
DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENT

MP 16 LINE RELOCATION PROJECT

PUC DOCKET No. E015/TL-14-977

Prepared by the Staff of the Energy Environmental Review & Analysis

March 9, 2015



85 7TH PLACE EAST, SUITE 500
SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA 55101-2198
MN.GOV/COMMERCE
651.539.1500 FAX: 651.539.1547
AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This draft scoping document is intended to advise the public of the scoping process and the process for the preparation of the Environmental Review document. The *Scoping Decision* will identify for the public the issues and alternatives that the Department of Commerce (DOC) has determined are appropriate for inclusion in the environmental review document.

On January 20, 2015, the Applicant submitted a high voltage transmission line (HVTL) Route Permit Application¹ under the alternative permitting process to the Commission for the proposed transmission line relocation of the MP Line 16.

The docket number for this route permit proceedings is E015/TL-14-977. The Route Permit Application (RPA) was accepted as complete by the Commission in its regularly scheduled meeting on February 26, 2015.

CERTIFICATE OF NEED

A Certificate of Need is not required for the project because it is not classified as a large energy facility under Minnesota Statutes Sections 216B.243 and 216B.2421, subdivision 2(3). While the project is a HVTL with a capacity of 100 kV or more, it is not more than 10 miles long in Minnesota and it does not cross a state line. Therefore, the project is exempt from the Certificate of Need requirements

HVTL ROUTE PERMITTING

Minnesota Statutes Section 216E.03, subd. 2, provides that no person may construct a HVTL without a route permit from the Commission. An HVTL is defined as a transmission line of 100 kV or more and greater than 1,500 feet in length in Minnesota Statutes Section 216E.01, subd. 4. The proposed transmission line is a HVTL and therefore a route permit is required prior to construction.

The Applicants submitted the HVTL RPA for the proposed MP 16 transmission line relocation pursuant to the provisions of the Alternative Permitting Process outlined in Minnesota Rules 7849.2900. The alternative permitting process includes environmental review and public hearings, and typically takes six months.

A copy of the HVTL route permit application, along with other relevant documents, can be reviewed at the DOC Siting and Routing Energy Facilities web page located here:

<http://mn.gov/commerce/energyfacilities/Docket.html?Id=34059>

The EERA staff is responsible for administering the environmental review process. The Commission is responsible for selecting the transmission lines routes and issuing the HVTL route permit.

Environmental Review

Environmental review under the alternative permitting process includes public information/scoping meetings and the preparation of an environmental review document, the Environmental Assessment (EA) (Minn. R. 7850.3700). The environmental assessment is a written document that describes the human and

¹ Route Permit Application (RPA), eDockets Document ID 20151-106265-01

environmental impacts of the transmission line project (and selected alternative routes) and methods to mitigate such impacts.

The EA must be completed and made available prior to the public hearing.

If issued a HVTL route permit by the Commission, the Applicant may exercise the power of eminent domain to acquire the land necessary for the project pursuant to Minnesota Statute 216E.12 and Minnesota Statute 117.

2.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Minnesota Power (Applicant) proposes to construct an approximately 3.0-mile-long, 115 kV HVTL in St. Louis County. In addition, three miles of existing transmission line will be taken out of service and removed. The proposed HVTL would connect to Minnesota Power's existing 16 Line on the east side of United Taconite's existing tailings basin and proceed southeast, parallel to an existing railroad grade for approximately 1.25 miles. The line would then proceed southwest for approximately 1.75 miles where it would connect to the existing 16 Line.²

United Taconite requested that Minnesota Power remove an existing 115 kV HVTL (portion of the 16 Line) to accommodate United Taconite's plans to expand its tailings basin located south of Fayal Township.

3.0 ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW DOCUMENT

The environmental review document under the HVTL Route Permit procedures (Minnesota Rules, 7850.3700, subpart 4) must include the following:

- A. A general description of the proposed project;
- B. A list of any alternative sites or routes that are addressed;
- C. A discussion of the potential impacts of the proposed project and each alternative site or route on the human and natural environment;
- D. A discussion of mitigative measures that could reasonably be implemented to eliminate or minimize any adverse impacts identified for the proposed project and each alternative;
- E. An analysis of the feasibility of each alternative site or route considered;
- F. A list of permits required for the project; and
- G. A discussion of other matters identified in the scoping process.

4.0 EA SCOPING PROCESS

The purpose of the scoping process is to provide the public with an opportunity to participate in the development of the scope of the EA by holding a public meeting and soliciting public comment.

The public information/scoping meetings and the comment period listed below are your opportunity to participate in the determination of the content or "scope" of the EA.

² RPA at p 9

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND SCOPING MEETINGS

Monday, March 23, 2015

6:00pm

**Eveleth City Hall
413 Pierce Street
Eveleth, MN 55734**

The meetings will inform the public about the project and the regulatory proceedings; provide a forum to discuss the environmental, social and economic issues of importance in the areas potentially affected; and gather public input into the scope of the EA to be prepared for the project. The meetings provide the public an opportunity to ask questions about the project and suggest alternatives and specific impacts that should be addressed in the EA.

Representatives of the DOC EERA, the Commission and the Applicant will be at the meetings to describe the proposed project and answer questions.

Written public comments can be submitted to the DOC EERA staff until **Friday, April 3, 2015**. Once the scope is determined, the DOC EERA staff will prepare the EA and introduce it into the record at a public hearing to be scheduled, noticed and held at a later date.

5.0 DRAFT SCOPE FOR COMPLETION OF EA

The environmental assessment will address the following matters:

Abstract

Acronyms, Abbreviations and Definitions

- 1.0 Introduction
 - 1.1 Project Description
 - 1.2 Project Location
 - 1.3 Project Purpose
 - 1.4 Sources of Information
- 2.0 Regulatory Framework
 - 2.1 Certificate of Need
 - 2.2 Route Permit
 - 2.3 Combining Processes
 - 2.4 Scoping Process
 - 2.5 Public Hearing
 - 2.6 Other Permits
 - 2.7 Applicable Codes
 - 2.8 Issues Outside the Scope of the EA
- 3.0 Proposed Project
 - 3.1 Project Segments
 - 3.2 Right-of-Way Requirements

- 3.3 Project Construction and Maintenance
- 3.4 Project Implementation
- 3.5 Alternative Routes Considered and Rejected
- 4.0 Alternative Routes and/or Route Segments*
- 5.0 Potential Impacts of the Proposed Route
 - 5.1 Description of Environmental Setting
 - 5.2 Socioeconomic
 - 5.3 Displacement
 - 5.4 Anticipated Noise Impacts
 - 5.5 Radio and Television Interference
 - 5.6 Aesthetics
 - 5.7 Public Health and Safety Including EMF
 - 5.8 Recreation
 - 5.9 Land-based Economies
 - 5.10 Commercial, Industrial, Residential Land Use
 - 5.11 Public Services and Transportation
 - 5.12 Archaeological and Historic Resources
 - 5.13 Natural Environment
 - Air Quality
 - Water Quality
 - Flora
 - Fauna
 - 5.14 Rare and Unique Natural Resources
- 6.0 Potential Impacts Comparison of Alternate Routes*
- 7.0 Unavoidable Impacts

(*) – If applicable

6.0 SCHEDULE FOR COMPLETION OF EA

It is anticipated that the Environmental Assessment on the MP 16 Relocation Route Permit application will be completed by July 1, 2015.

Upon completion of the EA, the EERA staff will notify those persons who have asked to be notified of the completion. In addition, the EERA staff will publish notice of the availability of the EA in the EQB Monitor. The EA will be made available for review and will be posted on the DOC webpage.