

**NOTICE OF INFORMATIONAL MEETINGS,
PUBLIC AND EVIDENTIARY HEARINGS, AND
AVAILABILITY OF DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

Issued: October 15, 2024

In the Matter of the Certificate of Need and Route Permit Applications for the Minnesota Energy Connection Project in Sherburne, Stearns, Kandiyohi, Wright, Meeker, Chippewa, Yellow Medicine, Renville, Redwood, and Lyon Counties in Minnesota

PUC Docket Numbers: CN-22-131 (Certificate of Need) and TL-22-132 (Route Permit)

OAH Docket Number: 23-2500-39782

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) will hold public and evidentiary hearings on the applications of Xcel Energy for a certificate of need and a route permit for the Minnesota Energy Connection Project, a new approximately 171- to 174-mile 345-kilovolt (kV) double-circuit transmission line between Sherburne and Lyon counties (MNEC Project).¹ The public meetings/hearings also provide an opportunity to comment on the draft environmental impact statement (draft EIS) prepared by the Minnesota Department of Commerce (Department) for the MNEC Project. The proposed MNEC Project includes the following:

- A new 345-kV double-circuit transmission line between the existing Sherco Substation in the city of Becker in Sherburne County and a new substation (Garvin Substation) proposed near the city of Garvin in Lyon County. Xcel Energy has proposed two route alternatives: the Purple Route, which is 171 miles in length, and the Blue Route, which is 174 miles in length. Xcel has also proposed four connector segments that would provide options to utilize different portions of each alternative route, as appropriate.
- A new 3.1-mile single-circuit 345-kV transmission line co-located on existing structures between the existing Sherco and Sherco Solar West substations in the city of Becker.
- Modifications to the existing Sherco and Sherco Solar West substations, a new voltage-support substation, and a new intermediate substation.

¹ The MNEC Project is a result of Xcel's Commission-approved 2020-2034 Upper Midwest Integrated Resource Plan.

Xcel Energy has requested a route width of 1,000 feet and a final right-of-way width of 150 feet, with the exception of the areas around the substations and conservation easements where the route width would range from 0.3 mile to 1.25 miles to enable flexibility in routing.

In addition to the routes proposed by Xcel Energy in its application, 48 alternative route segments, 11 alternative route connectors, and four alignment alternatives were evaluated in the draft EIS prepared for the proposed MNEC Project. The draft EIS also evaluated system alternatives to the proposed MNEC Project which include modified generation (nuclear or natural gas) at the Sherco plant, new generation plants (nuclear, natural gas, solar, or wind) closer to the Sherco plant, underground transmission line construction, and a no-build alternative.

In-Person Meetings/Hearings

Date	Time	Meeting Location
October 29, 2024	11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Open House 12:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. Formal Hearing	Monticello Community Center 505 Walnut Street Monticello, Minnesota 55362
October 30, 2024	10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Open House 11:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. Formal Hearing	Litchfield Opera House 136 N Marshall Avenue Litchfield, Minnesota 55355
October 30, 2024	5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. Open House 6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Formal Hearing	Kimball Schools Cafetorium 100 Highway 55 West Kimball, Minnesota 55353
November 6, 2024	10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Open House 11:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. Formal Hearing	Kilowatt Community Center 600 Kilowatt Drive Granite Falls, Minnesota 56241
November 6, 2024	5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. Open House 6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Formal Hearing	Max's Grille 2425 W Lincoln Avenue Olivia, Minnesota 56277
November 7, 2024	10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Open House 11:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. Formal Hearing	5 Family Ranch 2717 County Road 6 Marshall, Minnesota 56258
November 7, 2024	5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. Open House 6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Formal Hearing	Redwood Area Community Center 901 East Cook Street Redwood Falls, Minnesota 56283

If any reasonable accommodation is needed to enable you to fully participate in these hearings, please contact the Commission at 651-296-0406 or 1-800-657-3782 at least one week in advance of the meeting. To find out if a hearing is canceled due to bad weather or other call 1-855-731-6208 or visit mn.gov/puc.

Online Meeting/Hearing via WebEx

Date: October 29, 2024

Time: 6:00 p.m.

Join by WebEx Link: [WebEx Public Hearing Link²](#)

Webinar Number: 2498 811 3968

Webinar Password: X6FnmJHTh24 (96366548 from phones)

Join by Phone: 1-855-282-6330 Toll Free **Access Code:** 249 881 13968

If you are joining the meeting via WebEx and would like to ask a question or make a comment during the designated portion of the meeting, use the chat or raised-hand functions to send a message to the meeting moderator. If you are joining the meeting by phone, press *3 on your phone. When it is your turn to speak, your line will be unmuted, and you will be able to ask questions and provide comments.

Additional information and instructions are available at:

<https://mn.gov/puc/activities/meetings/webex/>

Public Meeting/Hearing Information

Doors will open one hour prior to each meeting/hearing. Attendees will have an opportunity to review maps and materials on the proposed MNEC Project and ask questions of Xcel Energy and state staff. During this time, comments made by attendees will become a part of the record for consideration only if the attendee submits the comment in writing. Forms will be available for this purpose.

The formal public meetings/hearings will be conducted by an administrative law judge with the Office of Administrative Hearings, who will provide the Commission with findings of fact, conclusions of law, and a recommendation.

The purpose of the public meetings/hearings is to obtain public input on the proposed MNEC Project, the drafts EIS, and compile the record for the Commission to consider in making a final decision on the certificate of need and route permit applications. Specifically, interested

² <https://minnesota.webex.com/minnesota/j.php?MTID=mc31b12dbce4b5fdfac101d99f7d1c335>

persons will have the opportunity to: (1) ask questions of state staff and the applicant; (2) offer oral and written comments on the merits of the proposed project and on the draft EIS; and (3) suggest possible conditions to be considered for inclusion in a certificate of need and a route permit.

- Comments received at the hearings and during the comment period will be used to: 1) develop the final EIS, to the extent that comments relate to the draft EIS; and 2) inform the record to help the Commission make its final decision.
- The information presented will be the same at all in-person and online hearings.
- The hearings will end when all attendees have had the opportunity to comment and all other business has been concluded, or the scheduled end time of the hearing, whichever occurs first.
- Members of the public may participate without the necessity of intervening as a party; representation by legal counsel is permitted but not required.

Comment Period

Written comments will be accepted through **November 25, 2024, by 4:30 p.m.** Please include the docket number in all communications. Comments received after the close of the comment period may or may not be considered by the Commission.

Topics for Comment

- What information needs to be clarified or included in the draft EIS to ensure that the final EIS is complete and accurate?
- Should the Commission grant a certificate of need for the proposed MNEC Project?
- If granted, what additional conditions or requirements should be included in a certificate of need?
- Should the Commission grant a route permit for the proposed MNEC Project?
- If granted, which proposed route alternative best meets the route selection criteria, and what additional conditions or requirements should be included in a route permit?

Submit Comments

Online: <https://mn.gov/puc/consumers/public-comments>

Email: consumer.puc@state.mn.us

U.S. Mail: Consumer Affairs Office
Minnesota Public Utilities Commission
121 7th Place East, Suite 350
St. Paul, MN 55101

Comments will be made available to the public via the Commission's website, except in limited circumstances consistent with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act. The Commission does not edit or delete personal identifying information from submissions.

Draft Environmental Impact Statement

The Department has prepared a draft EIS for the proposed MNEC Project. The purpose of the draft EIS is to provide information on the potential human and environmental impacts of the proposed MNEC Project, suggest possible mitigations for identified impacts, and evaluate the alternatives contained in the scoping decision.

The draft EIS is available for review and download at the online locations provided below.

- Department of Commerce website:
<https://eera.web.commerce.state.mn.us/web/project/15000>
- Commission's eDocket System:
<https://www.edockets.state.mn.us/EFiling/edockets/searchDocuments.do?method=eDocketsResult&docketYear=22&docketNumber=132>

Print copies of the draft EIS are available for viewing at the following public libraries:

- Great River Regional Library, 13020 Orono Parkway, Elk River, Minnesota 55330
- Great River Regional Library, 1300 West St. Germain Street, St. Cloud, Minnesota 56301
- Willmar Public Library, 410 Fifth Street Southwest, Willmar, Minnesota 56201
- Great River Regional Library, 18 Lake Boulevard Northwest, Buffalo, Minnesota 55313
- Litchfield Public Library, 216 North Marshall Avenue, Litchfield, Minnesota 55355
- Montevideo Public Library, 224 South First Street, Montevideo, Minnesota 56265
- Canby Public Library, 110 Oscar Avenue North, Canby, Minnesota 56220
- Olivia Public Library, 405 South Tenth Street, Olivia, Minnesota 56277
- Redwood Falls Public Library, 509 South Lincoln Street, Redwood Falls, Minnesota 56283
- Marshall-Lyon County Library, 201 C Street, Marshall, MN 56258

Print copies of the draft EIS will be available for review at the in-person public hearings. A limited number of electronic copies (zip drives) of the draft EIS will also be available to take home. For questions about the availability of the draft EIS please contact Department staff, Andrew Levi, at andrew.levi@state.mn.us or 651-539-1840.

Comments on the draft EIS may be submitted at any of the public meetings/hearings identified in this notice, or in writing through **November 25, 2024, by 4:30 p.m.** If you wish to comment on the draft EIS, please indicate so in your comment.

Evidentiary Hearings

Members of the public may attend and listen to the evidentiary hearings. The evidentiary hearings will not provide speaking or commenting opportunities for members of the public. Please attend either the in-person or online public meetings/hearings described earlier in the notice to provide comments or ask questions.

The evidentiary hearings will be held in the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission Hearing Rooms at 121 7th Place East, Suite 350, St. Paul, MN 55101 on the following dates and times:

- November 12, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.; and
- November 13-15, 2024, at 9:30 a.m. (**if necessary**)

Additional Information

Minnesota Statutes and Rules. This project is being reviewed under Minnesota Statutes chapters 216B and 216E, and Minnesota Rules chapters 7849 and 7850. The statutes and rules are available for review at: www.revisor.mn.gov

Review Process. Information on the review processes for certificates of need and site and route permits for large electric power facilities is available on the Commission's website at: <https://mn.gov/puc/activities/energy-facilities/>

Filing Requirements. Utilities, telecommunications carriers, official parties, and state agencies are required to file documents using the Commission's electronic filing system (eFiling). All parties, participants, and interested persons are also encouraged to use eFiling: mn.gov/puc/edockets, select *Go to eDockets* and follow the prompts.

Full Case Record. See all documents filed in this matter via the Commission's website at mn.gov/puc/edockets, select *Go to eDockets*, enter the year and the docket number (22-131 for the certificate of need or 22-132 for the route permit), and select *Search*.

Subscribe to the Docket. To receive email notification when new documents are filed in this matter visit: <https://www.edockets.state.mn.us/EFiling>, select *Subscribe to Dockets*.

Project Mailing List. Sign up to receive notices about project milestones and opportunities to participate or change your mailing preference. Email eservice.admin@state.mn.us or call 651-201-2246 with the docket number (22-131 or 22-132), your name, mailing address, and email address.

Contacts

Public Utilities Commission

Scott Ek, Energy Facilities Planner, scott.ek@state.mn.us or 651-539-1070

Jacques Harvieux, Public Advisor, jacques.harvieux@state.mn.us or 651-201-2233

Department of Commerce

Andrew Levi, Environmental Review Manager, andrew.levi@state.mn.us or 651-539-1840

Xcel Energy

Matt Langan, Principal Agent, MNEnergyConnection@xcelenergy.com, or 1-888-292-4714

To request this document in another format such as large print or audio, call 651-296-0406 (voice). Persons with a hearing or speech impairment may call using their preferred Telecommunications Relay Service or email consumer.puc@state.mn.us for assistance.

