



WOW's Chris Kunkle Speaks at CapX2020 Line Dedication Ceremony

Isak Kvam, Communications/Policy Associate • Sep. 26, 2016

On September 26, the CapX2020 partners celebrated the energization of the CapX2020 Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse 345 kV electric transmission line. The 156-mile line is the last Minnesota portion of CapX2020 to be brought online and will allow significant amounts of wind and solar generation to be added to the region's electricity resource mix.

"By providing access to the least-cost sources of clean, renewable wind energy, CapX2020 will deliver long-term benefits to customers throughout the region for decades to come," said Chris Kunkle, WOW's Western Regional Policy Manager.

"We're pleased the line is complete and grateful to our project partners," said Dave Geschwind, SMMPA Executive Director and CEO. "Since the Minnesota portion of the project is double-circuit capable, this investment in reliability and greater access to renewable energy will benefit our members far into the future."

"The electric grid is more important than ever as society goes through a resource evolution," said Teresa Mogensen, Xcel Energy Senior Vice President of Transmission. "With increasing proportions of variable generation sources like wind and solar reshaping the resource profile, the transmission system is at the center of making it all work together."

The Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse project was energized on September 16, and it is jointly owned by Xcel Energy, Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency, Dairyland Power Cooperative, Rochester Public Utilities and WPPI Energy. It will help Xcel meet its mandate from Minnesota to meet 30% of its energy needs with renewables by 2020. "This line is going to help open the door to bring these projects into different markets," Kunkle said.

CapX2020's inception began in a hallway discussion between executives of Xcel Energy and Great River Energy about the need to expand the electric transmission grid to ensure reliability and affordability. Soon, CapX2020, which stands for "Capacity expansion needed by 2020", became a joint initiative of 11 transmission-owning utilities.

CapX2020 has now completed four projects that total nearly 725 miles of new transmission upgrades, investing \$1.85 billion across Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. When finished, CapX2020 will cover nearly 800 miles and will have invested \$2.1 billion. The Big Stone South-Brookings line in South Dakota is the final line of the CapX2020 initiative. It is expected to become energized next year.