



STATE OF MINNESOTA
Office of Energy Security



Issued: July 22, 2008

NOTICE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETINGS

**In the Matter of a Route Permit Application and
Certificate of Need Application for the
Bemidji – Grand Rapids 230 Kilovolt Transmission Line**

**PUC Docket Number: TL-07-1327 (Route Permit)
PUC Docket Number: CN-07-1222(Certificate of Need)**

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the Minnesota Department of Commerce, Office of Energy Security (OES) and United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Utilities Service (RUS) will conduct public information and environmental impact statement scoping meetings at the locations listed below on an application by Otter Tail Power Company, Minnesota Power, and Minnkota Power Cooperative, Inc., to construct a 230 kilovolt (kV) transmission line from Bemidji to Grand Rapids, Minnesota. The purpose of the meeting is to provide information to the public about the proposed transmission line and to identify issues and alternatives to study in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) evaluating the proposal.

Date	Time		Location
	Daytime	Evening	
Monday 8/11/08		Open House 5-6pm Scoping Meeting at 6 pm	Blackduck Senior Center 24 1st Street SE Blackduck, MN 56630
Tuesday 8/12/08		Open House 5-6pm Scoping Meeting at 6 pm	Cass Lake Palace Casino & Hotel 16599 69th Avenue NW Cass Lake, MN 56633
Wednesday 8/13/08		Open House 5-6pm Scoping Meeting at 6 pm	Deer River Morse Town Hall 32775 State Hwy 46 Deer River, MN 56636
Thursday 08/14/08	Open House 1-2pm Scoping Meeting at 2 pm	Open House 5-6pm Scoping Meeting at 6 pm	Bemidji Hampton Inn & Suites 1019 Paul Bunyan Drive South Bemidji, MN 56601
Friday 08/15/08	Open House 9-10am Scoping Meeting at 10 am		Walker Hiawatha Beach Resort 10904 Steamboat Loop NW Walker, MN 56484

The public is invited to review the route permit application and certificate of need application, learn more about the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (PUC) permitting process, and ask questions. The public is also invited to learn more about the federal approvals and review for the proposed project. The first hour of each meeting will be an open house. Presentations on the state and federal review processes and the proposed project will begin at the start of the second hour, followed by an opportunity for public comment. Representatives from the OES, RUS and the applicants will be available for both the open house and presentation portion of the meetings to answer questions about the permitting process, federal review and approvals, and the proposed project. Members of the public will have an opportunity to ask questions, present comments, and propose issues, alternatives, and specific impacts to be addressed in the EIS.

The OES will accept written comments on the scope of the EIS until **August 29, 2008**. Comments should be mailed or e-mailed to:

Suzanne Steinhauer
Project Manager
Minnesota Department of Commerce
85 7th Place East, Suite 500
Saint Paul, Minnesota, 55101-2198
Fax: 651-297-7891
suzanne.steinhauer@state.mn.us

Project Description

Otter Tail Power Company, Minnesota Power, and Minnkota Power Cooperative, Inc (the Applicants), propose to construct a 68 mile, 230 kV transmission line from the Wilton Substation, just west of Bemidji, Minnesota, to the Boswell Substation in Cohasset, Minnesota, just northwest of Grand Rapids, Minnesota. The proposed routes for the transmission line primarily follow existing rights-of-way and cross sections of Beltrami, Hubbard, Cass and Itasca counties. Construction of the transmission line is proposed to begin in 2009 and be completed by the end of 2011.

Regulatory Review Process

Route Permit

High voltage transmission lines constructed in Minnesota require a route permit from the PUC. The route permitting process is governed by Minnesota Rules 7849.5010 – 7849.6500. As part of this permitting process, OES prepares an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The EIS contains information on the human and environmental impacts of the proposed project and addresses mitigating measures for anticipated impacts. To focus the content or “scope” of the EIS, the OES conducts public meetings to gather comments and questions on the proposed project.

The Applicants applied for a route permit for the proposed transmission line on June 4, 2008. On June 26, 2008, the PUC accepted the application as complete.

Certificate of Need

Large energy facilities constructed in Minnesota require a certificate of need from the PUC. The certificate of need process is governed by Minnesota Rules 7849.0010 – 7849.0400. The certificate of need process is the only proceeding in which a no-build alternative and the size, type, timing, system configuration, and voltage of a proposed project will be considered.

The OES prepares an Environmental Report (ER) on proposed large energy facilities that come before the PUC for a determination of need. The ER analyzes the human and environmental impacts of the proposed

project and project alternatives, and addresses mitigating measures for anticipated adverse impacts. To focus the content or “scope” of the ER, the OES conducts public meetings to gather comments, questions, and alternatives to the proposed project.

The proposed Bemidji – Grand Rapids transmission line qualifies as a large energy facility (Minn. Stat. 216B.2421). The Applicants applied for a certificate of need for the proposed transmission line on March 17, 2008. On June 26, 2008, the PUC accepted the application as complete.

Federal Environmental Review

In addition to state review, the proposed transmission line is subject to federal environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Prior to making a decision about whether to provide financial assistance for a proposal, the RUS is required to conduct an environmental review under NEPA in accordance with Agency policies and procedures codified in 7 CFR Part 1794. These regulations require the Agency to consider engineering alternatives including no action, load management, conservation measures, and reactive power supply and transmission line macro-corridor alternatives.

RUS, serving as the lead federal agency, in cooperation with other federal agencies, must prepare a federal EIS for the project and, prior to preparation, must conduct public meetings to determine the scope of the EIS. The U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the U.S. Bureau for Indian Affairs will participate as Cooperating Agencies. The Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe has been invited to participate as a Cooperating Agency.

Coordinated Review Process

Pursuant to Minnesota Rule 7849.7100, the OES will conduct a coordinated scoping and environmental review process for the Applicant’s route permit and certificate of need applications. OES will scope and develop one environmental document, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), for the project.

Additionally, the Minnesota Department of Commerce and RUS have entered into a memorandum of understanding to prepare a joint EIS for the proposed project. OES has primary responsibility for managing preparation of the EIS and will coordinate with RUS and other federal agencies to ensure that the EIS developed for this project meets both state and federal environmental review requirements.

RUS and OES, in consultation with the cooperating agencies, will determine the scope of the EIS based on input from the public scoping meetings and research studies, including the *Alternatives Evaluation Study* and the *Macro-Corridor Study* prepared for the RUS. Notices announcing the availability of the Draft EIS will be published in the *Federal Register* and local newspapers.

Upon completion of the EIS, public hearings will be held. Members of the public will have an opportunity to speak at the hearings, present evidence, ask questions, and submit comments. The hearing for the route permit application will be a contested case hearing presided over by an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ). The ALJ will issue a report containing findings, conclusions, and a recommendation on whether the PUC should issue a route permit for the proposed transmission line.

Eminent Domain

If issued a route permit by the PUC, the Applicants may exercise the power of eminent domain to acquire land for this project pursuant to Minnesota Statute 216E.12.

Project Contacts and Mailing Lists

Public advisors from the OES and the PUC have been appointed to assist persons interested in taking part in the permitting process. For more information, contact one of the persons listed below:

Department of Commerce, Office of Energy Security

The OES has designated Suzanne Steinhauer (651-296-2888, suzanne.steinhauer@state.mn.us) as project manager and Ray Kirsch (651-296-7588, raymond.kirsch@state.mn.us) as public advisor for the route permit proceedings. You may contact them at: Department of Commerce, Office of Energy Security, 85 7th Place East, Suite 500, St. Paul, MN 55101-2198. Additional contact information: Toll-Free: 1-800-657-3794, Fax: 651-297-7891, or TTY Minnesota Relay Service: 1-800-627-3529 (ask for the DOC).

Public Utilities Commission

The PUC has designated staff member Bret Eknes (651-201-2257, Fax: 651-297-7073, bret.eknes@state.mn.us) as public advisor for the certificate of need proceedings. Mr. Eknes may be contacted in writing at: Minnesota Public Utilities Commission, 121 7th Place E., Suite 350, St. Paul, MN 55101-2147.

Otter Tail Power Company (Applicants)

Information about this project is available from Otter Tail Power Company. You can direct questions to project manager Al Koeckeritz (218-739-8416, akoeckeritz@otpc.com). Mr. Koeckeritz may be contacted in writing at: Otter Tail Power Company, PO Box 496, Fergus Falls, MN 56538-0496.

Rural Utility Services

For further information about the federal review process, contact Barbara Britton, Environmental Protection Specialist, USDA Rural Development Utilities Programs, at 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Stop 1571, Washington DC 20250-1571, telephone 202-720-1414, fax: 202-690-0629, email Barbara.Britton@wdc.usda.gov

Project Mailing Lists

If you would like to have your name added to the OES project mailing list for this project, you may register on line at: <http://energyfacilities.puc.state.mn.us/Docket.html?Id=19344> or contact OES staff at the address above.

The PUC maintains a separate service list for certificate of need proceedings. To be placed on the list for this project, mail, fax or email Robin Benson at: Minnesota Public Utilities Commission, 121 7th Place E., Suite 350, St. Paul, MN 55101-2147, Fax: 651-297-7073, robin.benson@state.mn.us.

Information Availability

Copies of the route permit application and certificate of need application are available at:

- www.capx2020.com (Home > Regulatory > State > Minnesota)
- <http://energyfacilities.puc.state.mn.us/resource.html?Id=19631>

The *Alternatives Evaluation Study* and the *Macro-Corridor Study* prepared for the project can be obtained from the RUS website at: <http://www.usda.gov/rus/water/ees/environ.htm> or by contacting Bob Lindholm of Minnesota Power at (888) 373-4113, bemidjiinfo@capx2020.com.

All of these documents may also be viewed at the public libraries listed below:

Bemidji Public Library
 509 America Ave. N.W.
 Bemidji, MN 56601

Margaret Welch Memorial Library
 5051 State 84
 Longville, MN 56655

Cass Lake Community Library
 223 Cedar Ave NW
 Cass Lake, MN 56633

Walker Public Library
 207 4th St.
 Walker, MN 56484

Grand Rapids Area Library
 140 NE 2nd Street
 Grand Rapids, MN 55744

Bovey Public Library
 Village Hall
 402 2nd Street
 Bovey, MN 55709-0130

Blackduck Community Library
 72 First St. SE
 Blackduck, MN 56630

Coleraine Public Library
 Independent Building
 203 Cole Avenue
 Coleraine, MN 55722-0225

