



# Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota

300 33<sup>rd</sup> Avenue South, Suite 101 • Waite Park, Minnesota 56387

Phone: 651-341-4196 • E-Mail: [info@MnMississippiRiver.com](mailto:info@MnMississippiRiver.com)

**Members of the House:** Sheldon Johnson (DFL – 67B) – Chair; Branden Petersen (R – 49B) **Members of the Senate:** David Senjem (R – 29), Sandra Pappas (DFL – 65) **State Agency Appointees:** Charlie Poster – Agriculture, Frank Pafko – Transportation, Adam Johnson – Explore Minnesota Tourism, Greg Murray – Natural Resources, Andrea Kajer – Historical Society **Regional Appointees:** Jack Frost – Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids, John Schaubach – Grand Rapids to Brainerd, Karl Samp – Brainerd to Elk River, Paul Labovitz – Elk River to Hastings, Sheronne Mulry – Hastings to Iowa Border **Member at Large:** Mark Anderson

June 30, 2011

Kathleen D. Sheehy  
Administrative Law Judge  
Office of Administrative Hearings  
600 North Robert Street  
P.O. Box 64620  
St. Paul, MN 55164-0620

Re: OAH Docket # 3-2500-21181-2, Hampton-Rochester-LaCrosse Transmission Line Permit

Dear Judge Sheehy:

The Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota (MN-MRPC) exists to promote, preserve and enhance the resources of the Mississippi River and to develop the highways and amenities of the Great River Road. The Minnesota Great River Road, 575 miles in length, is part of a larger ten state National Scenic Byway. The proposed transmission line for the Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse area will have significant impact on our National Scenic Byway in both Minnesota and Wisconsin.

Vegetation removal was not reflected in the Great River Road photo simulations provided and simulations should be modified to show a more realistic view prior to route selection. The MN-MRPC has requested a video visual impact simulation including peripheral, front and rear views, in motion as travelers actually experience the byway, whether by car or bicycle. The simulations presented do not accurately or completely relate the cumulative experiential and resource impacts. Also, the underground river crossing should not be ruled out as a possibility. This option would result in the most minimal visual impact near the Mississippi River and Great River Road. Further, every effort should be made to co-locate the route with existing lines in the vicinity.

We ask that decision makers, in keeping with non-proliferation statutes, utilize all possible strategies to avoid, minimize and mitigate any impact to the Great River Road and Mississippi River corridors; and exercise due diligence in assessing potential impacts to the Great River Road. The MN-MRPC requests inclusion in the permit language to ensure on-going communication on these important topics. The Permittee would be responsible for providing plans to the MN-MRPC for review and response prior to proceeding with implementation. For example, "The Permittee shall make every effort to minimize the impact of the project on the intrinsic qualities for which the Great River Road received National Scenic Byway designation when installing the high voltage transmission line on the approved route. The Permittee shall consult with Mn/DOT and the Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission (MN-MRPC) regarding final structure locations and design, construction methods that minimize damage to vegetation along the Great River Road, installation of replacement vegetation to limit visual impacts from surrounding areas, and other methods to minimize any negative impact or maximize any positive impact on the Great River Road and the Mississippi River/byway travelers' experience. The Permittee shall minimize the number of trees to be removed in selecting the right-of-way and designing a prescribed removal plan for construction."

These requests come after experience with another CapX 2020 route affecting the Great River Road, in the St. Cloud to Monticello area. The Great River Road National Scenic Byway has incurred irreparable damage due to vegetation removal and pole construction/installation. We believe that requiring both consultation and response from the MN-MRPC in the permit language will assist all parties involved by clarifying communication and relationships.

The Great River Road has achieved the esteemed designation of a National Scenic Byway because it possesses characteristics of regional and national significance. These characteristics are worthy of protection and inclusion in the route permit language. We look forward to participating in the process as it continues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sheldon Johnson /cm". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rep. Sheldon Johnson, Chair