

**BEFORE THE
MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**

Katie J. Sieben	Chair
Hwikwon Ham	Commissioner
Audrey C. Partridge	Commissioner
Joseph K. Sullivan	Commissioner
John A. Tuma	Commissioner

In the Matter of the Application for a Certificate of Need for the “PowerOn Midwest” 765kV High Voltage Transmission Line Project DOCKET NO. E002, ET2, ET6675/CN-25-117 (CN-25-118, CN-25-119, CN-25-120)

In the Matter of the Application for a Certificate of Need for the “Gopher to Badger Link” 765kV High Voltage Transmission Line Project DOCKET NO. ET3, E002/CN-25-121

REQUESTED CLARIFICATION OF NORTH ROUTE GROUP AND NO765MN

The North Route Group and NO765MN (hereinafter “NRG and NO765MN”) offer the following clarification for PowerOn Minnesota, as requested in its Response to Petition for Consolidation, Request for Leave to Begin Discovery During Stay, Request for Contested Case and Joint Hearing, and Petition for Intervention in the above-captioned dockets. That’s plural, intended for and filed in dockets CN-25-117 (consolidated with CN-25-118, CN-25-119, and CN-25-120 and Gopher to Badger ET3, E002/CN-25-121 (consolidated with CN-25-122), and a courtesy filing in eDockets for clarification for the Commission and Department and the public.

I. NRG AND NO765MN INTEND TO PARTICIPATE AND INTEND THESE MULTIPLE REQUESTS FOR BOTH DOCKETS, POWERON MIDWEST, CN-25-117 AND GOPHER TO BADGER, CN-25-121.

PowerOn Midwest has requested that “NRG and NO765MN clarify whether they intend to participate in this docket, **alone**...” It’s not clear what PowerOn Midwest means by “alone.”

Our intent is that NRG and NO765MN participate in both the CN-25-117 and CN-25-121 dockets, ideally linked together in one docket. as they are inextricably linked.¹ This “Special Projects” analysis in both applications is the basis for their need claim, and specifically includes the MISO projects 22, 23, 24, 25, **AND** 26, which is the “PowerOn Midwest” **AND** Gopher to Badger” dockets. As Applicants note, the MISO Tranche 2.1 was designed requiring ALL the projects, ALL are connected, and these “two” dockets, these **FIVE** MISO projects, **SIX** Commission dockets, CN-25-117-122, are the 765kV transmission projects – they are interdependent and literally electrically connected. They cannot be analyzed separately, and should not be reviewed by the Commission separately.

II. THE 765Kv “SPECIAL PROJECTS” SHOULD ALL BE CONSOLIDATED INTO ONE DOCKET.

These applicants have already consolidated most of the projects, five in CN-25-117 and two in CN-25-121. PowerOn Midwest consolidated **FIVE** dockets into one – that is, CN-25-117, CN-25-118, CN-25-119, and CN-25-120. Gopher to Badger consolidated **TWO** dockets into one, that is, CN-25-121 and CN-25-122. The job of consolidation should be completed.

PowerOn Midwest and Gopher to Badger also consolidated these dockets, which comprise MISO Tranche 2.1 projects 22, 23, 24, 25, AND 26, and deemed them “Studied Projects” in their applications, analyzed them together, inseparably, for their need claim.

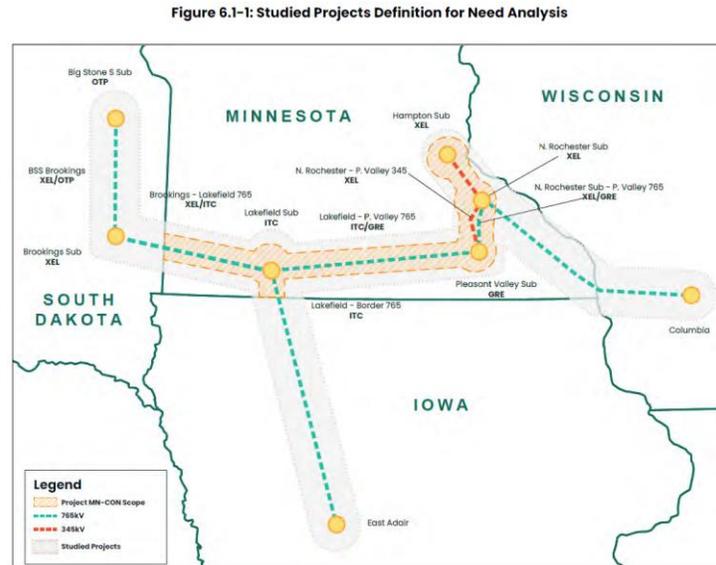
1.4 PROJECT NEED

The Project is needed to 1) mitigate system overloads to maintain system reliability to meet existing and future energy needs; 2) meet growing electrical demand in a cost-effective manner; and 3) support the energy transition. As described further in **Section 6.1**, for the purposes of the need analysis in this Application, the Applicants studied the entirety of LRTP numbers 22 through 26 (including the portions of those lines outside of Minnesota). This group of projects is referred to as the “Studied Projects.”

See PowerOn Midwest **AND** Gopher to Badger, Applications, Section 1.4; see also Section 6. That section’s Figure 6.1-1 shows graphically the interconnection of the 765kV transmission

¹ Both PowerOn Midwest and Gopher Badger applications, Section 1.4 and Section 6.

projects:



PowerOn Midwest AND Gopher to Badger Applications

This shows that the lines are inextricably linked, they are not separable for analysis of need, and at the very least, the Certificate of Need dockets should be consolidated.

Applicants argue that it's a request to "throw everything in one proceeding... and that NRG and NO765MN have no legal support for this extraordinary ask." PowerOn Midwest, Response, p. 3; Gopher to Badger, p. 3-4. This from the parties that have jointly consolidated SIX dockets into TWO, and now it's problematic? Are they forgetting the CapX 2020 Certificate of Need, CN-06-1115, consolidating three transmission lines, from Fargo to St. Cloud, Brookings to Hampton, and Hampton to La Crosse in Minnesota? Brookings to Hampton to the Mississippi sounds much like these 765kV projects in Minnesota! Consolidation was not regarded as a problem then, not regarded as a problem when the Applicants consolidated their projects, so why now? Further, it wasn't a problem for MISO or these Applicants to use MISO projects 22, 23, 24, 25, and 26 as "Studied Projects" for their need case. The objections are inconsistent and illogical.

III. THE COMMISSION SHOULD ISSUE A STAY FOR THESE DOCKETS.

Gopher to Badger is in agreement that there should be a stay until the route permit is

filed.² PowerOn Midwest disagrees, yet does not explain the urgency, does not explain why the western section of this 765kV project is different from the eastern section. It is up to the Commission to decide whether a stay is appropriate and under what terms.

IV. LEAVE TO BEGIN DISCOVERY IS NOT NOVEL AND SHOULD BE ALLOWED.

NRG and NO765MN have requested leave to begin discovery in an attempt to assure there is no unnecessary delay. Applicants object, in essence, contending that it's unheard of and that it would cause unnecessary delay. Where did this idea come from? The Applicants of Maple River-Cuyuna 345kV transmission project volunteered access to information. Application Cover Letter ([20261-227645-01](#), January 30, 2026).

Also, to ensure the orderly service of any information requests prior to the assignment of an administrative law judge to these proceedings, we ask that the following individuals receive service of any information requests during this interim period:

Jackson Evans	jjevans@mnpower.com
Jim Atkinson	jbatkinson@mnpower.com
Drew Janke	djanke@mnpower.com
Christian Winter	cwinter@mnpower.com
Jennifer Kuklenski	jkuklenski@mnpower.com
Hannah Mitchell	hmitchell@mnpower.com
Minnesota Power Discovery Manager	discoverymanager@mnpower.com
Kodi Verhalen	kverhalen@taftlaw.com
Valerie Herring	vherring@taftlaw.com
Spencer Rojas	srojas@taftlaw.com
Craig Steingaard	csteingaard@otpc.com
Robert Endris	rendris@otpc.com
Regulatory Filing Coordinator	regulatory_filing_coordinators@otpc.com
Owen Henriksen	ohenriksen@greenergy.com
Brian Meloy	bmeloy@greenergy.com

Again, the Commission will decide whether this is a reasonable approach.

V. NRG AND NO765MN AGAIN REQUEST A CONTESTED CASE AND PETITION TO INTERVENE.

NRG and NO765MN request a contested case based on the many material contested issues of fact laid out in the Supplemental Comment³. NRG and NO765MN are requesting a contested case and intervention in the contested case in Certificate of Need for the entire

²² Similarly, the Maple River-Cuyuna 345kV transmission project (CN-25-109) has also requested a stay until the route application is filed. They have also welcomed intervention in the meantime. That should happen here.

³ Request for Contested Case and Joint Hearing, [20263-229071-03](#), March 9, 2026; Petition for Intervention, [20263-229071-04](#), March 9, 2026.

consolidated stretch of 765kV transmission line across southern Minnesota, as well as the ultimate routing docket filed for the Gopher to Badger transmission projects. NRG and NO765MN are very concerned about the entire \$6 billion cost of this 765kV project, \$6 billion just in Minnesota. There are material issues of cost, likely substantial cost increases, impact of cost increases on MISO cost/benefit analysis with a result satisfactory for approval, and need for Variance Analysis to reevaluate cost-benefit ratio, particularly crucial where Applicants base their need claim on MISO analysis and “approval.” NRG and NO765MN are also very concerned about system alternatives that are only considered in a Certificate of Need review, in particular underground direct current along rail and transportation corridors, as promoted in the 2024 legislative session, as well as other new technologies that are taking hold. The full complement of 765kV projects are uniquely set up for consideration of use of direct current.

Applicants raise “delay” as an insurmountable issue, but it is not clear why the western part of the projects, PowerOn Midwest, CN-25-117-120, is more urgent than Gopher to Badger, CN-25-121-122, which is amenable to a stay until the route permit is filed. The Applicants should explain their objection.

Both Applicants address the “legislative intent” to “reduce the amount of time between MISO’s approval of projects and Certificate of Need applications,” using identical language. I’d also heard this from the dais on several occasions, speeding up review, an odd regulatory goal.

PowerOn Midwest also states that “it remains unclear whether there are parties who would and could participate in a contested case proceeding for PowerOn Midwest.”⁴

It’s unclear why it’s unclear. NRG and NO765MN have requested a Contested Case and Petitioned for Intervention – PowerOn Midwest requested that commitment in its Supplemental

⁴ Response, p. 6.

filing. NRG and NO765MN filed to demonstrate our willingness, sincerity, and preparedness, that we “would and could participate.” We are ready to intervene.

VI. NRG AND NO765MN REQUEST A STAY, DISCOVERY, REFERRAL FOR A CONTESTED CASE, AND ORDER FOR INTERVENTION.

NRG and NO765MN have requested referral for a Contested Case and Intervention in the currently open dockets, PowerOn Midwest (CN-25-117) and Gopher to Badger (CN-25-121), which as of now include dockets CN-25-117, 118, 119, 120, 121, and 122, and which should be entirely consolidated, as with CapX 2020. These six dockets should be joined as they are all one of a purpose, the 765kV “Studied Projects,” MISO’s Minnesota projects 22, 23, 24, 25, and 26.

Consolidation, Discovery, Referral for a Contested Case and Intervention are for the Commission to decide, mindful of the Public Participation mandate of Minn. Stat. §216I.16. A joint contested case of the six dockets CN-25-117-122 should be no more complicated than the CapX 2020 Certificate of Need docket.⁵ If need and routing all together is somehow problematic, perhaps that will have to be addressed separately when the applications are filed.

Thank you for the opportunity to file these Clarifying Comments in the Gopher to Badger and PowerOn Midwest transmission line dockets.



Dated: March 20, 2026

Carol A. Overland MN Lic. 254617
Attorney at Law
Attorney for North Route Group and
NO765MN
1110 West Avenue
Red Wing, MN 55066
(612) 227-8638
overland@legalelectric.org

⁵ Which is not to say the CapX 2020 CoN docket didn’t have its issues, particularly demand forecast, but as a process, with three lines, two connected and a third not, it did work procedurally as the basis for need was the same, as it is here with all the 765kV CoN dockets and identical “Studied Projects” analysis of 22, 23, 24, 25 and 26 projects..



12300 Elm Creed Blvd
Maple Grove, MN 55369



AN ALLETE COMPANY
30 W Superior St
Duluth, MN 55802



215 S Cascade St
Fergus Falls, MN 56537

January 30, 2026

—Via Electronic Filing—

Sasha Bergman
Executive Secretary
Minnesota Public Utilities Commission
121 Seventh Place East, Suite 350
St. Paul, MN 55101-2147

Re: Certificate of Need Application

In the Matter of the Application for the Maple River – Cuyuna 345 kV Transmission Line Project

Docket No. E015,ET2,E017/CN-25-109

Dear Ms. Bergman:

Minnesota Power, Great River Energy, and Otter Tail Power Company (collectively the “Applicants”), submit this Application for a Certificate of Need (“Application”) to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (“Commission”) for the Maple River – Cuyuna 345 kV Transmission Project (“Project”).

The Project was studied, reviewed, and approved by the Midcontinent Independent System Operator, Inc. (“MISO”) as part of its Long-Range Transmission Planning (“LRTP”) Tranche 2.1 Portfolio of projects included in MISO’s 2024 Transmission Expansion Plan (“MTEP24”). The LRTP Tranche 2.1 Portfolio is made up of 24 projects, including Project Number 20, the Maple River – Cuyuna 345 kV Transmission Project. The Project, as part of the LRTP Tranche 2.1 Portfolio, is needed to support the reliability of the regional transmission system, particularly in northern Minnesota and eastern North Dakota; provide additional transmission capacity and regional transfer capability to reliably integrate future generation resources; meet growing electrical demand, enhance resiliency during extreme weather events, and enable cost-effective regional energy transfers supporting economical grid operations.

The Project consists of construction of a new 345 kV double-circuit transmission line, operated initially as a single transmission line, connecting Minnesota Power’s Cuyuna Substation in Crow Wing County, Minnesota, to Otter Tail Power Company’s Maple River Substation in Cass County, North Dakota. The Project will be approximately 160 to 180 miles in length depending on the final route selected, with approximately 6-10 miles of its length in North Dakota.

The Applicants understand that the Commission will be issuing invoices for the application fees required under Minn. R. 7849.0210 and Minn. R. 7849.2100. The invoiced fees will be paid out of Minnesota Power’s existing funding account managed by the Department of Commerce.

Ms. Bergman
January 30, 2026
Page 2

A short summary of this Application is being distributed as required by Minn. R. 7829.2500, Subp. 3 and the Commission's Order Approving the Notice Plan for the Project as noted on the attached certificate of service. Please note that the Applicants have designated portions of Appendix H of the Application as NONPUBLIC. Public and nonpublic versions of this Appendix have been provided and a Trade Secret Justification is attached hereto.

Also, to ensure the orderly service of any information requests prior to the assignment of an administrative law judge to these proceedings, we ask that the following individuals receive service of any information requests during this interim period:

Jackson Evans	jjevans@mnpower.com
Jim Atkinson	jbatkinson@mnpower.com
Drew Janke	djanke@mnpower.com
Christian Winter	cwinter@mnpower.com
Jennifer Kuklenski	jkuklenski@mnpower.com
Hannah Mitchell	hmitchell@mnpower.com
Minnesota Power Discovery Manager	discoverymanager@mnpower.com
Kodi Verhalen	kverhalen@taftlaw.com
Valerie Herring	vherring@taftlaw.com
Spencer Rojas	srojas@taftlaw.com
Craig Steingaard	csteingaard@otpc.com
Robert Endris	rendris@otpc.com
Regulatory Filing Coordinator	regulatory_filing_coordinators@otpc.com
Owen Henriksen	ohenriksen@greenergy.com
Brian Meloy	bmeloy@greenergy.com

In a March 4, 2025 letter, Commission staff requested that the Applicants provide status updates every 45 days on the anticipated timing of the filing of the Certificate of Need and Route Permit application and in-service date for the Project until the application for the Project was filed. As required by this letter, the Applicants provided seven status updates for this Project, the last of which was filed on December 23, 2025. As the Applicants are now filing the Application for a Certificate of Need, which also includes information on when the Applicants will file the Route Permit Application, the Applicants will no longer be providing these 45-day status updates.

Ms. Bergman
January 30, 2026
Page 3

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Jim Atkinson, Manager – Siting and Land Rights, at jbatkinson@mnpower.com, or Jennifer Kuklenski, Manager – Regulatory Strategy and Policy, at jkuklenski@mnpower.com.

Sincerely,

/s/ Daniel Gunderson

Daniel Gunderson
Minnesota Power
Vice President – Transmission System
Planning & Operations

/s/ Priti Patel

Priti Patel
Great River Energy
Vice President and Chief Transmission
Officer

/s/ JoAnn Thompson

JoAnn Thompson
Otter Tail Power Company
Vice President – Asset Management

Attachments

cc: Service List