



Public Service Commission of Wisconsin

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Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
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July 13, 2021

Re: Application of Northern States Power Company–Wisconsin 4220-CE-183
 for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity to
 Construct the Ashland to Ironwood Transmission Line
 Relocation Project, to be Located in Ashland and Ironwood
 Counties, Wisconsin

To the Person Addressed:

On May 26, 2021, the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (Commission) received an application from Northern States Power Company, (Xcel Energy) for construction of the **Ashland to Ironwood Transmission Line Relocation Project** (project). ([PSC REF#: 412031.](#))

General Project Description

Specifically, Xcel Energy is proposing to relocate and rebuild two existing transmission lines that run between Xcel Energy’s Gingles Substation southeast of Ashland, Wisconsin and its Ironwood Substation in Ironwood, Michigan. Line W3351 is 88 kilovolt (kV) and line W3316 is 115 kV (Transmission Lines). Each line is approximately 35 miles long and is located within the reservation of the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians (Bad River Band).

The Commission is sending this letter to notify property owners near the proposed facilities, as well as individuals who have asked to be placed on our mailing list, that the Commission will be conducting an environmental assessment (EA) for the proposed project. This letter is also being sent to public officials who may wish to place this notification in a location where it can be viewed by the public.

Commission and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff are now analyzing the application and conducting a review of the environmental impacts of the proposed project. As part of this effort, the agencies are requesting comments from the public to help them determine the potential impacts associated with the project and the scope of the EA. The agencies encourage persons with local information or environmental concerns to provide comments.

Comments regarding the scope of the environmental assessment of the proposed project can be submitted through:

- The Commission’s website at <http://psc.wi.gov> where you can go to the “e-services” tab toward the top of the webpage, then click “file a comment” on the left hand side of the page, then locate docket **4220-CE-183**, or
- A letter or email addressed to the Commission’s Environmental Assessment Coordinator for this docket (see contacts at the end of this letter).

Please note that comments will be made available to the public via the Commission's Electronic Records Filing System. Personally identifying information is not edited or deleted from submissions. Effective topics to mention in comments on the scope of the environmental assessment may include:

- potential human and environmental impacts from the proposed project facilities;
- specific comments regarding particular locations of project infrastructure, or
- specific actions or changes to the proposed project that could minimize or mitigate potential impacts from the proposed project.

The deadline for submitting scoping comments on the environmental assessment for the Ashland to Ironwood Transmission Line Relocation Project is Thursday, August 12, 2021.

There will be an additional public comment period during the Commission's review process of the proposed project where the Commission will solicit comments from the public regarding the following:

- preliminary determination of the EA regarding whether to prepare an Environmental Impact statement.
- public hearing for the project where comments will be accepted and made part of the official case record. The hearing date has not yet been determined.

Route and Location

Xcel Energy has proposed five route alternatives that could be used to complete the project. These have been identified as Route Options A, B, C, D and E. All five route options contemplate relocating and rebuilding the 88 kV W3351 and 115 kV W3316 lines along the 34.5 kV W3606 and 34.5 kV W3607 corridors. Xcel has stated that the W3606 and W3607 lines are in poor condition and would be rebuilt as part of the proposed project. A segment of the W3606 line would also be relocated as part of the project. The following list provides a summary of the proposal and identifies where additional information may be found in the application for this project.

1. For all five route options, relocate and remove approximately 27 miles of the existing single circuit 88 kV W3351 transmission line between Structure 33 on the southeast side of Ashland and Structure 255 at the Saxon Pumping Station Tap.
2. For all five route options, rebuild, in the existing corridor, approximately 2 miles of the existing single circuit 88 kV W3351 transmission line between Structure 315 on the west side of Hurley and Structure 336 at the Ironwood Substation.

3. For all five route options, relocate and remove approximately 32 miles of the existing single circuit 115 kV W3316 transmission line between Structure 43 on the southeast side of Ashland and Structure 255 on the west side of Hurley.
4. Rebuild in the existing corridor, depending on final route, approximately 2 miles of the existing single circuit 115 kV W3316 transmission line between Structure 256 located west of Hurley and Structure 270 at the Ironwood Substation.
5. Rebuild, depending on final selected route, approximately 17 miles of the existing single circuit 34.5 kV W3606 transmission line to either double circuit 115/69 kV, double circuit 161/69 kV, single circuit 161 kV, single circuit 115 kV, or single circuit 69 kV between Structure 169 located southeast of Ashland and Structure 440 located east of Golf Course Road north of Mellen.
6. For all five route options, relocate and remove approximately 3.4 miles of the existing single circuit 34.5 kV W3606 transmission line between Structure 441 located east of Golf Course Road north of Mellen and Structure 495 within the Mellen City limits.
7. If Route Options A, B, or C are selected, rebuild approximately 0.5 miles of the existing single circuit 34.5 kV W3606 transmission line to double circuit 115/69 kV or single circuit 69 kV between Structures 496 and 503 within the Mellen City limits.
8. Rebuild, depending on final route, approximately 26 miles of the existing single circuit 34.5 kV W3607 transmission line to either double circuit 115/69 kV, double circuit 161/69 kV, single circuit 161 kV, single circuit 115 kV, or single circuit 69 kV between Structure 34 located within the Mellen City limits and Structure 463 at the Ironwood Substation.

State and Federal Agency Jurisdiction

The proposed project requires a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) from the Commission before construction can begin. Based on the record of analysis of potential environmental and societal impacts, the Commission will decide whether to approve, modify, or deny the applicant's proposal. DNR will consider the application for wetland and waterway permits, if applicable under Wis. Stat. ch. 30, potential impacts to rare species, and other affected resources under its jurisdiction. Other reviews, approvals, or permits may be necessary from local, state or federal entities. On June 4, 2021, The Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) issued a letter indicating that an Agricultural Impact Statement (AIS) is required for the proposed project. ([PSC REF#: 413265.](#))

Environmental Assessment

The proposed project is a Type II action under Wis. Admin. Code § PSC 4.10(2). The Commission will prepare an EA for this project that will evaluate the location of the project and its potential environmental, community, and private property impacts. There will be a preliminary determination when the EA is complete that will determine whether the preparation of an EIS is necessary. Comments on this preliminary determination will be accepted and the Commission shall make copies of the EA available to those persons that request it.

Public Hearing and Commission Decision

The Commission will hold technical and public hearings (date and times have not yet been confirmed) on the proposed project. At least 30 days before the hearings, the Commission will issue a Notice of Hearing and notify the local news media. If you have any concerns about the project, you should attend the hearing to make the Commission aware of your concerns. People can ask questions, speak about, and submit comments about the project at the hearing. The Commission must base its decisions about the project, in part, on the record of the hearing. The Commission will discuss the record for this project at a meeting open to the public prior to making to its decision, at a date and time yet to be determined.

Additional opportunities for public participation include the opportunity to comment on the preliminary determination (PD) on the need to prepare an EIS for the project. Notification of the PD and associated comment period will be sent to the mailing list for this project, and you can be added to this mailing list by contacting the PSC Case Coordinator for this project listed below under project contacts.

For more information on becoming involved in the Commission review of construction cases, please visit our [public participation page](#), or call one of the project contacts listed below.

Information and Contacts

To review project application materials and additional related documents:

- PSC website (<http://psc.wi.gov>) under the docket's "E-Services" tab, docket search number **4220-CE-183**.

Agency Contacts:

- PSC Environmental Assessment Coordinator
Aaron Greene
(608) 266-8950
aaron.greene@wisconsin.gov
P.O. Box 7854, Madison, WI 53707-7854

Agency Contacts (Continued):

- PSC Docket Coordinator
Jeff Kitsembel
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- PSC Media Contact
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Sincerely,



Aaron Greene
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ARG:pc:kle DL:01811670

Attachment: Map of Project Area

Ashland-Ironwood Electric Transmission Project 4220-CE-183

