

**In the Matter of the Application of
Minnesota Power for a
Certificate of Need and Route Permit for the
HVDC Modernization Project in Hermantown,
St. Louis County, Minnesota**

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
REVISED SCOPING DECISION**

**Docket No. E012/CN-22-607
Docket No. E015/TL-22-611**

The above matters have come before the Commissioner of the Department of Commerce (Department) for a decision on the scope of the environmental assessment (EA) to be prepared for Minnesota Power to modernize and upgrade the Minnesota terminal of its 465-mile Square Butte High-Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) transmission line and interconnect the upgraded HVDC terminal to the existing alternating current (AC) transmission system near the Arrowhead Substation in Hermantown, Minnesota.

On June 1, 2023, Minnesota Power (applicant) filed a combined certificate of need and route permit application with the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission).¹ Following a public comment period and Commission meeting, the Department issued a Scoping Decision for the project on November 30, 2023.²

Per Minnesota Rule 7850.3700, “Once the commissioner has determined the scope of the environmental assessment, the scope shall not be changed except upon a decision by the commissioner that substantial changes have been made in the project or substantial new information has arisen significantly affecting the potential environmental effects of the project or the availability of reasonable alternatives.”³

After issuance of the Scoping Decision, American Transmission Company (ATC), the proposer of the “ATC Alternative” included in the Scoping Decision, identified constraints with their originally proposed alignment. On December 7, 2023, ATC requested a modification of the route alignment for the ATC Alternative, stating: “ATC intends to modify the route ... relative to what was presented in its EA scoping comments, to avoid multiple crossings of West Rocky Run Creek. Specifically, ATC would site the new double circuited 345-kV line so that it doglegs south before crossing West Rocky Run Creek; with this approach, the new line would cross West Rocky Run Creek once before entering the ATC Arrowhead Substation.”⁴ This revised alignment is within the route identified for the ATC Alternative in the November 30, 2023, Scoping Decision.

ATC’s modified alignment is new information that could significantly affect the potential environmental impacts of the ATC Alternative.

HAVING REVIEWED THE MATTER, consulted with EERA staff, and in accordance with Minnesota Rule 7850.3700, I hereby make the following revised scoping decision:

¹ Minnesota Power HVDC Modernization Project, *Application to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission for a Route Permit for a Large Electric Generating Facility*, June 1, 2023, eDockets Numbers [20236-196333-02 \(through -16\)](#) and [20236-196346-02](#).

² Department of Commerce (December 1, 2023) *Scoping Decision*, eDockets No. [202312-200881-01](#).

³ Minnesota Rule [7850.3700](#), Subpart 3.

⁴ Personal communication; email from American Transmission Company to EERA staff, December 7, 2023.

MATTERS TO BE ADDRESSED

The EA will study the project in a manner consistent with the November 30, 2023, Scoping Decision, and revised as described below.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT, POTENTIAL IMPACTS, AND MITIGATIVE MEASURES

The EA will discuss the affected environment, potential impacts, and mitigative measures identified in the November 30, 2023, Scoping Decision for the applicant's proposed route and the revised ATC Alternative.

ROUTE ALTERNATIVES

The EA will analyze the applicant's proposed route (Map 1) and the revised ATC Alternative (Map 2).

SYSTEM ALTERNATIVES

The EA will analyze the system alternatives identified in the November 30, 2023, Scoping Decision.

SCHEDULE

The EA continues to be anticipated to be complete and available in February 2024.

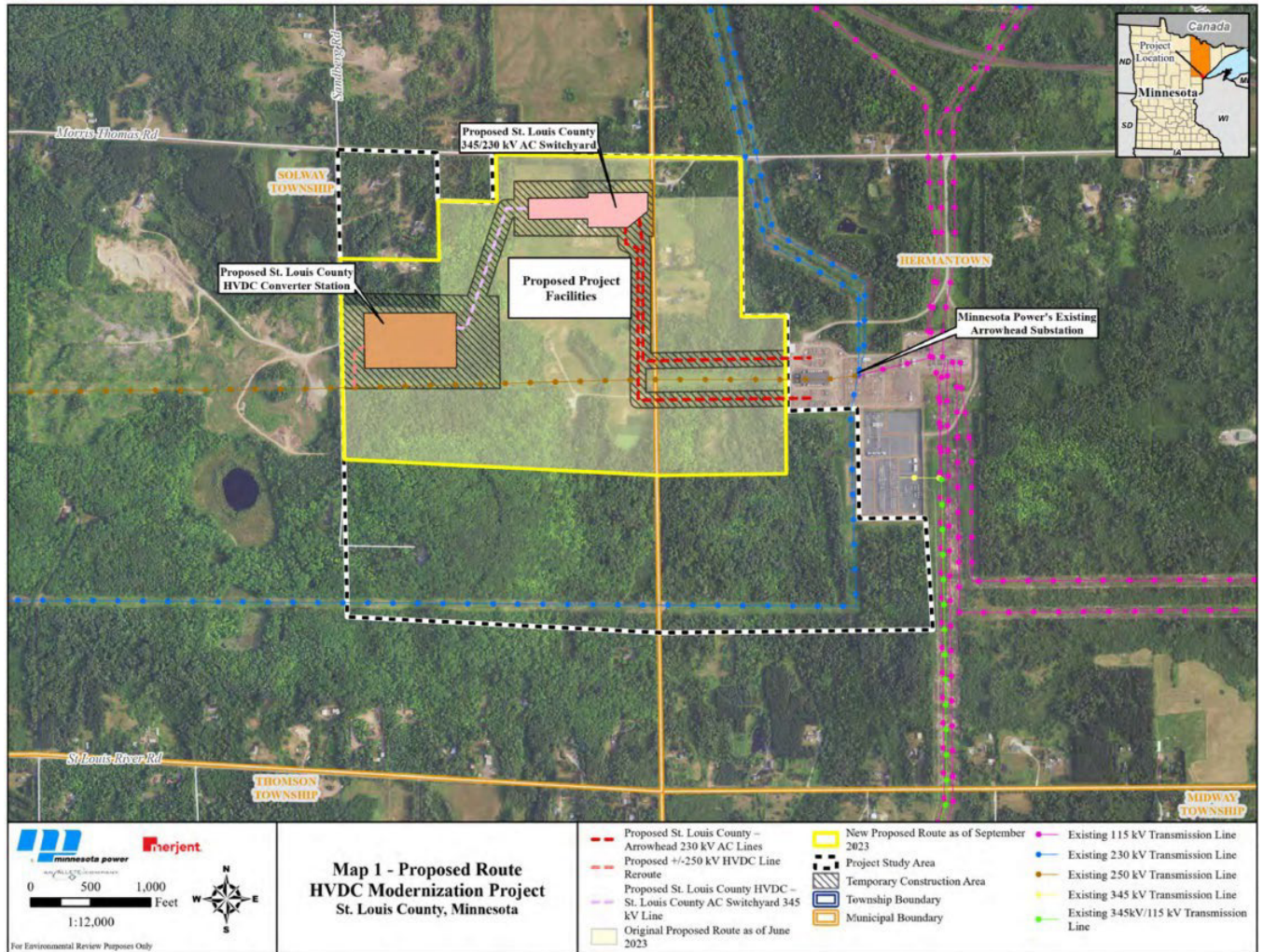
Signed this 27th day of December 2023

STATE OF MINNESOTA
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



Michelle Gransee, Deputy Commissioner

Map 1: Minnesota Power Proposed Project



Map 2: ATC Alternative



- ATC Arrowhead Substation
- Minnesota Power Proposed Converter Station

- ATC Alternative Route Width
- ATC Alternative - Modified Alignment

