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## **CapX2020 Bemidji-Grand Rapids project receives route approval**

*MN PUC granted Route Permit for 230-kilovolt transmission line project*

Minneapolis—October 28, 2010—The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (PUC) granted a Route Permit for a 230-kilovolt line between the Wilton Substation near Bemidji and the Boswell Substation near Grand Rapids. The line is the third CapX2020 project to receive route approval.

By a unanimous vote the PUC approved a route that follows existing pipelines on the west and east ends of the approximately 68-mile line and follows U.S. Highway 2 from Cass Lake to Ball Club. The project utilities expect to begin construction in January 2011, and the line is to be complete by late 2012.

“Landowners, the interested public, and state and local government officials were given numerous opportunities to express their opinions and concerns during the thorough state and federal proceedings followed to permit this line,” said Al Koeckeritz, project manager.

“Environmental, cultural, landowner, and consumer cost interests were all well represented in the process that led to today’s decision.”

These interests were the focus of several rounds of open houses and routing work group meetings during which landowners and local officials had opportunities to learn about the project and provide information on land-use considerations in the project area. Proximity to homes and existing pipelines, environmental issues, and local development plans were the primary issues discussed at these meetings.

“On behalf of the project team, I’d like to thank the hundreds of landowners, local officials, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe officials and members, and other stakeholders who took time to participate in the process,” said Koeckeritz.

### **Comprehensive state review process**

The state review process began in June 2008 when three utilities—Otter Tail Power Company, Minnkota Power Cooperative, and Minnesota Power—filed a Route Permit application on behalf of themselves, as well as Xcel Energy and Great River Energy. During the permitting process the Minnesota Office of Energy Security (OES) worked with several federal agencies, led by the United States Department of Agriculture’s Rural Utilities Services and including the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, and Army Corps of Engineers. Together these agencies

developed an Environmental Impact Statement that was reviewed through public comments, meetings, and hearings presided over by Administrative Law Judge Eric Lipman from the state's Office of Administrative Hearings. The OES also convened Citizen Advisory Task Force meetings for local governments and stakeholders to provide an additional level of review.

While the PUC voted to approve the Route Permit, a full written order detailing the decision will be published in the coming weeks. It will be posted on the PUC website at [www.puc.state.mn.us](http://www.puc.state.mn.us) when available (search for eDocket 07-1327).

### **Certificate of Need granted in July 2009**

The PUC unanimously granted a Certificate of Need for this 230-kV line in 2009 independent of the other three CapX2020 Group 1 projects, which are all 345-kV lines. Two Route Permits have been granted to other CapX2020 projects and two more are pending. Constructing the Group 1 projects is expected to continue through 2015.

### **About CapX2020**

CapX2020 is a joint initiative of 11 transmission-owning 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 project effort is the largest development of new transmission in the Upper Midwest in 30 years. This effort is 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 electric growth as well as connect with renewable energy sources in southern and western Minnesota and the Dakotas.

Along with Minnesota-based utilities Otter Tail Power Company (Fergus Falls) and Minnesota Power (Duluth), as well as Minnkota Power Cooperative (Grand Forks, North Dakota), other Minnesota utilities that expect to participate in one or more of the CapX2020 projects are Xcel Energy (Minneapolis), Great River Energy (Maple Grove), Central Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (Blue Earth), and Rochester Public Utilities and Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (Rochester). Wisconsin utilities include Dairyland Power Cooperative (La Crosse) and WPPI Energy (Sun Prairie). Missouri River Energy (Sioux Falls, South Dakota) also expects to participate in a CapX2020 project.