



Multiple Groups Line Up to Support Cardinal-Hickory Creek Transmission Line for its Economic and Environmental Benefits

Kelley Welf, Communications Manager • Apr. 26, 2019

The Cardinal-Hickory Creek transmission line is a much-needed addition to the Midwest electric grid that will deliver multiple benefits. The new transmission line will help facilitate the Midwest's transition to clean, renewable energy while offering reliability, energy security, and enabling an economic wholesale power market. The project will reduce congestion, improve access to new, economic wind and solar projects, and reduce curtailment from operating wind farms. The cost of wind has fallen 66 percent since 2009, and solar costs have plummeted 85 percent over the same time period. In addition, the line will deliver approximately \$22 million to \$349 million in economic benefits.

A group of clean energy organizations (CEOs) including Clean Grid Alliance, Fresh Energy and the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy, support the line, and are sponsoring expert witnesses to provide testimony to the Wisconsin Public Service Commission.

"Clean Grid Alliance is glad to be representing our industry members who are developing renewable energy projects in Wisconsin and surrounding states and have MISO Interconnection Agreements that require Cardinal-Hickory Creek to deliver energy from their projects," said CGA Executive Director Beth Soholt. "The new transmission line is a critical piece of infrastructure that will not only facilitate renewable energy development, but will provide additional robustness to the electric grid. There are thousands of megawatts of new wind and solar that are depending on Cardinal-Hickory Creek, as well as existing wind projects that cannot deliver their full output due to lack of transmission capacity. This is the last line of the MVP portfolio. Plans have been made based on the expectation that this line would be built.

Upsetting the apple cart at this critical time would be a devastating blow to the industry, and will increase overall costs because it simply delays the inevitable.

*Beth Soholt
Clean Grid Alliance*

The Cardinal-Hickory Creek transmission Line is the final Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) Multi-Value Project (MVP) to move through the state regulatory approval process. MISO [filings](#) at FERC continue to show benefits of the MVP portfolio far in excess of the cost of the projects and well above the benefits originally projected. Individually, this transmission line is projected to [save approximately \\$151 million](#) by eliminating the need to upgrade 13 other lower-voltage transmission projects. MISO has determined that no other transmission alternative will be as cost-effective as this project in connecting Northwestern Iowa with Southeastern and south central Wisconsin. MISO also concluded that non-transmission alternatives are not feasible.

"The clean energy economy we are moving towards requires next-generation transmission lines, like the Cardinal-Hickory Creek project. Energy efficiency and distributed generation alone will not get us to the carbon-free economy our region needs and which a changing climate demands," said Fresh Energy Senior Director of Energy Markets and Regulatory Affairs Allen Gleckner. "In addition to rooftop solar and

energy efficiency measures, we will also need a significant portion of our electricity from large-scale wind and solar. Clean energy transmission, like Cardinal-Hickory Creek, is critical to connecting the thousands of megawatts of large-scale wind and solar in the development pipeline in Wisconsin and throughout the Upper Midwest."

"As a \$500 million investment, the Cardinal-Hickory Creek transmission line will be a wide-ranging employment and economic development opportunity for Wisconsin, with stable, family-supporting wages in our community and throughout the Upper Midwest. Moreover, the project will provide much needed transmission stability and allow Wisconsin to access low-cost renewable energy from western states," said Terry McGowan, President and Business Manager of the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 139. "The Wisconsin Operating Engineers are looking forward to the broad economic benefits this transmission line will have for our state and region."

The Cardinal-Hickory Creek project will facilitate the supply of clean, low-cost electric energy while simultaneously increasing reliability. "Those are exactly the types of considerations Wisconsin law requires," said Amelia Vohs, Staff Attorney at Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy. "That's why the PSC should approve this project."

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