

DATE

ADDRESSEE

ADDRESS

EMAIL

RE: TITLE

Dear NAME,

The Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission (MN-MRPC) submits the comments below regarding the Gopher to Badger Link transmission line project. Our comments focus on the mission of the MN-MRPC and National Scenic Byway Intrinsic Qualities as defined by the Federal Highway Administration.

As established under Minnesota Statute 161.1419, the MN-MRPC's mission is to promote, preserve and enhance the resources of the Mississippi River Valley and to develop the highways and amenities of the Great River Road, which holds All-American Road status under the Federal Highway Administration's National Scenic Byways Program. The Great River Road has achieved this esteemed designation because it possesses characteristics of national significance demonstrating intrinsic qualities in at least two of the following areas – archaeological; cultural; historic; natural; recreational; and scenic.

The Great River Road qualified as an All-American Road for its scenic and historic intrinsic qualities. The All-American Road designation is the highest level of National Scenic Byways. There are only 44 in the United States, and eight of those represent Mississippi River states. Nationally and in Minnesota, the Mississippi River Parkway is charged with protecting the byway, its intrinsic qualities, and the river it celebrates for current and future byway travelers and residents.

The Gopher to Badger Link transmission line project route has potential impacts to the Minnesota Great River Road. Our initial review indicates that the proposed 765/161 kV double-circuit transmission line route along the State Highway 26 section in the MariBell Segment of the project will alter the scenic intrinsic qualities of the Great River Road and has the potential to impact historic intrinsic qualities. We ask that decision makers and project applicants utilize all possible strategies to avoid, minimize and mitigate any impact to the Great River Road and exercise diligence in assessing potential impacts to it.

Specifically, the MN-MRPC requests additional information and provides initial mitigation recommendations as follows.

Additional Information:

- A video or photo visual impact simulation of the proposed lines (including structure options that may minimize visual impacts), and associated vegetation impact where the proposed route crosses the Great River Road or is within the Great River Road viewshed.
- Add figures of the size of a person or vehicle for scale comparison to graphic showing 115 kV, 230 kV and proposed 765/161 kV double-circuit transmission line.
- Information on how structures will be maintained including addressing potential degradation of ground area surrounding poles.

Mitigation:

- Minimization of tree and vegetation removal.
- Restoration of disturbed areas with native/shrubby vegetation.
- Poles set back as far away from the road as practical.

We appreciate your consideration and offer our commissioners and technical advisors to provide further information as the process continues. Please add the MN-MRPC to your stakeholder list for communications as this project continues and keep us informed of actions taken.

We know that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Wisconsin Great River Road have submitted comments, and we urge Dairyland Power to address those comments to the fullest extent possible.

Sincerely,

NAME

Attach FWS and WI GRR comments