

Minnesota regulatory process overview



PowerOn Midwest must undergo a comprehensive state regulatory review by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (MPUC). This includes two key approvals:

A **Certificate of Need (CON)** to determine whether the project is necessary and appropriately sized.

A **Route Permit** to identify where the project should be located.



Certificate of Need

The CON identifies the issues the proposed project is designed to solve (the need for the project) and reviews how the project benefits the state and region. The application must include the type of infrastructure proposed, size, general engineering information, estimated costs, system alternatives that were evaluated, and other state required information. PowerOn Midwest submitted a CON application to the MPUC in February 2026.

Key steps (Typically a 12 to 15-month process)

[Public participation opportunity](#)



APPLICATION FILING AND COMPLETENESS REVIEW

The MPUC reviews the application for completeness and invites public comment. Once deemed complete, the case is typically assigned to an independent Administrative Law Judge, who presides over the review process.



INTERVENTION OPPORTUNITY

Anyone can attend meetings and submit comments without formally intervening, i.e. becoming a “party” to the proceeding. Persons who want to become a party must submit a request to the Administrative Law Judge. Parties may present formal arguments, testimony, and cross examine witnesses – often with legal representation (although not required for individuals). Formal intervention is not required to submit comments on the application.



ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT SCOPING PUBLIC MEETINGS

The MPUC prepares an Environmental Report to evaluate human and environmental impacts related to a project. Public meetings are conducted to explain the process and gather comments on issues and alternatives that should be addressed in the Environmental Report. Written comments may also be submitted to the MPUC at this time and meeting notices are published locally.



SCOPING DECISION

Before the MPUC prepares the Environmental Report, it reviews all public input and publishes its Scoping Decision, which outlines the issues to be addressed in the report.



ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

The MPUC gathers information, then prepares and publishes the Environmental Report, which must be done before public hearings can take place.



MPUC PUBLIC HEARINGS FOR THE CON

The MPUC holds public hearings presided by an Administrative Law Judge. Notice is published in local newspapers and mailed to landowners and local governments prior to the start of the hearings. Anyone can present comments and express opinions concerning the utilities’ proposal or alternatives and the Environmental Report. The Administrative Law Judge provides a report that summarizes the hearing record, including public comments, and makes recommendations to the MPUC.



MPUC CON DECISION

The MPUC makes the final decision about whether to issue a CON. In making its decision, the MPUC considers all information in the record and deliberates at a formal MPUC meeting.



Route Permit

A Route Permit is also required from the MPUC prior to building a high-voltage transmission line. A Route Permit application identifies where a transmission line will be located. The Route Permit application also discusses both sensitivities and opportunities for the new infrastructure that minimizes the overall impact of the project.

PRE-APPLICATION ROUTE DEVELOPMENT PHASE

Throughout the route development process, utilities work with landowners, local governments, and other stakeholders. Route development generally occurs in three stages during which utilities:

- 1 Define a study area; gather land use and resource information from federal, state and local agencies and governments; prepare maps.
- 2 Identify initial route options based on technical considerations, routing criteria and resource mapping.
- 3 Compare and evaluate route options and work with stakeholders to review routes; select a final route to be included in the Route Permit application.

Key steps (Typically a 12 to 15-month process)

 Public participation opportunity



APPLICATION FILING AND COMPLETENESS REVIEW

After a utility files a Route Permit application and it is accepted as complete, the regulatory review process begins.



MPUC ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (EIS) SCOPING PUBLIC MEETINGS

For this project, the MPUC will develop an EIS to identify the potential impacts the transmission line may have in the area where it has been proposed. An EIS typically analyzes, among other things, potential impacts on land use, including agricultural operations, residences, water resources, and other natural resources.

The MPUC will hold public meetings to present information about the project, answer questions from the public, and take comments on the issues that the EIS should address.

In Minnesota, the public may suggest alternate routes for the MPUC to consider in its review and those routes may be considered alongside the route proposed by the utilities. The route options must be specific, including starting and ending points, and may vary in length from a minor shift to many miles. The MPUC will provide information on how to suggest alternate routes and will determine which alternatives should be studied in the EIS.

The MPUC then publishes a scoping decision outlining what the EIS will address and what route alternatives will be included in their review.



DRAFT EIS

The draft EIS will be made available for review and comment by all stakeholders and the general public.



MPUC PUBLIC HEARINGS

Once the Draft EIS is published, the Administrative Law Judge conducts public hearings, which are designed to receive comments on the routes under review, and how potential impacts of the project could be addressed. The Administrative Law Judge prepares a report summarizing the hearings and makes routing and condition recommendations to the MPUC.



FINAL EIS

The MPUC issues a Final EIS.



MPUC ROUTE PERMIT DECISION

The MPUC makes its final Route Permit decision at one of its formal meetings after reviewing all materials. A permit can only be issued after a CON is granted. The Route Permit is the only approval required to determine the route of the transmission line. If the Route Permit is approved, utilities will work to obtain other required permits based on that route – like DNR stream crossing approvals.