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CapX2020 utilities file Route Permit application for Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse transmission line

MINNEAPOLIS – CapX2020 utilities today filed a Minnesota Route Permit application for the Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse 345-kilovolt transmission line, one of several lines the group is proposing in the Upper Midwest to preserve system reliability, serve increasing community electricity needs and increase capacity to accommodate renewable energy.

The application was filed with the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission. Route Permit applications were previously filed for the other CapX2020 345-kilovolt transmission line projects between Brookings County, S.D. and Hampton, Minn., and between Fargo, N.D., and Monticello, Minn.

The commission granted the three 345-kilovolt transmission lines a Certificate of Need on April 16, 2009. Need and Route Permit applications were filed in March 2008 and June 2008, respectively, for a 230 kilovolt transmission line between Bemidji and Grand Rapids, which is also part of the CapX2020 Group I projects.

“Communities like Rochester and La Crosse have experienced significant population growth and an increase in electricity demand, yet the backbone of the electric grid in this area hasn’t been expanded for 30 years,” said Priti Patel, CapX2020 co-executive director.

The Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse Route Permit application contains two main 345-kilovolt route options with a third alternative route provided in certain areas for the commission to review. Both the preferred and alternate routes lead to one proposed Mississippi River crossing at Alma, Wis.

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The application also includes two 161-kilovolt route options connecting a substation near Pine Island to a substation in north Rochester. The application process requires significant route option review by the Minnesota Department of Commerce's Office of Energy Security. The process provides numerous opportunities for public comment and input before the commission decides on a final route.

“Filing a Route Permit application with the commission starts the state process, which is very thorough and provides opportunities for landowners and others to suggest alternative route options for consideration,” said Tom Hillstrom, routing lead for the project. “The commission will not determine the line's final route for more than a year.”

In developing the route options over an 18-month period, CapX2020 hosted or participated in numerous meetings where landowners, local government officials, state and federal agencies and other stakeholders along a broad corridor expressed opinions on important criteria to be evaluated.

The public process on the Route Permit application formally begins when the Office of Energy Security hosts public scoping meetings to develop a draft Environmental Impact Statement. Local governments, organizations, landowners and other stakeholders will be able to comment on the project's environmental and routing aspects during the scoping meetings, while the impact statement is being drafted and again after it is published. The commission also will schedule public hearings where stakeholders can formally comment on the proposed route options. These comments will be included in the official record. A final commission decision on the route is expected in 2011.

A Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity, a regulatory permit that combines need and routing, will be filed with the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin later this year.

Additional information on the regulatory process is available at:
http://www.capx2020.com/Images/MN_Regulatory_Process_Fact_sheet.pdf.

Information on the permitting process is available at:
www.capx2020.com/HRL-mn-route-permit.

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About CapX2020

Utilities or groups that expect to participate in one or more of the CapX2020 projects are: Central Minnesota Municipal Power Agency, Blue Earth, Minn.; Dairyland Power Cooperative, La Crosse, Wis.; Great River Energy, Maple Grove, Minn.; Minnesota Power, Duluth, Minn.; Minnkota Power Cooperative, Grand Forks, N.D.; Missouri River Energy Services, Sioux Falls, S.D.; Otter Tail Power Company, Fergus Falls, Minn.; Rochester Public Utilities, Rochester, Minn.; Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency, Rochester, Minn.; WPPI Energy, Sun Prairie, Wis.; and Xcel Energy, Minneapolis. Additional information is available at www.capx2020.com.