

MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS AND AVAILABILITY OF ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

In the Matter of the Application for a Certificate of Need for the Big Stone South—Alexandria—Big Oaks Transmission Project; and In the Matter of the Application for a Route Permit for the Alexandria to Big Oaks 345-kV Transmission Project in Central Minnesota

PUC Docket Number: CN-22-538 (Certificate of Need) and TL-23-159 (Route Permit)
OAH Docket Number: 25-2500-39723

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) will hold public hearings on the applications of Xcel Energy, Great River Energy, Minnesota Power, Otter Tail Power Company, and Western Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (Applicants) for a certificate of need for the proposed Big Stone South—Alexandria—Big Oaks 345 kilovolt (kV) Transmission Project and a route permit for the Alexandria to Big Oaks 345 kV Transmission Project, the eastern segment of the Big Stone South—Alexandria—Big Oaks 345 kV Transmission Project.

The proposed project consists of approximately 208 miles of new 345 kV transmission facilities between the Big Stone South Substation near Big Stone City South Dakota, the Alexandria Substation near Alexandria, Minnesota, and a new substation (Big Oaks Substation) proposed southwest of Becker, Minnesota. The project also includes the expansion of the Alexandria, Riverview, and Quarry substations.

For permitting purposes, the proposed project has been divided into two segments: a western segment and an eastern segment. The western segment would connect the existing Big Stone South Substation to the existing Alexandria Substation (Otter Tail Power Company and Missouri River Energy Services expect to file a route permit application for the western segment in the fourth quarter of 2024). The eastern segment would connect the Alexandria Substation to a new Big Oaks Substation in Becker. As proposed, the eastern segment would be collocated on the open position of the existing double-circuit-capable CapX2020 structures, within existing transmission line right-of-way, for more than 95% of its length.

IN-PERSON HEARINGS

Date	Time	Hearing Location
June 13, 2024	10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Open House 11:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. Formal Hearing	Ally Cat 620 US Highway 75 Ortonville, Minnesota 56278
June 13, 2024	5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. Open House 6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Formal Hearing	Benson Northside Elementary 1800 Nevada Avenue Benson, Minnesota 56215
June 17, 2024	10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Open House 11:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. Formal Hearing	Broadway Ballroom 115 30th Avenue East Alexandria, Minnesota 56308
June 17, 2024	5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. Open House 6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Formal Hearing	Monticello Community Center 505 Walnut Street Monticello, Minnesota 55362
June 18, 2024	10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Open House 11:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. Formal Hearing	College of St. Benedict Gorecki Hall, Room 204 37 South College Avenue South St. Joseph, Minnesota 56374

If any reasonable accommodation is needed to enable you to fully participate in these hearings, please contact the Commission at 651-296-0406 or 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 855-731-6208 or visit mn.gov/puc.

ONLINE HEARING VIA WEBEX

Date: June 18, 2024

Time: 6:00 p.m.

Join by WebEx Link: <https://minnesota.webex.com/minnesota/j.php?MTID=m69a55fa398a7b17986d15b8ddff7ee28>

Webinar Number: 2489 794 6849

Webinar Password: PSdrH9FiG43 (77374934 from phones)

Join by Phone: 1-855-282-6330 (Toll Free) Access Code: 248 979 46849

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 HEARING INFORMATION

Doors will open one hour prior to each hearing. Attendees will have an opportunity to review maps and materials for the project and ask questions of the Applicants 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 public 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 hearings is to obtain public input on the proposed project 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 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 environmental assessment; and (3) suggest possible conditions to be considered for inclusion in a route permit.

- Comments received at the hearings and during the comment period will be used to inform the record and 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 **July 8, 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

- Should the Commission grant a certificate of need for the proposed Big Stone South—Alexandria—Big Oaks 345 kV Transmission Project?
- If granted, what additional conditions or requirements, if any, should be included in the certificate of need?
- Should the Commission grant a route permit for the proposed Alexandria to Big Oaks 345 kV Transmission Project (Eastern Segment)?
- If granted, what additional conditions or requirements, if any, should be included in the 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.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The Minnesota Department of Commerce (Department) has prepared an environmental assessment (EA) for the project. The purpose of the EA is to provide information on the potential human and environmental impacts of the proposed project, possible mitigations for identified impacts, and evaluation of any alternatives contained in the scoping decision.

The EA will be available on **May 29, 2024, by 4:30 p.m.**, for review and download at the locations provided below.

- Department of Commerce website: <https://eera.web.commerce.state.mn.us/web/project/15111>
- Commission’s eDocket System: <https://www.edockets.state.mn.us/EFiling/edockets/searchDocuments.do?method=eDocketsResult&docketYear=23&docketNumber=159>

Print copies of the EA are available from the Department upon request; please contact Jenna Ness at jenna.ness@state.mn.us or 651-539-1693.

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 (22-538 for the certificate of need or 23-159 for the eastern segment route), 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 (22-538 or 23-159), your name, mailing address, and email address.

Questions about these dockets or Commission process and procedure? Contact Commission staff, Scott Ek at scott.ek@state.mn.us or 651-539-1070.

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.

