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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CapX2020 transmission line will help create electric super highway to the east

South Dakota officials welcome the start of construction at groundbreaking ceremony

CLEAR LAKE, SOUTH DAKOTA — Sept. 14, 2015 — The Big Stone South-Brookings County 345-kilovolt (kV) transmission line project kicked off construction today during an event near Clear Lake. Once complete, the line will run between a new Big Stone South Substation near Big Stone City to the existing Brookings County Substation about 10 miles northeast of Brookings. Xcel Energy and Otter Tail Power Company are joint owners of the project that's estimated to cost \$225 million and be in service by fall 2017.

"I commend CapX2020 officials for undertaking the largest development of new transmission in this part of the country in 40 years," said Governor Dennis Daugaard. "The new 345-kilovolt transmission line will go a long way in providing South Dakotans with reliable and affordable electricity."

"Whether you're a farmer, rancher, small business owner, or homeowner, it is essential to have access to affordable energy that is tapped from reliable sources," said Senator John Thune. "This CapX2020 transmission line will help deliver much-needed energy to rural parts of South Dakota and spur continued energy investment in the region by bringing outdated portions of the state's electrical grid into the 21st century. I commend Otter Tail Power Company and Xcel Energy for taking on such a massive project, and I'm glad that I can be in Clear Lake to help mark this occasion."

The project is part of CapX2020, a joint initiative of 11 transmission-owning utilities to upgrade and expand the electric transmission grid to ensure continued reliable and affordable service in South Dakota and the surrounding region, while also expanding access to renewable energy.

"Nearly everything we do depends on electricity – from keeping the lights on to keeping our phone charged," said U.S. Representative Kristi Noem. "More so than ever, it's critical that South Dakota families and businesses have access to reliable and affordable electricity, but with an aging grid system, that could be increasingly difficult. The construction of CapX2020 in South Dakota, however, modernizes a critical section of grid for South Dakota and allows us to better tap into the Midwest's abundant wind energy. I'm honored to be part of today's ceremony, as we usher in the next era of energy for South Dakota and the region."

Big Stone South-Brookings County is one of 16 multi-value projects, approved by the Midcontinent Independent System Operator, Inc. The multi-value projects will help expand and enhance the region's transmission system, reduce congestion, provide access to affordable energy sources, as well as meet public policy requirements.

"The Public Utilities Commission has a significant interest in electricity reliability for South Dakota customers," said Chris Nelson, Chairman, South Dakota Public Utilities Commission. "This project



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enhances the reliability of the grid on the eastern side of our state and opens up new opportunities to generate additional electricity in South Dakota.”

“This transmission system build out will allow reliable and economical delivery of electric energy from all forms of electric generation, even as federal and regional energy policy uncertainty remains,” said Tim Roglestad, president Otter Tail Power Company. “It also will provide significant economic value to South Dakota and the region. This project is a win-win for the public. “

“Electricity customers in South Dakota and the surrounding region will benefit from a more robust and reliable electric transmission grid,” said Teresa Mogensen, senior vice president of transmission for Xcel Energy. “Reliable and affordable electricity is the backbone of a robust economy and vibrant community. “

South Dakota Wind Energy Association Vice President Nick Sershen said that South Dakota has long been at a competitive disadvantage without transmission to get wind power to the market. “This project will open up the vast wind resources in our state to future development.”

Local contractors providing services and materials for the Big Stone South-Brookings County project

CapX2020 officials said more than 100 workers will be on the project at the height of construction including South Dakota-based companies. For example, Clark Engineering Vice President Kevin Goff estimates six to eight employees will provide civil engineering and permit compliance support for the project.

“We are excited to work on a project of this size and importance,” said Goff. “It’s especially satisfying to know the line will help drive economic development in eastern South Dakota where many of our employees call home.”

GCC Ready Mix, with 14 South Dakota plants will provide approximately 33,000 cubic yards of concrete for the project. “Having successfully supplied concrete for the other CapX2020 projects; GCC fully understands the quality and level of service required and looks forward to being part of the team to bring this project to fruition,” said Chad Henrich, District Manager for GCC. “The timing of the project will allow us to keep 20 employees working during a time when we are normally forced to lay-off workers and close some locations for the winter months.”

Visit Capx2020.com for project information and maps.

About CapX2020

CapX2020 is a joint initiative of 11 transmission-owning utilities in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin formed to upgrade and expand the electric transmission grid to ensure continued reliable and affordable service. The projects include four 345-kilovolt transmission lines and a 230-kilovolt line. It is the largest development of new transmission in the upper Midwest in 40 years. The projects are projected to cost nearly \$2 billion and cover a distance of nearly 800 miles.

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Pictured from left to right: Adam Sokolski, Iberdrola Renewables, Chris Nelson, Chairman South Dakota Public Utilities Commission, U.S. Rep. Kristi Noem, U.S. Sen. John Thune, Teresa Mogensen, Xcel Energy, Tim Rogelstad, Otter Tail Power Company, Nick Sershen, SD Wind Energy Association, Laura McCarten, Xcel Energy.

Caption: Speakers stand in front of a rebar cage which will be used to build a foundation on the CapX2020 Big Stone South-Brookings County transmission line.