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Rail proposal proposes relief

BY SPENSER BICKETT Staff Writer

State and federal lawmakers have joined forces to announce a plan to improve the nation's busiest international rail crossing.

U.S. Rep. Rick Nolan, Gov. Mark Dayton, state Sen. Tom Bakk, state Rep. David Dill and Minnesota Department of Transportation Commissioner Charlie Zelle announced their support to include improvements for the Ranier rail crossing in the state bonding bill.

Bakk is introducing a bonding provisions in the state Senate. The bill calls for a county road extension and overpass to

solve the issue of homes in Ranier being cut off from the rest of the city while trains block the Spruce Street crossing. This issue is commonly cited by local emergency response officials as a danger in case of fire or medical emergency.

The connecting road would run between Highway 11 East and County Road 20, Ranier Mayor Dennis Wagner said. It would start on County Road 20 just south of City Beach, and meet up with Highway 11 just past the rail overpass.

"That little bypass road would certainly give Ranier some relief," Wagner said.

Rail to A7 >

RANIER CITY COUNCIL

Council adopts updated land use ordinance

BY SPENSER BICKETT Staff Writer

The Ranier City Council Tuesday approved a resolution adopting an updated land use ordinance and zoning map.

Two public hearings and an open forum were held regarding the unified land use ordinance and zoning map, and substantial public input was received. Now that the ordinance has been approved, a summary will be published and filed with Koochiching County, and a land use

planning commission will be appointed. The ordinance will take effect May 15.

The city's old land use ordinances hadn't been updated following the 2010 annexation of French, Jamison, Riverside Additions and Brennan's Beach. The new ordinance provides a more cohesive land use plan for the future, as well as preserves the historic character of Ranier by including a historic town center district.

Council to A7 >

Caleb Wolden, left, and Connor Mann entertain a large crowd of family, friends and community members Wednesday at Falls High School during the fifth and sixth grade spring concert series.



Local students kicked off spring concert season Wednesday at Falls High School. Fifth- and sixth-grade band and choir students performed in the morning with additional performances from the junior and senior high groups.

Elementary students will take the stage May 1 at Falls High School with their concerts.



Martylyn Norgart, left, and Gracie Bowles play the flute during Wednesday's concert.

STAFF PHOTOS BY EMILY GEDDE

Upcoming updates on power line project

BY SPENSER BICKETT Staff Writer

The next round of open houses for the Great Northern Transmission Line is coming up at the beginning of May.

The proposed Minnesota Power power line would run from a substation near Grand Rapids, through Koochiching County, and into Manitoba. The project is currently in the midst of state and federal permitting processes, with decisions on the review processes expected later this year.

The upcoming open houses in Koochiching County are:

- Littlefork: 5-7 p.m. Wednesday, May 6 at the Littlefork Community Building.
- Northome: 5-7 p.m. Monday, May 11 at the Northome Public School.

The purpose of the open houses is to share the scoping decision routes, which were identified

during the scoping process and are currently being studied as part of the environmental impact statement process. Both of the routes try to follow existing corridors as much as possible, which is state policy.

The scoping decision routes include various route alternatives and alignment modifications beyond the routes filed by Minnesota Power in the route permit application in April 2014. The current project schedule shows construction beginning in late 2016, with June 2020 as the required in-service date.

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission will decide the final route through the state application process and the U.S. Department of Energy must decide whether to approve a Presidential Permit to cross the border after completing the federal National Environmental Policy Act process.

The state and federal review

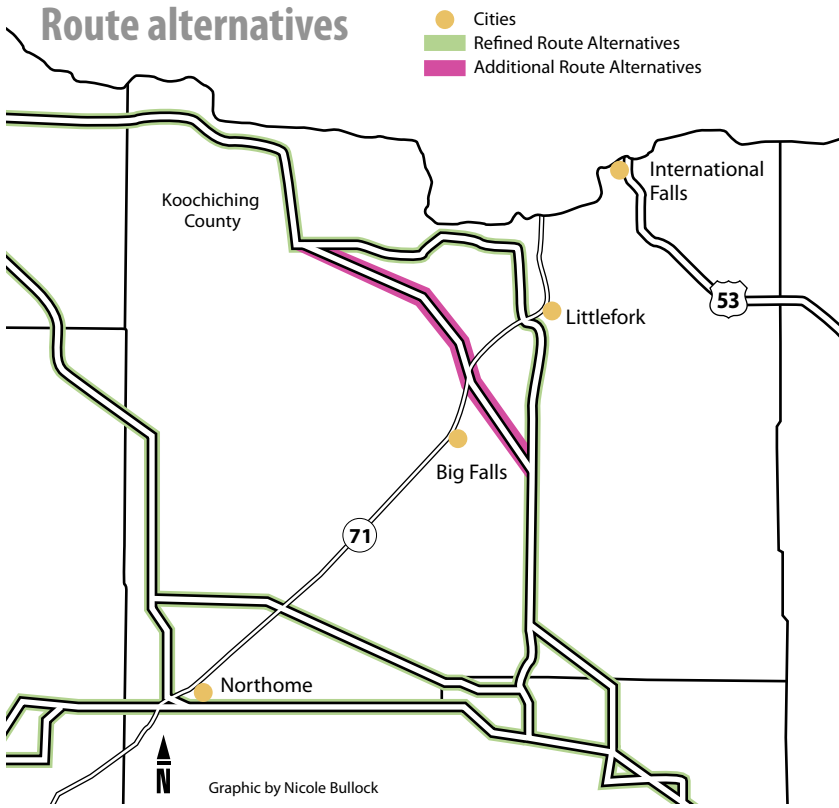
organizations will conduct one environmental impact statement, which will speed up the review process.

The power line, announced publicly in February 2012, is a proposed 500 kV single-circuit transmission line, which will run approximately 220 miles depending on the final route selection. The line will be capable of transmitting at least 883 MW of clean, flexible hydropower and is a part of Minnesota Power's Energy Forward initiative.

Minnesota Power would pay property taxes on the line, and payments would begin in 2018, with the full amount coming in 2021. The company is expecting to pay \$40,000-\$70,000 per mile annually on the line.

Six scoping meetings in July in Roseau, Baudette, Littlefork, International Falls, Kelliher,

Power line to A7 >



This map shows the proposed route alternatives for the Great North Transmission Line running through Koochiching County.

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