



Minnesota Public Utilities Commission



Public Information and Scoping Meeting

Bull Moose Transmission Line

Public Utilities Commission (PUC) Docket Number

- ET-2/TL-15-628



Meeting Purpose

- Explain the Commission's review process
- Provide information about the proposed project
- Gather information for the environmental review
- Answer general questions about the process and the project



Public Utilities Commission

- ❑ State Agency
- ❑ Regulates
 - Permitting for power plants, pipelines, transmission lines
 - Local and in-state long distance telephone companies
 - Investor-owned electric and natural gas utilities – rates and services
- ❑ 5 Commissioners
 - Appointed by the Governor
 - Serve staggered terms
 - Full time employment
- ❑ 50 staff



High Voltage Transmission Line

- Will operate at 100 kV or more *and*
- Greater than 1500 feet in length

- Requires **Route Permit** from Minnesota Public Utilities Commission
 - Minnesota Statutes, Chapter [216E](#)
 - Minnesota Rules, Part [7850](#)



Who's Who?

- **Applicant** – Company asking for Route Permit – *Great River Energy*
- **Department of Commerce Energy Environmental Review and Analysis (EERA)** – State agency, conducts environmental review
- **Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH)** – State agency, Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) holds hearings, summarizes the facts in the record, writes report for Public Utilities Commission



Who's Who?

- **Public Utilities Commission (PUC) Energy Facilities Planner**
 - Assists in building the record. Informs Commissioners on impacts of different decisions. Neutral party, does not give legal advice, not an advocate.
- **Public Utilities Commission (PUC) Public Advisor** – Helps citizens participate in the route permit process. Neutral party, does not give legal advice, not an advocate.



Factors Considered in Public Utilities Commission's Decision on the **Route**

- ❑ Human settlement – displacement, noise, aesthetics, cultural values, recreation, public services
- ❑ Public health and safety
- ❑ Economy– agriculture, forestry, tourism, mining
- ❑ Archaeological and historic resources
- ❑ Natural environment – air, water, plants, animals

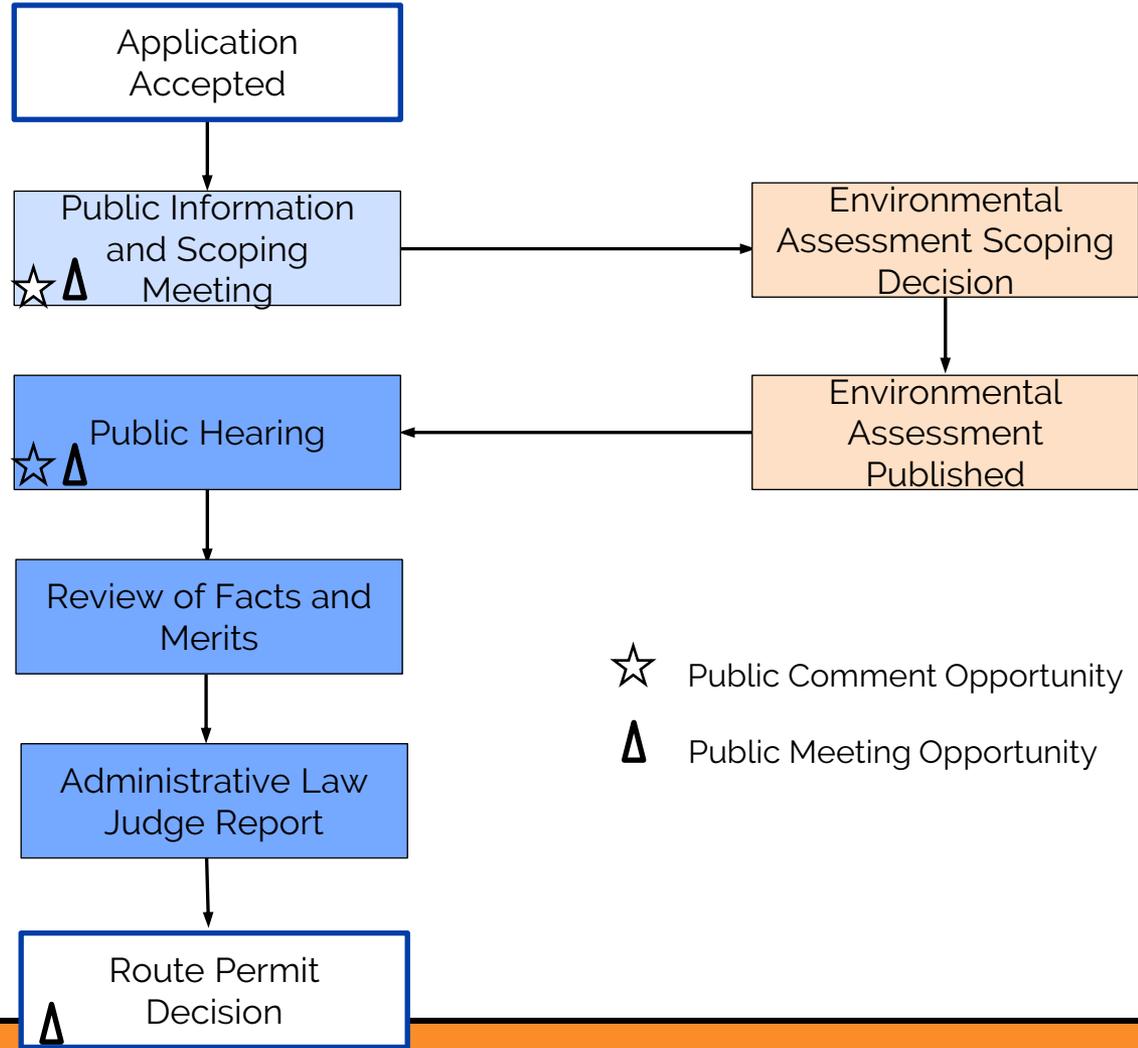


Factors Considered

- Maximize energy efficiencies
- Allow for future expansion
- Use of existing rights-of way
- Use of natural boundaries - survey lines, field boundaries
- Electrical system reliability
- Costs to construct, operate, and maintain the transmission line



Route Permit Process





Estimated Project Timeline

Route Permit Application Filed	August 2015
Route Permit Application Accepted	September 2015
*Public Information & Scoping Meeting	October 2015
Comment Period Closes	October 26, 2015
Environmental Assessment Scoping Decision	November 2015
Environmental Assessment Published	February 2016
Public Hearing	March 2016
Administrative Law Judge Report	April 2016
Route Permit Decision	May 2016



STATE OF MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

NOTICE OF COMMENT PERIOD ON COMPLETENESS OF ROUTE PERMIT APPLICATION

Issued: August 13, 2015

In the Matter of the Application of Great River Energy for a Route Permit for the Bull Moose 115 kV Transmission Line in Cass County, Minnesota

→ **PUC Docket Number:** ET2/TL-15-628 (Route Permit)

→ **Comment Period:** Initial comment period closes on August 27, 2015, at 4:30 p.m.
Reply comment period closes on September 3, 2015, at 4:30 p.m.

Topics Open for Comment:

- Does the route permit application contain the information required by Minnesota Rules parts 7850.1900?
- Are there any contested issues of fact with respect to the representations made in the application?
- Should the Commission appoint an advisory task force?



KEYS to Sending Comments

- Include the docket number (*15-628*)
- Stick to topics listed
- No need to submit comments more than once
- Verbal and written comments carry the same weight
- Commission's decision based on facts in the record
- Comments are public information
- Must be received before deadline



How to Learn More

See all documents related to this project

1. mn.gov/puc
2. Select *Search eDockets*
3. Enter the year and the Docket Number
 - 15 is the year and 628 is the number
4. Select *Search*
5. The list of documents will appear on the next page



How to Learn More

Project Mailing List

- ❑ Receive information about project milestones and opportunities for citizen participation
 - Email or US Mail
 - Complete and return *Project Mailing List* card
 - Contact the Public Utilities Commission
 - docketing.puc@state.mn.us
 - 651-201-2204 or 1-800-657-3782



How to Learn More

Subscribe to receive email notification when new documents are added to the Docket

1. mn.gov/puc
2. Select *Subscribe to a Docket*
3. Type your email address
4. For *Type of Subscription*, select *Docket Number*
5. For *Docket Number*, select *15* in the first box, type *628* in the second box
6. Select *Add to List*

*Subscribing may result in a large number of emails



How to Learn More

Subscribe to Dockets

Instructions

You may subscribe to receive electronic notification of documents filed before the MNPUC and
You will receive electronic notification at the email address you provide below. You may subscribe

Email Address:

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Type of Subscription:

Docket Number ▾ *

Docket Number:

15 ▾ 628 *

Description:

In the Matter of the Application of
Great River Energy for a Route Permit
under the Alternative Permitting

Add to List

Remove from List



PUC Project Contacts

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GREAT RIVER ENERGY
BULL MOOSE 115 kV PROJECT

MPUC DOCKET NO.
ET2/TL-15-628



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Project Need

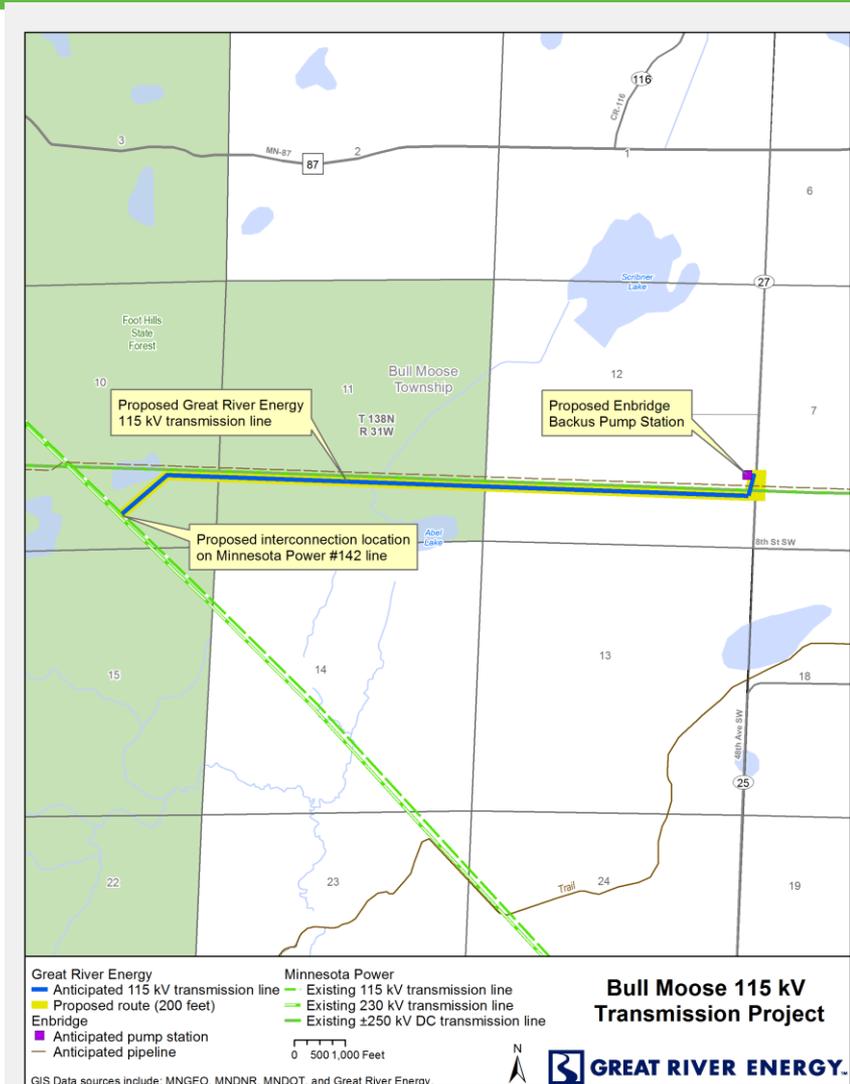
The Project would:

- Provide an electric source to the proposed Enbridge Energy Backus pump station in Bull Moose Township.

Proposed Project

Construct approximately 2.5 miles of new overhead 115 kilovolt (kV) transmission line in Cass County, Minnesota (Project) to serve the proposed Enbridge Energy (Enbridge) Backus Pump Station.

Project Area



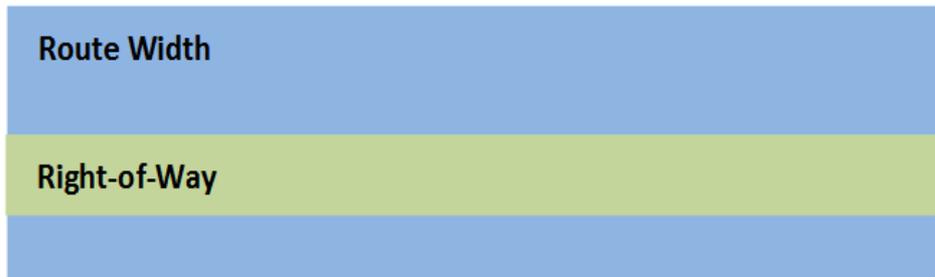
GREAT RIVER ENERGY™

Route Width

Great River Energy is requesting approval of a 200-foot route width for the transmission line and a wider route width (400 feet) in the vicinity of the pump station to accommodate routing the line into the substation associated with the pump station.

Right-of-Way (ROW)

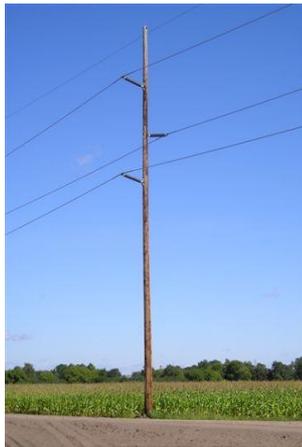
- Within the 200-foot route width, requesting a ROW (also known as easement area) of 100 feet.



- Poles would be located on both public and private property. The line will parallel the Minnesota Power DC \pm 250 kV line (on the south side, immediately adjacent to but not overlapping the DC Line ROW).
- During easement acquisition, landowners will be presented with an easement and offer of compensation.
- Information on tree removal, access and construction practices will also be shared during easement acquisition.

Proposed Transmission Structures

- Single pole wood structures, 70-80 feet above ground, will be used in most areas.
- Spaced approximately 350 to 400 feet apart.
- Specialty structures such as 3-pole structures or H-frames may be necessary based on final design to accommodate poor soils or crossing of existing utilities.



Construction Process

- Stake clearing limits and ROW/easement centerline
- Clear trees and vegetation from ROW
- Frame and set structures
- String conductor
- Restore and repair damage



Great River Energy Contacts

Bull Moose 115 kV Project

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Bull Moose 115 kV Project

Energy Environmental Review and Analysis (EERA)

Public Scoping Meeting

October 12, 2015

Backus, Minnesota

EERA Staff Contact Information

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What is EERA?

Energy Environmental Review and Analysis (EERA) provides technical expertise and assistance to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission, and conducts environmental review.

- When preparing environmental review documents, EERA performs related tasks, including conducting scoping meetings, managing public comment periods, and other duties.
- EERA and the Commission work cooperatively; however, each has a distinct role and functions independently as outlined by law and mutual agreement.
- EERA does not work for the applicant.

Environmental Review: Goals and Process

- The goal of environmental review is to promote informed decision-making.
 - EERA does not advocate for or against a project.
- Public Information and Scoping Meeting(s)
 - Public Comment Period
 - Scoping Decision
 - Preparation of an Environmental Assessment (EA)

Environmental Review: Scoping

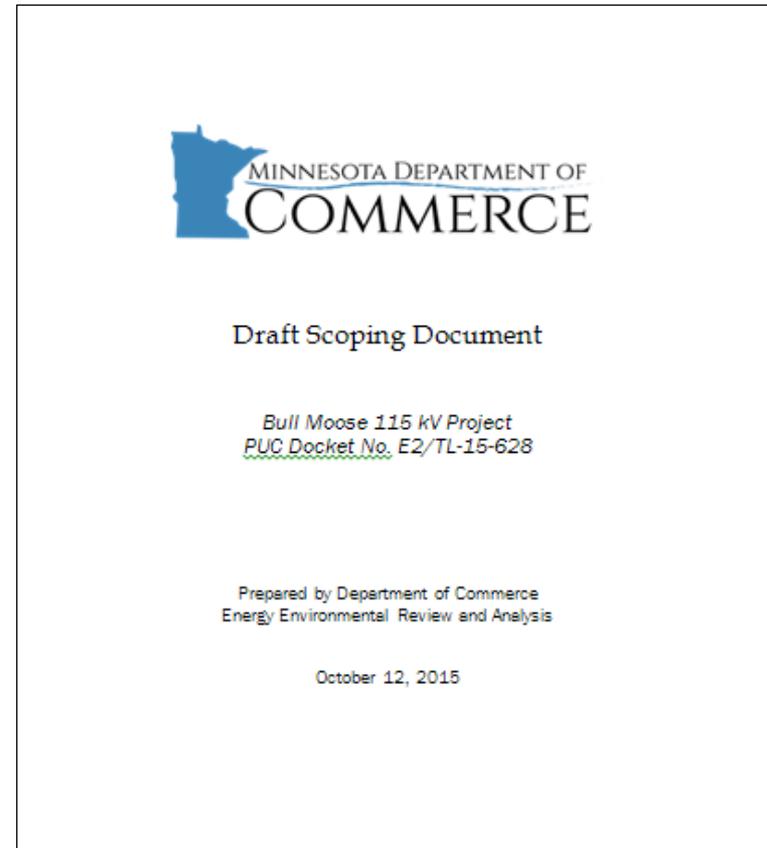
Scoping is an opportunity for agencies, tribes, local governments and the public to participate in the development of the “scope” or content of the EA.

- Scoping answers the question: “What does EERA need to know or analyze?”
 - Specific human or environmental impacts
 - Specific strategies to mitigate impacts
 - Alternative route or route segments
- Scoping consists of a public meeting(s) and comment period.

Draft Scoping Document

An informational document intended to advise the public of the scoping process and to provide a draft “scope” or “contents” for the EA.

- This document is available as a handout at today’s meeting.



Environmental Review: Scoping Decision

After the scoping comment period closes, the Department of Commerce issues a Scoping Decision that identifies:

- Alternative routes or route segments to be addressed in the Environmental Assessment (EA).
- Specific potential impacts to be addressed
- The schedule for completion of the EA
- Other matters to be included in the EA
- Matters to be excluded from the EA

Environmental Review: EA

An EA is a written document that provides the decision-makers and the public with an objective analysis describing the human and environmental impacts and potential mitigative measures associated with the proposed project and selected alternative routes.

Environmental Review: EA

An EA must contain the following information:

- A **general description** of the proposed project
- A list of any **alternative routes** to be addressed
- A discussion of **potential impacts** on the human and natural environment
- A discussion of **mitigative measures** to eliminate or minimize adverse impacts
- An analysis of the **feasibility** of each alternative
- A list of **required permits**
- A discussion of **other matters** identified during scoping

Commenting

Public and agency comments help to focus the scope (or content) of the EA.

- What about the proposed project and proposed route location should be studied?
 - Specific human or environmental impacts
 - Specific strategies to mitigate (avoid, minimize or mitigate) impacts
 - Alternative route or route segments

Suggesting an Alternative Route

Alternative Routes must:

- Be specific and identifiable
- Mitigate a specific impact
- Meet the need for the project
- Be submitted on time
- Be feasible

Suggestions need to explain why an alternative should be included in the EA, and include all supporting information the person wants the Department to consider. Include a map.



MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF
COMMERCE

HOW TO SUGGEST ALTERNATIVE POWER PLANT SITES OR TRANSMISSION LINE ROUTES

This fact sheet will help you suggest an alternative power plant site or transmission line route. It explains the permitting process, how to fully and clearly describe an alternative, and the evaluation criteria.

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) permits certain power plants and transmission lines. During the permitting process, persons can suggest an alternative power plant site(s) or transmission line route(s) to be evaluated as part of the environmental review process associated with the project.

Suggested alternatives are not carried forward automatically. Only those alternatives that mitigate impacts and will assist the Commission in making its decision are carried forward in the permitting process. This decision is informed by Department of Commerce (Commerce) Energy Environmental Review and Analysis (EERA) staff, and ultimately made by the commissioner of Commerce. **To be considered, alternatives must meet five criteria.**

An alternative must be accompanied by a detailed explanation why it should be carried forward in the permitting process. This is the first criteria. Explanations must:

- Describe an anticipated impact;
- Suggest an alternative site or route; and
- Discuss how the alternative mitigates an anticipated impact.

Alternatives must meet four additional criteria. Suggestions must be:

- Submitted during the public scoping period;
- Located outside certain prohibited areas;
- Able to meet the applicant's stated need for the project; and
- Feasible.

Permitting Overview

Certain power plants and transmission lines require a permit from the Commission. A site permit is needed for a power plant. A route permit is needed for a transmission line. Sometimes a project might need both permits, for example, an applicant might propose to build both a power plant and transmission line. These permits identify the specific location(s) a power plant or transmission line can be built and required mitigation measures.

The permitting process begins when a utility or energy developer submits an application to the Commission. After the Commission accepts an application, EERA staff conducts environmental review to identify and discuss potential impacts and mitigation measures associated with the proposed project. The first step in this process is a public scoping meeting(s). These meetings help inform the scope or content of the environmental review document. Suggesting a site or route alternative is a part of the scoping process.

Once the environmental review document is complete, additional public involvement occurs so that persons can provide comments on the document itself and advocate for a particular site or route. A record is developed that includes, among other documents, procedural notices, public and agency comments, and the environmental review document. The Commission reviews the record and makes a permit decision.

Energy Environmental Review and Analysis Page | 1

Example: Re-Align with County Road



How and When to Comment

- *Comment period closes October 26, 2015*
- Provide verbal comments at today's meeting
- Submit a comment form to EERA staff at today's meeting
- Mail a comment form (remembering to affix postage)
- Mail comments in a separate envelope to the address on the comment form or in this presentation
- Fax comments to EERA staff at: (651) 539-0109
- Email comments to EERA staff at: andrew.levi@state.mn.us
- Use the online comment form at:
<http://mn.gov/commerce/energyfacilities/#comment>

Commenting at Today's Meeting

- One speaker at a time. The court reporter cannot take comments from the audience.
- Maintain respect for others.
- To begin, state and spell your name.
- Direct your comments and questions to the scope of the EA.
- Please limit your comments to five minutes. If there is additional time at the end of the meeting we will come back to you.
- ***Remember: Comments are due October 26***