

# Cardinal-Hickory Creek Transmission Line Project

## Public Scoping Meetings



The Rural Utilities Service (RUS), an agency within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), intends to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Cardinal-Hickory Creek Transmission Line Project. The Cardinal-Hickory Creek Transmission Line Project is a proposed 345-kilovolt transmission line from the existing Cardinal Substation in Dane County, Wisconsin, to the Hickory Creek Substation in Dubuque County, Iowa (see attached map). A new substation is also planned in the area of Montfort, Wisconsin. Depending on the route alternative selected, the project will be 90 to 135 miles long.

American Transmission Company (ATC), ITC Midwest LLC (ITC), and Dairyland Power Cooperative (Dairyland) (collectively referred to here as the “Utilities”) are jointly developing the project. Dairyland intends to ask the RUS for financial assistance to fund its ownership interest in the transmission line portion of the project. Prior to making a decision about whether to make loan funds available, guarantee a loan, or award a grant for a proposed project, the RUS is required to conduct an environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The RUS NEPA process includes the development of an EIS that will consider and disclose a broad range of potential environmental issues. Two federal agencies, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, have been invited to participate as cooperating agencies in the federal review process.

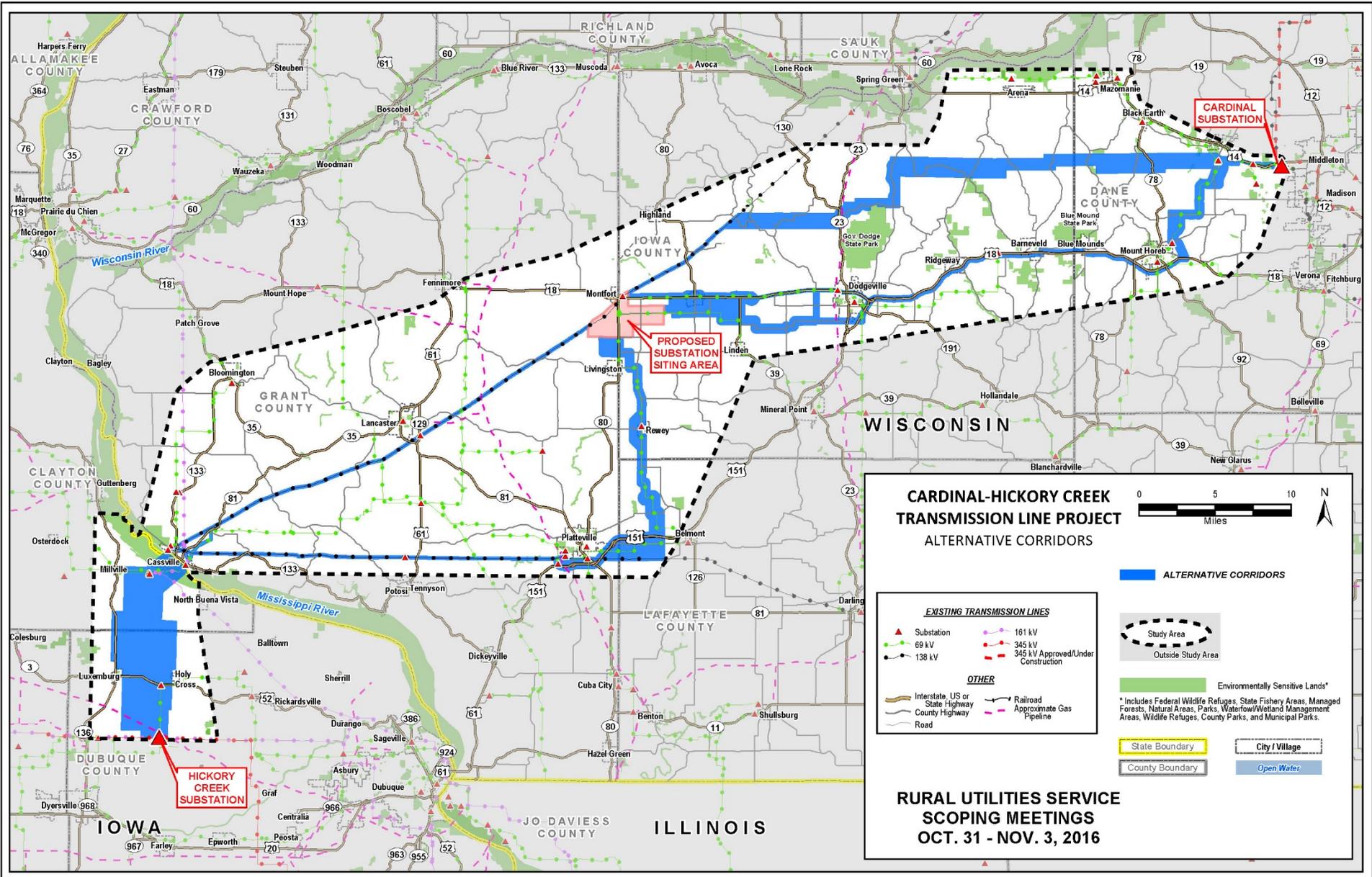
The NEPA public scoping process serves multiple goals for the proposed project, including:

- Soliciting public comments
- Discovering alternatives to a proposed action (preferred route)
- Identifying potential significant issues
- Eliminating insignificant issues
- Communicating information
- Consulting with agencies and organizations

**There are three ways to provide comments during the scoping period:**

1. **Complete a comment form (attached)**
2. **Email written comments to:** [comments@CardinalHickoryCreekEIS.us](mailto:comments@CardinalHickoryCreekEIS.us)
3. **Mail comments to:** SWCA Environmental Consultants  
Attn: Cardinal-Hickory Creek EIS  
200 Bursca Drive  
Suite 207  
Bridgeville, PA 15017

Public comments become part of the project’s official administrative record. The public will have more opportunities to provide comments after the Draft EIS is released for public review, and again after the Final EIS is released for review. Track EIS development, download comment forms, and access all public documentation at the RUS website: <http://www.rd.usda.gov/publications/environmental-studies/impact-statements/cardinal-%E2%80%93-hickory-creek-transmission-line> and <http://www.cardinal-hickorycreek.com/>.



### CARDINAL-HICKORY CREEK TRANSMISSION LINE PROJECT ALTERNATIVE CORRIDORS

**EXISTING TRANSMISSION LINES**

- ▲ Substation
- 69 kV
- 138 kV
- 161 kV
- 345 kV
- 345 kV Approved/Under Construction

**OTHER**

- Interstate, US or State Highway
- County Highway
- Road
- Railroad
- Approximate Gas Pipeline

0 5 10  
Miles

▲ N

ALTERNATIVE CORRIDORS

Study Area

Outside Study Area

Environmentally Sensitive Lands\*

\* Includes Federal Wildlife Refuges, State Fishery Areas, Managed Forests, Natural Areas, Parks, Waterfowl/Wetland Management Areas, Wildlife Refuges, County Parks, and Municipal Parks.

State Boundary

County Boundary

City / Village

Open Water

**RURAL UTILITIES SERVICE  
SCOPING MEETINGS  
OCT. 31 - NOV. 3, 2016**

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

**Q. Why is this transmission line needed?**

A. Midcontinent Independent System Operator, Inc., the regional electric transmission organization, proposed and approved the Cardinal-Hickory Creek Project as part of a portfolio of 17 transmission line projects that were identified as “Multi-Value Projects” for delivering multiple benefits to electric consumers across the Midwest region. Specifically, the Cardinal-Hickory Creek Project will improve electric system reliability, provide economic benefits to utilities and electric consumers, and expand the electric infrastructure to support public policy for greater use of renewable energy.

**Q. What is the anticipated timeline for this project?**

A.

Public scoping period	October 2016–January 6, 2017
NEPA compliance (development of EIS)	2016–2018
Plan to file applications with state regulators	2018–2019
Anticipated decision from state regulators on applications	2019–2020
Planned project in service	2023

**Q. Which resource issues have been identified so far?**

A. The transmission line could potentially cross the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge. The project may also have visual impacts to historic trails administered by the National Park Service. High value habitat for federally listed species protected under the Endangered Species Act may be affected. The project may also have visual impacts to viewers from the Wisconsin Scenic Byway. Finally, there is strong stakeholder interest in areas where the transmission line would be in proximity to communities.

**Q. What will this project look like? How tall will the poles be?**

A. Typically, transmission line structures for this voltage are 100 to 150 feet tall, but the final design of the line will depend on many factors. In addition, the Utilities will consider opportunities to combine this line with other transmission lines in the area, collocating existing lines and the new Cardinal-Hickory Creek Project on new structures, which will also impact the final appearance of the line. Typical right-of-way width requested in Wisconsin will be approximately 150 feet. In Iowa, the typical width of the right-of-way will be approximately 200 feet.

**Q. What is the route for the new transmission line?**

A. A route for the new transmission line has not been determined. Based on analysis and discussions with stakeholder groups, the Utilities have identified two preliminary major corridors with several potential subroute variations (see attached map). These corridors were developed based on analyses of a number of factors, including the location identified for a Mississippi River crossing. In Wisconsin, routing criteria under state law requires giving priority to using existing corridors, such as existing transmission lines, highways, roads, railroads, etc. In Iowa, state law requires new transmission lines to be routed along roads, active railroads, and along division lines of land where practical and reasonable. These corridors will be reviewed through the state regulatory routing process and the federal NEPA process.

**Q. Are these corridors final, or are they subject to change? What would cause them to change?**

A. These are the corridors currently under study based on the analyses that have been completed so far and input received through public outreach in Wisconsin and Iowa. The final proposed routes (Iowa considers a single proposed route, Wisconsin requires two proposed routes) will come through further analyses and review through the state regulatory routing processes and the federal NEPA process.

**Q. Where will this project cross the Mississippi River?**

A. The Utilities and the RUS are working with multiple agencies and jurisdictions, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, to determine the optimum location and obtain the necessary approvals and permits for the Mississippi River crossing. Based on those conversations and extensive analyses, the Utilities have identified locations near Cassville, Wisconsin, as the most suitable locations for crossing the river. The Utilities have found these locations, which include existing transmission corridors, to offer the least potential social, environmental, and engineering impacts.

**Q. What is the approval process for Wisconsin?**

A. Once ATC, ITC, and Dairyland submit an application in Wisconsin, the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSCW) will review the project application to determine if there is enough information to begin the regulatory review process and then, once the application is determined to be complete, notify the public about the project and hold scoping meetings to provide the public an opportunity to talk with PSCW staff and learn about the PSCW's review process; create an EIS (i.e., a detailed analysis with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources of how the project might affect the human and natural environments); and hold technical and public hearings for the project. Once the application is determined to be complete by the PSCW, the agency will make its determination on whether to grant a Certificate of Public Convenience and Need for the project within a year, as required by state statute.

**Q. What is the approval process in Iowa?**

A. After a public informational meeting is held in each county where the project is proposed, ITC and Dairyland will file a petition(s) for a franchise with the Iowa Utilities Board (IUB) for any portion of the transmission line located outside municipal boundaries. A franchise petition must be submitted for each county traversed by the proposed transmission line. Following receipt of the petition, the IUB will review it for any errors or omissions. After the petition is deemed complete, there are two paths for the franchise proceeding. If no objections are filed and the petition does not request the power of eminent domain, then a notice will be published in a newspaper in each county and the IUB may grant a franchise without holding a hearing. If objections to the petition are filed or if the applicants request eminent domain authority, a hearing will be held before the IUB. Following the hearing, the IUB may grant or deny the franchise in whole or in part.