



STATE OF MINNESOTA  
Department of Commerce



Issued: October 15, 2013

**NOTICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT  
SCOPING DECISION**

**In the Matter of the Certificate of Need and Route Permit Applications by  
ITC Midwest LLC for the Minnesota to Iowa 345 kV Transmission Line Project  
and Associated Facilities in Jackson, Martin and Faribault Counties**

**PUC Docket Nos. ET6675/CN-12-1053 and ET6675/TL-12-1337**

**PLEASE TAKE NOTICE** that the Minnesota Department of Commerce (Department) has issued the scoping decision for the environmental impact statement (EIS) to be prepared for the proposed Minnesota to Iowa 345 kV transmission line project in Jackson, Martin, and Faribault County, Minnesota (see attached).

The EIS will be prepared by the Department's Energy Environmental Review and Analysis (EERA) staff and will address the potential human and environmental impacts of the proposed project and alternatives to the project. The scoping decision identifies the route, alignment, and site alternatives that will be examined in the EIS. The decision also identifies alternatives that will not be addressed.

The scoping decision and other relevant documents are available on the Department's website: <http://mn.gov/commerce/energyfacilities/Docket.html?Id=33080> and on the State of Minnesota's eDockets system: <https://www.edockets.state.mn.us/EFiling/search.jsp> (enter the year "12" and the number "1053" or "1337").

A draft EIS is anticipated to be completed and available in February 2014. Public meetings and a comment period on the draft EIS will follow. Timely and substantive comments on the draft EIS will be responded to in a final EIS. Public hearings will be held in the project area after issuance of the draft EIS and are anticipated to occur in April 2014.

If you have questions, would like more information, or to place your name on the project mailing list, contact environmental review manager Ray Kirsch (651-539-1841, [raymond.kirsch@state.mn.us](mailto:raymond.kirsch@state.mn.us)) or public advisor Tracy Smetana (651-296-0406, [consumer.puc@state.mn.us](mailto:consumer.puc@state.mn.us)).

This document can be made available in alternative formats (i.e., large print or audio) by calling 651-539-1530.





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**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT  
SCOPING DECISION**

**PUC DOCKET NO. ET6675/CN-12-1053  
PUC DOCKET NO. ET6675/TL-12-1337**

The above matter has come before the deputy commissioner of the Department of Commerce (Department) for a decision on the scope of the environmental impact statement (EIS) to be prepared for the Minnesota to Iowa 345 kV transmission line project proposed by ITC Midwest LLC in Jackson, Martin, and Faribault counties.

**Project Description**

ITC Midwest LLC (ITCM) proposes to: (1) construct approximately 75 miles of new 345 kV transmission line eastward from the Lakefield substation near Lakefield, Minn., to a new Huntley substation near Winnebago, Minn. and then southward to the Iowa border, (2) expand the existing Lakefield substation and construct a new substation (the Huntley substation) which will replace the existing Winnebago substation, and (3) relocate and reconfigure several segments of existing 161 kV and 69 kV transmission line which currently terminate at the Winnebago substation such that they will terminate at the new Huntley substation upon completion of the project.

ITCM requested a 1,000 foot route width for the 345 kV portion of the project, with a larger route width in select areas. ITCM indicates that the new 345 kV line will require a right-of-way (easement) of 200 feet. ITCM requested a 500 foot route width for the 161 kV portions of the project, with a right-of-way of 150 or 250 feet depending on the location of the 161 kV lines. ITCM has proposed two possible routes for the project – designated in its route permit application as Routes A and B.

**Project Purpose**

ITCM indicates in its certificate of need and route permit applications that the proposed project is needed to enhance regional electrical reliability, to increase transmission capacity to support additional generation, and to reduce congestion on the electrical grid. The project was studied by the Midcontinent Independent Transmission System Operator (MISO) and was approved by MISO in the 2011 MISO Transmission Expansion Plan as a multi-value project.

**Regulatory Background**

ITCM's proposed project requires two separate approvals from the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) – a certificate of need (CN) and route permit. A certificate of need application for the project was submitted to the Commission by ITCM on March 22, 2013, and accepted as complete by the Commission on June 27, 2013. A route permit application was submitted to the Commission on March 28, 2013, and was also accepted as complete on June 27, 2013.

Department of Commerce, Energy Environmental Review and Analysis (EERA) staff is responsible for conducting environmental review for CN and route permit applications submitted to the Commission.<sup>1</sup> As two concurrent environmental reviews are required – one for the CN application and one for the route permit application – the Department has elected to combine the environmental review for the two applications.<sup>2</sup> An environmental impact statement (EIS) will be prepared to meet the requirements of both review processes.

### **Scoping Process**

Scoping is the first step in the development of the EIS for the project. The scoping process has two primary purposes: (1) to gather public input as to the impacts, mitigation measures, and alternatives to study in the EIS, and (2) to focus the EIS on those impacts, mitigation measures, and alternatives that will aid in the Commission’s decisions on the CN and route permit applications.

EERA staff gathered input on the scope of the EIS through six public meetings and an associated comment period. EERA staff also facilitated input on the scope of the EIS through an advisory task force. This scoping decision identifies the impacts and mitigation measures that will be analyzed in the EIS, including route, alignment, and site alternatives for the project. Additionally, this scoping decision identifies alternatives to the project itself that will be analyzed in the EIS.

### **Public Scoping Meetings**

Commission staff and EERA staff held joint public information and environmental impact statement scoping meetings on July 16, 17, and 18, 2013, in the cities of Fairmont, Jackson, and Blue Earth. Total attendance at these meetings was approximately 200 persons. Comments were received from several persons at these meetings; comments included impacts and mitigation measures to study in the EIS, including specific route alternatives.<sup>3</sup> Specific impacts suggested for study included impacts to agriculture, residences, airstrips, and human health.<sup>4</sup>

### **Public Comments**

A comment period, ending on August 2, 2013, provided the public an opportunity to submit comments on issues, route alternatives, and system alternatives for consideration in the scope of the EIS. Comments were received from three agencies,<sup>5</sup> three local units of government,<sup>6</sup> the applicant,<sup>7</sup> and from approximately 220 citizens.<sup>8</sup> These comments included a range of impacts and mitigation measures to study in the EIS, including specific route and alignment alternatives. The issues and impacts proposed for study in the EIS are summarized here in Table 1.

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<sup>1</sup> Minnesota Rule 7849.1200; Minnesota Rule 7850.2500.

<sup>2</sup> Minnesota Rule 7849.1900.

<sup>3</sup> Oral Comments from Public Information and EIS Scoping Meetings, July 16-18, 2013, eDockets Number [20138-90314-01](#).

<sup>4</sup> Id.

<sup>5</sup> Written Agency Comments on Scope of EIS, eDockets Number [20138-90433-01](#) [hereinafter Agency Comments].

<sup>6</sup> Written LGU Comments on Scope of EIS, eDockets Number [20138-90433-02](#) [hereinafter LGU Comments].

<sup>7</sup> Written Applicant Comment on Scope of EIS, eDockets Number [20138-90433-03](#) [hereinafter Applicant Comments].

<sup>8</sup> Written Public Comments on Scope of EIS, eDockets Numbers [20138-90434-01](#), [20138-90434-02](#), [20138-90434-03](#), [20138-90434-04](#), [20138-90434-05](#), [20138-90434-06](#), [20138-90434-07](#), [20138-90434-08](#), [20138-90434-09](#), [20138-90434-10](#) [hereinafter Public Comments].

**Table 1. Issues and Impacts Proposed for Study in the EIS<sup>9</sup>**

<b>Issues</b>	<b>Number of Times Mentioned</b>	<b>Percentage of Commenters Who Raised the Issue</b>
Public Health / Electric and Magnetic Fields	190	76%
Property Values / Aesthetics	181	73%
Impacts to Farming Operations	41	16%
Impacts to Airstrips	8	3%
Impacts to Trees and Windbreaks	7	3%
Impacts to Wildlife and Birds	7	3%
Impacts to Springs and Wells	3	1%
Stray Voltage	3	1%
Decommissioning of Concrete Footings	1	–
Undergrounding	1	–

Of the 220 written comments received, 159 of them included a form letter from the “worshippers and friends” of the Assembly of God church in Sherburn, Minnesota.<sup>10</sup> The form letter noted that Route A as proposed in the route permit application prevented possible expansion of the church and threatened the congregants with adverse public health and property value impacts. In addition to the form letter, several citizens of Sherburn and congregants of the church proposed that the transmission line be placed north of Interstate 90 near Sherburn or that Route B be used for the project. Other comments were also received indicating a preference for Route A or Route B in a particular area of the project. Two written comments were received that related past experiences with ITCM or the State of Minnesota’s permitting process. One comment letter suggested the use of undergrounding to mitigate potential impacts of the project.

Of the 220 written comments received, 22 of them proposed a route or alignment alternative to mitigate potential impacts of the project. These alternatives are discussed further below.

<sup>9</sup> Issues and impacts proposed in oral and written public comments on the scope of the EIS.

<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., Written Comment of Ms. Denise Allen, Public Comments.

### Agency Comments

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers commented that the transmission line routes proposed by ITCM were not anticipated to affect any existing Corps projects.<sup>11</sup>

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) noted its accommodation policy for the placement of utilities along highway rights-of-way. MnDOT recommended that the EIS evaluate a route alternative that would proceed along the north side of Interstate 90 near the city of Sherburn.<sup>12</sup>

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) recommended that the EIS evaluate several route alternatives. Among these, DNR recommended evaluation of a route alternative that crossed Lake Charlotte following the existing 161 kV line and analysis of removing this line from the lake and co-locating it with the proposed 345 kV line. DNR noted its recent purchase of land for the Center Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Martin County – land which is within ITCM’s proposed Route B. DNR noted that it likely would not license a crossing of this WMA. DNR commented on federal funding that may be associated with potential WMA crossings. Finally, DNR requested analysis of the criteria proposed to locate bird diverters along ITCM’s proposed transmission line.<sup>13</sup>

### Comments from Local Units of Government

The city of Jackson noted that it owns and operates a municipal airport two miles north of the city – the Jackson Municipal Airport. The city indicated that it has an airport layout plan and has no objection to the routes proposed by ITCM as long as these routes are determined by the Federal Aviation Administration not to be a hazard to aviation at the Jackson Municipal Airport.<sup>14</sup>

The city of Sherburn noted that ITCM’s proposed Route A would adversely affect the health and welfare of the city. The city recommended that the Commission select a route for the project north of Interstate 90 in the Sherburn area.<sup>15</sup>

Rutland Township noted potential adverse impacts of ITCM’s proposed Route A near Lake Charlotte, including health concerns and loss of property value. The township also noted the potential for damage to drainage tile within the township as a result of the project.<sup>16</sup>

### Applicant Comments

ITCM submitted route alternatives to amend Route B near the Center Creek WMA. ITCM also submitted revised structure drawings and revised map sheets, with such sheets indicating the proposed placement of the existing 161 kV line at the Faribault Substation in Faribault County.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Agency Comments.

<sup>12</sup> Id.

<sup>13</sup> Id.

<sup>14</sup> LGU Comments.

<sup>15</sup> Id.

<sup>16</sup> Id.

<sup>17</sup> Applicant Comments.

### ***Advisory Task Force***

The advisory task force for the project – authorized by the Commission to aid the Department in developing the scope of EIS – identified seven issue areas and seven route alternatives for analysis in the EIS.<sup>18</sup> The route alternatives are discussed further below.

### ***Alternatives to the Project***

No comments were received during the scoping process that proposed an alternative to ITCM's transmission line project that could meet the project's stated need.

### ***Commission Review***

After close of the public comment period, EERA staff conferred with ITCM, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) on the alternatives proposed for study in the EIS. On September 6, 2013, EERA staff provided the Commission with a summary of the EIS scoping process.<sup>19</sup> The summary discussed the route and alignment alternatives that were proposed during the scoping process and those alternatives that the Department intended to recommend for inclusion in the scope of the EIS. On September 24, 2013, the Commission considered what action, if any, it should take with respect to the route alternatives to be considered in the EIS. The Commission took no action.

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**HAVING REVIEWED THE MATTER**, consulted with Department staff, and in accordance with Minnesota Rule 7850.2500, I hereby make the following scoping decision:

### **MATTERS TO BE ADDRESSED**

The issues outlined below will be analyzed in the EIS for the proposed Minnesota to Iowa 345 kV transmission line project. The EIS will describe the project and the human and environmental resources of the project area. It will provide information on the potential impacts of the project as they relate to the topics outlined in this scoping decision, including possible mitigation measures. It will identify impacts that cannot be avoided and irretrievable commitments of resources, as well as permits from other government entities that may be required for the project. The EIS will discuss the relative merits of the route alternatives studied in the EIS using the routing factors found in Minnesota Rule 7850.4100.

The EIS will include a description and analysis of the human and environmental impacts of the proposed project and alternatives to the project that would have otherwise been required by Minnesota Rule 7849.1500 in an environmental report for a certificate of need. This includes evaluating matters of size, type, and timing that would not normally be included in an EIS for a route permit application.

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<sup>18</sup> Minnesota to Iowa 345 kilovolt (kV) Transmission Line Advisory Task Force Report, August 2013, eDockets Number [20138-90358-01](#) [hereinafter Advisory Task Force Report].

<sup>19</sup> Department of Commerce, Comments and Recommendations on EIS Scoping Process, September 6, 2013, eDockets Numbers [20139-91036-01](#), [20139-91036-02](#), [20139-91036-03](#) [hereinafter Department Comments and Recommendations].

**I. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT**

- A. Project Description
- B. Project Purpose
- C. Route Description
  - 1. Route Width
  - 2. Right-of-Way
- D. Substation Description
- E. Project Costs

**II. REGULATORY FRAMEWORK**

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

**III. ENGINEERING AND DESIGN**

- A. Transmission Line Structures
- B. Transmission Line Conductors
- C. Lake Crossings
- D. Substations
- E. Undergrounding

**IV. CONSTRUCTION**

- A. Right-of-Way Acquisition
- B. Construction
  - 1. Transmission Line
  - 2. Substation
- C. Restoration
- D. Damage Compensation
- E. Operation and Maintenance
- F. Decommissioning

**V. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT, POTENTIAL IMPACTS, AND MITIGATIVE MEASURES**

The EIS will include a discussion of the human and environmental resources potentially impacted by the proposed project and the route, alignment and site alternatives described herein (Section VI). Potential impacts, both positive and negative, of the project and each alternative will be described. Based on the impacts identified, the EIS will describe mitigation 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. Socioeconomics
- C. Human Settlements
  - 1. Noise
  - 2. Aesthetics

3. Displacement
4. Property Values
5. Public Services
  - a) Roads and Highways
  - b) Utilities
  - c) Emergency Services
6. Electronic Interference
  - a) Radio
  - b) Television
  - c) Wireless Phone / Internet Services
- D. Public Health and Safety
  1. Electric and Magnetic Fields
  2. Implantable Medical Devices
  3. Stray Voltage
  4. Induced Voltage
  5. Air Quality
- E. Land Based Economies
  1. Agriculture
    - a) Compaction
    - b) Tile Damage
    - c) Aerial Spraying
    - d) GPS Systems / Real Time Kinetic Systems
    - e) Structure Foundations
  2. Forestry
  3. Mining
  4. Recreation and Tourism
- F. Archaeological and Historic Resources
- G. Natural Environment
  1. Water Resources
    - a) Surface Waters
    - b) Groundwater
    - c) Wetlands
  2. Soils
  3. Flora
  4. Fauna
- H. Threatened / Endangered / Rare and Unique Natural Resources
- I. Zoning and Land Use Compatibility
  1. Use of Existing Rights-of-Way
- J. Electric System Reliability
- K. Operation and Maintenance Costs that are Design Dependent
- L. Adverse Impacts that Cannot be Avoided
- M. Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources

## **VI. ROUTES AND SITES TO BE EVALUATED IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

The EIS will evaluate the routes, sites, and associated facilities proposed in ITCM's route permit application – these are Routes A and B; the Jackson Municipal Airport West and Jackson Municipal Airport East connector segments, the Fox Lake West connector, and the Pilot Grove Waterfowl Production Area connectors; expansion of the Lakefield substation; construction of a new Huntley substation; and associated facilities that will be rerouted to terminate at the new Huntley substation. The EIS will evaluate Route B as amended by ITCM's proposed alternatives near the Center Creek WMA (see M15-R, M16-A, and M17-A below).

In addition, the following route, alignment, and substation site alternatives will be evaluated in the EIS (see description below and attached maps). Alternatives are presented here in a west-to-east fashion – from Jackson County through Martin County to Faribault County. Alternatives are referenced with an initial for the county in which the alternative occurs, an identifying number, and an indicator of whether the alternative is a route alternative (R) or an alignment alternative (A). The only exception to this nomenclature is the route alternative proposed to proceed along Interstate 90 (I-90), which is denoted as I-90-R.

### ***Jackson County***

#### **Map Sheet 1**

**J1-R and J3-A.** This route and alignment alternative parallel a north-south segment of Route A in Section 3 of Des Moines Township.

**J2-R and J4-A.** This route and alignment alternative parallel, on the north side, an east-west segment of Route A, through Sections 34, 35, and 36 of Belmont Township.

### ***Martin County***

#### **Fox Lake (Map Sheet 2)**

**M1-R.** This route alternative connects Routes A and B west of Fox Lake along 40<sup>th</sup> Ave., along Sections 27, 28, 33, and 34 in Elm Creek Township and Sections 3 and 4 in Jay Township.

**M2-R.** This route alternative connects Routes A and B east of Fox Lake along 130<sup>th</sup> Ave., along Sections 13 and 24 in Fox Lake Township and Sections 18 and 19 in Fraser Township.

**M3-R.** This route alternative follows the existing 161 kV transmission line from Route B – as Route B proceeds on 140<sup>th</sup> St. on the north side of Fox Lake – northward and then turning eastward until connecting with Route A in Section 14 of Fox Lake Township.

**M4-R.** This route alternative follows the existing 161 kV transmission line from Route A, north of the city of Sherburn, along the north side of I-90, across Fox Lake, ending at Route B on 140<sup>th</sup> St. on the north side of Fox Lake.

The EIS will evaluate paralleling and double circuiting the existing 161 kV line across Fox Lake. In addition, the EIS will evaluate routing options that remove the 161 kV line from the lake.

**M5-R.** This route alternative proceeds from Route A, north of the city of Sherburn, along the north side of I-90 following, in part, existing 161 and 69 kV transmission lines, until rejoining Route A in Section 3 of Manyaska Township. The route width for this alternative widens to follow the existing 161 kV transmission line to the Fox Lake Substation and to allow for analysis of routing options that remove the 161 kV line from the lake.

**M6-R** (Map Sheets 2 and 3). This route alternative begins at Route A in Section 35 of Fraser Township, proceeds eastward along an existing 69 kV line and along I-90, until ending at its intersection with Highway 15 north of the city of Fairmont.

**M7-R.** This route alternative begins at Route A north of I-90 near the city of Sherburn, proceeds on the north side of I-90, and then crosses south of I-90 to rejoin Route A.

### **Lake Charlotte (Map Sheet 3)**

**M8-R.** This route alternative connects Routes A and B, west of Lake Charlotte, in Sections 13 and 24 of Fraser Township.

**M9-R.** This route alternative begins at Route A, west of Lake Charlotte, proceeds south on the section line between Sections 13 and 14 in Fraser Township, then turns eastward following an existing 69 kV line and proceeding south of Lake Charlotte on 160<sup>th</sup> St., then turning northward along field lines in Section 16 of Rutland Township, and then connecting with the existing 161 kV line and turning eastward to rejoin Route A.

**M10-R.** This route alternative begins at Route A, west of Lake Charlotte, and follows the existing 161 kV line across Lake Charlotte, past the Rutland substation, and reconnecting with Route A in Section 16 of Rutland Township.

The EIS will evaluate paralleling and double circuiting the existing 161 kV line across Lake Charlotte. In addition, the EIS will evaluate routing options that remove the 161 kV line from the lake.

**M11-R.** This route alternative begins at Route A, at the intersection of Route A on 196<sup>th</sup> Ave. and an existing 69 kV line, on the border of Sections 18 and 19 in Rutland Township. From this point, the alternative proceeds eastward following an the existing 69 kV line and passes south of Lake Charlotte on 160<sup>th</sup> St. to an intersection with Highway 15 where it rejoins Route A.

**M12-R.** This route alternative begins north of the city of Fairmont at the termination of M6-R, and then proceeds northward along Highway 15 until intersecting Routes A and B in Section 21 of Rutland Township.

**M13-R.** This route alternative begins at Route A, west of Lake Charlotte in Section 18 of Rutland Township. The alternative proceeds south along field lines, then eastward along an existing 69 kV line, passing south of Lake Charlotte on 160<sup>th</sup> St., then turning northward along field lines in Section 16 of Rutland Township, and then connecting with the existing 161 kV line and turning eastward to rejoin Route A.

**M14-R.** This route alternative will be evaluated as a 161 kV transmission line route to facilitate interconnection with the Rutland substation. This alternative begins at the common section of Routes A and B south of Lake Charlotte, at the border of Sections 20 and 21 in Rutland Township. The alternative proceeds northward along the section line and 210<sup>th</sup> Ave., following an existing 69 kV line to the Rutland substation.

#### **Center Creek WMA (Map Sheet 4)**

**M15-R.** This route alternative replaces a segment of Route B northwest of the city of Granada in Sections 20 and 29 of Center Creek Township.

**M16-A and M17-A.** These alignment alternatives are within route alternative M15-R. Both proceed from Route B along the center line of Section 20 in Center Creek Township southward to the southern section line of Section 20 and along 150<sup>th</sup> St. eastward until rejoining Route B. M16-A proceed southward along field lines; M17-A proceeds southward on the west side of 265<sup>th</sup> Ave.

#### ***Faribault County***

#### **Huntley Substation (Map Sheet 5)**

**F1-R.** This alternative will be evaluated as a 345/161 kV double circuit alternative. The alternative heads south from ITCM's proposed Huntley substation site and parallels Route A on its west side in Section 23 of Verona Township, rejoining Routes A and B at the south section line.

#### **South to Iowa (Map Sheets 6 and 7)**

**F2-A.** This alignment alternative runs across fields along the eastern edge of Route A in Section 26 of Jo Daviess Township.

**F3-R.** This route alternative is a variation on Route B in Section 36 of Blue Earth Township and Section 1 of Elmore Township. The alternative proceeds across fields, from Route B, west, then south, then back east to rejoin Route B.

**F4-A.** This alignment alternative runs southward along field lines across Sections 26 and 35 of Pilot Grove Township, near the Iowa border, before turning eastward along the border to the existing 161 kV line within Route A.

## *Interstate 90*

### **Map Sheets 8-16**

**I-90-R.** This route alternative begins, on its western end, with a connection to Route A or B along 570<sup>th</sup> Ave. and the section lines of Sections 4, 5, 8, and 9 in Wisconsin Township, Jackson County. The line proceeds eastward along I-90 following generally the existing 161 kV line to the city of Sherburn, proceeding on the north side of I-90 in the Fox Lake area, and then following an existing 69 kV line and I-90 to the city of Fairmont. From Fairmont, the line proceeds eastward along I-90 until connecting with Routes A and B.

As part of I-90-R, the EIS will evaluate four (4) routing options, including an alternate southern site for the Huntley substation, to facilitate the transmission line connections proposed in ITCM's route permit application:

**Option 1.** This routing option sites the Huntley substation at an alternate southern location near I-90 in Section 2 of Jo Daviess Township, and introduces new 161 kV transmission line routes in the area to connect with the Huntley substation. The routes are west and east of the existing north-south 161 kV line and also include a 161 kV line running eastward from the Huntley substation (double circuited with a 69 kV line).

The western 161 kV line runs near the western section line of Sections 15, 22, 27, and 34 in Verona Township, Faribault County. The eastern 161 kV line runs along the western section line of Sections 16, 21, 28, and 33 in Prescott Township, Faribault County. The 161 kV line eastward from the Huntley substation runs across fields and across the Blue Earth River and Highway 169 to a connection with an existing 69 kV line in Section 5 of Blue Earth Township, Faribault County.

**Option 2.** This routing option sites the Huntley substation at an alternate southern location in Section 2 of Jo Daviess Township, and runs all of the connecting 161 kV and 69 kV lines southward following the existing north-south 161 kV line in Sections 14, 23, 26, and 35 in Verona Township, Faribault County.

**Option 3.** This routing option sites the Huntley substation at the location proposed in ITCM's route permit application and utilizes a separate route segment to run the 345 kV line northward from I-90 to the substation site, with a 345/161 kV double circuit line then following Route A or B south to Iowa.

The 345 kV route segment begins at I-90-R in Section 4 of Jo Daviess Township, Faribault County. The segment proceeds northward through Sections 33, 28, and 21 of Jo Daviess Township and then turns eastward to connect with the common section of Routes A and B that proceeds along 160<sup>th</sup> St. to the substation site. With this routing option, that portion of Route A in Section 15 of Verona Township would be evaluated solely for a 161 kV line.

**Option 4.** This routing options sites the Huntley substation at the location proposed in ITCM's route permit application with the 345 kV line following the existing north-south

161 kV line northward from I-90 to the substation site, and then following Route A or B back south to Iowa as a 345/161 kV double circuit line. With this routing option, Route A and the common section of Routes A and B in Sections 15 and 14 of Verona Township would be evaluated solely for a 161 kV line.

## **VII. ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT**

The EIS, in accordance with Minnesota Rule 7849.1500, will describe and analyze the feasibility of the following system alternatives, and the human and environmental impacts and potential mitigation measures associated with each:

- A. No-build Alternative
- B. Demand Side Management
- C. Purchased Power
- D. Transmission Line of a Different Size
- E. Upgrading of Existing Facilities
- F. Generation Rather Than Transmission
- G. Use of Renewable Energy Sources

## **VIII. 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.

## **ISSUES OUTSIDE THE SCOPE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

The EIS for the Minnesota to Iowa 345 kV transmission line project will not consider the following:

- A. Any route or site alternative not specifically identified for study in this scoping decision.
- B. Any system alternative (an alternative to the proposed transmission line project) not specifically identified for study in this scoping decision.
- C. Policy issues concerning whether utilities or local governments should be liable for the cost to relocate utility poles when roadways are widened.
- D. The manner in which land owners are paid for transmission line right-of-way easements.
- E. Of the alternatives proposed during the scoping process to mitigate potential impacts of the project, three alignment alternatives and three route alternatives will not be included for further study in the EIS.

### ***Alignments***

Two alignment alternatives were proposed within route alternative J2-R, in addition to J4-A. These alternatives would have greater aesthetic and economic impacts relative to J4-A and would address fewer routing concerns. Accordingly, these alignment alternatives would not aid in the Commission's decision on the route permit application.

An alignment alternative was proposed within route alternative M15-R along the Center Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Martin County. The DNR indicated that this alignment alternative would compromise future WMA expansion and wetland restoration and recommended that the alternative not be included for study in the EIS.<sup>20</sup> Accordingly, this alternative would not aid in the Commission's decision on the route permit application.

### ***Routes***

A route alternative was suggested to proceed directly south from the Lakefield substation to Iowa. This alternative does not meet the applicant's stated need for the project – i.e., it does not connect two substations in Minnesota (Lakefield and Huntley) before proceeding southward to Iowa. Accordingly, this route alternative would not aid in the Commission's decision on the route permit application.

A route alternative was suggested around the northwest edge of the Fox Lake Game Refuge in Martin County. The alternative would utilize Route A and the Fox Lake West connector and would then proceed cross country in a northeasterly direction through Section 25 of Elm Creek Township, Sections 30, 20, and 29 of Fox Lake Township, and through the Seymour Lake WMA to connect with the existing 161 kV line.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) indicated that this route alternative has the potential to impact wetlands and public waters.<sup>21</sup> DNR noted that it is not likely to issue a license to cross Seymour Lake WMA given that reasonable and feasible alternatives exist for avoiding the WMA and has recommended that the route alternative not be included in the scope of the EIS.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, the impacts that this route alternative sought to mitigate can be mitigated by other route alternatives (M3-R, M4-R, Fox Lake West connector, Route B) that utilize or could connect with the existing 161 kV line and do not proceed cross country or impact the Seymour Lake WMA. Accordingly, this alternative would not aid in the Commission's decision on the route permit application.

A route alternative was suggested by landowners near the proposed Huntley substation site in Faribault County. This alternative would begin at Route A, where it would leave the existing 161 kV line in Section 15 of Verona Township, and proceed in a southeasterly direction across Sections 15 and 14 of Verona Township, and across the Blue Earth River to the substation site.

DNR indicated that this route alternative includes two public watercourse crossings and has the potential to significantly impact wetland, riparian, and forest habitat.<sup>23</sup> DNR noted that it is unlikely to license the public water crossings for this alternative when reasonable and feasible alternatives exist and has recommended that the alternative not be

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<sup>20</sup> Department Comments and Recommendations

<sup>21</sup> Id.

<sup>22</sup> Id.

<sup>23</sup> Id.

included in the scope of the EIS.<sup>24</sup> Accordingly, this alternative would not aid in the Commission's decision on the route permit application.

### SCHEDULE

The draft EIS is anticipated to be completed and available in February 2014. Public meetings and a comment period on the draft EIS will follow. Timely and substantive comments on the draft EIS will be responded to in a final EIS. Public hearings will be held in the project area after issuance of the draft EIS and are anticipated to occur in April 2014.

Signed this 14<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2013

STATE OF MINNESOTA  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



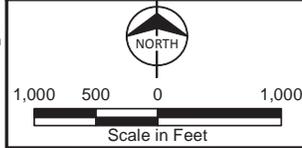
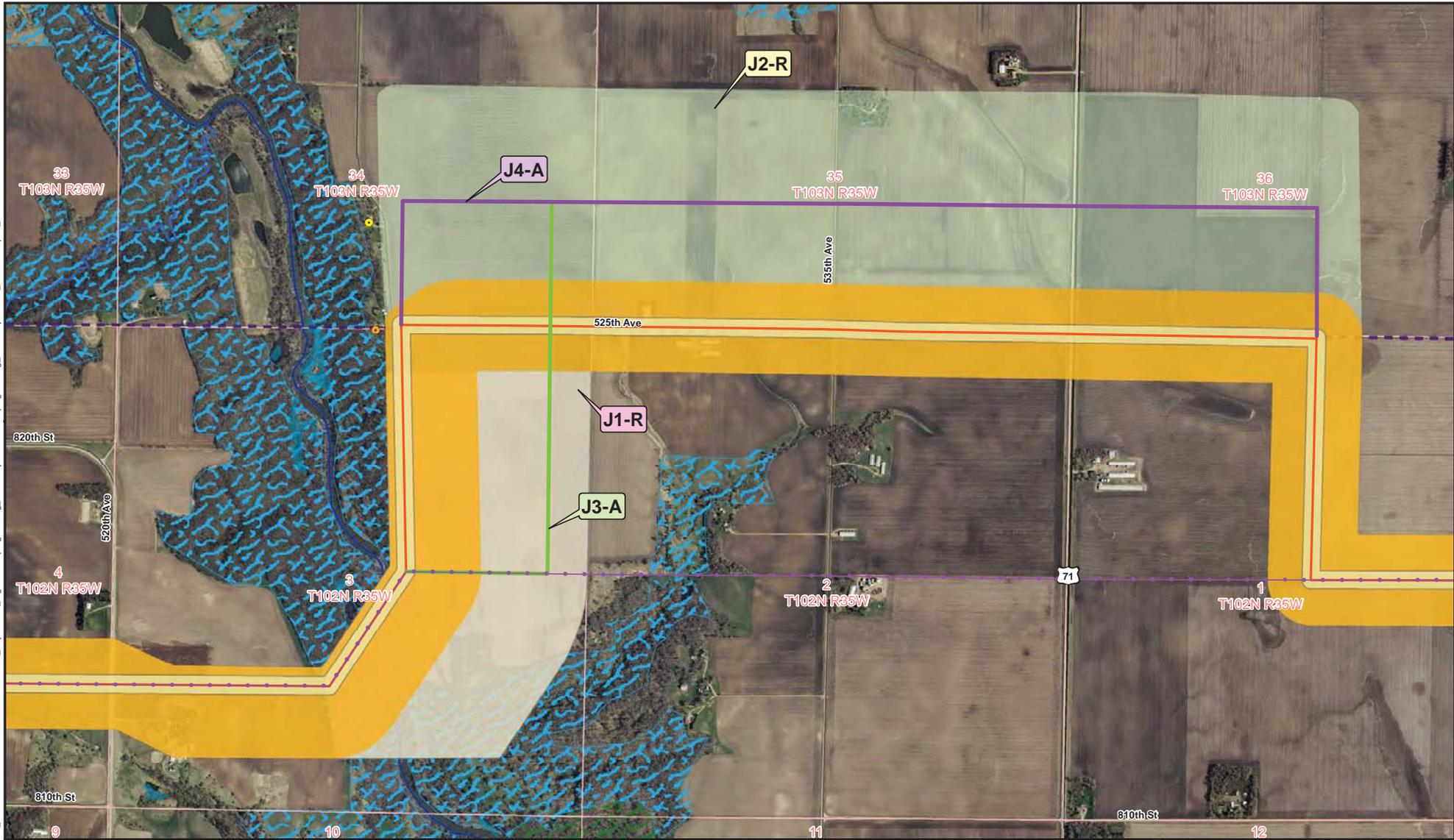
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William Grant, Deputy Commissioner

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<sup>24</sup> Id.

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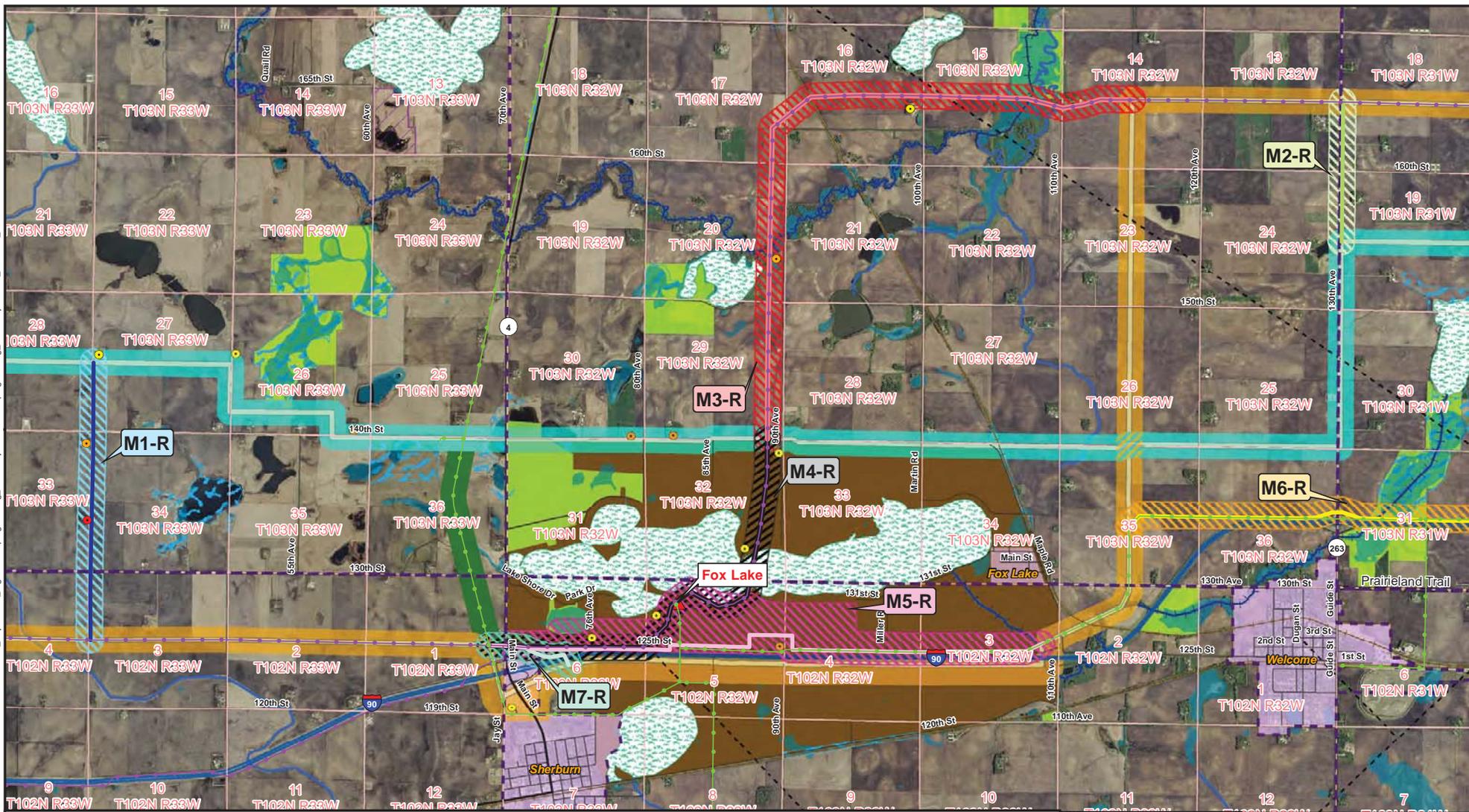
- |                  |                                 |                   |                   |                  |                |
|------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Alternative J1-R | Applicant Proposed Route A      | City              | WRP               | <b>MBS Sites</b> | Home 0-75ft    |
| Alternative J2-R | Application ROW                 | Civil Township    | PWI Stream        | Below            | Home 75-150ft  |
| Alternative J3-A | Route A - Application Alignment | Township Sections | PWI Water Basin   | Moderate         | Home 150-300ft |
| Alternative J4-A | Existing 69 kV Lines            | State Park or WMA | PWI Water Wetland | High             | Home 300-500ft |
|                  | Existing 161 kV Lines           | State Game Refuge | Impaired Stream   | Outstanding      |                |
|                  | Existing 345 kV Lines           | WPA               | Existing Pipeline | Railroad         |                |



ITC Midwest- Minnesota to Iowa  
345 kV Transmission Line Project

**Scoping Decision**  
Route and Alignment Alternatives  
Map Sheet 1 of 16

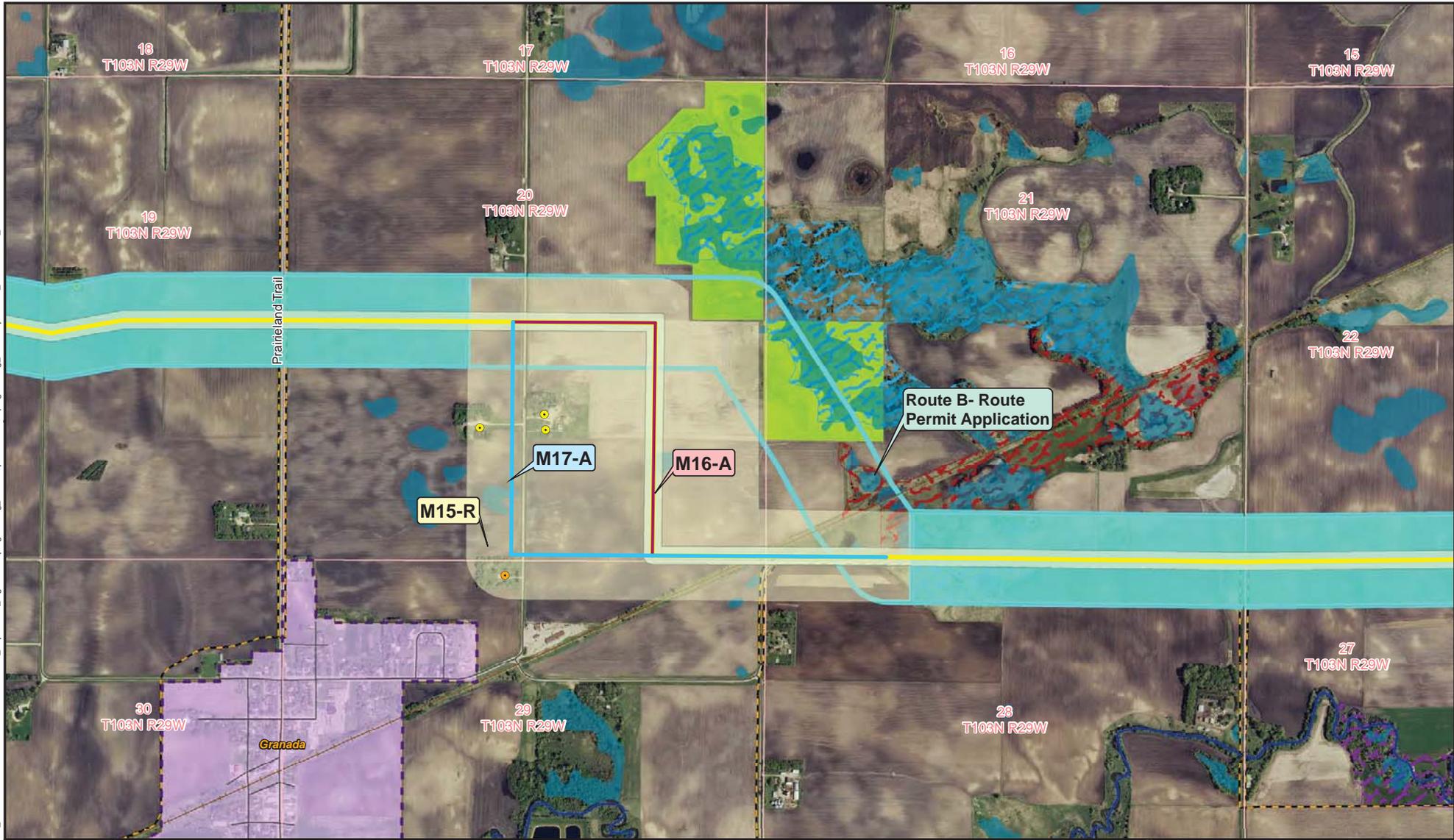
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<p>Scale in Feet</p> <p>3,500 1,750 0 3,500</p>	Existing Substation Alternative M1-R Alternative M2-R Alternative M3-R	Alternative M4-R Alternative M5-R Alternative M6-R Alternative M7-R	Applicant Proposed Route A Applicant Proposed Route B Application ROW Connector Segment Existing 69 kV Lines Existing 161 kV Lines	City Civil Township Township Sections State Park or WMA State Game Refuge WPA	PWI Water Basin MBS Sites <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Below</li> <li>Moderate</li> <li>Impaired Stream</li> <li>Existing Pipeline</li> </ul>	Railroad <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Home 0-75ft</li> <li>Home 75-150ft</li> <li>Home 150-300ft</li> <li>Home 300-500ft</li> </ul>	<p>Jackson</p> <p>Martin</p> <p>Locator Map</p>	<p>ITC Midwest- Minnesota to Iowa 345 kV Transmission Line Project</p> <p><b>Scoping Decision</b> Route and Alignment Alternatives Map Sheet 2 of 16</p>
	<p>Source: MN Geo 2011 Aerials; USFWS NWI Wetlands; National Hydrography Dataset; National Flight Data Center; Minnesota DNR; Minnesota Geo GIS; Minnesota DOI; ITC; Burns &amp; McDonnell.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Issued: 10/9/2013</p>							

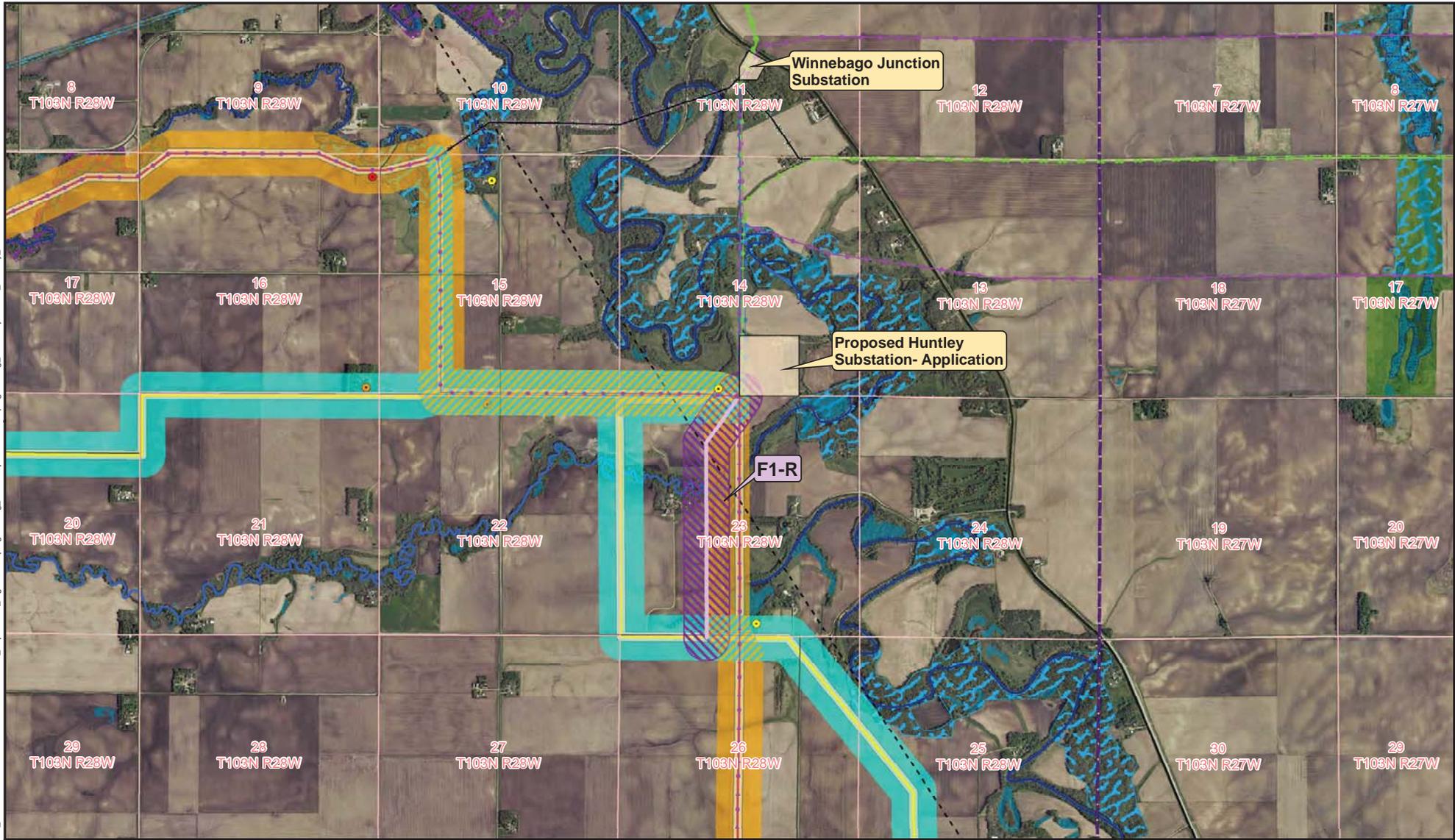


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	Alternative M15-R Alternative M16-A Alternative M17-A Route B - Application Alignment Applicant Proposed Route B	Application ROW Existing 69 kV Lines Existing 161 kV Lines Existing 345 kV Lines City	Township Sections State Park or WMA State Game Refuge WPA WRP	PWI Water Basin PWI Water Wetland Impaired Stream Existing Pipeline Snowmobile Trail	<b>MBS Sites</b> Below Moderate High Outstanding	Railroad Home 0-75ft Home 75-150ft Home 150-300ft Home 300-500ft		<p>ITC Midwest- Minnesota to Iowa 345 kV Transmission Line Project</p> <p><b>Scoping Decision</b> Route and Alignment Alternatives Map Sheet 4 of 16</p>
	<p>Source: MN Geo 2011 Aerials; USFWS NWI Wetlands; National Hydrography Dataset; National Flight Data Center; Minnesota DNR; Minnesota Geo GIS; Minnesota DOT; ITC; Burns &amp; McDonnell.</p>							

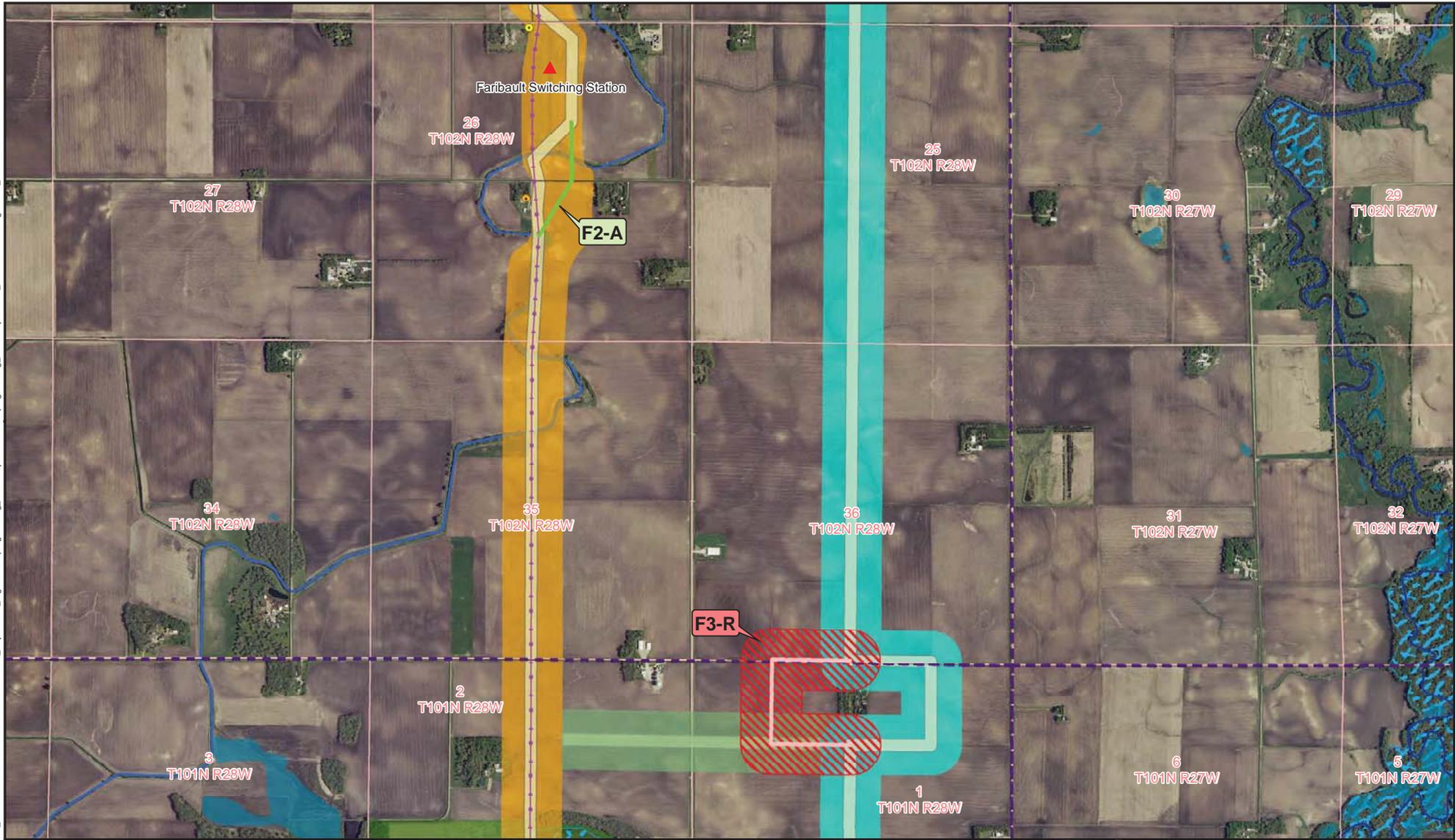
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	Alternative F1-R	Route A - Application Alignment	City	WPA	<b>MBS Sites</b> Below Moderate High	Existing Pipeline		ITC Midwest- Minnesota to Iowa 345 kV Transmission Line Project  <b>Scoping Decision</b> Route and Alignment Alternatives Map Sheet 5 of 16
	Substation	Applicant Proposed Route A	Civil Township	WRP	Impaired Stream	Home 0-75ft Home 75-150ft Home 150-300ft Home 300-500ft		
	Applicant Proposed Route B	Existing 69 kV Lines	Township Sections	PWI Stream	Line to be Removed	Existing 161 kV Lines	State Park or WMA	PWI Water Basin
	Line to be Removed	Existing 345 kV Lines	State Game Refuge	PWI Water Wetland				

Source: MN Geo 2011 Aerials; USFWS NWI Wetlands; National Hydrography Dataset; National Flight Data Center; Minnesota DNR; Minnesota Geo GIS; Minnesota DOT; ITC; Burns & McDonnell.

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	Alternative F2-A	Application ROW	Switching Station	State Game Refuge	PWI Water Wetland	Existing Pipeline
	Alternative F3-R	Connector Segment	City	WPA	MBS Sites	Home 0-75ft
	Applicant Proposed Route A	Existing 69 kV Lines	Civil Township	PWI Stream	Below	Home 75-150ft
	Applicant Proposed Route B	Existing 161 kV Lines	Township Sections	PWI Water Basin	Moderate	Home 150-300ft
		Existing 345 kV Lines	State Park or WMA	Impaired Stream	Impaired Stream	Home 300-500ft

**Martin**

Locator Map

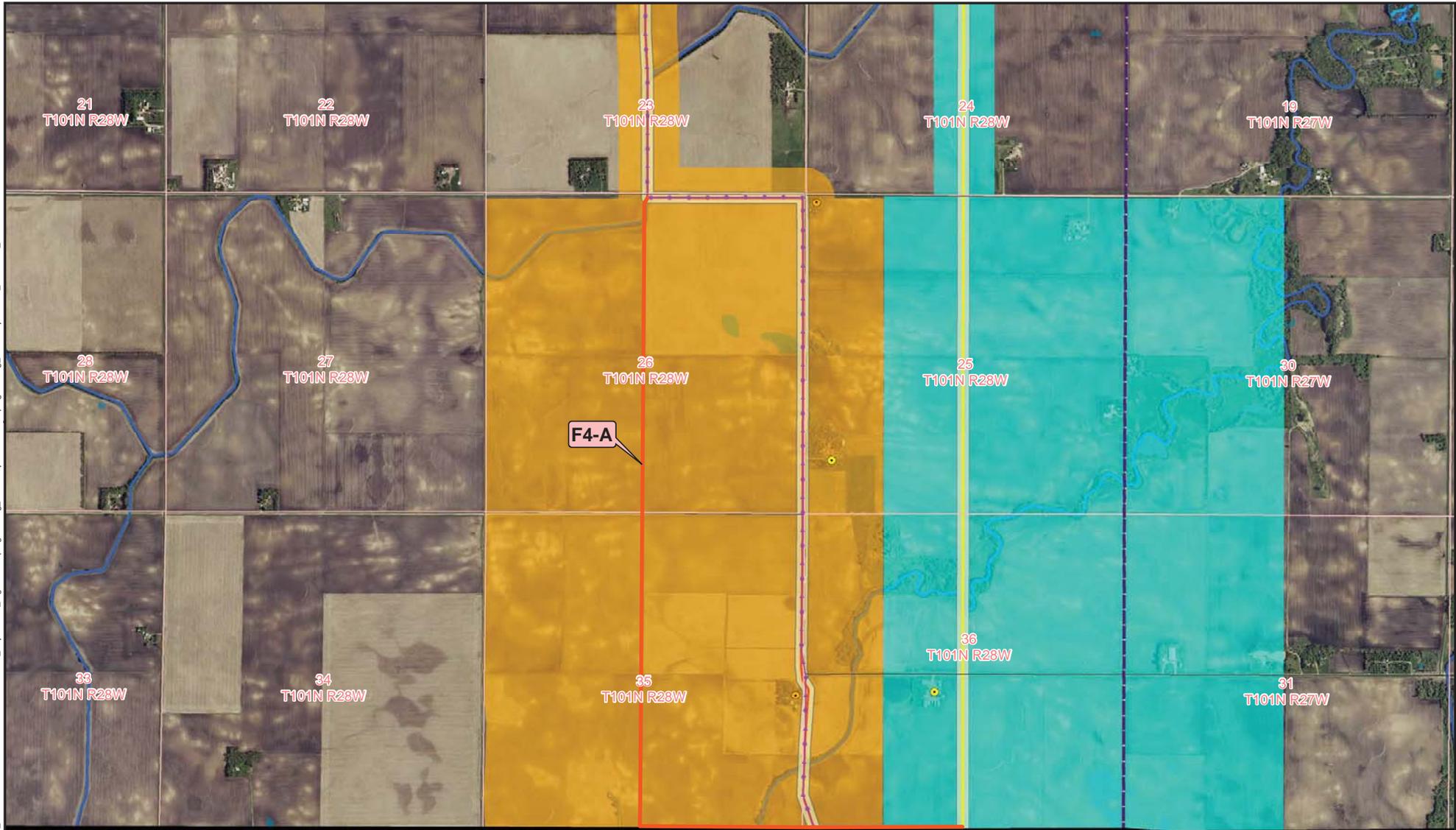
**Faribault**

ITC Midwest- Minnesota to Iowa  
345 kV Transmission Line Project

**Scoping Decision**  
Route and Alignment Alternatives  
Map Sheet 6 of 16

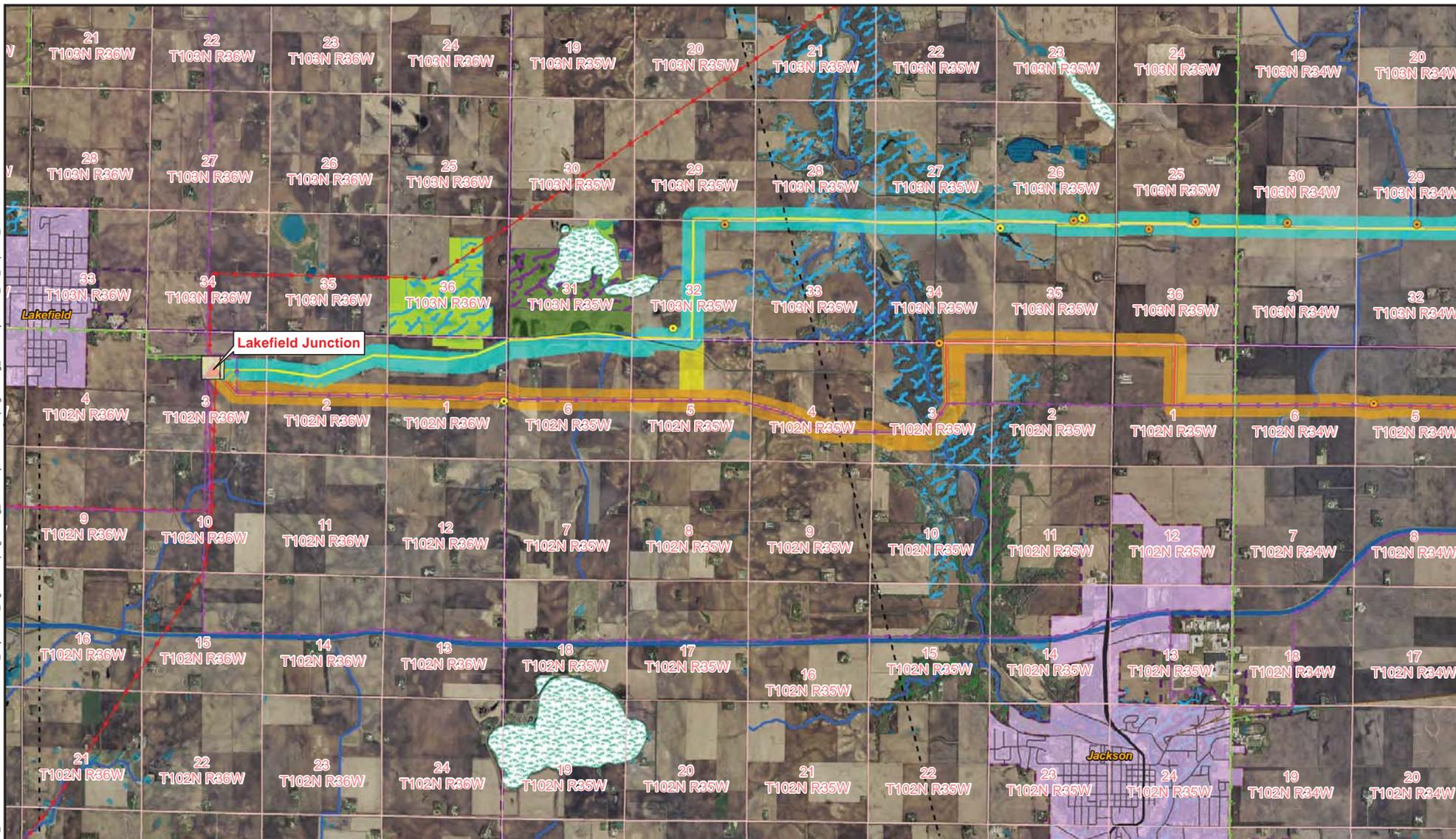
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	<p>Source: MN Geo 2011 Aerials; USFWS NWI Wetlands; National Hydrography Dataset; National Flight Data Center; Minnesota DNR; Minnesota Geo GIS; Minnesota DOT; ITC; Burns &amp; McDonnell.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Issued: 10/9/2013</p>							

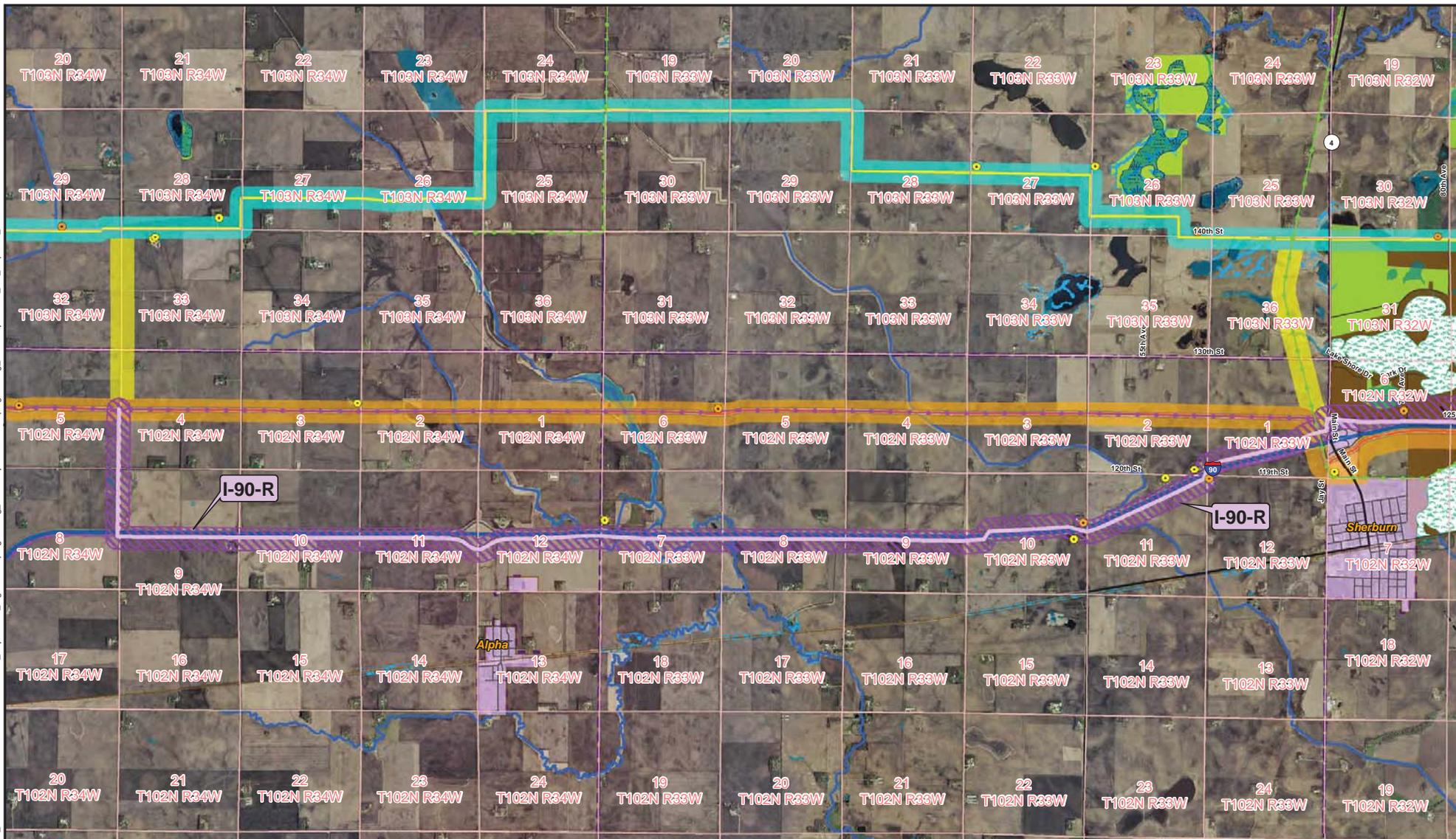
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<p>Scale in Feet</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Alternative I-90-R</li> <li> Alternative M15-R</li> <li> Existing Substation</li> <li> Substation Boundaries</li> <li> Line to be Removed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Applicant Proposed Route A</li> <li> Applicant Proposed Route B</li> <li> Route A - Application Alignment</li> <li> Route B - Application Alignment</li> <li> Connector Segment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Existing 69 kV Lines</li> <li> Existing 161 kV Lines</li> <li> City</li> <li> Civil Township</li> <li> Township Sections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> State Park or WMA</li> <li> State Game Refuge</li> <li> PWI Water Basin</li> <li> PWI Water Wetland</li> <li> Existing Pipeline</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> MBS Sites</li> <li> Below</li> <li> Moderate</li> <li> High</li> <li> Outstanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Private Landing Strip</li> <li> Home 0-75ft</li> <li> Home 75-150ft</li> <li> Home 150-300ft</li> <li> Home 300-500ft</li> </ul>	<p>Locator Map</p>	<p>ITC Midwest- Minnesota to Iowa 345 kV Transmission Line Project</p> <p><b>Scoping Decision</b></p> <p>Route &amp; Alignment Alternatives: I-90-R Map Sheet 8 of 16</p>
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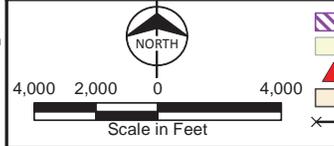
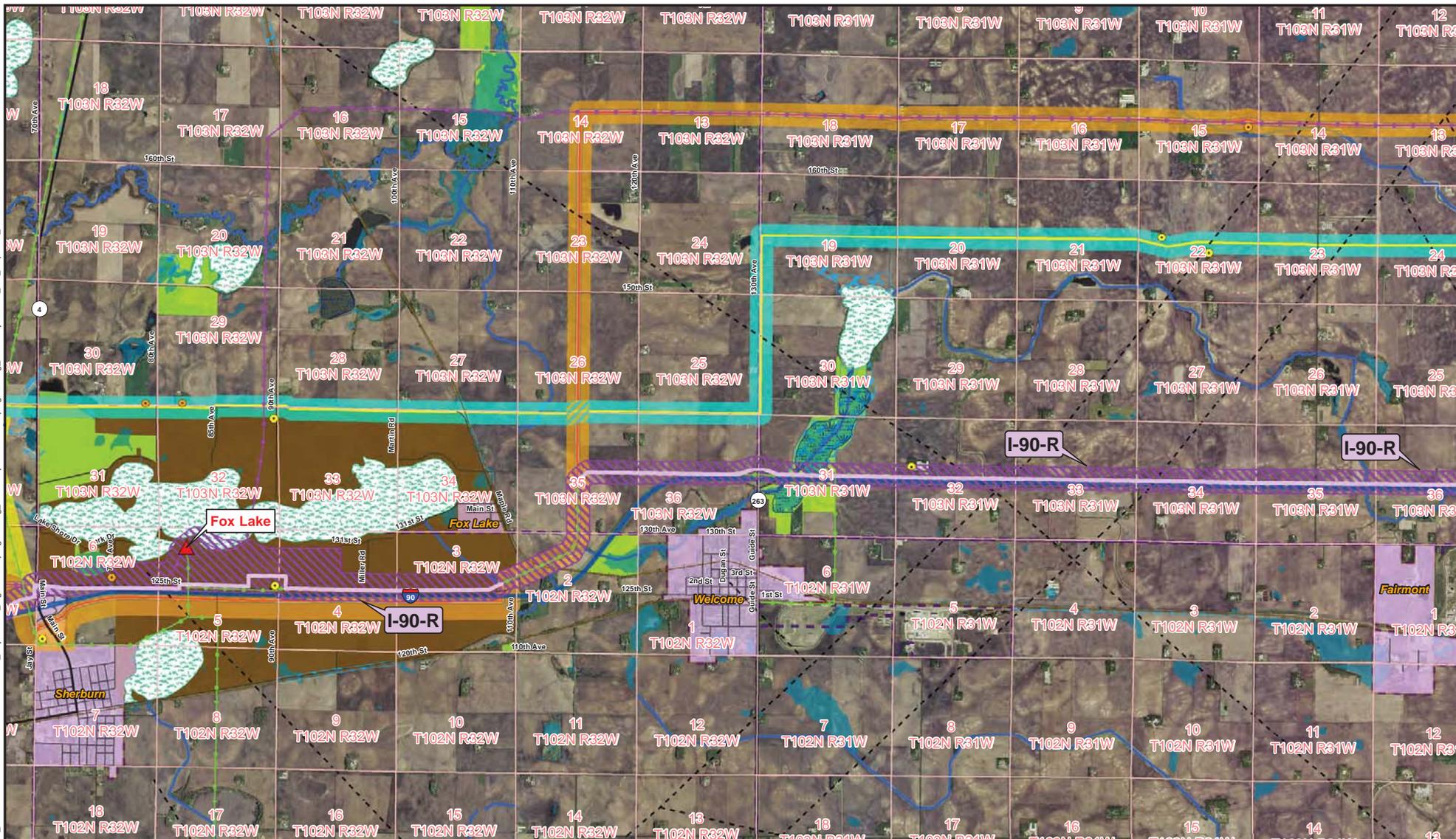
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 	Alternative I-90-R Alternative M15-R Existing Substation Substation Boundaries Line to be Removed	Applicant Proposed Route A Applicant Proposed Route B Route A - Application Alignment Route B - Application Alignment Connector Segment	Existing 69 kV Lines Existing 161 kV Lines City Civil Township Township Sections	State Park or WMA State Game Refuge PWI Water Basin PWI Water Wetland Existing Pipeline	<b>MBS Sites</b> Below Moderate High Outstanding	Private Landing Strip Home 0-75ft Home 75-150ft Home 150-300ft Home 300-500ft		<p>ITC Midwest- Minnesota to Iowa 345 kV Transmission Line Project</p> <p><b>Scoping Decision</b></p> <p>Route &amp; Alignment Alternatives: I-90-R Map Sheet 9 of 16</p>
	<p>Source: MN Geo 2011 Aerials; USFWS NWI Wetlands; National Hydrography Dataset; National Flight Data Center; Minnesota DNR; Minnesota Geo GIS; Minnesota DOT; ITC; Burns &amp; McDonnell.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Issued: 10/9/2013</p>							

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- |                       |                                 |                       |                   |             |                       |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Alternative I-90-R    | Applicant Proposed Route A      | Existing 69 kV Lines  | State Park or WMA | MBS Sites   | Private Landing Strip |
| Alternative M15-R     | Applicant Proposed Route B      | Existing 161 kV Lines | State Game Refuge | Below       | Home 0-75ft           |
| Existing Substation   | Route A - Application Alignment | City                  | PWI Water Basin   | Moderate    | Home 75-150ft         |
| Substation Boundaries | Route B - Application Alignment | Civil Township        | PWI Water Wetland | High        | Home 150-300ft        |
| Line to be Removed    | Connector Segment               | Township Sections     | Existing Pipeline | Outstanding | Home 300-500ft        |



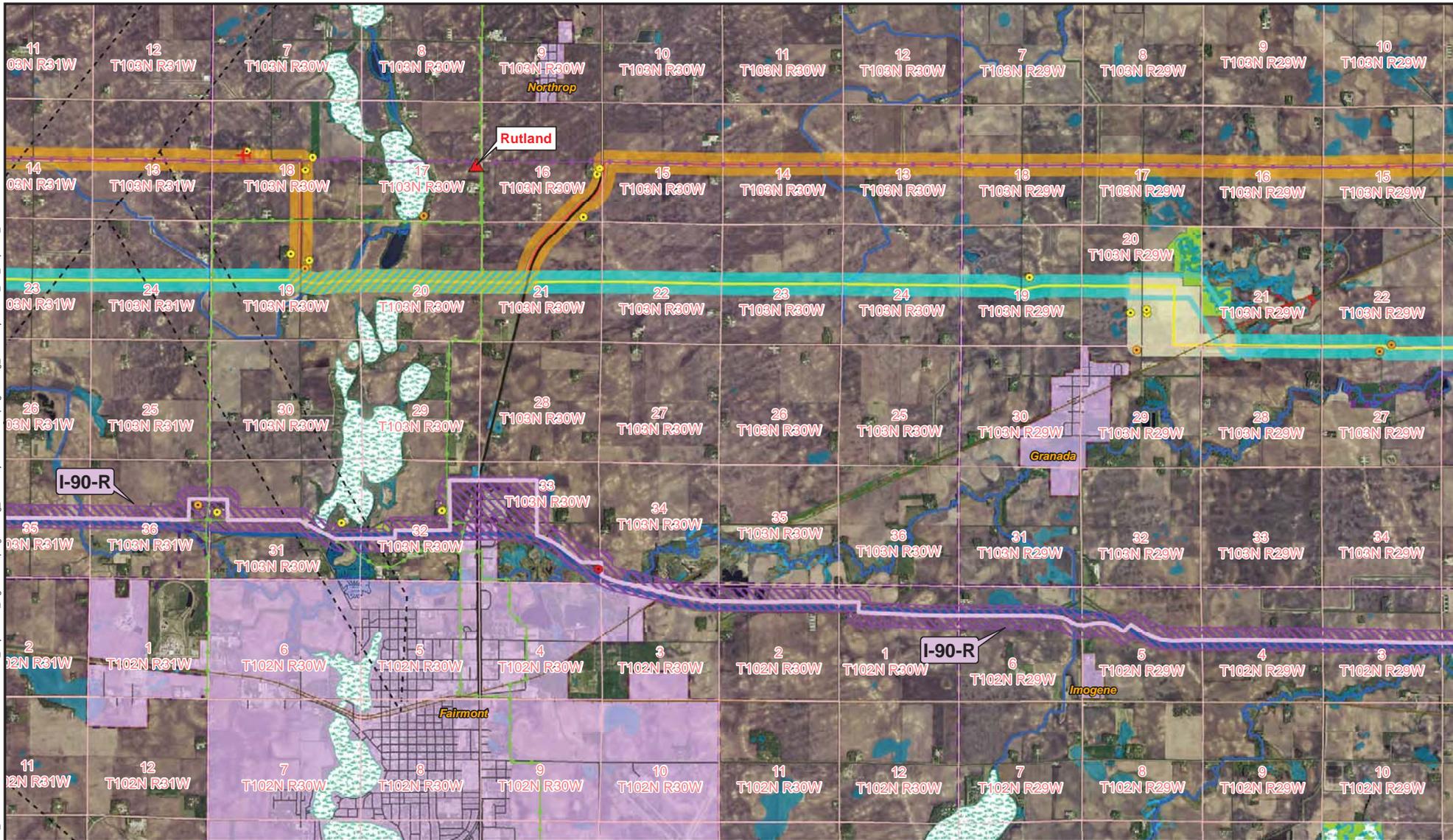
ITC Midwest- Minnesota to Iowa  
345 kV Transmission Line Project

**Scoping Decision**

Route & Alignment Alternatives: I-90-R  
Map Sheet 10 of 16

Source: MN Geo 2011 Aerials; USFWS NWI Wetlands; National Hydrography Dataset; National Flight Data Center; Minnesota DNR; Minnesota Geo GIS; Minnesota DOT; ITC; Burns & McDonnell.

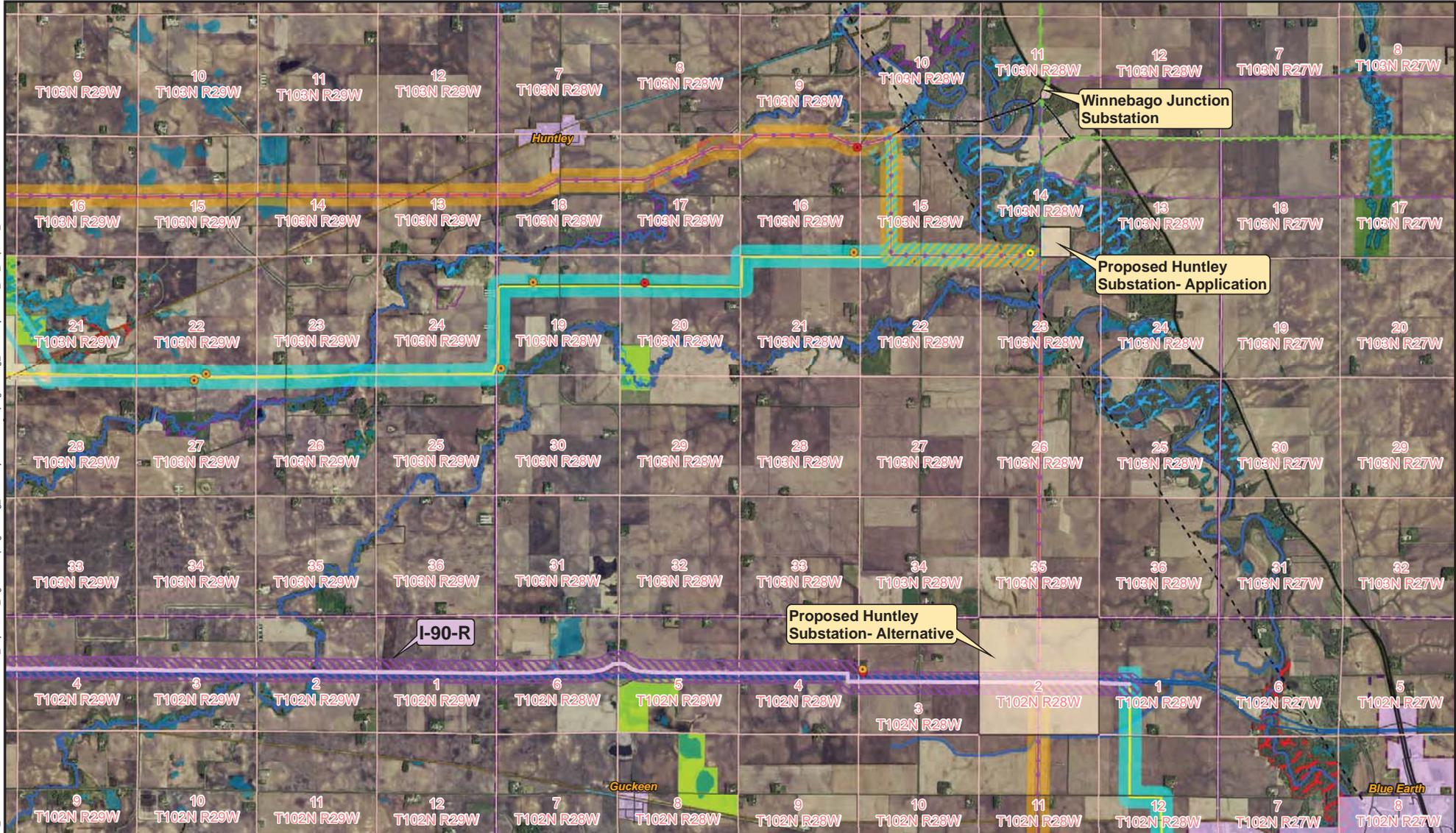
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 4,000 2,000 0 4,000 Scale in Feet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Alternative I-90-R</li> <li> Alternative M15-R</li> <li> Existing Substation</li> <li> Substation Boundaries</li> <li> Line to be Removed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Applicant Proposed Route A</li> <li> Applicant Proposed Route B</li> <li> Route A - Application Alignment</li> <li> Route B - Application Alignment</li> <li> Connector Segment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Existing 69 kV Lines</li> <li> Existing 161 kV Lines</li> <li> City</li> <li> Civil Township</li> <li> Township Sections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> State Park or WMA</li> <li> State Game Refuge</li> <li> PWI Water Basin</li> <li> PWI Water Wetland</li> <li> Existing Pipeline</li> </ul>	<b>MBS Sites</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Below</li> <li> Moderate</li> <li> High</li> <li> Outstanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Private Landing Strip</li> <li> Home 0-75ft</li> <li> Home 75-150ft</li> <li> Home 150-300ft</li> <li> Home 300-500ft</li> </ul>	 Locator Map	<b>ITC Midwest- Minnesota to Iowa 345 kV Transmission Line Project</b>  <b>Scoping Decision</b> Route & Alignment Alternatives: I-90-R Map Sheet 11 of 16
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Source: MN Geo 2011 Aerials; USFWS NWI Wetlands; National Hydrography Dataset; National Flight Data Center; Minnesota DNR; Minnesota Geo GIS; Minnesota DOT; ITC; Burns & McDonnell.

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Alternative I-90-R	Applicant Proposed Route A	Existing 69 kV Lines	State Park or WMA	<b>MBS Sites</b>	Private Landing Strip
Alternative M15-R	Applicant Proposed Route B	Existing 161 kV Lines	State Game Refuge	Below	Home 0-75ft
Existing Substation	Route A - Application Alignment	City	PWI Water Basin	Moderate	Home 75-150ft
Substation Boundaries	Route B - Application Alignment	Civil Township	PWI Water Wetland	High	Home 150-300ft
Line to be Removed	Connector Segment	Township Sections	Existing Pipeline	Outstanding	Home 300-500ft

Locator Map

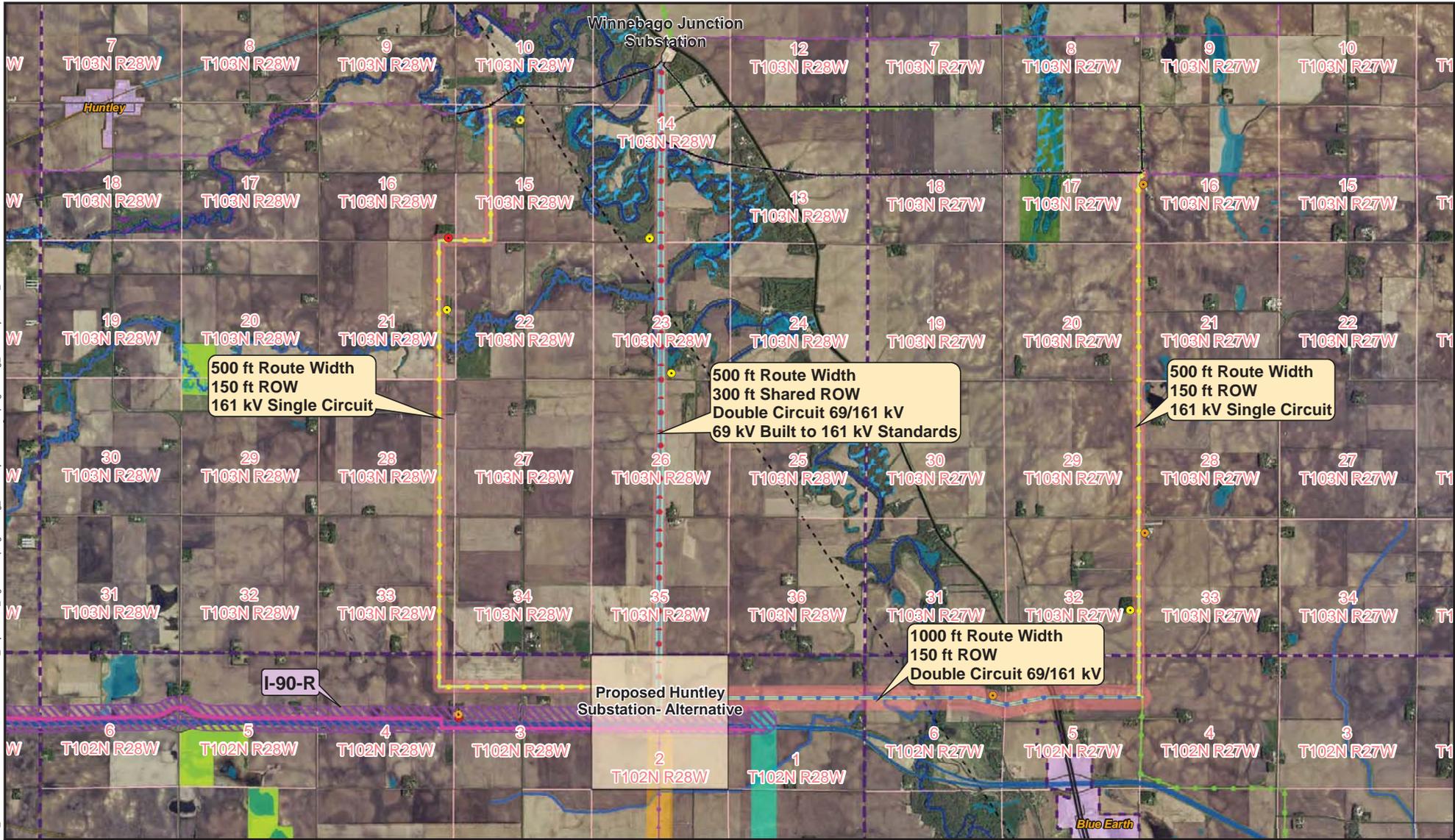
ITC Midwest- Minnesota to Iowa  
345 kV Transmission Line Project

**Scoping Decision**

Route & Alignment Alternatives: I-90-R  
Map Sheet 12 of 16

Source: MN Geo 2011 Aerials; USFWS NWI Wetlands; National Hydrography Dataset; National Flight Data Center; Minnesota DNR; Minnesota Geo GIS; Minnesota DOT; ITC; Burns & McDonnell.

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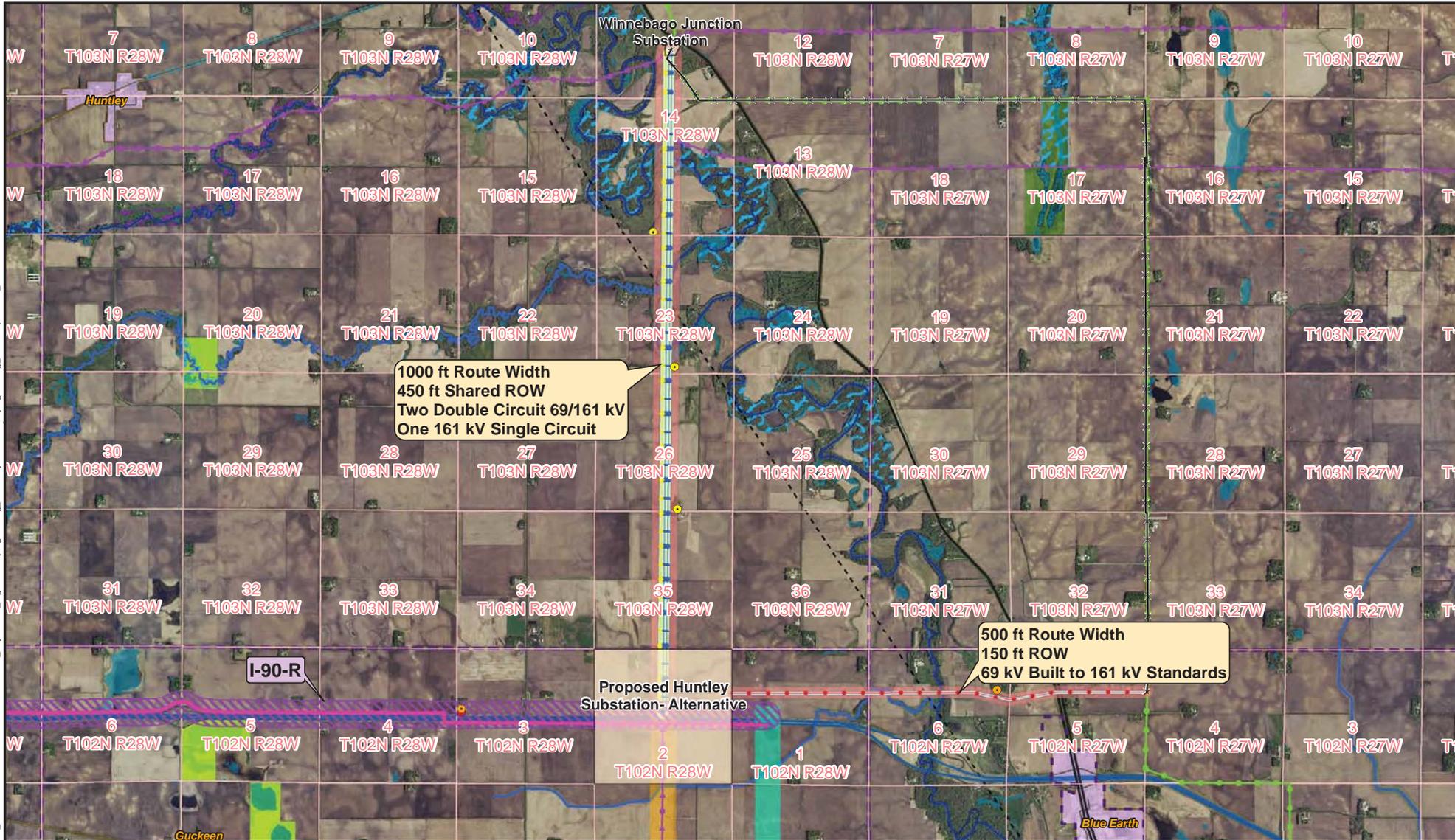


	Substation	ROW- 300ft	Applicant Proposed Route B	Township Sections	MBS Sites	Existing Pipeline		<p>ITC Midwest- Minnesota to Iowa 345 kV Transmission Line Project</p> <p><b>Scoping Decision</b> Route &amp; Alignment Alternatives: I-90-R Huntley Substation Option 1 Map Sheet 13 of 16</p>
	69 kV Built to 161 kV	I-90-R Huntley- Route Width	Existing 69 kV Lines	State Park or WMA	Below	Home 0-75ft		
Double Circuit 69/161 kV	Alternative I-90-R	Alternative I-90-A	Existing 161 kV Lines	City	Moderate	Home 150-300ft		
New 161 kV	Applicant Proposed Route A	ROW- 150ft	Civil Township	PWI Stream	High	Home 300-500ft		
				PWI Water Basin	Impaired Stream			
				PWI Water Wetland				

Source: MN Geo 2011 Aerials; USFWS NWI Wetlands; National Hydrography Dataset; National Flight Data Center; Minnesota DNR; Minnesota Geo GIS; Minnesota DOI; ITC; Burns & McDonnell.

Issued: 10/9/2013

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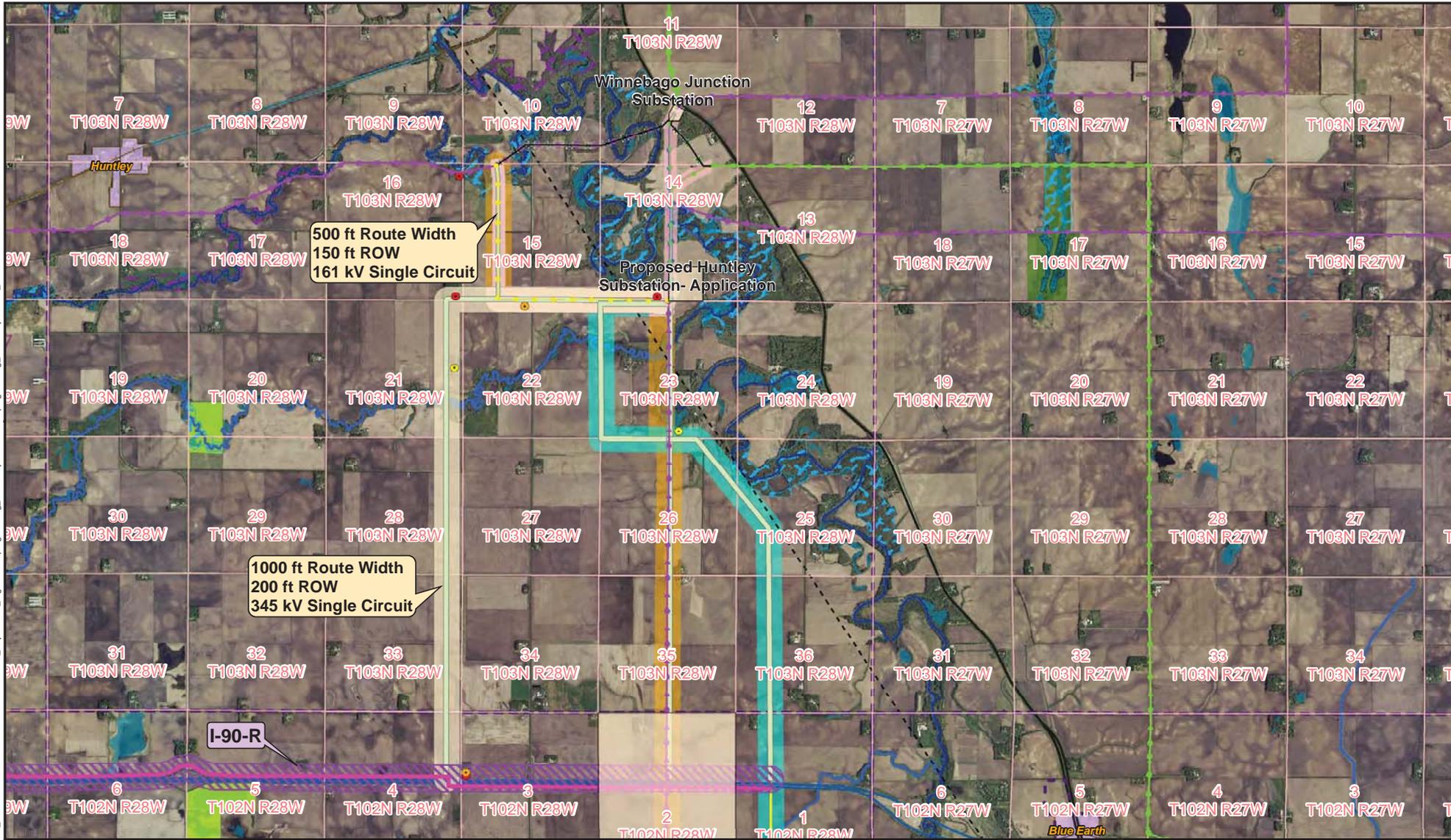


ITC Midwest- Minnesota to Iowa  
345 kV Transmission Line Project

**Scoping Decision**  
Route & Alignment Alternatives: I-90-R  
Huntley Substation Option 2  
Map Sheet 14 of 16

Issued: 10/9/2013

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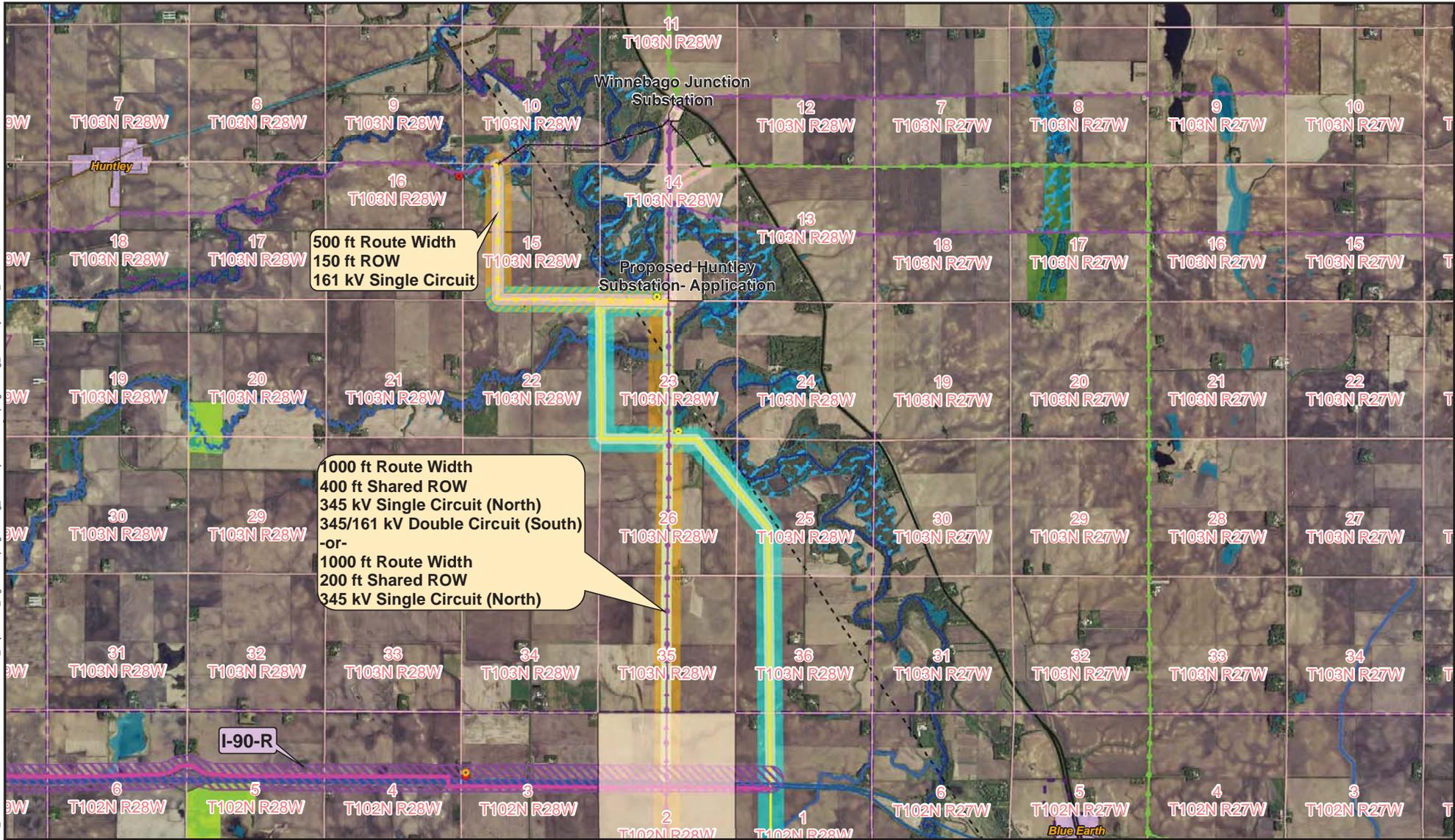


Substation	New 161 kV	Existing 69 kV Lines	State Park or WMA	PWI Water Wetland	Existing Pipeline
Alternative I-90-R	Applicant Proposed Route A	Existing 161 kV Lines	State Game Refuge	MBS Sites Below	Home 0-75ft
Alternative I-90-A	Applicant Proposed Route B	City	WPA	MBS Sites Moderate	Home 75-150ft
ROW- 200ft	Route A - Application Alignment	Civil Township	WRP	MBS Sites Impaired Stream	Home 150-300ft
Associated Facilities	Route B - Application Alignment	Township Sections	PWI Stream		Home 300-500ft

ITC Midwest-Minnesota to Iowa  
345 kV Transmission Line Project

**Scoping Decision**  
Route & Alignment Alternatives: I-90-R  
Huntley Substation Option 3  
Map Sheet 15 of 16

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	Substation	New 161 kV	Existing 69 kV Lines	State Park or WMA	PWI Water Wetland	Existing Pipeline
	Alternative I-90-R	Applicant Proposed Route A	Existing 161 kV Lines	State Game Refuge	MBS Sites	Home 0-75ft
Alternative I-90-A	Applicant Proposed Route B	City	WPA	Below	Home 75-150ft	Moderate
ROW- 400ft	Route A - Application Alignment	Civil Township	WRP	Impaired Stream	Home 150-300ft	Home 300-500ft
Associated Facilities	Route B - Application Alignment	Township Sections	PWI Stream			

ITC Midwest- Minnesota to Iowa  
345 kV Transmission Line Project

**Scoping Decision**  
Route & Alignment Alternatives: I-90-R  
Huntley Substation Option 4  
Map Sheet 16 of 16