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CapX2020 receives Route Permit approval for Fargo-St. Cloud project

MN PUC grants fourth CapX2020 Route Permit

Minneapolis—June 10, 2011—The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission voted unanimously to grant a Route Permit for a 345 kilovolt (kV) electric transmission line between the North Dakota border and St. Cloud, Minn. The line will connect at the Quarry Substation near St. Cloud to the CapX2020 Monticello-St. Cloud project currently under construction. The project will alleviate electric reliability concerns in the St. Cloud, Alexandria and Red River Valley areas, as well as meet the region’s projected electric growth and provide an outlet for new generation, including renewable energy.

The Commission approved a route that generally follows Interstate 94 from the North Dakota border near Fargo to the Alexandria Switching Station. From Alexandria, the line will continue east mostly along Interstate 94 to Sauk Centre where it heads south along county and township roads near Albany, Colledgeville and St. Joseph to the new Quarry Substation west of St. Cloud.

“The state’s regulatory review process is comprehensive and inclusive, and actively solicits and encourages input from local landowners and other stakeholders,” said Darrin Lahr, project routing lead. “The approved route features a combination of the CapX2020 utilities’ modified preferred route, as well as route options that were suggested by local stakeholders during the regulatory process.”

The CapX2020 utilities began engaging the public in 2007, hosting several rounds of open houses and routing work group meetings where landowners and local officials could learn about the project and provide information on land use considerations in the project area, such as agricultural impacts, local development plans, proximity to homes and environmental concerns.

“Thousands of landowners, local and state officials participated in this important process, and we are very appreciative of their efforts and input,” said Lahr.

Construction is expected to begin in late 2011. The 28-mile Monticello-St. Cloud project is scheduled for completion in December 2011. The Fargo-St. Cloud project, including a North Dakota segment, will be energized in 2015.

Comprehensive state review process

The state review process began in 2009 when the Route Permit application was filed with the Commission; it included an Environmental Impact Statement developed by the Minnesota Office of Energy Security (now called the Division of Energy Resources). This process included public meetings and hearings presided over by an administrative law judge. The state process also convened citizen advisory task forces for local governments and stakeholders to provide an additional level of review.

While the Commission voted today to approve the Route Permit, a full written order detailing the decision will be published in the coming weeks. It will be posted to the Commission's website at www.puc.state.mn.us when available (search for eDocket 09-1056).

CapX2020 project permits

The Commission unanimously granted a Certificate of Need for the 345 kV projects in 2009 following a rigorous state review process. The 230 kV line in north central Minnesota was granted a Certificate of Need in mid-2009. Route Permit applications were granted for the Brookings County-Hampton and Monticello-St. Cloud projects in 2009 and 2010, respectively, as well as for the Bemidji-Grand Rapids project in 2010. The Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse project Route Permit is pending and is expected to be determined in 2012.

About CapX2020

CapX2020 is a joint initiative of 11 investor-owned, cooperative and municipal utilities in Minnesota and the surrounding region to upgrade and expand the electric transmission grid to ensure continued reliable and affordable service. The CapX2020 Group 1 projects include three proposed 345 kV transmission lines and a proposed 230 kV line. It is the largest development of new transmission in the upper Midwest in 30 years. The projects are projected to cost nearly \$2 billion and cover a distance of more than 700 miles. The new infrastructure will provide a foundation for the region's projected electricity growth as well as connect into renewable energy sources in southern and western Minnesota and the Dakotas.