Project overview

Construction on the Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse 345 kV transmission line started north of Rochester in early 2013 and the final segment of the line was placed in-service in September, 2016.

The double circuit capable and single circuit 345 kilovolt (kV) transmission line runs between the Hampton substation near Hampton, Minn., the North Rochester substation north of Pine Island, Minn., and the Briggs Substation north of La Crosse, Wis. It includes a 161 kV transmission line, energized in 2014, between the North Rochester Substation and Northern Hills Substation in northwest Rochester. A second 161 kV line was energized in 2016 between the North Rochester Substation and the Chester Substation, northeast of Rochester. The Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse transmission line will improve reliability and open up new avenues for renewable energy for the Twin Cities, Rochester and La Crosse areas, including rural electric cooperative customers in Goodhue, Olmsted and Wabasha counties of Minnesota and Buffalo, Trempealeau and La Crosse counties in Wisconsin.

Single pole steel structures for the 345 kV line were used to reduce land impacts. Structures between 140 and 170 feet tall are spaced 800 to 1,000 feet apart. Typically, a 150-foot right-of-way is required. Structures for the 161 kV lines are between 70 and 125 feet tall and are spaced 400 to 650 feet apart. The typical right-of-way is 80 feet.

Permitting process

The CapX2020 utilities were granted a Certificate of Need (CN) from the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (MN PUC) on April 16, 2009 for all three 345 kV projects. To view CN documents, visit the MN PUC’s website at www.puc.state.mn.us and search for eDocket 06-1115. The MN PUC can also be reached at 1-800-657-3782. The CapX2020 utilities filed a Route Permit application (docket number E002/TL-09-1448) with the MN PUC on January 19, 2010 for the project. The MN PUC approved the Route Permit in April 2012.

A Route Permit application for the North Rochester-Chester project (docket number E002/TL-11-800) was filed with the MN PUC on September 19, 2011 and the route permit was granted on September 6, 2012. The Wisconsin regulatory process combines need and routing into one permit. A Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) was filed with the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSCW) and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources in late December 2010 and approved in May 2012. Project documents can viewed on the PSCW website, www.psc.wi.gov, by searching for document number 05-CE-136. The PSCW can also be reached at 1-888-816-3831. The MN PUC and PSCW determine the transmission line’s final Route.

Federal approval

Before the lines can be built, permits and approvals are also required from several federal agencies, including Rural Utilities Service (RUS), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Federal agencies conduct environmental reviews to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act. The MN PUC, the PSCW and participating federal agencies work together to coordinate their processes. RUS issued the project’s final EIS in July 2012 and granted a Federal Record of Decision in January 2013.
About CapX2020

CapX2020 is a joint initiative of 11 transmission-owning utilities in Minnesota and the surrounding region to expand the electric transmission grid to ensure continued reliable and affordable service. The CapX2020 projects include four 345 kilovolt (kV) transmission lines and a 230 kV line. For more information on the Hampton- Rochester-La Crosse project visit www.capx2020.com.

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