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 Gopher to Badger Link 765kVHigh Voltage Transmission Line Project	Docket No. ET3, E002/CN-25-121
In the Matter Of The Application For A Route Permit For The Gopher To Badger Link 765 kV High Voltage Transmission Line Project	Docket No. ET3, E002/TL-26-156

NORTH ROUTE GROUP AND NO765MN PETITION FOR INTERVENTION
GOPHER TO BADGER LINK
CERTIFICATE OF NEED AND ROUTE PERMIT
DOCKETS CN-25-121 and TL-26-156

The North Route Group and NO765MN (hereinafter "NRG and NO765MN") hereby renew the Petition to Intervene in the Gopher to Badger Link[1] Certificate of Need proceeding and submit this Petition to Intervene in the now applied for and "complete" Gopher to Badger Link Route Permit to the Public Utilities Commission. Together, North Route Group and NO765MN request intervention in the above-captioned dockets as provided by Minn. R. 7829.0800, Minn. R. 1400.6200, and Minn. R. 1405.0900.

NRG and NO765MN have jointly intervened in the related PowerOn Midwest 765 kV transmission Certificate of Need docket, CN-25-117, currently ongoing, by providing comments, participating in the Public and Evidentiary Hearings, and working to educate

[1] Gopher to Badger Link is MISO's LRTP 26, with endpoints in North Rochester, north of Pine Island, and Columbia, Wisconsin.

community members and local governments about public participation and issues of concern. NRG and NO765MN have demonstrated their ability to help inform the record, and will continue to do so as those directly affected in the Gopher to Badger Link eastern part of this 765 kV transmission superhighway for export.

NRG is an association of directly affected landowners, farmers, and business owners along "Segment 1" of the proposed Gopher to Badger Link. North Route Group has extensive experience participating in a Commission and Court of Administrative Hearings proceeding. It was formed when the CapX 2020 Hampton to La Crosse transmission project, TL-09-1448, was proposed, and one of the route alternatives was to go over their land. The North Route for CapX 2020 was rejected by the Administrative Law Judge and the Commission. NRG was granted intervention and participated extensively; was represented by counsel; and held numerous meetings to inform other affected and interested landowners how to effectively participate; attended and commented at each of the public meetings and hearings; were active members of the Hampton – La Crosse Citizens Task Force that met in Pine Island; submitted alternative routes for environmental review and routing consideration; propounded Information Requests; raised specific environmental concerns in scoping and general comments, particularly focused on avoiding decimation of the Richard J. Gorer Memorial Hardwood Forest and damage to the Zumbro River; reviewed and commented on the DEIS and adequacy of the EIS; presented Direct and Surrebuttal testimony with multiple exhibits; testified at the evidentiary hearing; cross-examined other witnesses, submitted Initial and Reply briefs; and attended Commission meetings. The North Route was rejected for CapX 2020 transmission.

Now, sixteen years later, the Gopher to Badger applicants have once again chosen a route for "Segment 1" of the Gopher Badger Link, a route almost identical to the CapX 2020 "North Route," the northern-most route of several early options heading east from the "North Rochester"

substation north of Pine Island. Thus far, members have attended the utility "open house" gatherings on the north part of the project, and they have filed comments both as a group and many as individuals. The North Route is prepared to intervene to protect their unique interests. As directly affected landowners, farmers, residents, business owners, with experience as a past intervenor in a transmission docket, North Route Group is well positioned to help inform the record as they did in the past, to do their utmost to protect their land, the Dorer Forest, and the Zumbro River, raise system security issues regarding the concentration of infrastructure in the area, utilization of existing corridor, a no-build option and partial no-build option such as elimination of the "loop" of the 765 kV PowerOn Midwest and Gopher to Badger Link from southern Minnesota up to Rochester and back, and most importantly, North Route Group takes the position that the NorthRoute should again be rejected by the Commission. No other party represents the North Route Group's interests.

NO765MN is an association of landowners, farmers, residents, and business owners in the Driftless region of southeast Minnesota, near the Mississippi River and Iowa border directly affected by "Segment 2" of the Gopher Badger Link. Members of NO765MN live, farm, and operate businesses near a 161kV transmission line owned by Dairyland Power Cooperative running east to west near the Iowa border and crossing the Mississippi River. The route for "Segment 2" of the Gopher-Badger link has been targeted by Dairyland to share its 161kV corridor, the only route proposed for this 765kV transmission project, with no alternative shown. The 161kV line runs along a high ridge in this very hilly area where it would be the most prominent visual feature of the landscape. These landowners are very concerned about this huge project's impacts if it subsumes the smaller existing 161 kV line in an expanded easement. The smaller line was routed decades ago and much has changed since

that time. The proposed 161 kV colocation route is in close proximity to homes, families, barns, animals, fields, businesses, and would have an extreme impact on the community.

NO765MN has been learning the Commission process and has begun participating. Regarding the Gopher to Badger Link transmission project, NO765MN members have been heavily involved – they have attended many Dairyland open house meetings throughout southeast Minnesota and have commented extensively as individuals and as a group in the Gopher to Badger Link Certificate of Need docket. Of particular concern are system alternatives including the no-build option and partial no-build option such as elimination of the "loop" of PowerOn Midwest and Gopher to Badger Link from southern Minnesota up to Rochester and back, direct current underground and cost comparisons of DC underground and above ground AC. System alternatives open for consideration are limited by factors inherent in MISO's development of this project, separate from Applicants, and these factors are rarely subject to scrutiny under Certificate of Need process, such as MISO's project purpose, capacity of project, declared "endpoints" and identification of projects.

NO765MN has been hosting well-attended public informational meetings across the project area, independently and in concert with NRG, and securing significant local and statewide media attention. NO765MN shares with NRG concern about many aspects of this project, including but not limited to health impacts of electric and magnetic fields; the accuracy of electric and magnetic field calculations presented; the noise the project will emit and impacts; accuracy of noise modeling and characterization of the area subject to Minn. R. 7030.0040; protection of the vistas of the Driftless region; whether it will provide any economic benefit for their specific community and identifying where the MISO claimed "benefits" accrue; what it will cost their community; loss of property values; the importance

of protecting the character of the Driftless region; irreversible impacts on the protected Mississippi River including the river itself, flora and the protected bluffland and disruption affecting the thousands of eagles and swans and the many other birds migrating through the most important North American flyway; how the high costs of this line and the entire Tranche 2.1 will be allocated to the community and Minnesota; whether the transmission line is needed, partially, or needed at all; what system alternatives are available; whether a different Mississippi River crossing using existing transmission corridor would have lesser impacts ranging from visual harm, to tourism and socioeconomic impacts; whether a combination of alternatives could eliminate the need for the line; whether rebuilding the existing system more robustly would eliminate the need claimed; and whether this project, the purpose of this transmission, is in the public interest. The electric system has changed so much in recent decades, and since CapX 2020 was permitted through Minnesota and across the Mississippi, that it's difficult to predict what the electric system will be in even the near future. This project would lock us into this high voltage transmission mode for the life of the project.

NO765MN has presented system alternatives, in particular underground DC, which would avoid nearly all potential impacts and mitigate any non-compensible impacts that may occur. In advocating direct current transmission, undergrounded direct current transmission, and utilizing road and rail rights-of-way for undergrounding, NO765MN promotes a far less impactful alternative, minimizing public outrage, one that would not mar the vistas, lower property values, cause life-threatening hazards for migrating birds, disturb the federal wildlife refuge, an alternative that offers many advantages that offset potential increase in cost. DC underground along rail corridor, the Soo Green Line, has been approved in neighboring Iowa, not far south of this project, and an early alternative proposed by Soo Green utilized a rail

corridor in southeast Minnesota.

Because NO765MN members are directly along this 161kV line, and because Minnesota law favors use of existing transmission corridors for new transmission, they are concerned that the Commission may approve co-routing the 765kV along this much smaller line when there are other reasonable and economic alternatives, including a 345kV crossing of the Mississippi not far to the north.

Intervention is crucial for NO765MN to be able to participate at the fullest, to advocate for route options, raise considerations and impacts in the route docket, and to address costs, cost/benefits, and feasible and economic system alternatives in the Certificate of Need process. No other group has the direct impacts of Dairyland's preference of use of the 161kV transmission corridor. No other group represents the interests of NO765MN.

Equally important, NRG and NO765MN are working jointly. They are separated geographically and have both joint interests and markedly different, though not conflicting, interests. Both groups are faced with the application proposing just one route coming through their community, and NO765MN line members are along the only route that is being considered for co-location with a much lower voltage transmission line by the Applicants. Both groups share interests in system alternatives, particularly co-location with existing 345 kV high voltage transmission and highway infrastructure and direct current underground as system alternatives. Both question whether the line is needed; both challenge the purpose of the line, the design amperage, end points, and limitation these characteristics place on considered alternatives; the extreme cost increases in this project, PowerOn Midwest, and the entire Tranche 2.1 portfolio; the equity of cost apportionment across Minnesota ratepayers; landowners' bearing the cost of eminent domain; and what benefits it brings to their

communities when compared to benefits to MISO members.

There are no current Intervenors or parties requesting Intervention at this time, and even if there are other intervenors, there are none that could or would represent the distinct interests of these two groups. Both groups are working hard to learn the Commission's process since the legislative changes of 2024, and the record thus far shows that individually, and the groups through counsel, are active participants. In granting intervention status to NRG and NO765MN, there would be no delay, they would continue to participate vigorously, and would abide by the schedule ordered as this project goes forward.

NRG and NO765MN meet the criteria for intervention and request that both groups be granted intervention with all the rights and responsibilities of a party in the above captioned proceeding.

In sum, NRG and NO765MN request that the Commission refer the two 765kV Gopher to Badger dockets, Certificate of Need and Route, to the Court of Administrative Hearings for contested case proceedings, and that Intervention be granted to NRG and NO765MN in both of the Gopher to Badger Link dockets.

Respectfully submitted:



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