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Contact:
Xcel Energy Media Relations
(612) 215-5300

April 8, 2009

**CapX2020 utilities file Route Permit application
for Monticello-St. Cloud transmission line**
12-15 month state process will determine final route

MINNEAPOLIS – CapX2020 utilities today filed a Route Permit application for the Monticello-St. Cloud 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. It is the second Route Permit application filed for the three proposed CapX2020 345-kilovolt transmission line projects. A separate Route Permit application will be filed later in 2009 for the Fargo-St. Cloud 345-kV transmission line project. A Route Permit application was previously filed for the line between Brookings County, S.D. and Hampton, Minn., and work continues on an application for a route between Hampton and Rochester, Minn., and La Crosse, Wis.

The process began in 2004 with planning studies. A Certificate of Need application was filed in August 2007 for the three 345-kilovolt transmission lines, while 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.

“The Monticello-St. Cloud project will address regional reliability issues in the growing St. Cloud area,” said Laura McCarten, CapX2020 co-executive director. “The effort put into the public process and soliciting public input has been exceptional, and we are proud to have worked so closely with so many people.”

The Monticello-St. Cloud Route Permit application contains three route options for the commission to review. The application process also requires significant route option review by the Minnesota Department of Commerce, Office of Energy Security. The process provides numerous opportunities for public comment and input before the commission decides on a final route.

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. This input was critically important to the utilities in making an informed recommendation on possible routes.

“The two most important criteria we heard were to keep the line as far away from existing homes as possible and to minimize agricultural impacts,” said Darrin Lahr, project routing lead. “As a result, most of our route options follow roads or field and section lines. Single-pole structures will also help minimize land-use impacts.”

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 2010.

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

Approval of the Route Permit application also depends on approval of the Certificate of Need application, which currently is under review. The commission is scheduled to hear oral arguments and deliberate on April 15 and 16 on whether the three 345-kilovolt lines are needed.

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.

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