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Monticello-St. Cloud 345-kV transmission line Project update

CapX2020 is a joint initiative of 11 transmission-owning utilities in Minnesota and the surrounding region to expand the electric transmission grid to ensure continued reliable and affordable service. Planning studies show that customer demand for electricity will increase by 4,000 to 6,000 megawatts (MW) by 2020. The new transmission lines will be built in phases designed to meet this increasing demand as well as to support renewable energy expansion. The first group of CapX2020 projects (Group 1) is comprised of three proposed 345-kilovolt (kV) transmission lines, including the Fargo-St. Cloud-Monticello line, and a proposed 230-kV line.

The CapX2020 utilities are committed to working closely with residents, landowners, local and tribal governments, business groups, state agencies and other stakeholders to explain the need for the proposed transmission lines and to determine the most preferable routes.

Project need

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (MN PUC) granted the three CapX2020 345-kilovolt (kV) projects a Certificate of Need on April 16, 2009. The CN process determines the need for the lines as well as their characteristics, such as substations and end-points in Minnesota. To view CN documents, go to the MN PUC's Web site at www.puc.state.mn.us, click on "Search eDockets" and search for docket 06-1115. The MN PUC can also be reached at 1-800-657-3782.

The North Dakota regulatory process requires a Letter of Intent be submitted, followed by three applications - a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity, a Certificate of Corridor Compatibility, and a Route Permit. The CapX2020 utilities expect to file the applications with the North Dakota Public Service Commission (ND PSC) in 2010. Visit the ND PSC's Web site at www.psc.state.nd.us or call (701) 328-2400 for more information.

Routing process

Siting a transmission line is a three-phase process that involves mapping resources, identifying opportunities and constraints within the project study area, and evaluating each alternative. A recommended route and alternatives will be

identified based on a series of project-specific siting criteria, which typically includes the following:

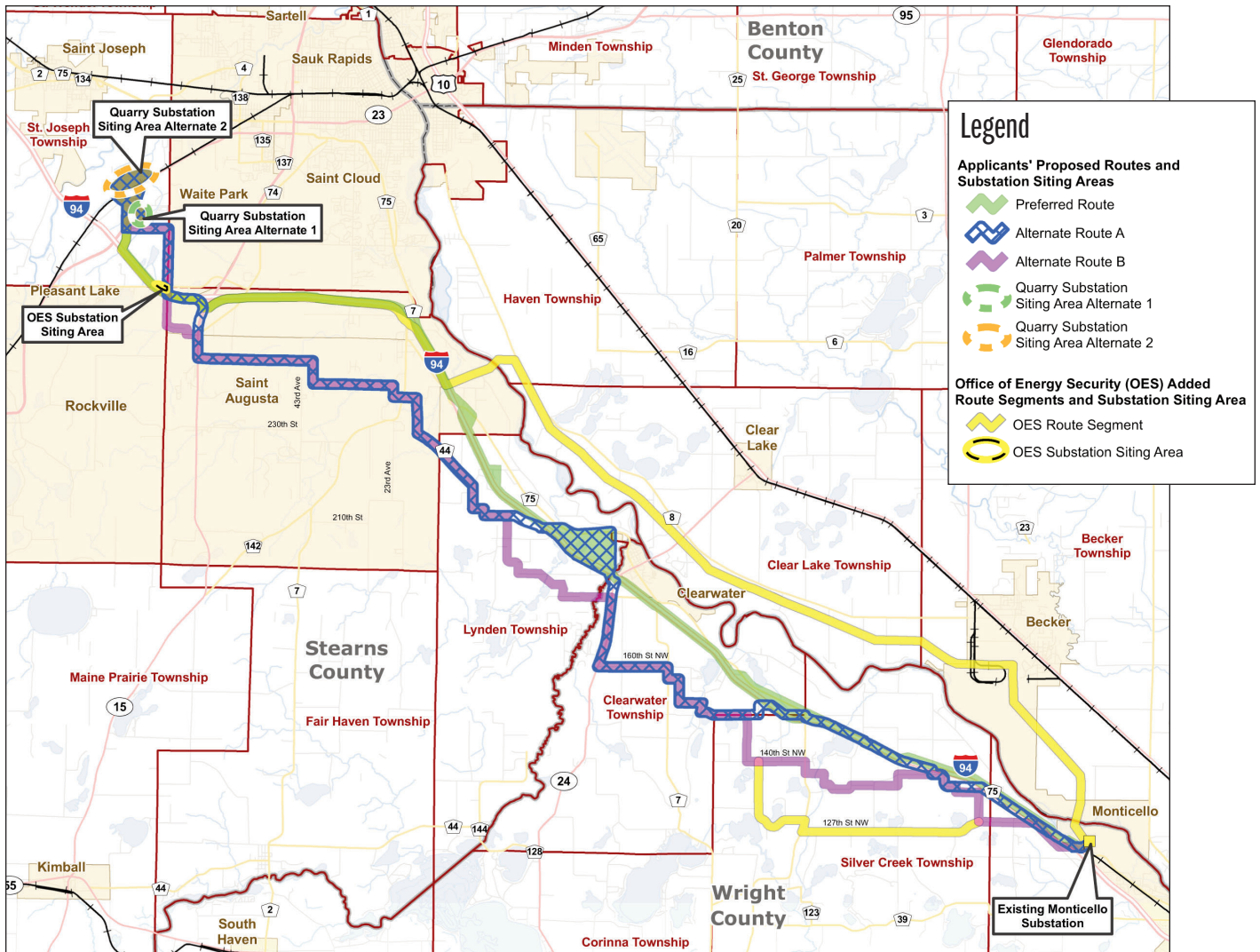
- Transmission line length
- Right-of-way requirements and availability
- Existing road and transmission line corridors
- Land use considerations, such as proximity to residences, impact on agricultural activities, existing and future land use and visual impacts
- Environmental resource considerations, such as impacts on cultural and historic sites, or biological resources, such as wildlife, plants and wetlands
- Topography
- Jurisdiction and regulatory considerations
- Conflicts with airport height restrictions
- Cost

In Minnesota, a Route Permit application proposing two route options must be filed with the MN PUC. The CapX2020 utilities submitted a Route Permit application for the Monticello-St. Cloud transmission line on April 8, 2009 (docket ET-2, E002/TL-09-246) and another for the Fargo-St. Cloud transmission line on October 1, 2009 (docket ET-2, E002/TL-09-1056). The MN PUC and ND PSC determine the transmission line's final route, taking into consideration recommendations from all participating parties and landowners, complying with federal agency reviews, and following a comprehensive process that includes public meetings and hearings examining route alternatives.

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Monticello-St. Cloud proposed route options



The preferred and alternate routes detailed in this map have been filed in a Minnesota Route Permit application. Areas outside these routes are not exempt from further analysis during the state regulatory process.

The Minnesota Office of Energy Security (OES) issued its Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) scoping decision on October 9, 2009 for the project. The OES received numerous comments and route alternatives during the scoping period in summer 2009. The map above includes the route options filed by the CapX2020 utilities as well as the two route segments included by the OES (in yellow) for study in the project's EIS. Public meetings on the draft EIS will be scheduled for early 2010.

Federal approval

Before the lines can be built, permits and approvals are also required from several federal agencies, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Federal agencies will conduct environmental reviews to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act. The MN PUC, the ND PSC and participating federal agencies will work together to coordinate their processes.

Public information and outreach

There are many opportunities for public comment throughout the project schedule and permitting process. Early input is encouraged to help the project team minimize potential impacts in the project area. For more information on the dates and locations of upcoming meetings, visit www.CapX2020.com.

Project contacts

Project development manager – Xcel Energy
Darrin Lahr, routing lead
Jerry Chezik, project manager
 PO Box 9451
 Minneapolis, MN 55440-9451
 1-866-876-2869
fargoinfo@capx2020.com