



US Army Corps  
of Engineers  
St. Paul District

# Information Paper

## Regulatory Program: CapX 2020 345-kV High Voltage Transmission Line Twin Cities-Rochester-La Crosse (TCRL)

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### Location/Description

Xcel Energy, as part of an initiative of regional utilities known as CapX 2020, is proposing to construct and operate a 345-kV electric transmission line connecting an existing substation near Hampton, Minnesota (Hampton is located near Highway 52, approximately 25 miles south of St. Paul, Minnesota.), to a proposed North Rochester Substation. The line would then continue east, and cross the Mississippi River, then turn southeast to a new substation in the La Crosse, Wisconsin, area. The Minnesota segment would be approximately 90 miles long; the Wisconsin segment would be approximately 50 miles long. The project also includes a new 15-mile-long, 161-kV line connecting the new North Rochester Substation and the existing North Hills Substation in northwest Rochester, Minnesota. Project construction is expected to begin in 2013 with the project completed and in service in 2015.

The proposed project would be constructed mostly with single-pole steel structures, ranging in height from 130 to 175 feet, with an average span of 1,000 feet between poles. The 161-kV line would be constructed mostly with single-pole steel structures ranging in height from 70 to 105 feet, with a span of 400 to 700 feet.

### Background/Discussion

The proposed project is intended to improve regional reliability, enhance local load serving needs, and provide generation outlet support. Dairyland Power Cooperative, which has an 11 percent ownership interest in the project, has requested financial assistance from the USDA Rural Utility Service (RUS). RUS is the lead agency for National Environmental Policy Act and Section 106 review. OP-R is participating as a cooperating agency for development of an environmental impact statement (EIS).

The CapX 2020 preferred Mississippi River crossing is at Alma, Wisconsin. The Alma crossing uses an existing

utility corridor and avoids potential community impacts to La Crescent and Winona, Minnesota.

The EIS for the Wisconsin segment evaluates various route options, which include potential impacts to the Van Loon Wildlife Area, Black River floodplain wetlands, a Seven Bridges Road historic property, and one known Native American burial mound group. The preferred alternative selected by RUS avoids these potential impacts.

### Status

In October 2011, President Obama identified this project as part of an initiative to improve Federal, tribal, and State regulatory reviews; consultations; and permitting. The project is identified for consideration by the Administration's Rapid Response Team. The team will develop an integrated Federal planning approach to streamline Federal permitting and increase cooperation. We have provided general project details to the team and plan to implement the approach recommended by the team.

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission has issued the route permit, and the Wisconsin Public Service Commission approved its Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity on May 30, 2012.

A final EIS has been published by RUS and distributed to the public. Comments were due August 20, 2012. The Record of Decision is scheduled to be issued in October 2012. The preferred alternative selected in the final EIS appears to select the least damaging practicable alternative.

Because of independent utility and project staging, it is anticipated that separate permit applications will be submitted for three segments of the project. The first application for the North Rochester-North Hills segment is expected to be received in September 2012.

### Authority

Section 404 of the Clean Water Act  
Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act