minnesota Statute 216E.08, may establish an advisory task force (ATF) to assist it in carrying out its duties. Under the statute the Commission shall provide guidance to the ATF in the form of a charge.

WHEREAS, an ATF shall be comprised of at least one representative from each of the following: regional development commissions, counties and municipal corporations, and one town board member from each county in which a route is proposed to be located. This statute further stipulates that no officer, agent, or employee of the applicant shall serve on the advisory task force.

WHEREAS, the ATF terminates upon completion of its charge or upon designation by the Department of Commerce of alternative sites or routes to be included in the environmental assessment, whichever occurs first.

WHEREAS, on August 25, 2011, the Commission authorized Department of Commerce Energy Facility Permitting (EFP) to establish an ATF with the structure and charge herein noted.

THEREFORE, having reviewed this information, the Department of Commerce makes the following determination with regard to the need for and charge to an ATF relating to this matter.

HOLLYDALE ADVISORY TASK FORCE AUTHORIZATION

As authorized by the Commission, the Department of Commerce establishes an ATF to assist in identifying impacts and route alternatives to be evaluated in the environmental assessment to be prepared by EFP staff for the proposed Hollydale 115 kV transmission line project. The Hollydale ATF members will be solicited, as required by Minnesota Statute 216E.08, subdivision 1, from the following governmental units:

- Metropolitan Council
- Hennepin County
- City of Medina
- City of Plymouth

In addition, the ATF will include no more than six designated representatives from homeowners associations with property on or near the proposed project.

The ATF will be comprised of no more than 10 members total.

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.

The Department of Commerce charges the Hollydale ATF with:

1. Identifying specific impacts and issues of local concern that may be included in the scoping decision document and evaluated in the environmental assessment, particularly regarding potential conflicts with local planning and zoning.
2. Identifying potential alternative transmission line routes or route segments and alignments that may maximize positive impacts and minimize or avoid negative impacts of the project in specific areas of concern and that may be included in the scoping decision document and evaluated in the environmental assessment.

The following issues will not be addressed in the scope of environmental review:

- A no-build alternative.
- Issues related to project need, size, type, or timing.
- Routes segments or alternatives that would be unpractical or unreasonable, or would not meet the stated need of the proposed project.

ATF members are expected to participate with EFP staff in up to two meetings and to assist staff with the development of a summary of the task force's work, including their preferences or recommendations, if any. Meetings will be facilitated by EFP staff or a facilitator engaged by EFP staff.

The ATF will expire upon completion of its charge or upon release of the environmental assessment scoping decision by the Department of Commerce, whichever occurs first.

EFP staff is directed to solicit and appoint, as appropriate, members of the ATF and to begin work on the above-noted charge.

Signed this 19th day of September, 2011

STATE OF MINNESOTA
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



William Grant, Deputy Commissioner

B – ATF members notice of appointment



STATE OF MINNESOTA Department of Commerce



Issued: October 13, 2011

NOTICE OF APPOINTMENT FOR THE HOLLYDALE ADVISORY TASK FORCE

**In the Matter of the Route Permit Application for the Hollydale 115 kV Transmission Line
Project in the Cities of Plymouth and Medina, Hennepin County**

PUC Docket No. E002/TL-11-152

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the Minnesota Department of Commerce Energy Facility Permitting (EFP) has appointed the following individuals to serve as members of the Hollydale Advisory Task Force (ATF) for the proposed Hollydale 115 kV transmission line project. Replacement appointments may be made, as necessary.

Hollydale Advisory Task Force

Name	Affiliation
Dusty Finke	City of Medina
Judy Johnson (Doran Cote, Alternate)	City of Plymouth
<i>Did not participate</i>	Hennepin County
<i>Did not participate</i>	Metropolitan Council
Janet Clarke	Holly Creek Village Townhome Association
Daniel Callahan	Multiple
Gregory Gibson	Quail Ridge Homeowners Association
Derek Rock (Jeff Johnson, Alternate)	Kingsview Heights Homeowners Association
Peter Savage	West Branch Fourth Homeowners Association
John Sullivan	Parkview Ridge Homeowners Association
Lance Stendal	Conor Meadows Homeowners Association

The ATF will assist EFP staff in developing the scope of the environmental assessment for the proposed Hollydale 115 kV transmission line project.

Information about the proposed project can be found on the Public Utilities Commission's website:
<http://energyfacilities.puc.state.mn.us/Docket.html?Id=32121>.

Questions about the ATF should be directed to: Scott Ek (651-296-8813, scott.ek@state.mn.us) or Ray Kirsch (651-296-7588, raymond.kirsch@state.mn.us), Department of Commerce Energy Facility Permitting, 85 7th Place East, Suite 500, St. Paul, MN 55101.

C – Impacts and Issues Table

Hollydale Advisory Task Force

October 18, 2011

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?

Health and Safety Issues (Top priority)	Property Values (Top Priority)	Lines too close to houses (Top priority)	Environmental Impacts (Priority)	Right-of-way Impacts (Priority)	Cultural & aesthetic values (Priority)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Magnetic field (real/perceived) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pets ○ Children/grandchildren ○ Old people • Electrical fields, magnetic fields, pacemaker interference, childhood leukemia, line drop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Property value, impacts of new line vs. upgrade of existing • Lower value of homes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Minimum of 10%? ○ Aggregate > \$700M ○ Deters buyers • Knowingly buying a property next to an existing line is a fundamentally different impact than having a new line placed next to an existing home. • Shifting the line, shifts impacts to other properties and homeowners. • Buying a property at a 20% discount because of its proximity to a power line; you can't expect your property to appreciate at the same rate when you sell. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electromagnetic field • Danger of falling pole • Eliminates yard • Property value decrease • Fire hazards (decks with grills under lines) 22' min. • Parents with children losing safe use (perceived or actual) of back yard in townhome area – no other green space in front of home. • People in townhomes close to line threatening to move – home values “underwater” or loans – may default on association deals. • Proximity to homes. Property rights and change in land use • Route is too close to homes. • Impact fewest households (least impact) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wet lands damage & trees/shrubs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Change drainage in one area ○ Long term impact ○ Spread of invasives ○ Environmental impact • Watercourses, wetlands & floodplains ○ Aesthetic ○ Problem to repair/time to repair ○ Time to repair reduced reliability • Wetland impacts • Loss of trees & vegetation • Existing line runs through numerous wetlands now. Old rules (1971) did not value wetlands. Aesthetics. Difficult to access to repair. Longer repair time leads to reduced reliability. • Wetland impacts (during construction) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right-of-way impacts (access, trees, railroad, natural areas) During both build & maintain • Structural interference with road way clearance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metal vs. wooden poles • Line through Turtle Lake Park • Route C only, above ground lines. • Aesthetic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Plymouth as #1 livable city!! ○ Introducing ugly & trails • Lessened value to parks • Turtle Lake Park and city path to the north will have reduced aesthetics, use and value. Other parks & trails may have similar

D – Maps of routes, route segments, and substation locations reviewed by task force

