
DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENT

MINNKOTA POWER COOPERATIVE MPL-LAPORTE 115 kV HVTL PROJECT PUC DOCKET No. ET6/TL-16-327

Prepared by the Staff of the Energy Environmental Review & Analysis

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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 June 6, 2016, Minnkota Power Cooperative, Inc. (Minnkota) filed a route permit application¹ (RPA) under the alternative permitting process in Minnesota Rule 7850.2800-3900 to construct approximately 9.4 miles of new 115 kilovolt (kV) transmission and a new 115/4.16 kV substation (Project) in Clearwater and Hubbard counties. On June 7, 2016, the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) issued a notice² soliciting comments on the completeness of the RPA.

The docket number for this route permit proceedings is ET6/TL-16-327. The Route Permit Application (RPA) was accepted as complete by the Commission in its regularly scheduled meeting on July 29, 2016.

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 voltage of the new transmission line will be between 100 and 200 kV, so the project qualifies for the Commission's alternative permitting process (Minnesota Rule 7850.2800, subp. 1C).

Route permit applications for HVTLs must provide specific information about the proposed project including, but not limited to, applicant information, route description, and potential environmental impacts and mitigation measures (Minnesota Rule 7850.3100). Review under the alternative permitting process does not require the applicant to propose alternative routes in the permit application. However, if the applicant has evaluated and rejected alternative routes they must include these and the reasons for rejecting them in the route permit application.

The Commission may accept an application as complete, reject it and require additional information to be submitted, or accept it as complete upon filing of supplemental information (Minnesota Rule 7850.2000). The environmental review and permitting process begins on the date the Commission determines that a

¹ Application for a Route Permit" (Application) Minnkota Cooperative Power, Inc., June 6, 2016, eDocket no. 20166-121952-01, -02, -03, -04

² Notice of Comment Period on Completeness, Commission, June 7, 2016, eDocket no. 20166-122060-01, -02

route permit application is complete. The Commission has six months from the date of this determination to reach a route permit decision; though the decision can be extended for three months for cause, or with the Applicant's agreement (Minnesota Rule 7850.3900).

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=34468>

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 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

Project Purpose

The proposed project will provide electrical service to a proposed new pumping station to be constructed and operated by Minnesota Pipeline Company, LLC. The Project does not require a Certificate of Need by length or capacity for a large energy facility as defined in Minnesota Statute 216B.2421.

Project Description

The proposed Project includes construction of a new 9.4-mile long 115 kV electric transmission line and a new 115/4.16 kV substation. The route originates in Section 12 of Township 144N, Range 36W in Itasca Township. The proposed HVTL extends west from the existing line and then south, adjacent to existing roadway right-of-way (ROW) along 281st Avenue for approximately 3.7 miles. The HVTL then turns east and southeast and cuts cross-country until it reaches State Highway 200. The HVTL continues southeast adjacent to State Highway 200 and crosses the county line. Just after entering Hubbard County, the line turns east and is located adjacent to 400th Street for approximately 1.7 miles. The HVTL turns south at 115th Avenue and continues south adjacent to existing roadway ROW for approximately 2.0 miles before turning west for approximately 2,350 feet adjacent to County Road 95. The HVTL then turns south, crossing County Road 95 and entering the new Substation site in Section 17 of Township 143N, Range 35W.

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.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND SCOPING MEETINGS

**Tuesday, August 30, 2016
6:00pm**

**Park Rapids Library
210 First Street SW
Park Rapids, MN 56470**

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 **Tuesday, September 13, 2016**. 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 Minnkota Power 115 kV HVTL Permit application will be completed by January 31, 2017.

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.