

MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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

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

Meeting Location	Date	Time
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)
Max’s Grill 2425 West Lincoln Avenue	Thursday, January 25, 2024	10:00 a.m. (doors open pre-meeting hour) 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. (formal meeting)

Meeting Location	Date	Time
Olivia, MN 56277		
Redwood Area Community Center 901 East Cook Street Redwood Falls, MN 56283	Thursday, January 25, 2024	5:00 p.m. (doors open pre-meeting hour) 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. (formal meeting)
Litchfield Civic Arena 900 North Gilman Avenue Litchfield, MN 55355	Tuesday, January 30, 2024	5:00 p.m. (doors open pre-meeting hour) 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. (formal meeting)
Monticello Community Center 505 Walnut Street Monticello, MN 55362	Wednesday, January 31, 2024	10:00 a.m. (doors open pre-meeting hour) 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. (formal meeting)
Kimball Community Schools Cafetorium 100 Highway 55 West Kimball, MN 55353	Wednesday, January 31, 2024	5:00 p.m. (doors open pre-meeting hour) 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. (formal meeting)

To find out if a meeting is canceled due to bad weather or other call 1-855-731-6208 or 651-201-2213 or visit mn.gov/puc.

Online (WebEx) Meeting

Date: Thursday, February 1, 2024

Time: 6:00 p.m.

Join by WebEx (Webinar) Link:

<https://minnesota.webex.com/minnesota/j.php?MTID=md1a5ccd8cbdf8e4f15cf099b11ee3e48>

Webinar Number: 2495 499 3436

Webinar Password: BmN6hMmWK36 (26664669 from phones)

Join by Phone: 1-855-282-6330 Toll Free **Access Code:** 249 549 93436

If you are joining the meeting by WebEx and would like to ask a question or make a comment during the designated portion of the meeting, use the chat function or raised hand function 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/>

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?

Comments may be submitted:

Online: <https://mn.gov/commerce/energyfacilities/#comment>

Email: andrew.levi@state.mn.us

(Include “22-131 22-132 Scoping Comment” in subject line.)

U.S. Mail: Andrew Levi

Minnesota Department of Commerce

85 7th Place East, Suite 280

St. Paul, MN 55101

Important. 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 and the Department of Commerce do not edit or delete personal identifying information from submissions.

Project Description

The proposed Minnesota Energy Connection Project includes the following:

- a new 345-kV double-circuit transmission line between the existing Sherco Substation in Becker and a new substation (Terminal Substation) proposed near Garvin in Lyon County. Xcel Energy has proposed two route alternatives that are 171 and 174 miles in length and designated as the Purple Route and Blue Route, respectively. Xcel has also proposed four connector segments that would provide options to utilize different portions of each alternative route, as appropriate.
- A new 3.1-mile single-circuit 345-kV transmission line between the existing Sherco Substation and Sherco Solar West Substation in Becker (Green Segment). This segment of the new transmission line would be co-located with Xcel Energy’s Line 5651, occupying the open position on the existing double-circuit-capable structures.
- Modifications to the existing Sherco Substation and Sherco Solar West Substation.
- A voltage-support substation to be located 80 miles south of the Sherco Substation in either Meeker, Kandiyohi, or Renville County.
- An intermediate substation to be located 20 miles north of the proposed Terminal Substation near Garvin in Lyon County.

Xcel Energy has generally requested a route width of 1,000 feet and a final right-of-way width of 150 feet.

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.

Additional Information

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 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 (22-131 for the certificate of need or 22-132 for the route permit), 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* and follow the prompts.

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 (22-131 or 22-132), your name, mailing address, and email address.

Department of Commerce Website:

<https://eera.web.commerce.state.mn.us/web/project/15000>

Contacts

Public Utilities Commission

Scott Ek, Energy Facilities Planner, scott.ek@state.mn.us or 651-539-1070

Jacques Harvieux, Public Advisor, jacques.harvieux@state.mn.us or 651-201-2233

Department of Commerce

Andrew Levi, Environmental Review Manager, andrew.levi@state.mn.us or 651-539-1840

Xcel Energy

Matt Langan, Principal Agent, matthew.a.langan@xcelenergy.com, or 1-888-292-4714

If any reasonable accommodation is needed to enable you to fully participate in these meetings, please contact the Commission at 651-296-0406 or 1-800-657-3782 at least one week in advance of the meeting. 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.