



**STATE OF MINNESOTA**  
Energy Facility Permitting



Issued: January 9, 2012

**NOTICE OF SCOPING DECISION AND INTENT TO PREPARE AN  
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

**In the Matter of the Route Permit Application for the Enterprise Park to Crooked Lake  
115 kV Transmission Line Project in Anoka County**

**PUC Docket No. ET2/TL-11-915**

**PLEASE TAKE NOTICE** that the Minnesota Department of Commerce, Energy Facility Permitting (EFP) announces the release of the scoping decision and notice of intent to prepare an environmental assessment (EA) for Great River Energy's proposed Enterprise Park to Crooked Lake 115 kV transmission line project.

Electronic versions of the EA scoping decision, route permit application and other documents relevant to this matter are available on the Public Utilities Commission's EFP website: <http://energyfacilities.puc.state.mn.us/Docket.html?Id=32289>, and on the Department of Commerce eDockets website: <https://www.edockets.state.mn.us/EFiling/search.jsp> (enter the Docket Number Year "11" and Number "915").

The scoping decision identifies the issues and alternative route segment (see attached maps) the deputy commissioner of the Department of Commerce has determined are appropriate for inclusion in the EA. The scoping decision also identifies certain issues that will not be included in the EA. The EA is anticipated to be complete and available in March 2012.

If you have any questions about this project or would like more information, please contact the EFP state permit manager: Matthew Langan, 85 7<sup>th</sup> Place East, Suite 500, St. Paul, MN 55101; Tel: 651.296.2096, e-mail: [matthew.langan@state.mn.us](mailto:matthew.langan@state.mn.us).



In the Matter of the Route Permit Application  
for the Enterprise Park to Crooked Lake 115  
kV Transmission Line Project in Anoka  
County, Minnesota

**Environmental Assessment  
Scoping Decision Document  
PUC Docket No. ET2/TL-11-915**

## **Introduction**

The above matter has come before the deputy commissioner of the Department of Commerce for a decision on the scope of the environmental assessment (EA) to be prepared on the Enterprise Park to Crooked Lake 115 kV transmission line project proposed by Great River Energy (applicant). Great River Energy has submitted this application on behalf of itself and other anticipated co-owners of the project, including Minnesota Municipal Power Agency, Anoka Municipal Utility, and Xcel Energy.

## **Project Description**

On October 4, 2011, the applicant filed a route permit application (RPA) under the alternative permitting process for the construction of approximately 5.8 miles of new, overhead 115 kV transmission line between Xcel Energy's existing Crooked Lake Substation in Coon Rapids, Minn., and Anoka Municipal Utility's existing Enterprise Park Substation in Anoka, Minn., in Anoka County (see Figure 1 attached). The project will remove, rebuild, and attach Anoka Municipal Utility's existing overhead (12.5 kV) distribution lines to the new 115 kV transmission line where the new line overtakes the existing distribution lines. (Alternatively, Anoka Municipal Utility may choose to bury some of the distribution lines.) The project would also include modifications to the Crooked Lake and Enterprise Park substations to accommodate the new transmission line, including a new ring bus, breaker additions, step down transformers, and associated switch gear.

The applicant is requesting a route width as narrow as 100 feet in some locations, and as wide as 400 feet in others, except for the area near Anoka High School where the requested route width is 800 feet. The variation in route width is due to the developed nature of the project area. The typical right-of-way for the 115 kV line is 50-75 feet, depending on the structure used. The typical span between poles without underbuild is 300 to 400 feet, and 250 to 300 where 12.5 kV distribution lines are attached. Poles range in height from 60 to 85 feet. Most poles will be constructed as single-pole, wood structures with horizontal post insulators.

## **Purpose**

In its RPA, the applicant states the purpose of the proposed project is to meet future electric load requirements in the area, to provide relief on the existing transmission system, and to provide backup service to an existing 69 kV transmission line.

## **Regulatory Background**

A high-voltage transmission line RPA for the project was filed by the applicant on October 4, 2011, and accepted by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) on November 4, 2011. The route permit will be reviewed under the alternative review process, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes 216E (Power Plant Siting Act) and Minnesota Rules 7850.2800 to 7850.3900. Under the alternative permitting process the Commission has six months from the date the application was accepted as complete to make a decision on the route permit. The Commission may extend this time limit up to three months for just cause or upon agreement of the applicant (Minnesota Rule 7850.3900, subpart 1).

## **Scoping Process**

Scoping is the first step in the process after application acceptance. 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 EA, and 2) to help focus the EA on the most important issues surrounding the route permit decision. The scope identifies potential human and environmental issues that will be addressed in the EA. The scope also presents an anticipated schedule of the environmental review process.

### Public Scoping Meeting

Department of Commerce Energy Facility Permitting (EFP) staff held public information and scoping meetings on December 1, 2011, at Anoka City Hall in Anoka, Minnesota. The meeting provided members of the public an opportunity to learn about the proposed project and the state's high-voltage transmission line route permitting process, review the applicant's RPA, ask questions, provide comments, and identify potential impacts and route alternatives to be considered for the scope of the environmental assessment. Approximately 20 people attended the two meetings.

A court reporter was present at the public meeting and transcribed questions asked and comments made by the public, as well as responses from EFP staff and the applicant. Six people provided oral comments and/or asked questions about the proposed project. Topics and issues raised by the public at the meeting included: transmission line structure construction and engineering, preferred route, regulatory framework, noise, tree removal, and parks. One route segment alternative was proposed at the meeting.

### Route Segment Alternative suggested

Route Segment Alternative A – This route segment alternative is in the city of Anoka. As is represented in the attached Figure 2, this alternative would depart from the applicant's preferred route at 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue where it crosses railroad tracks, and instead parallel the railroad right of way to the northwest, then turn north along 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, then turn east to join up with the applicant's preferred route at Garfield Avenue.

### Public Comments

A public comment period, ending on December 19, 2011, provided the public an opportunity to submit comments to EFP staff via e-mail, fax, U.S. mail, or online on issues and alternative routes and alignments for consideration for the scope of the EA. EFP staff received four comment letters by the close of the comment period from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), and two citizens who own land or live in the project area. No alternative routes were proposed in the written comments received.

The scoping meeting comment report and each comment letter are available for viewing and downloading on the project website maintained by the Commission at: <http://energyfacilities.puc.state.mn.us/Docket.html?Id=32289> or on the eDockets website at: <https://www.edockets.state.mn.us/EFiling/search.jsp> (enter the year “11” and the number “915”).

### Issues raised

Issues raised by the public for inclusion in the scope of the environmental assessment include transmission line routing near athletic fields, and possible noise mitigation strategies between a MnDOT garage and residential area once existing trees are removed for the transmission line right-of-way.

DNR requested that information be provided in the EA on vegetation removal minimization techniques, including at the Rum River crossing, a state-designated Wild and Scenic River. DNR also requested information on placement of bird flight diverters in the Rum River area. DNR also sought clarification of the administrator of a parcel of land along the route owned by the State of Minnesota. DNR sent a follow-up email clarifying that the land is administered by the Department of Administration. DNR attached to its letter fact sheets on wildlife-friendly erosion control matting, and the Blanding's turtle, a state-listed threatened species, along with a flyer on best management practices for reducing the potential for impacts to the species.

MnDOT requested information on transmission line impacts to Trunk Highway 10 interchanges at 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Thurston Avenue.

Having reviewed the matter, consulted with EFP staff, and in accordance with Minnesota Rule 7850.3700, I hereby make the following scoping decision:

### **Matters to be Addressed**

The issues outlined below will be identified and described in the EA for the proposed Enterprise Park to Crooked Lake 115 kV project. The EA will describe the project and current setting of the proposed project area. It will also provide information on the potential impacts the proposed project could have as they relate to the topics outlined in this scoping decision document, including possible mitigation for identified impacts, identification of irreplaceable commitment of resources and permits from other government entities that may be required.

**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
  - 2. Existing easements
  - 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
  - 1. Design and structure material
  - 2. Structure strength and stability (i.e. Structural failure)
- C. Substations
- D. 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**

- A. Environmental Setting
- B. Socioeconomic and Cultural Setting
- C. Human Settlement
  - 1. Noise
  - 2. Aesthetics
  - 3. Proximity to homes
  - 4. Existing utilities

5. Property values
  6. Property/right-of-way acquisition and displacement
- D. Public Health and Safety
1. Construction and operation/maintenance
  2. Electric and magnetic fields
  3. Implantable medical devices
  4. Stray voltage
  5. Induced voltage
  6. Air quality associated with the transmission facility
- E. Recreation
- F. Transportation and Public Services
1. Emergency services
  2. Airports
  3. Railroads
  4. Schools
- 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. Industrial/commercial
  2. Tourism
  3. 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
- O. Threatened/Endangered/Rare and Unique Natural Resources

## **VI. Alternative Routes to be Evaluated in the Environmental Assessment**

In addition to the Proposed Route, the EA shall evaluate the following alternative route segment suggested through public comment:

### Route Segment Alternative A

This route segment alternative is in the city of Anoka. As is represented in the attached Figure 2, this alternative would depart from the applicant's preferred route at 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue where it crosses railroad tracks, and instead parallel the railroad right-of-way to the northwest, then turn north along 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, then turn east to join up with the applicant's preferred route at Garfield Avenue. The route width for this route segment alternative is 400 feet.

## **VII. Identification of Permits**

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

### **Issues Outside the Scope of the Environmental Assessment**

The scope of the Enterprise Park to Crooked Lake 115 kV EA will not consider the following:

- A. No-build alternative
- B. Issues related to project need, size, type, or timing
- C. Any route or substation alternatives not specifically identified in this scoping decision document.
- D. Policy issues surrounding whether utilities or local-government should be liable for the cost to relocate utility poles when roadways are widened
- E. The manner in which land owners are paid for transmission rights-of-way easements, as that is outside the jurisdiction of the Commission.

**Schedule**

The EA will be completed and available in March 2012. A public hearing will be held in the project area after the EA has been issued and notice served.

Signed this 5<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2012

STATE OF MINNESOTA  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
DIVISION OF ENERGY RESOURCES

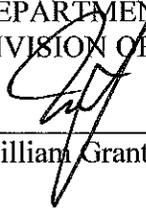
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
William Grant, Deputy Commissioner

Figure 1: Enterprise Park to Crooked Lake 115 kV Transmission Line Project Map

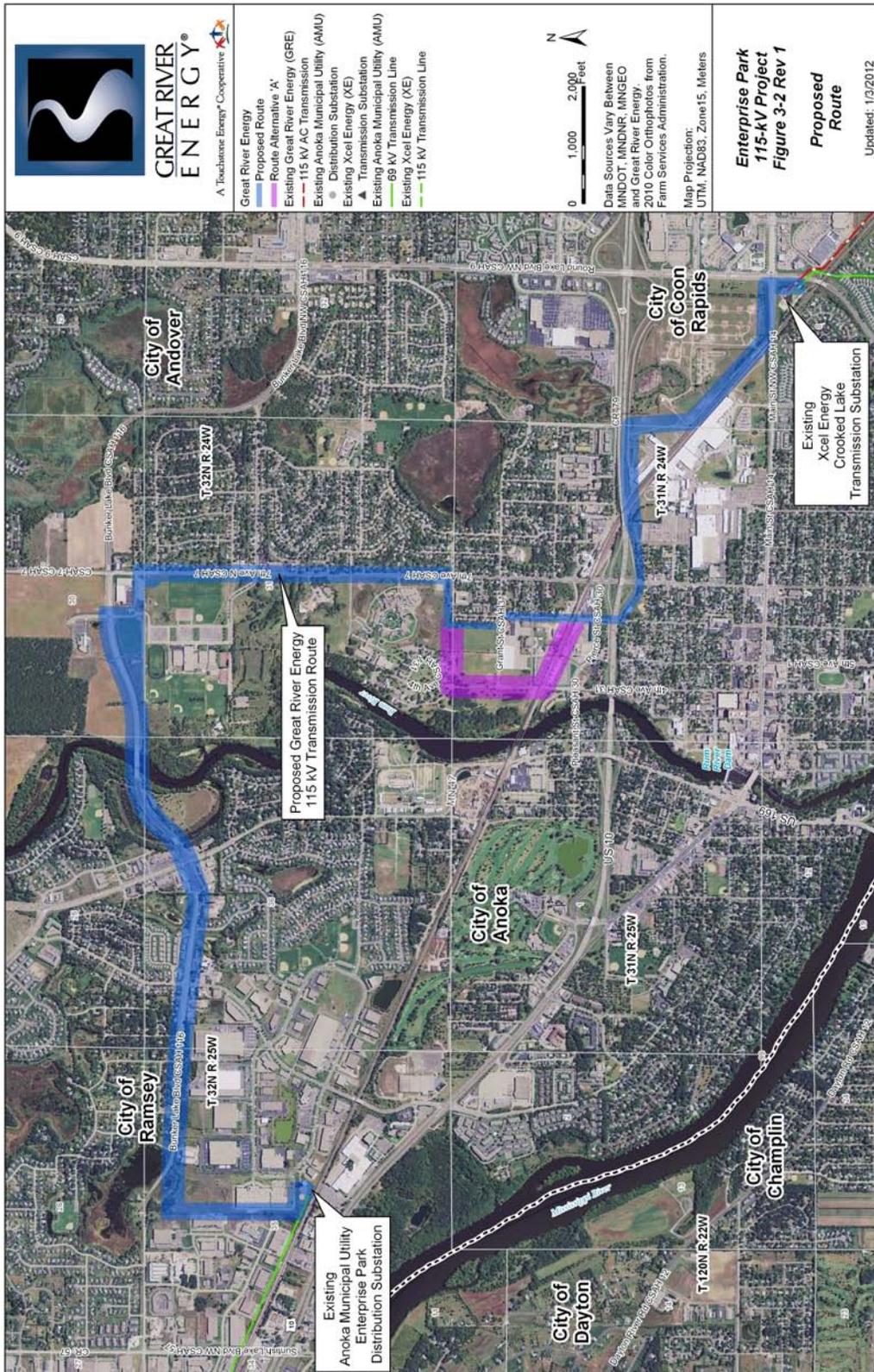


Figure 2: Route Segment Alternative A

