Road projects scheduled for this season

BY ERIC MATHEWS
Staff Intern

Some state, Koochiching County, and International Falls roads are scheduled for construction this summer.

State

An 11.4 mile stretch of Minnesota Highway 11, west of International Falls will be graded, paved, and culverts replaced, starting July 7. Drivers can expect lane closures throughout the project, a detour which will last approximately 14 days, and delays.

The detour, coming from the west, will direct motorists south onto County Road 10, east onto County Road 1 to Littlefork, and then north to Pelland.

It's not clear on how long the project will last, but the contract, awarded to Davidson Construction Inc. for $6.9 million, is set to last for 70 working days, said Troy Bradfort with the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

"Safety is our number one priority during this project." said Bradfort. "Motorists just need to remember to keep the speed down when construction is around and be careful."

Construction over the next few months will include some parts of Highway 11 east. The construction is being done to upgrade Minnesota, Dakota, and Western Railway gates, which have reached the end of their useful lives. The contract has not yet been awarded, but the project is estimated to cost $325,000, according to the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

The upgrades to the railway crossing will bring increased safety features such as new cantilevers, gates, LED lenses, and upgraded control circuitry, according to Beth Petrowske, MnDOT District 1. The work will be done in the fall over the course of September through November, and motorists will only be inconvenienced by temporary lane closures while construction is ongoing, she said.

Koochiching County is also working on this project by building a bike and pedestrian trail through the crossing. The trail will have gate arms as well.

City

The city of International Falls will reconstruct this summer several roads which are beyond their life expectancies, as a part of regular city maintenance.

Eighteenth Street will be rebuilt from Second Avenue East to Fifth Avenue East, as will Nineteenth Street from Second Avenue East to U.S. Highway 53, and Twentieth Avenue from Shorewood Drive down to the south end of the road.

A water main replacement project is also scheduled for this summer on Fourteenth Avenue from Thirteenth Street to Fifteenth Street. Roads will be patched around town where needed.

The city plans to spend around $1 million on the road projects. Property owners can expect traffic delays, and motorists will be rerouted around construction areas with the use of signs.

County

Koochiching County will only have one sizable road construction project this summer according to county Engineer Joe Sutherland.

County State Aid Highway 107, formerly County Road 107, will be rebuilt from Minnesota Highway 11-71 to County State Aid Highway 2. The road will also be widened, realigned with Twentieth Street, and bike lanes and storm sewer will be added.

Construction on County State Aid Highway 107 take place from August to October. Traffic will be maintained by the contractor of the project while work is ongoing. The county expects to spend anywhere from $2 million-$2.5 million on road construction projects this summer.

Some mill and overlay, and bridge replacement projects may also occur throughout the summer if the county can secure funding.

STAFF PHOTO BY ERIC MATHEWS

Crews work to repave 14th Avenue, causing the road to be closed for a few days this week.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT SCOPING MEETINGS

Issued: June 20, 2014

In the Matter of the Application of Minnesota Power for a Route Permit for the Great Northern Transmission Line

Public Utilities Commission (PUC) Docket Number: E-015/TL-14-21

Burl W. Haar, Executive Secretary
Minnesota Public Utilities Commission

AND

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Minnesota Power proposes to build approximately 220 miles of 500 kilovolt (kV) transmission line from the Manitoba, Canada – Minnesota border to its Blackberry Substation in Itasca County and to expand its Blackberry Substation. The proposed project would be located in Beltrami, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake of the Woods, and Roseau counties.

MEETING INFORMATION

- The meeting starts on time.
- Plan to arrive a few minutes early so you have time to sign in, pick up materials, and find a seat.
- Public Utilities Commission, United States Department of Energy, Department of Commerce, and Minnesota Power staff will present information and answer questions about the permitting process and the project.
- Citizens will have the opportunity to offer oral comments, written comments, or both into the record.
- Citizens who do not wish to speak may submit questions or comments in writing.
- Comments received at the meeting and during the comment period will be used to develop the environmental impact statement for this project.
- The meeting will last until everyone at the meeting has the opportunity to speak, or until the scheduled end time, whichever comes first.
- The same information will be presented at each meeting.

SUBMIT COMMENTS

Topics Open for Public Comment:

- What human and environmental impacts of the proposed transmission line should be studied in the environmental impact statement prepared for this project?
- Are there any specific methods to address these impacts that should be studied in the environmental impact statement?
- Are there any alternative routes or route segments that should be considered to address these impacts?

Comment Period: June 20, 2014 through August 15, 2014 at 4:30pm.

Submit Public Comments:

Bill Storm, Environmental Review Manager
Minnesota Department of Commerce
85 7th Place East, Suite 500, St. Paul MN 55101
Email: bill.storm@state.mn.us | Fax: 651-539-1549
Online: http://mn.gov/commerce/energyfacilities/#comment

Please include the PUC Docket Number (14-21) in all communications.

Important: *Comments will be made available to the public via the Public Utilities Commission's and Department of Commerce's websites, except in limited circumstances consistent with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act. Personally identifying information is not edited or deleted from submissions.*

HOW TO LEARN MORE

Department of Commerce Project Website: http://mn.gov/commerce/energyfacilities/Docket.html?Id=33847

Project Mailing List: Sign up to receive notices about project milestones and opportunities to participate (meetings, comment periods, etc.). Contact docketing.puc@state.mn.us or 651-201-2204 with the docket number (14-21), your name, mailing address, and email address.

Full Case Record: All documents filed in this docket are available online at mn.gov/puc. Select "Search eDockets", enter the year (14) and docket number (21), select Search.

Subscribe to the Docket: Subscribe to receive email notifications when new documents are filed. *Note - subscribing may result in a large number of emails.*

1. Go to: mn.gov/puc
2. Select green box Subscribe to a Docket
3. Type your e-mail address
4. For Type of Subscription, select Docket Number
5. For Docket Number, select 14 in the first box, type 21 in the second box
6. Select Add to List
7. Select Save

PROJECT CONTACT

Public Utilities Commission Public Advisor: Tracy Smetana at consumer.puc@state.mn.us, 651-296-0406 or 1-800-657-3782

Public Utilities Commission Energy Facilities Planner: Michael Kaluzniak at mike.kaluzniak@state.mn.us or 651-201-2257

Department of Commerce Environmental Review Manager Bill Storm at bill.storm@state.mn.us, 651-539-1844 or 1-800-657-3794

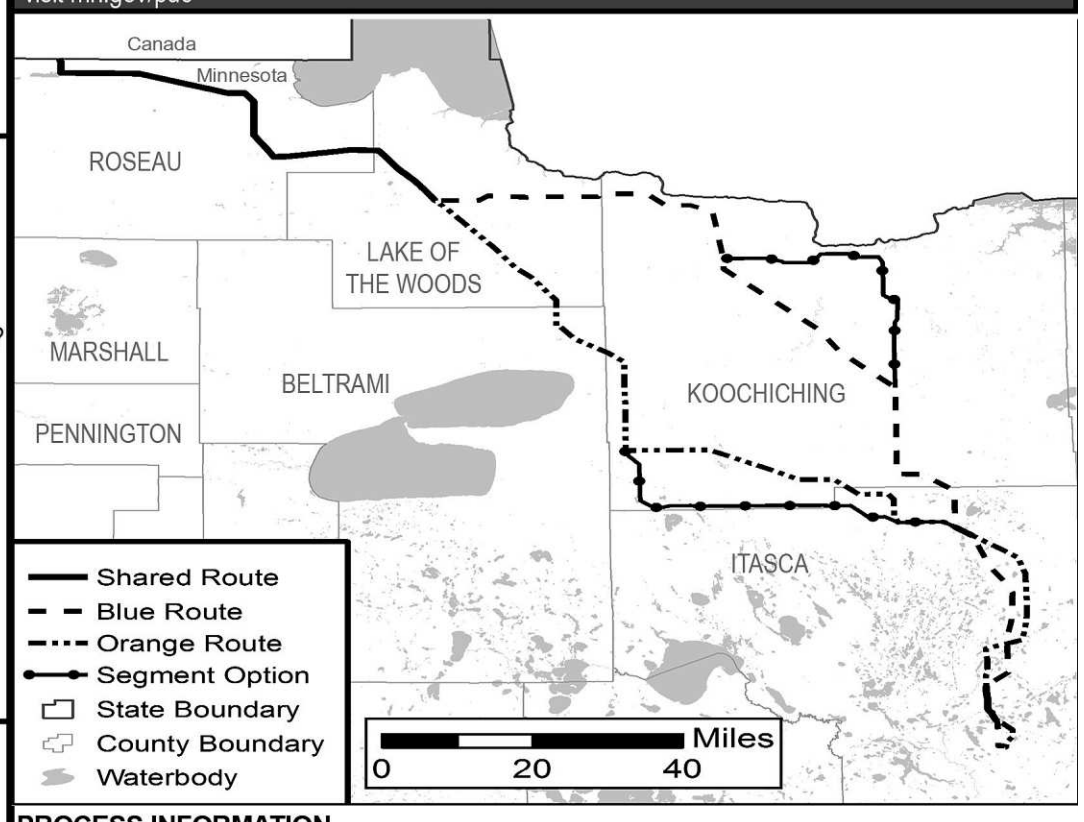
Minnesota Power Project Contact: Jim Atkinson at jbatkinson@mnpower.com or 218-355-3561

The route permit application is available at the following public libraries:

- Baudette
- Blackduck
- Bovey
- Calumet
- Coleraine
- Duluth
- Grand Rapids
- Greenbush
- International Falls
- Marble
- Northome
- Roseau
- Warroad
- Williams

COUNTY	CITY	MEETING LOCATION	DATE AND TIME
Roseau	Roseau	Roseau Civic Center 121 Center Street E	Wednesday, July 16, 2014 11:00am – 3:00pm
Lake of the Woods	Baudette	Lake of the Woods School 236 15th Ave SW	Wednesday, July 16, 2014 6:00pm – 10:00pm
Koochiching	Littlefork	Littlefork Community Center 220 Main St	Thursday, July 17, 2014 11:00am – 3:00pm
Koochiching	International Falls	AmericInn 1500 Highway 71	Thursday, July 17, 2014 6:00pm – 10:00pm
Beltrami	Kelliher	Kelliher Public School 345 4th Street NW	Wednesday, July 23, 2014 11:00am –3:00pm
Itasca	Bigfork	Bigfork School 100 Huskie Blvd	Wednesday, July 23, 2014 6:00pm – 10:00pm
Itasca	Grand Rapids	Sawmill Inn 2301 S Highway 169	Thursday, July 24, 2014 11:00am – 3:00pm
Itasca	Grand Rapids	Sawmill Inn 2301 S Highway 169	Thursday, July 24, 2014 6:00pm – 10:00pm

Bad weather? Find out if a meeting is canceled. Call (toll-free) 1-855-731-6208 or 651-201-2213 or visit mn.gov/puc



PROCESS INFORMATION

Before the project can be built, the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) must approve a certificate of need and a route permit. Since the project would cross the international boundary between Minnesota and Canada, a Presidential Permit from the United States Department of Energy is also required. The Commission accepted Minnesota Power's route permit application in June 2014. This means the company submitted all the information required to begin the review process. The Commission's decision-making process takes about 15 months.

Minnesota Power has submitted a certificate of need application for this project. The certificate of need application is PUC Docket Number E-015/CN-12-1163. The certificate of need application is being handled separately from the route permit application.

The Department of Commerce Energy Environmental Review and Analysis staff and the U.S. Department of Energy will work together to prepare an environmental impact statement for this project. The environmental impact statement will review the potential human and environmental impacts of the proposed project and alternatives, as well as ways to address impacts.

The Department of Commerce and United States Department of Energy will hold public meetings on the draft environmental impact statement after it is issued. Citizens will be able to ask questions and submit comments about the draft environmental impact statement. The final environmental impact statement will address issues and concerns raised about the draft environmental impact statement. After the draft environmental impact statement is issued, an Administrative Law Judge will hold public hearings. Citizens will be able to speak at the hearings, ask questions, and submit comments about the project.

The judge will use all the information in the record, including written comments and comments received at the public hearings, to write a report for the Commission. The report will include findings, conclusions, and recommendations about this project. After receiving the judge's report, the Commission will schedule a meeting to make a final decision on the route permit for this project, expected by October 2015.

Eminent Domain: If the Commission issues a route permit, Minnesota Power may use the power of eminent domain to take land for this project.

This document can be made available in alternative formats (e.g., large print or audio) by calling 651-296-0406 (voice). Persons with hearing or speech disabilities may call us through their preferred Telecommunications Relay Service. If any reasonable accommodation is needed to enable you to fully participate in these meetings (e.g., sign language, foreign language interpreter, large print materials), please contact the Commission at 651-296-0406 or 1-800-657-3782 at least one week in advance of the meeting.

Minnesota Power Project Information: www.greatnortherntransmissionline.com or 1-877-657-9934

Minnesota Statutes and Rules: This route permit is being reviewed under Minnesota Statute 216E and Minnesota Rules Chapter 7850, available at www.revisor.mn.gov.