

BEFORE THE MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

Katie J. Sieben	Chair
Hwikwon Ham	Commissioner
Valerie Means	Commissioner
Joseph K. Sullivan	Commissioner
John A. Tuma	Commissioner

ISSUE DATE: October 9, 2024

In the Matter of the Application of Xcel Energy for a Certificate of Need and Route Permit for the Mankato to Mississippi River 345 kV Transmission Line Project in Southeast Minnesota

DOCKET NO. E-002/CN-22-532

DOCKET NO. E-002/TL-23-157

ORDER ADDING ALTERNATIVE TO SCOPE OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

**PROCEDURAL HISTORY**

On April 2, 2024, Northern States Power Company, doing business as Xcel Energy (Xcel), filed a joint application for a Certificate of Need (CN) and route permit for the Mankato-Mississippi River Transmission Project (the Project).

On June 26, 2024, the Commission issued an order accepting the applications as complete and establishing procedural requirements. The order also approved combined environmental review of the CN and route permit applications, including preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in lieu of an environmental report.

On July 3, 2024, Xcel filed comments regarding the scope of the EIS.

Between July 8 and July 10, 2024, public information and EIS scoping meetings were held in each of the following cities: Mankato, Waterville, Faribault, Pine Island, and Kellogg. Two online public information and environmental impact statement scoping meetings were held on July 11, 2024.

By August 1, 2024, the Commission received comments on the scope of the EIS from the Prehn Family and NoCapX 2020, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Department of Transportation (MnDOT), and Citizens for Environmental Rights & Safety. The Department of Commerce Energy Environmental Review and Analysis (EERA) also filed several public comments it received, including comments from tribal nations, local government units, state agencies, and federal agencies.

On August 28, 2024, Xcel filed reply comments.

On September 19, 2024, EERA filed reply comments and recommendations.

On October 3, 2024, the matter came before the Commission.

## **FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

The Project includes four segments and is part of a series of long-range transmission projects that were studied and approved by the Midcontinent Independent Systems Operator, Inc. (MISO) in an effort to address loading and congestion issues on the existing 345 kV transmission system across southern Minnesota and Wisconsin.

When a high voltage transmission line project is reviewed under the full permitting process, EERA prepares an EIS on the project under Minn. R. 7850.2500. EERA uses public meetings and comments to develop the scope of the EIS, including alternatives that will be analyzed. The Commission may also identify alternative routes to be studied in the EIS under Minn. Stat. § 216E.03, subd. 5.

Based on the public meetings and public comments it received, EERA identified 17 route alternatives and three system alternatives for study in the EIS.

By the time the Commission met to discuss the scope of the EIS, the parties were in agreement that the system and route alternatives EERA recommended in its September 19, 2024 comments should be adopted.

The Commission agrees with the parties and will adopt EERA's recommended system and route alternatives. After discussion with the parties, the Commission will also exercise its statutory authority to add one additional route expansion for study in the EIS, as described in the relevant ordering paragraph below.

## **ORDER**

1. The Commission adopts the system alternatives recommend by EERA for inclusion in the EIS scope.
2. The Commission adopts the route alternatives recommended by EERA for inclusion in the EIS scope.
3. The following route expansion shall also be included in the scope of the EIS:

Expand Route Segment 9 from EERA's September 19, 2024 comments by also studying a continuation of a straight line Southwest of that proposed alternative from the point where that proposed alternative turns West to reconnect with Route Option 1 such that the line would continue straight to connect with 230th St. W. to the south where it would then turn West to reconnect with Route Option 1. Thus, moving the line further away from Cannon Lake.

4. This order shall become effective immediately.

BY ORDER OF THE COMMISSION



Will Seuffert  
Executive Secretary



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