



**In the Matter of the Application for a Route
Permit for the Yankee Substation to Brookings
County Substation #2 115 kV High Voltage
Transmission Line**

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
SCOPING DECISION
PUC Docket No. E002/TL-07-1626**

The above matter has come before the Director of the Office of Energy Security for a decision on the scope of the Environmental Assessment to be prepared on the proposed Xcel Energy, Yankee Substation to Brookings County Substation #2 115 kV High Voltage Transmission Line Project.

Xcel Energy proposes to construct an approximate 13-mile 115 kV transmission line in Lincoln County, Minnesota, and Brookings County, South Dakota, to provide a second 115 kV connection between the Yankee Substation and the Brookings County Substation. Approximately 6.5 miles of the line will be located in Minnesota. The project also includes necessary modifications to both substations. The line is one of three 115 kV transmission line projects in the area that together will improve the overall system's general reliability and capability to support future wind generation development in southwestern Minnesota and eastern South Dakota.

Xcel filed an Application for a Route Permit with the Public Utilities Commission for the proposed High Voltage Transmission Line Project on January 18, 2008. The Public Utilities Commission accepted the application.

The Office of Energy Security, Energy Facility Permitting staff held a public information and Environmental Assessment scoping meeting on March 3, 2008, at the Midwest Center for Wind Energy in Hendricks, Minnesota, to discuss the project with the public and gather public input into the scope of the Environmental Assessment to be prepared. Approximately 16 people attended the meeting. The public was given until March 14, 2008, to submit written and/or email comments. The Office of Energy Security received a total of two comment letters that were reviewed and considered during preparation of the scoping decision.

Having reviewed the matter, consulted with the Energy Facility Permitting staff, and in accordance with Minnesota Rule 7849.5700, I hereby make the following Scoping Decision:

MATTERS TO BE ADDRESSED

The Environmental Assessment on the Yankee Substation to Brookings County Substation #2 115 kV High Voltage Transmission Line Project will address and provide information on the following matters:

A. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

1. Purpose of the Transmission Line
2. Project Location and Environmental Setting

3. Engineering and Operation Design
 - a. Transmission Line and Structures
 - b. Transmission Capacity
 - c. Construction Procedures
 - d. Right of Way Maintenance

B. IMPACTS AND MITIGATIVE MEASURES

1. Human Settlement
2. Public Health and Safety (including electromagnetic fields [EMF], and safety codes)
3. Noise
4. Aesthetics
5. Recreation
6. Transportation
7. Soils and Geology
8. Land Use
9. Archaeological and Historic Features
10. Air Quality Resources
11. Surface Water Resources
12. Wetlands
13. Flora
14. Fauna
15. Rare and Unique Natural Resources
16. Radio, Television, and Cellular Phone Interference

C. ALTERNATIVES TO BE ADDRESSED IN THE EA

The Environmental Assessment will address impacts and mitigation of Xcel Energy's proposed route, including both the east and west sides of 110th Avenue which are within the proposed route, as recommended in a comment letter submitted by Mr. Theodore Schwing (a landowner along the proposed route).

D. IDENTIFICATION OF PERMITS

The Environmental Assessment will include a list of permits that will be required for construction of this project.

ISSUES OUTSIDE THE SCOPE OF THE EA

The Environmental Assessment will not consider the following:

1. The manner in which land owners are paid for transmission rights of way easements, as that is outside the jurisdiction of Public Utilities Commission.
2. Alternatives not described specifically in this Scoping Decision.
3. Whether a different size or different type of transmission line should be built.
4. The no-build option regarding the High Voltage Transmission Line or routes other than those noted herein.
5. The impacts of specific energy sources, such as carbon outputs from coal-generated facilities or environmental impacts from a wind generation installation.

SCHEDULE

The Environmental Assessment shall be completed and available in May 2008. A public hearing will be held in the city of Hendicks area after the Environmental Assessment has been issued and notice served.

Signed this 27 day of March, 2008

STATE OF MINNESOTA
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
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