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CapX2020 commemorates major milestone and $300 million investment
90 miles of high voltage transmission line energized in Wisconsin and Minnesota

HOLMEN, WIS. — Oct. 13, 2015 — CapX2020 partners, state and local officials and renewable energy supporters were among those who gathered to celebrate the energizing of 90 miles of a new 345-kilovolt transmission line in Wisconsin and Minnesota today.

An event was held at the new Briggs Road Substation in Holmen, Wis. The newly completed transmission line segments energized Sept. 15 between Holmen, Wis., and Pine Island, Minn., include 50 miles of new transmission line in Wisconsin, 40 miles in Minnesota and two new substations. The entire CapX2020 Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse project, which also includes two 161-kilovolt lines that feed Rochester and a 40-mile, 345-kilovolt segment between Hampton and Pine Island, is expected to be complete in 2016.

“Major transmission lines, like the CapX2020 project, are helping to unlock the potential for a major build out of wind energy in the Midwest, while also offering important reliability benefits for customers,” said Chris Kunkle, a regional policy manager at Wind on the Wires. “By providing increased access to cost-effective wind power, CapX2020 will play a vital role in our region’s transition to a cleaner energy future.”

The project is part of the largest transmission expansion in the Upper Midwest in decades. The CapX2020 projects include a series of high voltage transmission lines that will provide reliable and affordable electric service to Wisconsin, Minnesota and the surrounding region, while also expanding access to renewable energy.

“As part of a coordinated expansion plan the Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse transmission project helps ensure reliability and provide access to low-cost generation across the region,” said Priti Patel, MISO regional executive. “Careful planning of the transmission system to ensure reliability, reduce congestion and increase transmission access is just one way MISO provides significant value to electric consumers across the region.”

“Despite multiple challenges, including eagle nesting, a three-mile crossing of a wildlife management area and building a triple circuit transmission line over the Mississippi River, our project team built the 90 miles of line and two substations on time and on budget.” said Teresa Mogensen, senior vice president of transmission for Xcel Energy. “The new line will provide local reliability benefits to customers in La Crosse, Winona, Rochester and the surrounding area.”
“On behalf of Governor Walker, I’m honored to be here to thank you and congratulate you on a job well done completing this major investment in Wisconsin’s power infrastructure,” said John Hogan, assistant deputy secretary for the Wisconsin Department of Administration. “It’s through reforms and investments like this that we are moving Wisconsin forward. Wisconsin’s economy is growing and creating jobs – 2014 was Wisconsin’s best year for private sector job creation in a decade. Because of projects like this, Wisconsin’s future is bright.”

“Our operations control center has already seen the reliability benefits of this new 345-kilovolt line segment in western Wisconsin as we plan and perform routine maintenance on the local delivery network,” said Ben Porath, vice president of power delivery for Dairyland Power Cooperative. “We are proud to own a share of this vital project that enhances the existing transmission network in western Wisconsin that was originally developed beginning in the 1950s.”

“This transmission project is beneficial for the customers of our locally owned, not-for-profit member utilities and for the entire region,” said Tim Noeldner, WPPI Energy vice president of rates and special projects. “The Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse line is ‘right-sized’ in that it appropriately balances project cost with reliability improvements and increased access to economical renewable energy resources.”

“Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (SMMPA) is proud to be a part of the collaboration that resulted in development of this important transmission expansion project, and completion of this segment is a major milestone,” said Mark Mitchell, director of operations and chief operating officer for SMMPA. “Enhanced system reliability, and access to renewable and conventional resources is critical to SMMPA’s service to its eighteen municipal utility members. The unique and positive working relationships among municipal, cooperative and investor owned utilities in the upper Midwest has made the success of the CapX2020 projects possible.”

Several local contractors were utilized for the project. La Crosse based J.F. Brennan constructed foundations on the challenging Mississippi River crossing between Minnesota and Wisconsin, including using barges to shuttle workers and equipment to construction sites on an island and peninsula, pouring more than 3,200 cubic yards of concrete to construct 15 pile cap foundations. “Our employees were excited to take part in the CapX2020 project to bring more reliable power to western Wisconsin,” said Zach Pontzer, director civil group, J.F. Brennan. “Working on the river was a daily challenge that required special collaboration with CapX2020 crews.”

The CapX2020 Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse Project is jointly owned by Xcel Energy, Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency, Dairyland Power Cooperative, Rochester Public Utilities and WPPI Energy. When complete, the $500 million project will have constructed 150 miles of new transmission lines, three new substations and made modification at three existing substations.
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 projects include four 345-kilovolt transmission lines and a 230-kilovolt line. It is the largest development of new transmission in the upper Midwest in 40 years. The projects are projected to cost nearly $2 billion and cover a distance of nearly 800 miles.

Pictured above from left to right: Chris Kunkle, Wind on the Wires, John Hogan, Dept. of Administration, Mark Mitchell, SMMPA, Teresa Mogensen, Xcel Energy, Mark Stoering, Xcel Energy, Tim Noeldner, WPPI, Ben Porath, Dairyland Power Cooperative, Randy Anderton, Rochester Public Utilities