

BEFORE THE MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

Katie J. Sieben
Valerie Means
Matthew Schuerger
Joseph K. Sullivan
John A. Tuma

Chair
Commissioner
Commissioner
Commissioner
Commissioner

In the Matter of the Application of Great River
Energy for a Route Permit for the Reroute of the
115-kV Cedar Lake Transmission Line Project in
Scott and Rice Counties

SERVICE DATE: October 26, 2023

DOCKET NO. ET-2/TL-23-170

The above-entitled matter was considered by the Commission on October 19, 2023, and the following disposition made:

- 1. Required that the environmental assessment evaluate Great River Energy's preferred route and the County Hollows Lane Alternative (Alignment Modification).**
- 2. For the purpose of encouraging alignment modifications within the studied route to mitigate environment and human impacts and to allow impacted landowners to propose alignment modifications for consideration before the public hearing, required that the environmental assessment evaluate an expanded route width between the Cedar Lake Substation and Highway 19. The environmental assessment shall provide an assessment of potential impacts a quarter mile South and West of the proposed alignment from the substation to Highway 19 and a quarter mile to the east of the proposed alignment from the intersection of 270th St. W. and Baseline Road to Highway 19.**
- 3. Required that the environmental assessment include an analysis of a complete under build for the full length of the proposed route paralleling Highway 19 of the existing distribution line that is now located South of Highway 19 or other modifications that co-locate or remove the distribution infrastructure from the route corridor in coordination with the electric distribution provider Minnesota Valley Electric Cooperative.**

The Commission agrees with and adopts the recommendations of the Department of Commerce, which are attached and hereby incorporated into the order.¹ This order shall become effective immediately.

BY ORDER OF THE COMMISSION



Will Seuffert
Executive Secretary



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¹ No party opposed ordering paragraphs 2 and 3 above.



BEFORE THE MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

ENERGY ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW AND ANALYSIS AMENDED COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

IN THE MATTER OF THE GREAT RIVER ENERGY APPLICATION FOR A HVTL ROUTE PERMIT FOR THE CEDAR LAKE REROUTE PROJECT IN SCOTT AND RICE COUNTIES DOCKET No. ET2/TL-23-170

Date: October 10, 2023

Staff: William Cole Storm | bill.storm@state.mn.us | 651-539-1844

Issues Addressed: These amended comments and recommendations address the environmental assessment (EA) scoping process and those alternatives which Department of Commerce staff recommends for inclusion in the scope of the EA.

Tables, Figures, Attachments:

Figure 1: Project Overview Map

Figure 2: Alignment Modification – Country Hollow Lane

Additional documents and information can be found on eDockets <https://www.edockets.state.mn.us/EFiling/search.jsp> (year="23" and number "170")

This document can be made available in alternative formats, i.e., large print or audio tape by calling 651-539-1530.

Introduction and Background

On June 7, 2023, Great River Energy (Applicant or GRE) submitted a high voltage transmission line (HVTL) Route Permit Application (RPA) to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission).¹ The RPA was submitted under the alternative review process (Minnesota Statute 216E.04; Minnesota Rule 7850.2800-3900).

Project Purpose and Description

The Project will replace approximately 4.5 miles of existing 115 kV line connected to the Cedar Lake Substation. The existing 115 kV line is currently installed in the second circuit position on CapX2020 structures 044 through 068 in the Helena to Chub Lake segment of the Brookings to Hampton 345 kV transmission line project. On May 26, 2015, the Commission approved GRE's request for a minor

¹ Great River Energy Cedar Lake Reroute Application, pp. 1-1 through 1-7. June 7, 2023. eDocket No. 20236-196404-02.

alteration to allow the temporary installation of the existing 115 kV line. GRE indicated that use of the existing double circuit structures would be temporary and would continue until such time as the structures are needed to carry a new permanent 345 kV transmission line. At that time, GRE would be required to remove the 115 kV line and develop other means to serve the Cedar Lake substation.

GRE entered into a temporary structure sharing agreement with the CapX2020 owners. The agreement requires GRE to remove the existing 115 kV line when the owners provide written notice specifying the need for the Brookings project second circuit line. On March 29, 2023, the owners provided GRE with notice of termination of the agreement, effective 30 months from the date of the notice.

The current Project is proposed in order to make room for a second 345 kV circuit to be attached to the existing CapX2020 Brookings to Hampton transmission structures. The Project will include construction of a new approximately 6.3-mile 115 kV transmission line.

The transmission line will connect at GRE's existing MV-EVX 115-kV transmission line near the intersection of County Road 23 and Minnesota Highway 19 and extend to the existing Cedar Lake Substation south of County Road 2. The Project will initially operate at 69 kV; designing to 115-kV standards will simplify operating the regional transmission system at 115 kV as electrification and load development increases in the area. Once the transmission line is constructed and connected to the substation, GRE's existing 4.5-mile 115 kV transmission circuit, which is co-located in part on the CapX2020 Brookings to Hampton transmission structures, will be removed (**Figure 1**).

Regulatory Process and Procedures (EA Scoping)

On September 13, 2023, EERA staff filed its *Summary of Scoping Process* to the Commission;² in that filing staff recommended that the Highway 2 Alternative Route, Cedar Lake Substation South Alternative Route Segment, RA3 Alternative Route, and the two Alignment Modifications not be included in the scoping decision for the EA. EERA staff recommended that GRE's preferred route be the sole routing alternative included in the scoping decision for the EA.

On October 3, 2023, EERA staff, along with a representative from Great River Energy (Mark Strohfus), conducted an additional site visit. The purpose of this site visit was to allow EERA staff to reassess routing alternatives for the project.

Country Hollows Lane Alignment Alternative

During the scoping comment period several residents of the Country Hollows Development expressed concern over the potential impacts from the proposed alignment along the northside of Highway 19. The proposed alignment would pass directly over the landscaping at the entrance and more than likely require some tree removal to remain compliant with the NESC standards (**Diagram 1**).³

A possible alternative to mitigate (avoid) this potential impact could be accomplished by a modification to the proposed alignment, while staying in the requested route width. The proposed alignment could be

² EERA Summary of Scoping Process, September 13, 2023. eDocket No. 20239-198916-01.

³ Great River Energy Cedar Lake Reroute Application, pp. 3-1 to 3-2, Appendix A, plate 3/3. June 6, 2023. eDocket No. 20236-196404-01 to 10

shifted to run parallel to the southside of highway 19 just prior to Country Hollow Lane (**Figure 2**), avoiding the landscaping at the entrance to the development.

Diagram 1: Landscaping Country Hollows Development



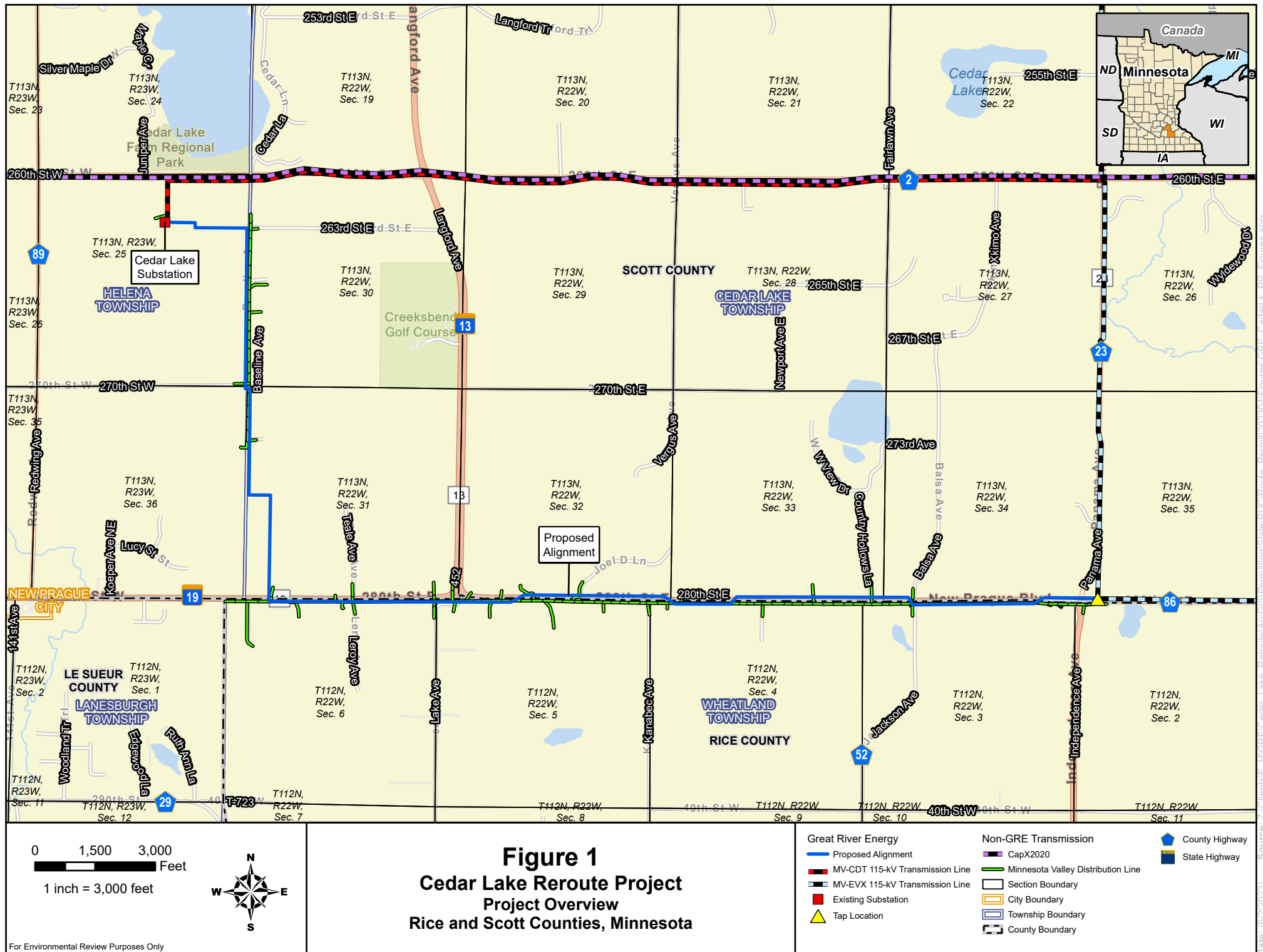
EERA Staff Recommendation

EERA staff continues to recommend that the applicant's preferred route be include in the scope of the EA for the project. EERA staff also recommends that one alignment modification be included in the scope of the EA – the Country Hollows Lane Alignment Alternative.

EERA staff's September 13, 2023, comments and recommendations recommended against an alignment alternative for Country Hollows Lane; however, after an additional site visit and further study, EERA staff now recommends that the Country Hollows Lane Alignment Alternative be included in the scope of the EA.

No other changes to EERA staff's September 13, 2023, comments and recommendations are proposed here.

Figures







0 75 150 Feet
1 inch = 150 feet

For Environmental Review Purposes Only

**Figure 2 Amended Summary
Scoping CLRR Project
Country Hollows Ln Reroute Option
Great River Energy
Rice and Scott Counties, Minnesota**

 Residence	 PWI Waterway	 County Boundary
 Proposed Route	 NWI Wetland	 USFWS Waterfowl Production Area
 Country Hollows Ln Reroute Option	 Parcel Boundary	

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I, Robin Benson, hereby certify that I have this day, served a true and correct copy of the following document to all persons at the addresses indicated below or on the attached list by electronic filing, electronic mail, courier, interoffice mail or by depositing the same enveloped with postage paid in the United States mail at St. Paul, Minnesota.

Minnesota Public Utilities Commission ORDER

Docket Numbers: **ET-2/TL-23-170**

Dated this **26th** day of **October, 2023**

/s/ Robin Benson

First Name	Last Name	Email	Company Name	Address	Delivery Method	View Trade Secret	Service List Name
Jon	Brekke	jbrekke@grenergy.com	Great River Energy	12300 Elm Creek Boulevard Maple Grove, MN 553694718	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-170_Official CC Service List
Generic Notice	Commerce Attorneys	commerce.attorneys@ag.state.mn.us	Office of the Attorney General-DOC	445 Minnesota Street Suite 1400 St. Paul, MN 55101	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_23-170_Official CC Service List
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Generic Notice	Residential Utilities Division	residential.utilities@ag.state.mn.us	Office of the Attorney General-RUD	1400 BRM Tower 445 Minnesota St St. Paul, MN 551012131	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_23-170_Official CC Service List
Will	Seuffert	Will.Seuffert@state.mn.us	Public Utilities Commission	121 7th Pl E Ste 350 Saint Paul, MN 55101	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_23-170_Official CC Service List
Janet	Shaddix Elling	jshaddix@janetshaddix.com	Shaddix And Associates	7400 Lyndale Ave S Ste 190 Richfield, MN 55423	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_23-170_Official CC Service List
Mark	Strohfus	mstrohfus@grenergy.com	Great River Energy	12300 Elm Creek Boulevard Maple Grove, MN 553694718	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-170_Official CC Service List
Suzanne	Todnem	suzanne.todnem@state.mn.us	Office of Administrative Hearings	600 Robert St N PO Box 64620 St. Paul, MN 55164	Electronic Service	Yes	OFF_SL_23-170_Official CC Service List

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Cynthia	Warzecha	cynthia.warzecha@state.mn.us	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	500 Lafayette Road Box 25 St. Paul, MN 55155-4040	Electronic Service	No	OFF_SL_23-170_Official CC Service List