Project overview
The Bemidji-Grand Rapids 230 kilovolt (kV) transmission line was fully energized in September of 2012 to improve reliability for the Red River Valley, Bemidji, Grand Rapids and north central Minnesota. The finished line connects the Wilton Substation near Bemidji, Minnesota and the Boswell Substation in Grand Rapids, Minnesota.

The project includes steel H-frame structures between 70 and 90 feet tall, and steel single-pole structures between 95 and 115 feet tall. The right-of-way is 125 feet wide in most places.

Project need
The Bemidji-Grand Rapids 230 kV transmission line improves reliability in Bemidji, Grand Rapids, the Red River Valley and north central Minnesota.

Project route
Minnesota’s comprehensive routing process includes public and advisory task force meetings, public hearings presided over by an administrative law judge, an Environmental Impact Statement, and agency review. Based on the project record, which contained information and recommendations from participants, the MN PUC determined the transmission line’s final route and granted a Route Permit October 28, 2010. To view Route Permit documents, visit the MN PUC’s website and search for eDocket 07-1327.

Other requirements
A partner in the Bemidji-Grand Rapids project, Minnkota Power Cooperative, Inc., sought financing from Rural Utilities Service (RUS) for a portion of the investment. RUS, a federal financing agency within the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), provides direct loans, loan guarantees and grants to cooperatives for rural electric system projects.

To provide project financing, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires RUS to conduct an Environmental Impact Statement, which it did jointly with the Minnesota Department of Commerce, Division of Energy Management (formerly the Office of Energy Security). RUS issued its record of decision November 23, 2011.

The project received all major permits required from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Forest Service (to cross Chippewa National Forest) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as from Minnesota’s Department of Natural Resources, Pollution Control Agency and Department of Transportation, and various local government units.

Construction
Crews began clearing right-of-way in January 2011, working east from Cass Lake to the Boswell Substation. Setting structures began in July 2011, and by the end of January 2012, about half of the line’s 535 structures were set. Also in January 2012, installation started of conductor and shield wire using a helicopter and implosive splicing in the eastern part of the line. The eastern segment of the line was energized in August 2012 and the western segment was energized in September 2012.
About CapX2020

CapX2020 is a joint initiative of 11 transmission owning utilities in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin formed to upgrade and expand the electric transmission grid to ensure continued reliable and affordable service. The CapX2020 projects provide needed transmission capacity to support new generation outlet, including renewable energy. The projects include four 345 kV transmission lines and one 230 kV line.

Project development manager:
Otter Tail Power Company
Cindy Kuismi, Land Rights Supervisor
PO Box 1140
Cass Lake, MN 56633-1140
218-739-8751
bemidjiinfo@capx2020.com