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Minnesota Power's Great Northern Transmission Line Reaches Another Milestone with Release of Final Environmental Impact Statement

DULUTH, Minn.--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- Minnesota Power announced today that the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and the Minnesota Department of Commerce (DOC) have issued the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Great Northern Transmission Line (GNTL).

The issuance of the FEIS concludes the successful review of the project's environmental impacts under the National Environmental Policy Act and clears the way for a route permit decision by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (MPUC) in early 2016. DOE's proposed action is the issuance of a Presidential Permit that would authorize Minnesota Power to construct, operate and maintain the Great Northern Transmission Line, which would cross the Canadian-U.S. international border. Minnesota Power is a utility division of ALLETE (NYSE:ALE).

The Great Northern Transmission Line will be a 500-kilovolt, 220-mile line that will run from the Canadian-U.S. border northwest of Roseau, Minn., to an expanded Blackberry electric substation east of Grand Rapids, Minn. The international power line will be used to deliver hydroelectric power purchased from Manitoba Hydro to serve Minnesota Power's customers and the region. The transmission line is a critical component of Minnesota Power's EnergyForward strategy to reduce carbon emissions and assure continued reliability and affordable rates while diversifying its energy portfolio to a one-third renewable, one-third coal and one-third natural gas energy mix. On the Canadian side, on Sept. 23, 2015, Manitoba Hydro filed its environmental documents and final preferred route with provincial regulators as part of the process for securing a license for the transmission line in Manitoba.

The transmission line's FEIS is the result of intensive review and analysis, an effort launched by the DOE and DOC in July 2014 with scoping meetings. A draft Environmental Impact Statement was released in June 2015. Agencies formally cooperating with the DOE and DOC were the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians and the Environmental Protection Agency. The Great Northern's FEIS is available at <http://www.greatnortherneis.org>.

"We are extremely satisfied that, after almost two years of comprehensive agency review and many years of voluntary stakeholder engagement by Minnesota Power, the Department of Energy and Minnesota Department of Commerce have released the Final Environmental Impact Statement," said Minnesota Power Chief Operating Officer Brad Oachs. "This environmental review process highlighted the involvement and input Minnesota Power has incorporated into this project from the public and various levels of government, including a resolution of support from the Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians. Release of the FEIS is an important step as we plan for a sizable new capital investment in Upper Midwest transmission that carries economic, reliability and renewable energy benefits."

U.S. Sens. Amy Klobuchar and Al Franken and U.S. Reps. Collin Peterson and Rick Nolan, members of Minnesota's congressional delegation, sent a letter of support for the project to U.S. Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz where they stated: "we write to express our support for the successful collaborative public outreach effort by the project sponsor that was critical to the development of a consensus plan for the preferred location of the line's international border crossing."

More information about the project is available at www.greatnortherntransmissionline.com.

Minnesota Power provides electric service within a 26,000-square-mile area in northeastern Minnesota, supporting comfort, security and quality of life for 144,000 customers, 16 municipalities and some of the largest industrial customers in the United States. More information can be found at www.mnpower.com. ALE-ENRG

The statements contained in this release and statements that ALLETE may make orally in connection with this release that are not historical facts, are forward-looking statements. Actual results may differ materially from those projected in the forward-looking statements. These forward-looking statements involve risks and uncertainties and investors are directed to the risks discussed in documents filed by ALLETE with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

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