

Clean Energy Transmission Takes Big Step Forward in Michigan

Regional Grid Operator Expedites Approval Process for Michigan “Thumb” Project to Deliver Clean Energy to Market, Setting Positive Precedent for Further Clean Energy Transmission in 2011

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Saint Paul, MN—The Midwest Independent System Operator (Midwest ISO) today approved a clean energy transmission line known as the Michigan “Thumb” Project for inclusion in Appendix A of the Midwest Transmission Expansion Plan for 2010 (MTEP 10). The full suite of transmission lines within MTEP 10 will be voted on in December. Once a transmission line is included in Appendix A of MTEP and approved by the Midwest ISO Board of Directors, the utilities/transmission companies must use best efforts to construct the transmission line. The Thumb Project is needed for Michigan to meet its Renewable Energy Standard requirements in 2015.

The Thumb Project is the first regional transmission line to be considered under the Multi-Value Project, or MVP, criteria of the Midwest ISO’s cost allocation proposal. The new cost allocation approach, currently under review at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), would broadly distribute the costs of large transmission lines that bring wide-ranging benefits to the Midwest region over time. As the regional grid operator for the region, the Midwest ISO’s actions on establishing a just and reasonable cost allocation proposal and now expediting a needed transmission line were welcomed by many in the wind industry.

“We are very pleased the Thumb Project has been expedited for consideration in 2010. This is a great step forward not just for Michigan, but for the overall process of building overdue new transmission to meet our clean energy goals across the Midwest,” said Beth Soholt, Executive Director of the regional wind energy advocacy group Wind on the Wires. “This will send a positive signal to wind developers, policymakers and clean energy advocates that the Midwest is serious about building the infrastructure we need to accommodate a clean energy future.”

The Thumb is one of a number of Starter Projects identified by the Midwest ISO through the Regional Generator Outlet Study for initial consideration under their recently proposed cost allocation proposal, which was filed with FERC on July 15th. Wind on the Wires is focused on moving forward proposed transmission projects, such as the starter projects, that will enable new wind generation development as quickly as possible. Working within the Midwest ISO stakeholder process, Wind on the Wires will advocate for the inclusion of the remainder of the Starter Projects to be included in Appendix A in MTEP11.