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Tim Carlsgaard

O: 612-330-7697 | C: 612-201-7538

timothy.s.carlsgaard@xcelenergy.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

More than 150 miles of new transmission line added to the electric grid

\$485 million investment opens up new path for wind and solar energy

HAMPTON, MINN. — Sept. 26, 2016 — Transforming the energy grid was a key theme when CapX2020 partners began studying improvements needed in the region's transmission system more than a decade ago. That transformation was made a reality with the recent completion and energizing of the Hampton-Rochester-LaCrosse 345/161-kilovolt transmission lines, a new 156-mile link that was celebrated by project partners, local officials and renewable energy advocates today.

CapX2020 has now invested \$1.85 billion in completing four high voltage transmission line projects totaling nearly 725 miles across Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin. A fifth project in eastern South Dakota is scheduled for completion in 2017. The transmission infrastructure projects are addressing local reliability needs and opening up new paths for solar and wind energy across the upper Midwest, helping to meet state renewable energy standards, including Minnesota's 25 percent by 2025 mandate (30 percent by 2020 for Xcel Energy).

"The electric grid is more important than ever as society goes through a resource evolution," said Teresa Mogensen, Xcel Energy Senior Vice President of Transmission. "With increasing proportions of variable generation sources like wind and solar reshaping the resource profile, the transmission system is at the center of making it all work together."

"Delivering renewable energy, maintaining reliability and keeping electric costs low are the key benefits of the regional grid," said Priti Patel, Executive Director of MISO's North Region. "We congratulate the CapX2020 partners on the completion of this critical link and its role in providing that value."

"By providing access to the least-cost sources of clean, renewable wind energy, CapX2020 will deliver long-term benefits to customers throughout the region for decades to come," said Chris Kunkle, a regional policy manager at Wind on the Wires.

"We're pleased the line is complete and grateful to our project partners," said Dave Geschwind, SMMPA Executive Director & CEO. "Since the Minnesota portion of the project is double-circuit capable, this investment in reliability and greater access to renewable energy will benefit our members far into the future."

"We are very proud to be part of the CapX2020 project and what it means to the region, and to Rochester," said Mark Kotschevar, Rochester Public Utilities General Manager. "It serves as a wonderful example of what can be accomplished when multiple utilities come together with a common goal. "



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“Dairyland’s cooperative members depend on a reliable, safe transmission system to meet their needs every day,” said Ben Porath, Dairyland Vice President, Power Delivery. “We are proud to share in this vital project that enhances the existing transmission network in western Wisconsin.”

“This line makes it feasible for WPPI Energy to buy more renewable energy for the customers of our member municipal electric utilities,” said Tim Noeldner, WPPI Energy Vice President. “We especially appreciate the work of Xcel Energy as construction manager and all the contractors and sub-contractors who worked so diligently to complete the line, and did so safely.”

The final phase of the Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse project was energized on September 16, 2016. The transmission line runs between the Hampton substation near Hampton, Minn., the North Rochester substation north of Pine Island, Minn., and the Briggs Road Substation north of La Crosse, Wis. and includes three new substations.

The CapX2020 Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse Project is jointly owned by Xcel Energy, Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency, Dairyland Power Cooperative, Rochester Public Utilities and WPPI Energy.

At the dedication event today Xcel Energy officials demonstrated new drone technology that is being tested to inspect transmission lines and other utility infrastructure. Unmanned aerial systems (or drones) have the potential to help utilities more efficiently inspect transmission lines. A team from Flot Systems demonstrated flights today, including the high-definition views the systems can provide.

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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Left-to-right: Mark Kotschevar, Rochester Public Utilities; Dave Geschwind, Southern MN Municipal Power Agency; Teresa Mogensen, Xcel Energy; Chris Kunkle, Wind on the Wires; Ben Porath, Dairyland Power Cooperative; Priti Patel, MISO; Tim Noeldner, WPPI Energy