



STATE OF MINNESOTA
Energy Facility Permitting



Issued: November 8, 2011

NOTICE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION AND SCOPING MEETING

**In the Matter of the Route Permit Application for the North Rochester to Chester
161 kV Transmission Line Project in Goodhue, Wabasha, and Olmsted Counties**

PUC Docket No. E002/TL-11-800

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that Minnesota Department of Commerce Energy Facility Permitting (EFP) staff will conduct a public information and environmental assessment scoping meeting on the route permit application by Xcel Energy to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) for the proposed North Rochester to Chester 161 kilovolt (kV) transmission line project (see attached map). The purpose of the meeting is to provide information about the project and to identify issues and alternative routes to study in the environmental assessment (EA) that will be prepared by EFP staff.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND SCOPING MEETING

Tuesday, November 29, 2011
6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Oronoco Community Center
115 2nd Street NW
Oronoco, MN 55960

EFP staff will accept written comments on the scope of the EA until Thursday, December 8, 2011. Please include PUC Docket No. E002/TL-11-800 on all comments. Comments should be mailed, emailed, or faxed to:

Matthew Langan
State Permit Manager
Minnesota Department of Commerce
85 7th Place East, Suite 500
St. Paul, Minnesota, 55101-2198
Fax: 651-296-2096
matthew.langan@state.mn.us

Comments may also be submitted on the Commission's Energy Facility Permitting website, <http://energyfacilities.puc.state.mn.us/#comment>.

The meeting will include a brief presentation of the state's high-voltage transmission line permitting process, the proposed project, and how the public can participate in the permitting process. Representatives from Xcel Energy will be present to answer questions about the proposed project. Members of the public will have an opportunity to ask questions, present comments, and propose issues, impacts, and route alternatives to be studied in the EA.

Project Description. On September 19, 2011, Xcel Energy (applicant) filed a route permit application under the alternative permitting process for the construction of 29 to 30 miles of 161 kV transmission line between the proposed North Rochester Substation, located between Pine Island and Zumbrota, Minn., in Goodhue County, and the existing Chester Substation, east of Rochester, Minn., in Olmsted County. The project would also include modifications to the Chester Substation. Xcel Energy has submitted this application on behalf of itself and other anticipated co-owners of the project, including Dairyland Power Cooperative, Rochester Public Utilities, Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency, and WPPI Energy.

The project consists of two segments: 1) An East-West segment, in which the applicant proposes to place the Chester 161kV line on the same poles as the Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse 345kV line for a distance of 13 to 19 miles; and 2) A North-South segment that leaves the 345kV transmission right-of-way east of the Zumbro River and travels south for 11 to 16 miles to the Chester Substation. The North-South segment would consist of portions of single-circuit 161 kV line and portions of double-circuited 161/69 kV transmission line.

The applicants are requesting a 600-foot route width for the North-South segment. The typical right-of-way for a 161 kV line is 80 feet, the typical span between poles is 400 to 700 feet, and poles range in height from 70 to 120 feet. For the East-West segment, the applicants are requesting the same route width (1000 feet) described in the route permit application for the Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse 345kV project. The 345kV poles range from 130 to 175 feet in height, with spans of 600 to 1000 feet between the poles. The typical right-of-way for 345kV lines is 150 feet.

Modifications to the Chester Substation will consist of addition of a 161 kV circuit-breaker, switches, line termination and expanded box structure, electrical bus and associated equipment. The substation yard would be expanded by approximately one acre to accommodate the added equipment.

Review Process. Under the Power Plant Siting Act (Minnesota Statute 216E), a route permit from the Commission is required to construct a high-voltage transmission line. A route permit application for the project was filed by Xcel Energy on September 19, 2011. The application was accepted as complete by the Commission on October 24, 2011.

EFP staff is responsible for conducting the environmental review for route permit applications submitted to the Commission (Minnesota Rules 7850). Environmental review for a project of this size requires the preparation of an EA. An EA examines the potential human and environmental impacts of a proposed project, alternative routes or route segments, and potential mitigative measures. EFP staff conducts a public information meeting to gather comments and suggestions on the proposed project in order to focus the content or "scope" of the EA.

Upon completion of the EA, a public hearing will be held in the project area. 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 project mailing list (see below).

Upon completion of the environmental review and hearing process, the record compiled for the route permit application will be presented to the Commission for a final decision. A decision by the Commission on a route permit for the project is anticipated in spring 2012.

Certificate of Need. On May 22, 2009, the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) granted a Certificate of Need (CON) for the North Rochester-Chester 161 kV project, as one of three components of the Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse 345 kV transmission line project. The other two components granted in the CON (CN-06-115) are the Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse 345kV transmission line and the North Rochester-Northern Hills 161kV transmission line, which were filed in a separate route permit application (TL-09-1448) on January 19, 2010. The CON stated this project was needed to improve regional reliability of the transmission system, to improve community reliability of the transmission system in specified communities, and to increase generator outlet.

Eminent Domain. If issued a route permit by the Commission, the applicant 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: <http://energyfacilities.puc.state.mn.us/#mailing> to get their name on the project mailing list. Persons on the mailing list will receive notices of meetings 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. Project mailing list registration is voluntary and may be done at any time.

Project Documents. A more detailed description of the proposed project is contained in the route permit application. An electronic version of this document is available on the Commission's Energy Facility Permitting website: <http://energyfacilities.puc.state.mn.us/Docket.html?Id=32260>. Additionally, documents are available on the Commission's eDockets system: <https://www.edockets.state.mn.us/EFiling/search.jsp> (enter the year "11" and the number "800").

The route permit application is also available at the locations noted below:

Zumbrota Public Library
100 West Ave.
Zumbrota, MN 55992

Van Horn Public Library
115 3rd Street SE
Pine Island, MN 55963

Rochester Public Library
101 2nd Street SE
Rochester, MN 55904

Project Contacts. If you have questions or would like further information about this project, please contact:

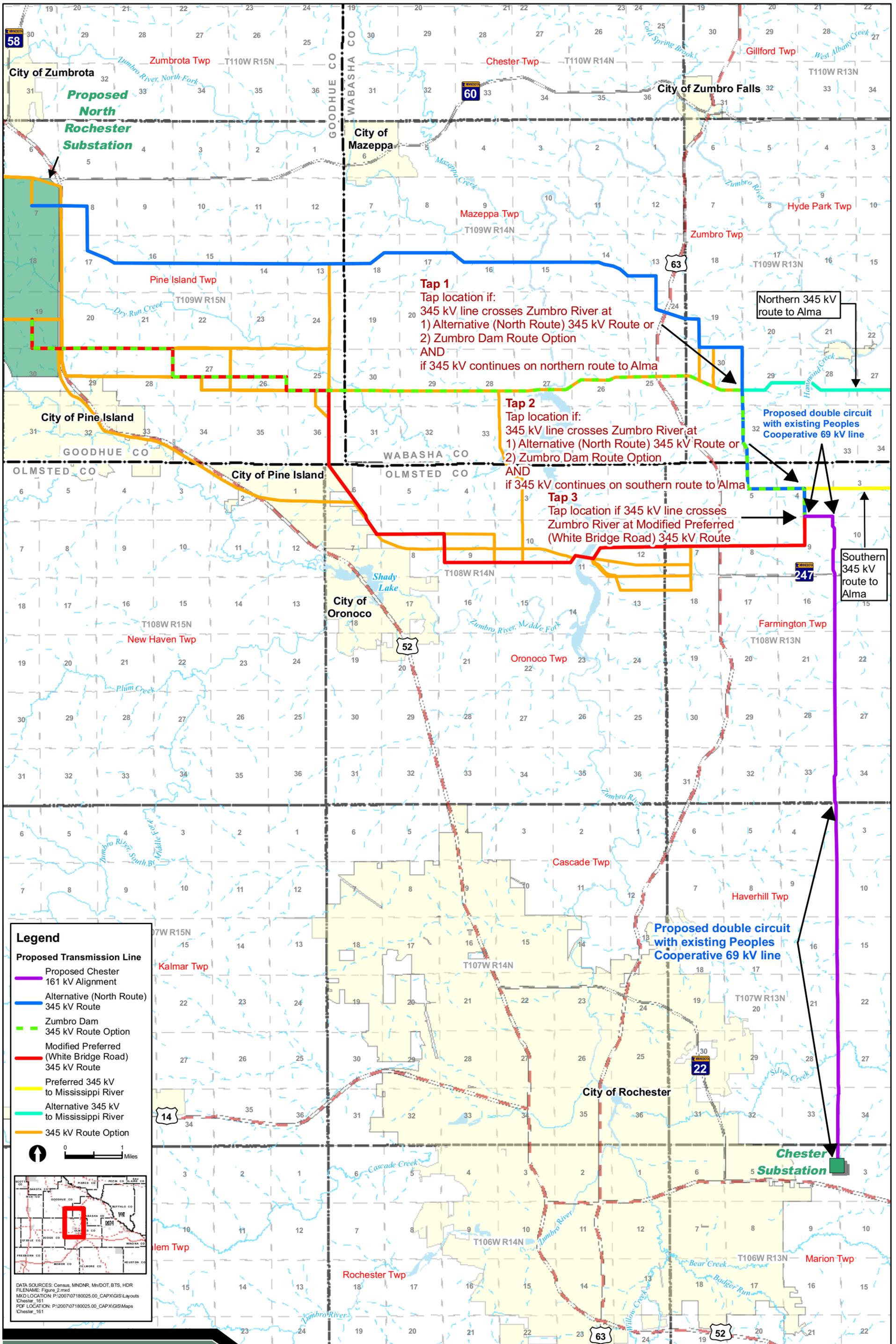
Matt Langan, State Permit Manager
651-296-2096
1-800-657-3794
matthew.langan@state.mn.us

Raymond Kirsch, Public Advisor
651-296-7588
raymond.kirsch@state.mn.us

Information about the project may also be obtained by contacting the applicant:

Tom Hillstrom
Xcel Energy, Inc.
612-330-6538
thomas.g.hillstrom@xcelenergy.com

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.



Tap 1
 Tap location if:
 345 kV line crosses Zumbro River at
 1) Alternative (North Route) 345 kV Route or
 2) Zumbro Dam Route Option
 AND
 if 345 kV continues on northern route to Alma

Tap 2
 Tap location if:
 345 kV line crosses Zumbro River at
 1) Alternative (North Route) 345 kV Route or
 2) Zumbro Dam Route Option
 AND
 if 345 kV continues on southern route to Alma

Tap 3
 Tap location if 345 kV line crosses
 Zumbro River at Modified Preferred
 (White Bridge Road) 345 kV Route

Northern 345 kV
 route to Alma

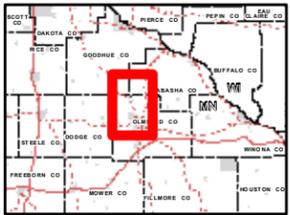
Proposed double circuit
 with existing Peoples
 Cooperative 69 kV line

Southern
 345 kV
 route to Alma

Legend

Proposed Transmission Line

- Proposed Chester 161 kV Alignment
- Alternative (North Route) 345 kV Route
- - - Zumbro Dam 345 kV Route Option
- Modified Preferred (White Bridge Road) 345 kV Route
- Preferred 345 kV to Mississippi River
- Alternative 345 kV to Mississippi River
- 345 kV Route Option



DATA SOURCES: Census, MNDNR, Mn/DOT, BTS, HDR
 FILENAME: Figure 2.mxd
 MKD LOCATION: P:\2007\07180025.00_CAPX\GIS\Layouts
 Chester_161
 PDF LOCATION: P:\2007\07180025.00_CAPX\GIS\Maps
 Chester_161