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## **(Neb.)-NPPD Says Reliability, Congestion Relief Is Focus Of Proposed Transmission Line**

By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 03/15/2012 11:34 AM

(COLUMBUS)-Progress continues on a proposed 345,000-volt transmission line, which covers 260 miles and will enhance reliability and relieve congestion on Nebraska Public Power District's electrical grid system. The Southwest Power Pool (SPP) had approved a 10-year Integrated Transmission Plan (ITP10) during a meeting in January.

While identified in ITP10, SPP will have to give NPPD a formal notice to construct before detailed planning or construction can begin. Further approvals will also need to come from NPPD's Board of Directors and the Nebraska Power Review Board. Once NPPD receives notification to proceed, they will begin an extensive public involvement process to determine the best route while minimizing impact to landowners.

"We are pleased to see this line included in the SPP plan," said NPPD Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Tom Kent. "But I caution it will be awhile before this high voltage line is built. Planning, engineering, financing arrangements, public input, environmental reviews, and actual construction will take years to complete." NPPD would be the responsible entity to construct the line.

SPP is a Regional Transmission Organization responsible for ensuring adequate transmission infrastructure in a nine-state region, which includes Nebraska. The proposed transmission line would enhance the reliability of the electric grid by providing an additional parallel path for west-east power flows, particularly in the event of an ice storm such as the one in the winter of 2006-07 that damaged large segments of transmission lines in central Nebraska. The line will relieve congestion, increase transfer capability of the transmission system, and allow for the interconnection of further wind-power development in the state.

The proposed transmission line would consist of two line segments. The first segment, from Gerald Gentleman Station to Cherry County and east to Holt County, covers approximately 222 miles. The second segment will run from the NPPD's Hoskins substation near Norfolk to a new substation at Neligh, covering approximately 40 miles. The ITP10 plan calls for in-service dates of 2018 for the first phase and 2019 for the second phase.

The proposed line was recommended by Nebraska's transmission operating utilities and has been supported by an informal coalition of non-utility organizations organized by the Nebraska Power Association, known as the Nebraska Transmission Advocacy Group (NTAG), a voluntary advocacy group created to positively communicate to SPP Nebraska's unified message regarding long-range transmission needs.

NPPD President and CEO Pat Pope praised the efforts of NTAG, formed through the Nebraska Power Association, bringing together the state's electric utilities and non-utility organizations, including various agencies of the State of Nebraska and wind developers. "This group has provided unified feedback and advocated to SPP about the transmission needs in Nebraska," said Pope.

NPPD's transmission line siting and routing process is extensive and includes establishing study areas first, followed by the development of study corridors and alternative routes, before determining a final route. Numerous public open houses will

be held during each step of the process, allowing utilities to interact with various stakeholders and gather information in order to determine a route that will minimize the impact to landowners. This effort also includes significant environmental reviews with various environmental and wildlife agencies and working with local governments.

The estimated cost of the line is approximately \$380 million, although if built, Nebraska ratepayers would not be obligated for the total cost of the project. SPP uses a cost-sharing methodology for the construction of transmission lines in its region, with NPPD's share being seven percent. At the same time, Nebraska transmission-owning utilities share in the cost of construction projects in other states within SPP's regional boundaries.

SPP indicates that there are a number of benefits gained from the transmission projects, including improving access to lower cost generation by reducing grid bottlenecks, adding renewable energy to the grid, improving reliability, and providing more efficient energy delivery.

--Submitted by Nebraska Public Power District