



**Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission  
Special Meeting – October 16, 2023, 3:00 p.m.  
Capitol 123/Zoom Hybrid  
DISCUSSION NOTES – Draft**

**Commissioners Present**

Sally Fineday – Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids  
Kate Carlson – Hastings to Iowa Border  
Sen. John Hoffman  
Paul Hugunin – Agriculture Appointee  
Lisa Havelka – Tourism Appointee  
David Kelliher – Historical Society Appointee  
Marni Karnowski – Transportation Appointee  
Anne Lewis – At Large Member

**Technical Advisors/Staff Present**

Carol Zoff – Transportation  
Peter MacDonagh - Transportation  
Michelle Yurich – LCC  
Megan Voelke – LCC

Sally Olson - LCC  
Chris Miller – MN-MRPC Staff

**Members/Technical Advisors Absent**

Megan Christianson, Grand Rapids to Brainerd  
Karl Samp, Brainerd to Elk River  
John Anfinson, Elk River to Hastings  
Sen. Karin Housley  
Rep. Sydney Jordan  
Rep. Leigh Finke  
Grant Wilson – Natural Resources Appointee  
Kelli Bruns – Natural Resources  
Tucker Blythe – National Park Service

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Members in attendance participated in general discussion related to the agenda with no action taken. The topic will be forwarded to the November 16 Quarterly Meeting of the MN-MRPC.

**Northland Reliability Project Overview**

The Northland Reliability Transmission Line's proposed route would cross the Great River Road at Itasca County Road 3 and Crow Wing County Road 11. As recommended at the August 17 MN-MRPC meeting, a briefing was held for Regional Commissioners closest to the proposed Great River Road crossing areas. The recommendation was to prepare comments for MN-MRPC consideration. Draft content was defined.

**Review Draft Comments**

Draft comments were provided for review. Public meetings and a written comment period were announced by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission and Minnesota Department of Commerce on October 10, the announcement includes a series of questions to consider, and the comment period closes November 21. Discussion followed.

- A recommendation was made to add a comparison point (person, vehicle) for scale on the graphic showing sizes of transmission line towers.
- The National Scenic Byway Foundation held a Protecting Scenic Viewsheds webinar on October 11. Questions were raised about multi-state responses to proposed transmission lines with no examples noted by others on the webinar. An example of a finish treatment on towers to better blend with background areas was shared by a participant. <https://www.natina.com/project-item/natural-looking-lattice-towers-in-virginia/>
- A suggestion was made to clarify that All-American Road designation is part of the Federal Highway Administration National Scenic Byways Program.
- Focus was confirmed to be on MN-MRPC comments only since each member agency will be following their own processes.
- A question was raised on possible impact to tribal lands including 1854 ceded territory. Sally Fineday offered to request information on this, to be shared back with the commission.
- A question was raised regarding maintenance of the tower structures over time, including degradation of ground areas around towers. The Department of Natural Resources might have information on what they have seen with other projects and/or this can be included in the commission's comments.
- It would be helpful to have past examples of commission comments and a comparison of how the proposed towers of the Northland Reliability Project compare to the towers constructed for CapX2020.

**Public Testimony**

There was no pre-registration received for public testimony.

**Next Steps**

Suggested edits will be made to draft comments and the updated version will be included in the next meeting packet for consideration. It was noted that additional projects coming soon may also be of interest to the commission related to possible Great River Road impacts, including the Xcel Energy Mankato – Mississippi River Transmission Project and the Alexandria to Big Oaks Transmission Project. Any comments the commission may choose to make on the Northland Reliability Project could serve as the model for other project comments. Comments made in the past on similar types of projects will be summarized as resource material.

**Next Meeting**

November 16, 2023, 2:00 – 4:30 p.m.  
Capitol Room 123 and Zoom

**Adjournment**

Discussion was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.