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CapX2020 transmission expansion receives final 345 kV Minnesota Route Permit approval
MN PUC approves Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse project route in Minnesota

Minneapolis – April 12, 2012 – The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission voted unanimously to grant a Route Permit for an approximate 80-mile 345 kilovolt (kV) electric transmission line between Hampton and Rochester, Minn. to the Minnesota border near Alma, Wis.

The Commission approved CapX2020's modified preferred route, including Highway 52 in the Cannon Falls area and the Zumbro River crossing at White Bridge Road. The administrative law judge had recommended a western bypass of the Cannon Falls area, with a crossing at Lake Byllesby Dam, as well as a crossing at the Zumbro River dam. Detailed route maps will be posted to www.capx2020.com.

The Commission also approved CapX2020's alternate route for the 35-mile 161 kV line between a new substation at Pine Island and the Northern Hills Substation northwest of Rochester.

"The La Crosse project will increase reliability in the growing Rochester area and surrounding rural areas and will improve access to renewable generation in southeastern Minnesota," said Priti Patel, co-director of CapX2020. "The Commission's decision affirms the need for transmission in Minnesota and regionally to serve customers with reliable, affordable electricity for decades to come."

The CapX2020 utilities began engaging the public in 2007, hosting several rounds of open houses and routing work group meetings where landowners and local officials could learn about the project and provide information on land use considerations in the project area, such as agricultural impacts, local development plans, proximity to homes and environmental concerns.

"We can't build a project like this without affecting people," said Tom Hillstrom, project routing lead. "The goal of the process was to identify the route with the least impact to people and the environment. We think the process was successful thanks to the participation of thousands of landowners and agency personnel."

Permit approval for the 345 kV line in Wisconsin is expected on or before June 4, 2012. The federal Environmental Impact Statement, which covers the entire project, is expected to be issued in June, with federal approval this fall. Construction is expected to start in Minnesota in early 2013. The Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse project, including the route in Wisconsin, is expected to be energized in 2015. The overall project cost is approximately \$490 million.