

CapX2020 project working through environmental impacts

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CENTERVILLE, Wis. — About 75 residents from area communities affected by the CapX2020 power line project gathered at two public meetings Wednesday at the Centerville community center.

The purpose of the meetings was to give residents an opportunity to discuss the environmental impacts of the project with representatives from power companies and government agencies.

Ken Rineer with Wisconsin's Public Service Commission said the largest potential impacts come from endangered species, water resources, agricultural lands, airports, and aesthetics.

The public meetings are “absolutely necessary to find the right route and to minimize the impact on the environment,” said Tom Hillstrom, a permitting leader with Xcel Energy.

Capx2020 is considering two options for a final power line route that would run south from Alma, Wis. The estimated \$450 million project would construct more than 100 miles of high-voltage transmission lines in Minnesota and Wisconsin. The company building the lines, American Transmission Co., has said the project will provide more effective and stable electrical service, particularly in rural areas.

A team of officials are working to draft an environmental impact statement, a required document that analyzes the project's potential environmental consequences.

After the draft is completed in the fall, the public will have 45 days to comment before it's finalized.

While environmental issues were the focus of Wednesday's meetings, property owners and members of a citizen energy task force came to gather information and voice their concerns. Members of Power Line Truth, an organization that opposes the project, said they don't see the need for the project in the first place.

“Our needs aren't big enough for a project of this size,” said member Joe Morse. “A huge project that crosses state lines takes away money from locally generated power.”

Chuck and Linda Glowcheski own land in Trempealeau, Wis., and said they attended to meeting to learn more about the project.

“My concern is that it'll make land values go down,” Chuck Glowcheski said.

The project could be approved by Wisconsin's Public Service Commission as early as June of 2012. If the project is approved, construction could begin as early as 2013.