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Contact:
Randy Fordice
763-445-5713 (office)
612-865-1366 (cell)
rfordice@grenergy.com

CapX2020 files Route Permit application for Brookings County-Hampton Project

12-15 month State of Minnesota process will determine final route

Minneapolis/St. Paul—December 30, 2008—For Immediate Release—The CapX2020 utilities filed a Route Permit application with the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) on December 29 for the proposed Brookings County-Hampton electric transmission line. The docket number assigned to the proceeding is ET2/TL-08-1474.

The filing of a Route Permit application for one of the three proposed CapX2020 345-kilovolt (kV) transmission projects is the next step in an exhaustive and comprehensive process to add reliability to the transmission system in the region, serve local community energy growth needs and allow new generation to connect to the system.

The process began in 2004 with planning studies and included a Certificate of Need filing in August 2007 for three 345-kV transmission lines and a 230-kV proposal, which was filed in March 2008.

“The three proposed CapX2020 345-kV projects will help deliver reliable electricity to Minnesota and the surrounding region for decades to come. Additionally, the Brookings County-Hampton project will provide needed expansion to the electric grid in southwest Minnesota and enable new generation to connect to the system,” said Will Kaul, chairman of CapX2020 and vice president of transmission for Great River Energy. “The effort put into the public process and soliciting public input has been exceptional, and we are proud to have worked so closely with so many people.”

The Brookings County-Hampton Route Permit application contains two separate route options that will be reviewed by the Commission. The application process requires significant review by the Minnesota Department of Commerce, Office of Energy Security (OES) and the Commission on possible route options. The process provides numerous opportunities for public comment and input before the Commission makes a decision.

In developing the route options for the transmission line, the CapX2020 utilities hosted or participated in more than 100 meetings over a 15-month period where landowners, local government representatives, state agencies and other stakeholders along a broad corridor expressed opinions on important criteria to be evaluated during the process. This input was critically important to the utilities in making an informed recommendation on possible routes.

“The two most important criteria we heard from people in suggesting how to choose a route were to keep the line as far away from existing homes as possible and to minimize impact to agriculture operations,” said Craig Poorker, routing team leader for the project. “As a result, the vast majority of our proposals follow roads, existing transmission lines or field and section lines. We are proposing to build single-pole structures. These factors combine to minimize impacts to landowners.”

The public process formally begins when the OES hosts scoping meetings to develop a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Local governments, organizations, landowners and other stakeholders will be able to comment on environmental and routing aspects of the project during the scoping meetings, while the draft EIS is being drafted and again after it is published. The Commission will also schedule public hearings where stakeholders can formally comment on the proposed route options. These comments will be included in the official record. A final decision by the Commission on the route is expected in early 2010.

Additional information on the regulatory process is available at:
http://www.capx2020.com/Images/MN_Regulatory_Process_Fact_sheet.pdf.

The Route Permit's approval is also dependent on the Certificate of Need application being approved. That application is currently under review; a Commission decision is expected in 2009.

About Great River Energy

Great River Energy is a not-for-profit cooperative that provides wholesale electricity to more than 1.7 million people through 28 member distribution cooperatives in Minnesota and Wisconsin. With more than \$2 billion in assets, Great River Energy is the second largest utility in the state, based on generating capacity, and the fifth largest generation and transmission (G&T) cooperative in the United States. Great River Energy's member cooperatives range from those in the outer-ring suburbs of the Twin Cities to the Arrowhead region of Minnesota to the farmland of southwestern Minnesota. Great River Energy's largest distribution cooperative serves more than 120,000 member-consumers; the smallest serves just over 2,400. For more information, visit www.greatriverenergy.com.

About Xcel Energy

Xcel Energy (NYSE: XEL) is a major U.S. electricity and natural gas company with regulated operations in eight Western and Midwestern states. Xcel Energy provides a comprehensive portfolio of energy-related products and services to 3.3 million electricity customers and 1.8 million natural gas customers through its regulated operating companies. Company headquarters are located in Minneapolis. More information is available at www.xcelenergy.com.

About CapX2020

Along with Great River Energy, Maple Grove, Minn., and Xcel Energy, Minneapolis, utilities or groups that expect to participate in one or more of the CapX2020 projects are: Central Minnesota Municipal Power Agency, Blue Earth, Minn.; Dairyland Power Cooperative, La Crosse, Wis.; Minnesota Power, Duluth, Minn.; Minnkota Power Cooperative, Grand Forks, N.D.; Missouri River Energy Services, Sioux Falls, S.D.; Otter Tail Power Company, Fergus Falls, Minn.; Rochester Public Utilities, Rochester, Minn.; Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency, Rochester, Minn.; and WPPI Energy, Sun Prairie, Wis.