

**Minnesota Public Utilities Commission**  
*Staff Briefing Papers*

---

Meeting Date: November 24, 2014.....Agenda Item #7\*

---

Company: **Great River Energy**

Docket No. **ET2, E015/TL-10-1307**

In the Matter of Great River Energy’s Application for a Route Permit for the Savanna 115 kV Transmission Line in St. Louis and Carlton Counties, Minnesota

Issue(s): Should the Commission approve the alignment deviation from the permitted route?

Staff: Hwikwon Ham | 651-201-2253 | [hwikwon.ham@state.mn.us](mailto:hwikwon.ham@state.mn.us)

---

**I. Relevant Documents**

Great River Energy Petition for a Minor Alteration ..... September 24, 2014  
Notice of Comment Period on Petition.....October 29, 2014  
Department of Commerce Comments and Recommendations.....November 7, 2014

---

The attached materials are work papers of the Commission Staff. They are intended for use by the Public Utilities Commission and are based upon information already in the record unless noted otherwise.

**This document can be made available in alternative formats (e.g., large print or audio) by calling 651.296.0406 (voice). Persons with hearing loss or speech disabilities may call us through their preferred Telecommunications Relay Service.**

## **II. Statement of the Issues**

Should the Commission approve the alignment deviation from the permitted route?

## **III. Background**

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) issued the route permit for the Savanna 115 kV Transmission Line Project on March 7, 2012.

Great River Energy (GRE) filed a petition for a minor alteration on September 24, 2014 to modify the approved route east of Structures 27 through 30 along the proposed Savanna 115 kV transmission line.

On November 7, 2014, the Department of Commerce Energy Environmental Review and Analysis unit (EERA) filed comments.

## **IV. Great River Energy Request**

On September 24, 2014, GRE filed a request to deviate structures 27 through 30 in Cromwell Bulk Substation to the Cromwell City Substation segment from the permitted route to accommodate stakeholder concerns.

## **V. Department of Commerce Energy Environmental Review and Analysis Comments**

The Department of Commerce provided an analysis in its November 7, 2014 comments focused on the anticipated impacts of GRE's proposed project modification based on following factors:

- Human settlements (displacement, noise, cultural values, recreation, public services). The modified route would result in a decrease in the number of residences within 150 feet of the transmission line and decrease the number of parcels crossed.
- Public health and safety.
- Land-based economies (forestry, tourism, and mining).
- Archaeological and historic resources.
- Natural environment (air quality, flora, fauna, wetlands).
- Rare and unique natural resources.
- Electrical system reliability.

EERA stated that the modified route would result in an estimated additional loss of 0.94 acres of crop/grass land and an estimated additional loss of 0.17 acres of upland deciduous forest.

EERA stated that the modified route would not utilize the existing 69kV right-of-way, resulting in approximately 924 feet of new right-of-way.

EERA concluded the requested modifications do not significantly change the human or environmental impact of the project and are, therefore, minor.

EERA recommended the Commission approve GRE's request to modify the permitted route for the Savanna 115 kV transmission line as proposed.

## **VI. Staff Discussion**

Staff generally agrees with EERA's analysis and recommendation. According to GRE, the proposed modification of the permitted route is intended to accommodate stakeholder concerns. GRE further stated that the new location of structures has been discussed with all landowners impacted by the proposed shift and all are in agreement with the new alignment. On October 29, 2014, all impacted landowners were served with the Commission notice soliciting comments. None of the landowners filed any comments by the due date.

**VII. Commission Decision Alternatives**

- A. Approve the alignment deviation from the permitted route as proposed by GRE.
- B. Deny the alignment deviation from the permitted route.
- C. Take some other action.

**Staff Recommendation:** A