

8.0 Public Involvement

8.1 Introduction

An important aspect of all transmission planning is the openness of the process. Not only is much of the planning engaged in by the various utilities discussed in meetings attended by interested members of the public and by regulatory staff, but on a number of fronts, the utilities undertake steps to keep the public advised of ongoing planning activities. This report on compliance with Renewable Energy Standard milestones is a good example of a method to keep the public advised, as is the Biennial Transmission Projects Report. In addition, the discussion below summarizes some of the specific ways in which the public is informed about transmission planning.

8.2 Sub-Regional Planning Group

With the beginning of deregulation in the late 1990's, the Mid-Continent Area Power Pool (MAPP) — an organization of Minnesota and regional utilities first formed in 1963 that engages in transmission planning through its Regional Transmission Group, created Sub-Regional Planning Groups to discuss and coordinate transmission planning efforts in the region. The meetings of these Sub-Regional Planning Groups, which provide an opportunity for utility planners to discuss transmission study efforts, are open to those interested in transmission planning efforts. In the past these SPG meetings have been attended by state regulatory staff, by environmental advocates, by interested developers, as well as by various utility personnel. These forums are also an opportunity to present study scopes and seek input from those attending the meetings. Presentations on transmission projects for renewable energy have been a regular event at the SPG meetings over the past few years. The utilities will continue to use these SPG meetings to communicate with the stakeholders regarding the development of the transmission system for RES.

8.3 Transmission Planning Annual Meetings

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission requires Minnesota utilities owning transmission lines, as part of the biennial transmission planning requirement, to conduct annual meetings in each of the six Transmission Planning Zones across the state. The utilities have been holding these meetings every year since 2003. More information about these meetings is provided in the Biennial Transmission Projects Report, Section 4.0.

8.4 Department of Commerce Technical Review Committee

In 2007 the Minnesota Legislature passed a law requiring those utilities subject to the Renewable Energy Standards to participate collaboratively with the Department of Commerce in a two-phase statewide study of dispersed generation projects that can be developed in Minnesota. Minn. Laws 2007, chapter 136, article 4, sec. 17. The Department was directed to appoint a technical review committee consisting of between ten and 15 individuals with experience and expertise in electric transmission system engineering, renewable energy generation technology,

and dispersed generation project development. This task force must also include representatives from the federal Department of Energy, MISO, and stakeholder interests. Utility representatives both participate on the Technical Review Committee and present study results based on input from Committee participants. This Committee has also been kept apprised of ongoing transmission studies associated with the Renewable Energy Standard legislation and will provide useful feedback on future study efforts.

8.5 Dispersed Renewable Generation Public Meetings

The Dispersed Renewable Generation transmission study legislation, Minnesota Laws 2007, chapter 136, article 4, § 17, the same statute calling for the Technical Review Committee described above in Section 8.4, called for the Technical Review Committee to hold public meetings in five of the six transmission planning zones (Twin Cities excluded) to gather input into the study scope, review interim results, and later, review the Department's final report. These meetings are to occur for both phases of the study. Transmission planners from a number of the utilities participated in a series of meetings held across the state in September 2007 to gather input into the scope of the study, and will continue to participate in future meetings. The number of people (100+) who participated in the first round of meetings suggests that these public forums will be an excellent mechanism to afford the public an opportunity to participate and to be informed about work regarding dispersed renewable generation.