



Will Seuffert, Executive Secretary

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT SCOPING MEETINGS**

Issued: January 8, 2024

**In the Matter of the Certificate of Need and Route Permit Applications for the Minnesota Energy Connection Project in Sherburne, Stearns, Kandiyohi, Wright, Meeker, Chippewa, Yellow Medicine, Renville, Redwood, and Lyon counties in Minnesota**

**PUC Docket Numbers:** CN-22-131 (Certificate of Need) and TL-22-132 (Route Permit)

**PLEASE TAKE NOTICE** that the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) and Minnesota Department of Commerce will hold public information and environmental impact statement (EIS) scoping meetings on the applications of Xcel Energy for a certificate of need and a route permit for the Minnesota Energy Connection Project, a new approximately 171- to 174-mile 345-kilovolt (kV) double-circuit transmission line between Sherburne and Lyon counties. Additional information is available on the Commission website at: <https://mn.gov/puc/activities/energy-facilities/power-plants-transmission-lines/tranche-one/minnesota-energy-connection/>

The purpose of the meeting is to: (1) provide information to the public about the proposed project and the state's high-voltage transmission line certificate of need and route permitting processes; and (2) provide members of the public an opportunity to participate in developing the scope of the EIS. This includes commenting on issues or concerns related to the proposed project and proposing alternatives for consideration.

**In-Person Meetings**

<b>Meeting Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>
Kilowatt Community Center 600 Kilowatt Drive Granite Falls, MN 56241	Wednesday, January 24, 2024	10:00 a.m. (doors open pre-meeting hour) 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. (formal meeting)
EverSpring Inn & Suites 1500 East College Drive Marshall, MN 56258	Wednesday, January 24, 2024	5:00 p.m. (doors open pre-meeting hour) 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. (formal meeting)

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/>

### **Meeting Information**

Doors will open one hour prior to each meeting. Attendees will have an opportunity to review maps and materials for the project and ask questions of the applicant and state staff. During this time, comments made by attendees will become a part of the record for Commission consideration only if the attendee submits the comment in writing. Forms will be available for this purpose.

During the formal public meeting, state staff will make a presentation on the state's permitting and environmental review processes and the applicant will summarize the proposed project. After the presentations, attendees will have the opportunity to offer oral and written comments into the record. The meetings 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 meeting, whichever occurs first. The information presented will be the same at all meetings.

### **Written Comment Period**

Written comments will be accepted through **February 21, 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.

Please focus your comments on information that will help answer the following questions:

- Are there other ways to meet the stated need for the project, for example, a different size project or a different type of facility?
- What potential human and environmental impacts of the proposed project should be considered in the EIS?
- Are there any methods to minimize, mitigate, or avoid potential impacts of the proposed project that should be considered in the EIS?
- Are there any alternative routes or route segments that should be considered in the EIS to address or mitigate potential impacts associated with the proposed project?
- Are there any unique characteristics of the proposed project that should be considered in the EIS?

Exceptions to the 1,000-foot route width include areas near certain conservation easements and the proposed terminal, intermediate, and voltage support substations where route widths ranging from 0.3 mile to 1.25 miles are being requested to enable flexibility in routing.

The Minnesota Energy Connection Project is a result of Xcel Energy's approved 2020-2034 Upper Midwest Integrated Resource Plan (Docket No. 19-368).

### Review Process

The Commission must approve a certificate of need and a route permit before the project can be constructed. The certificate of need and route permit applications are being processed jointly (*i.e.*, joint public meetings, joint public hearings, and joint environmental review); however, the certificate of need application will be reviewed under the informal review process (Minn. R. 7829.1200) and the route permit application will be reviewed under the full permitting process (Minn. R. 7850.1700 to 7850.2700). This meeting satisfies the public meeting requirement for both the certificate of need application (Minn. R. 7849.1400) and route permit application (Minn. R. 7850.2300). Relevant Minnesota statute (chapters 216B and 216E) and rules (chapters 7849 and 7850) may be viewed at: <https://www.revisor.mn.gov>.

**Environmental Review.** The Minnesota Department of Commerce is tasked with preparing an environmental report (ER) for the Commission for the certificate of need application and an EIS for the route permit application. In this case, environmental review has been combined and an EIS will be prepared instead of an ER. The EIS will evaluate the human and environmental impacts of the proposed project, identify measures that could reasonably be implemented to avoid or minimize impacts identified, evaluate alternative route segments identified, and will include the analysis of alternatives required under the certificate of need application review process.

**Public Hearing.** After the draft EIS is prepared, public hearings will be held near the project area. The hearings will be presided over by an administrative law judge from the Office of Administrative Hearings. At the hearings, members of the public will have an opportunity to make an oral presentation, present evidence, and ask questions of the applicant and staff. The administrative law judge will prepare findings of fact, conclusions, and recommendations for the Commission to consider.

Upon completion of the public hearing process, the Commission will make a final decision on whether to issue a certificate of need and a route permit. If the Commission issues a certificate of need and a route permit, the applicant may exercise the power of eminent domain to acquire land for this project pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 216E.12.

