



Upper Midwest Transmission Workshop II Fact Sheet

March 12-13, 2002

Radisson City Center Hotel

St. Paul, MN

Background

The electrical transmission system in the United States has been built to enhance the overall reliability and efficiency of the electric power system. Its primary historical functions have been to provide avenues for the point-to-point transfer of blocks of energy between neighboring, and sometimes distant, regions – thus allowing more efficient use of power generation facilities – and to provide power from alternate sources in the event of failure of individual generating or transmission facilities.

With movement toward open access, the transmission system is being called upon to serve a broader role. One popular vision is that the system should allow for connection of new generating facilities and new loads at almost any point – and indeed over the past few years a number of new generation facilities have been interconnected with little if any expansion of transmission capability. This would be similar to adding on and off ramps to major freeways at will without upgrading the freeways themselves. As we all know from personal experience, even when major steps have been taken – such as adding additional roadway lanes in locations with higher-than-average traffic and adding on-ramp lights to regulate the inflow of traffic – congestion can easily occur.

Transmission-system congestion has become a critical problem in many parts of the country. Many feel that it is particularly critical in the Upper Midwest. This is a key issue for wind-power development in the region, since good wind resources abound but tend to be distant from major load centers. The NWCC aims to examine major issues that can impede the rational expansion of wind power, and has thus paid close attention to transmission. NWCC's members realize that wind is only a small part of the transmission arena, but they also realize that any improvement in the overall transmission situation stands a good chance of benefiting wind. NWCC's related activities over the past several years have been aimed at ensuring that wind receives fair – though not preferential – treatment with respect to transmission services.

Differing Views

Although many feel that transmission in the upper Midwest needs to be strengthened, opposition is often voiced from several sectors. Many, if not most, find transmission lines to be visually intrusive. And those along the rights of way, who must live among these lines, often see the benefits accruing to those at the ends of the lines and not to them. These people, along with those who seek increased conservation and others who expect an expanding role for distributed generation close to load centers, ask – from a market-needs perspective – whether new lines are necessary at all. Still others are concerned that new transmission will be used primarily to allow increased generation from coal, with attendant emissions that raise environmental concerns. All of these perspectives need to come to the table with the traditional entities that have considered transmission additions from the standpoint of system reliability. While the traditional planners have actively sought the

involvement of other stakeholders in their planning discussions, there is room for a more inclusive forum aimed at constructive development of consensus on transmission issues.

Workshop Objective and Approach

With this background in mind, the organizers of this workshop aim to assist in enhancing the inclusiveness and effectiveness of the transmission planning and approval process in the upper Midwest. The approach will be to encourage a long-term view of transmission needs in the region that reflects reliability, environmental and market issues; and to build on the well-established infrastructure that MAPP/MISO has employed for reliability-based transmission planning over the past several years.

Workshop Content

The workshop will begin with a discussion of the MAPP/MISO process for reliability-based transmission planning. Subsequent sessions will address major planning issues for the next decade, including (a) how will trends in generation and electricity usage affect transmission needs; (b) who will need to consider and approve recommended transmission additions; and (c) what factors are important to these individuals and entities. The primary means for examining and illuminating these issues will be the presentation and discussion of several plausible scenarios for future generation and load evolution. The overall aim will not be to select or recommend any particular scenario as preferred by the group, but instead to provide the beginnings of an enhanced process for consideration of transmission improvements in the region that enjoys participation of and acceptance by all affected stakeholder sectors.

Workshop Participants

The workshop will involve participants from all sectors with a stake in transmission evolution in the region. The aim is to include individuals who serve as key strategic resources to those who will make major decisions on transmission improvements.

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