

**In the Matter of the Application of Otter Tail Power Company for a Site Permit for the up to 66MW Solway Solar Project in Beltrami County, Minnesota**

**Comments**

**PUC Docket Number: E017/GS-24-309**

LIUNA Minnesota and North Dakota (“LIUNA”) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the site permit application filed by Otter Tail Power for construction of the 66 megawatt (“MW”) Solway Solar Project in Beltrami County. We recommend that the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (“Commission”) approve a site permit for the projects.

LIUNA represents more than 14,000 skilled construction laborers, including many that live in Northwest Minnesota, and many that receive their electric services from OTP. Our members and their families count on affordable and reliable electricity, not only to power their homes but also to serve construction contractors for whom they work, as well as energy-intensive industries that range from mining to manufacturing to refining to pipeline operation.

Like OTP’s Hoot Lake Solar project, Solway Solar has potential to deliver significant energy and socioeconomic benefits to a region of the state that has seen relatively little clean energy development. Based on our members’ experience working on the Hoot Lake project, we expect Solway Solar to provide family-supporting jobs and construction career opportunities that will benefit local workers and communities.

In recently-enacted legislation, including laws requiring 100% clean power and streamlining permitting, Minnesota legislators have made clear that the permitting process for large energy projects approved by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (“Commission”) should prioritize the creation of high-quality jobs and career opportunities for local workers with a focus on construction, specifically adding the following criteria for consideration:

*(14) evaluation of the proposed facility's impact on socioeconomic factors; and*

*(15) evaluation of the proposed facility's employment and economic impacts in the vicinity of the facility site and throughout Minnesota, including the quantity and quality of construction and permanent jobs and their compensation levels. The commission must consider a facility's local employment and economic impacts, and may reject or place conditions on a site or route permit based on the local employment and economic impacts. (Minn. Stat. § 216E.03, Subd. 7)*

We have had the opportunity to discuss construction plans for the project with Otter Tail Power, and value both the open dialogue and the company’s commitment to work with LIUNA to maximize the project’s socioeconomic benefits, including creation of union jobs and career opportunities for local workers. Based on the company’s construction plans, we believe that the project meets the abovementioned statutory requirements for a site permit.

We believe that the application satisfies the requirements of applicable statutes and rules governing the siting of large solar projects, and we urge the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (“Commission”) to accept the applications as complete and allow the applicants to proceed under the alternative review process.

Dated: May 30, 2025

Respectfully Submitted,  
LIUNA Minnesota & North Dakota

By: Kevin Pranis  
Marketing Manager  
81 Little Canada Road  
St. Paul, MN 55117