



MP, Wisconsin utility plan new transmission line

Wisconsin Public Service Corporation (NYSE: WPS) and Minnesota Power, Inc. (NYSE: MPL) have announced a plan to construct a 345-kilovolt transmission line from Wausau, Wis. to Duluth, Minn., a distance of about 250 miles.

The proposal, called "Power Up Wisconsin," is a direct response to Governor Tommy Thompson's call to address the pressing need for more dependable electricity in Wisconsin and the Upper Midwest.

"This transmission line as proposed by Wisconsin Public Service and Minnesota Power will go a long way toward assuring Wisconsin residents will have affordable energy while at the same time helping to improve electric reliability," said Governor Thompson. "In addition, it will help bring low cost electricity into the state which is necessary to support economic growth and the creation of new jobs."

"We are pleased to be moving forward with this project to improve the dependability of the electric system in the Upper Midwest," said Patrick Schrickel, president and chief operating officer, Wisconsin Public Service Corporation.

"Because our power systems are interconnected, when Wisconsin has a problem, Minnesota has a problem," said Robert D. Edwards, president of Minnesota Power's electric operations. "This line will mean more reliable service for our customers in Wisconsin and Minnesota."

Utility engineers are finalizing possible routes for the line with the goal of using existing rights-of-way where possible. The plan will be submitted to the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin and the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board when construction permit applications are filed this summer. These filings begin the formal regulatory process, which includes hearings and public meetings.

Depending on siting and regulatory review and approval, Mr. Schrickel and Mr. Edwards emphasized that the line could be in service during 2002 at an estimated cost of \$125–\$175 million.

-The Wausau-Duluth line is designed to strengthen the regional electric network and would complement the proposed Chisago-Apple River line which is intended to primarily serve local needs in east central Minnesota and northwestern Wisconsin. Both Minnesota Power and Wisconsin Public Service continue to support the Chisago-Apple River project because of its importance to the electric system.

Wisconsin Public Service Corporation, headquartered in Green Bay, provides electricity and natural gas to 400,000 customers in a 19-county area in north-central and northeastern Wisconsin and a portion of Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

Minnesota Power, Inc. is a diversified services company with corporate headquarters in Duluth, Minnesota. In addition to providing low-cost electric service in northeastern and central Minnesota, a subsidiary of Minnesota Power, Superior Water, Light and Power, provides electricity, natural gas and water to customers in Superior and adjacent areas in northwestern Wisconsin.