



Hiawatha Project Questions and Answers

Xcel Energy is proposing major improvements to its electric infrastructure in south Minneapolis to meet increasing demand for electricity in the region spurred by a growing population and economic growth. We're calling this package of improvements the Hiawatha Project.

Here are answers to some questions you might have regarding the proposed improvements.

What is a transmission line?

A transmission line is a set of wires, called conductors, that carries electric power from generating plants to the substations that deliver power to customers. At a generating plant, electric power is “stepped up” to several thousand volts by a transformer and delivered to the transmission line. At the end of the transmission line, the power is stepped down to a lower voltage by a transformer at a substation and delivered to a distribution line. The distribution line carries the power to the customer, where a final transformer steps down the power to the necessary voltage to operate lights, appliances, computers and other equipment.

What causes the need for a new transmission line?

Typically, the need is triggered by growth of electric load. As load grows, existing transmission lines become inadequate and may overload or provide insufficient voltage to customers. Another reason for new transmission is to replace old lines that are in poor condition and are no longer capable of reliable service.

Why does South Minneapolis need a new transmission line?

The existing electric infrastructure serving south Minneapolis was put in place 50 years ago. It's a distribution system designed and installed in the 1940s and 1950s, when facilities were built to handle smaller load densities, and is insufficient to meet demand for this area. There is no major transmission line directly serving the area today.

What is being proposed to improve the system?

Our proposed project involves construction of one substation near the Hiawatha corridor and another in the Midtown area, connected by two 1.25-mile, 115-kilovolt transmission power supply lines. The two lines may be located on the same corridor.

Where will the line be located?

Generally, the line will be located in an area extending to the west from a new substation on Hiawatha Avenue to a second new substation in the Midtown area. The exact location will

be determined during the routing and permitting process with input from various stakeholders, including the City of Minneapolis and area neighborhoods.

Who will benefit from the transmission improvements?

Residents and businesses in the south Minneapolis area.

How much will these improvements cost?

Approximately \$15 million

When will the improvements be made?

Xcel Energy is proposing to start construction in October 2009 and be complete by June 2010.

Will the new line be safe?

Every effort is made to ensure safety in construction, operation and maintenance of transmission lines. Lines and line structures are designed to withstand extreme weather conditions. Protective devices at terminals on the lines stop the flow of electricity under any abnormal operating circumstances. Utility practices meet or exceed standards set by the national electric safety codes and safety codes adopted by local government.

What about EMF?

Electric and magnetic fields (EMF) are created by any wire conducting electricity, including transmission lines, household appliances, computers, entertainment systems and other equipment. These fields are strongest close to their source, so the farther you are away from the source the amount of EMF reaching your body will be substantially less. Subsequently, EMF exposure from transmission lines, which are high in the air or underground, is minimal. And most research reviewed by scientific organizations and federal agencies has concluded that EMF does not pose a threat to human health.

What determines whether a transmission line is overhead or underground?

There are several factors, including cost and complexity of installation and repairs. Additional information about overhead vs. underground lines is available in a separate fact sheet produced by Xcel Energy.

Why can't conservation measures be used to eliminate the need for this project?

Voluntary conservation programs offered to customers are currently in use by many residents within the Minneapolis area. Nearly half of all eligible customers in south Minneapolis are participating in the Saver's Switch program (approx. 12,000 customers). This percentage is comparable to participation rates statewide. However, even a sizeable increase in program participation would not sufficiently offset projected demand in the area. Xcel energy makes energy conservation and efficiency programs available to business customers to help them improve the performance and efficiency of their electric equipment, thereby reducing their energy use. Unfortunately, expansion of these energy conservation programs will not adequately address south Minneapolis' looming capacity deficiencies.

Who can I contact for more information about the Hiawatha project?

For further information, contact Pam Rasmussen, Xcel Energy Siting and Permitting Supervisor, at 1-800-238-7968 or pamela.jo.rasmussen@xcelenergy.com.

