

POWERLINE

► continued from A1

the company to get about one-third of its electricity from coal, one-third from renewable sources and one-third from natural gas.

“Our concern is that (coal) will become much more expensive in the coming years with carbon taxes and other legislation borne at the federal and state level and we’re trying to get ahead of that issue,” he said. “We’re trying to reduce our reliance on it.”

In addition, he said the project would help to mitigate the negative effect on rates of continuing to produce electricity with too much coal. “We think over the long term, it will have a positive effect in keeping rates reasonable,” he said.

At the same time, he said the project would help keep up with increased power demands, much of which is coming from the taconite plants on the Iron Range, where about 60 percent of Minnesota Power’s sales are generated.

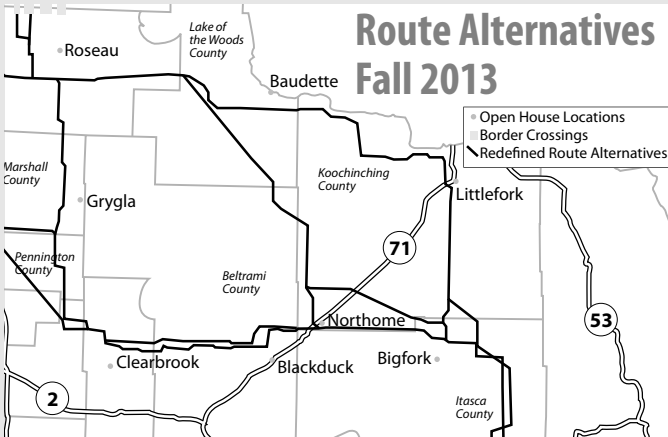
Meanwhile, Atkinson discussed different aspects of the proposal as he pointed to each of the placards at the community building.

“We’re going to be deciding what we will propose in our application for a route permit over the next four to five months,” he said.

Similar open house meetings have been held in three different rounds at different sites over the last year. Prior to that, stakeholder meetings with local leaders, resource managers and others were invited.

Response to the proposal in the Littlefork area has been smaller than in other

Route Alternatives Fall 2013



Open House Locations
Border Crossings
Redefined Route Alternatives

areas because an alternative route avoids the city and the population density in the outskirts of the community is low, he said.

“The folks that come are very interested and given us information we wouldn’t have otherwise found out,” he said. “That’s what it’s all about.”

As an example, he said area residents identified the location of two private airstrips that were not revealed in maps and other data used by the company. And those two areas were eliminated from the proposed route.

He said many questions surround the impact of the transmission line on property use. Towers for the transmission line would be located in a 200-foot right-of-way, or about 24 acres per mile, which Atkinson said could continue to be used in many situations. While tall trees would be cleared from the right-of-way, farming and other uses would still be allowed. He said in agricultural areas, self-supporting towers would be used to avoid the need for guide wires sticking out into the fields. The towers would be on average one-quarter mile apart, and as much as 1,450 feet apart in some cases.

Some Koochiching Coun-

ty residents have publicly questioned how the proposed project would benefit property owners and the local area, should the local route be selected.

“Minnesota Power pays full market value for its easements, so we do a lot of research at the county level,” Atkinson said. “We have to pay for every square foot of right-of-way we acquire.”

In addition, he said the company pays personal property taxes on its line. He estimated that \$40,000 to \$60,000 per mile per year would be paid on the proposed line.

“That’s a substantial input into the local levy. Assuming the levy is just not increased to do more things, it should have a significant off-setting effect on homeowners and landowners,” he said.

The goal now, said Atkinson, is to get as much information as possible to help the company decide which of the route alternatives to move forward.

“The things we heard in the past is because of the remoteness of the corridors are in this area had to do with impacts to hunting land and the private airstrips and things like that,” he said. “We’ve made



STAFF PHOTO BY LAUREL BEAGER

Mike Hanson points a map as he gets and gives information about a proposed route for the transmission line. Hanson said there will plenty more opportunity for input as the proposed project goes through federal and state permitting processes. And, should the local route be selected, a county hearing would be held.

several adjustments along this route to accommodate the concerns people have.”

He said the route proposed near Littlefork mostly follows an existing power line.

Atkinson said three major permits are needed before the project is built. Public hearings and comment opportunities are included in the processes.

Minnesota Power has a purchase agreement with electricity provider Manitoba Hydro, which calls for the transmission line to be operational by June 1, 2020.

To get to that point, the company must jump several federal, state and local hurdles.

The company will in the next few weeks, submit to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission an application for a certificate of need, a mechanism to prove the line is in the public interest and needed, Atkinson said.

Next, a route permit will

dents, and he noted that the proposed route has been modified as a result of local input to avoid most residences.

“And it may not even come through here,” he said, adding that Canada is going through the same process and the route to cross into the U.S. has not yet been determined.

And should the route near Littlefork be selected, it will have to be approved by the Koochiching County Planning Commission.

“There will be plenty of opportunity for more comment,” he said of the three levels of government permitting needed.

Steve Blair of the county’s Environmental Services Department, has attended all public gatherings about the project to stay informed in case the Littlefork area route is selected.

“A local conditional use permit would be required,” he said, which would involve a public hearing in front of the Planning Commission. The county board would have the ultimate decision on granting a CUP, if recommended by the commission, said Blair.

Blair notified Minnesota Power staff Wednesday that the proposed route appears to go through a privately owned wetland bank that is now under a conservation easement “so their not supposed to disturb it,” he said.

Meanwhile, said he’s not heard much opposition to the proposal, but said transmission lines can be considered “ugly” in a place known for its natural beauty.

“The only comment I’ve heard is ‘why can’t we tap into it,’” said Blair, noting that some rural electricity users pay very high rates.

KEDA

► continued from A1

Former Congressman Jim Oberstar in July, toured the FTZ among other sites, and offered ideas how to make it “more attractive” to potential clients.

Wednesday, Nevanen said he researched what had been done in 2009 when an application for shovel-ready designation to the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development was last considered.

“We essentially compiled most of the information necessary to complete the

application, but stopped short due to the issue of rock removal,” he said. “If need be, I could have the application done today.”

Nevanen said the board needs to consider what direction to take with removing the rock at the FTZ, which brought the development of the site to a halt.

“Do we want to sit on it? Do we want to move on it? We just need to figure out what to do with the rock at this point,” he said.

Bob Anderson, International Falls mayor and KEDA member, the needs of a potential client must be considered.

“If we need to run natural gas and that natural gas line is a mile away...we need to know we can do that,” he said. “If we need to get water and sewer...we need to know that. We should be listing all these things so we have a good understanding of what it’s going to take. As the years go on, we can move on some of those items and move on it.”

Nevanen said estimates have already been secured on what it would cost and take to bring utilities to the site.

Wade Pavleck, Koochiching County commissioner and board member, said

there are a lot of shovel-ready sites that sit idle and he wanted to be sure the FTZ would have interested clients before the board moves too far.

Also Wednesday, board members discussed the ongoing Island View sewer project. The shovel-ready project has had many ups and downs since its beginning, and KEDA members are hopeful state bonding money from the 2014 legislative session will give the project the boost it needs.

Pavleck said local lawmakers have assured him the money will be secured next year.

“There are people up there waiting and hauling their sewage,” he said. “The businesses up there can’t go on like that and we can’t afford to lose any more businesses.”

The county has paid for all the engineering to the site, and the goal is to get enough money to run the main lines all the way to Sha Sha Resort.

“We’re still hopeful,” Pavleck said of gaining a federal contribution.

Nevanen reported Northome city officials and the current owner of the Northome Healthcare Center have reached a tentative agreement of transferring

the facility back to the community.

A shortage of residents, causing the loss of about \$1.2 million over the last five years, led the management of the Northome Healthcare Center to close the facility’s doors earlier this year.

Nevanen said officials involved hope to have the transaction complete before the city’s next council meeting.

“I’ve been involved in preliminary discussions with several entities regarding the facility, as well as looking into resources to conduct a general assessment of the building,” Nevanen said.



STOP IN AND CHECK OUT OUR DAILY SPECIALS!

PIZZA BARN

Pizza • Tacos • Subs • Soups

Monday-Friday 9am-7pm
Saturday 11am-7pm – Sunday Closed
1111 3rd St., Int’l Falls
283-4946
Forestland Sales & Service

Set Pain Straight

with *QUALITY*
Chiropractic Care

- All Chiropractic Needs
- Massage by Marie Milan
- Acupuncture for: Shingles, Fibromialgia, Arthritis, Chronic Pain, Insomnia, Hot Flashes/Night Sweats




CHIROPRACTIC UP NORTH

DR. GORDON ROUTIER
MARIE MILAN, C.M.T.
2205 2nd Ave. West
Int’l Falls, MN • 218-283-9000

SURPRISE RETIREMENT PARTY

For

ROGER HANKS



On Sept 28 at 3622 County Road 9
Dinner From 1 pm. to 5 pm.

Do you have one of the following health insurance providers?

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota
Medica • HealthPartners®
U-Care for Seniors • SilverSneakers®

If your answer is yes, you may be eligible for a fitness rewards program that pays you back for working out or a free membership if you are eligible for SilverSneakers.

Bring your insurance card into Stride during staffed hours (7am-8pm M-F) to find out which option is available for you!

FEDERAL EMPLOYEES
You are also eligible for a reduced rate membership through the Blue Cross Blue Shield Federal Employees Program. Ask us for details!



Stride Fitness & Health

Located at 10 Shorewood Dr.
International Falls, Minnesota
Phone: 218.285.2901

Don’t just search for any job.
Find one that’s right for you!

I was wasting my time looking at one irrelevant job listing after another—until I discovered job matching. Now, I can focus on the job opportunities that are a real fit.



Try Real-Time Job Matching™ and get hired fast on www.BigFishJobs.net



BIG FISH JOBS

“Land a Jobber”
bigfishjobs.net