



STATE OF MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

January 16, 2015

Carole L. Schmidt
Great River Energy
12300 Elm Creek Boulevard
Maple Grove, MN 55369-4718

Jennifer Buckentine
Stearns County Environmental Services
Administration Center Room 343
705 Courthouse Square
St. Cloud, MN 56303

RE: Local Review of Great River Energy's St. Stephens Substation and Transmission Line
Upgrade in Stearns County, Minnesota
Docket No. ET-2/TL-15-42

Dear Ms. Schmidt and Ms. Buckentine:

This letter confirms that the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) has received Great River Energy's (GRE) letter dated January 13, 2015, indicating that it has elected to pursue local review approval to convert the St. Stephens distribution substation to 115 kV and rebuild approximately 1.25 miles of 69 kilovolt (kV) transmission line to 115 kV near the city of St. Stephens, Stearns County, Minnesota.

Under the Minnesota Statutes Chapter 216E, a route permit from the Commission is required for most high-voltage transmission lines that are greater than 100 kV. However, certain projects may be eligible for review and permitting by local units of government with jurisdiction instead of filing with the Commission. The transmission line and substation upgrade proposed by GRE is eligible for local review under Minn. Stat. § 216E.05.

GRE has indicated that Stearns County is the local government unit with jurisdiction to conduct environmental review and permit the proposed project.

Under Minn. Stat. § 216E.05, subd. 1(b), a local unit of government may relinquish its jurisdiction by requesting the Commission to assume jurisdiction and make a decision on the permit. The request must be filed within 60 days after an application for the proposed project has been filed. A conditional use permit application for the project was filed with Stearns County on January 5, 2015.

Under Minn. R. 7850.5300, subp. 5, an environmental assessment must be prepared by the local unit of government with jurisdiction over the project. Specific requirements with regard to the environmental review process include providing an opportunity for the public to participate in the development of the scope of the environmental assessment before it is prepared; publishing notice in the *EQB Monitor* of when the assessment is available for review and of the procedure for commenting on the assessment; and withholding a final decision on the project until at least 10 days after the notice appears in the *EQB Monitor*. A copy of the environmental assessment must be provided to the Commission upon completion. The environmental assessment may be filed using the Commission's electronic filing system (<https://www.edockets.state.mn.us/EFiling>).

This letter acknowledges that GRE has also sent the required notice under Minn. R. 7850.5300, subp. 3, to those persons on the Commission's general notification list that a permit has been applied for from the local unit of government.

If you have any questions, please direct them to Scott Ek of the Commission staff at 651-201-2255 or scott.ek@state.mn.us.

Sincerely,

Daniel P. Wolf
Executive Secretary