



## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Who is Montana-Dakota Utilities Company?**

Montana-Dakota Utilities Co. (MDU) is a large regional energy supplier that initiated on the border between Montana and North Dakota in 1924. With headquarters in Bismarck, North Dakota, MDU provides retail natural gas and/or electric service to parts of Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming. It serves nearly 365,000 customers and has a service area that covers more than 168,000 square miles.

### **Why is a new transmission line being proposed?**

System studies have shown a need to increase the transfer capacity on the current transmission system in this area. This increase would provide a generation outlet for the proposed 150 megawatt (MW) Merricourt Wind Farm. In addition, it may benefit future wind energy projects. This Project would, also, provide transmission grid reliability to MDU's existing Wishek to Ellendale 230 kV transmission line.

### **Where will the energy that flows on the new lines come from?**

The new transmission line will carry wind energy generated at the Merricourt Wind Farm, a proposed 150 megawatt (MW) wind farm located about 10 miles southwest of Kulm, ND

### **How will I find out if my property is potentially affected?**

MDU and their agents will communicate with property owners and community members within the Project area. This Web site and the toll-free Project information line (800-225-7587) will be maintained to provide up-to-date information regarding the progress of the Project. Open House meetings will be scheduled to meet with property owners and identify potential routing options. A contact list will be maintained and will be used to mail important Project information.

### **How can I get involved?**

Visit the [Get Involved page](#) to leave a comment or call the toll-free project information line (800-225-7587). The [Events page](#) provides information for open house meetings and Project milestones. Your involvement is important to the development of this Project.

### **What permits are required for this Project?**

MDU will follow the North Dakota regulatory process by applying for two approvals from the North Dakota Public Service Commission (PSC): a Certificate of Corridor Compatibility (N.D.C.C. Section 49-03) and a Route Permit (N.D. Admin Code 69-02). MDU is seeking a waiver from the PSC to file a combined Certificate of Corridor Compatibility and Route Permit. Additional approvals/permits from state agencies may be required, such as the North Dakota Department

of Transportation. Other state agencies will be consulted including but not limited to the State Historical Society of North Dakota, North Dakota Game and Fish Department, North Dakota Parks and Recreation, and North Dakota State Water Commission. In addition to state permit requirements, local Conditional Use Permits (CUPs) along with other local permits may be required. MDU will coordinate with local officials throughout the Project.

**What do the transmission line structures look like?**

The line will likely be constructed from wooden H-frame structures. Typical H-frame structures will be approximately 70-90 feet in height with an average span of approximately 800 feet and a maximum span of approximately 1,000 feet.

Some sections of the line may be double-circuited with an existing MDU transmission line requiring taller structures with shorter spans (approximately 500 feet) between structures.

**How much right-of-way will be required on either side of the line?**

The right-of-way required for the new line is planned to be 120-feet-wide. In some areas, MDU may request larger right-of-way to facilitate construction.

**When will the lines be built?**

Project construction is anticipated to begin in spring 2011 and be energized by fall 2011.

**How close will the transmission line be to houses?**

Per North Dakota Public Service Commission, the transmission line is required to be routed at least 500 feet from occupied houses. The 500 foot avoidance criteria may be waived by the owner of the occupied house if stated in writing. Avoidance criteria laws can be found in the “North Dakota Energy Conversion and Transmission Facility Siting Act” (49-22-05.1).

**What is the typical construction process for a high-voltage transmission line?**

Once the permitting and environmental review work is complete, a preferred line route will be identified and easements will be acquired. A property survey will be performed to prepare plats describing the easements. An aerial survey will also be performed to obtain the topographic data required to design the line. After the design has determined the final pole locations, typical construction follows the steps listed below. During construction, all heavy equipment used will be driven within the easement right-of-way or approved access roads.

Typical Transmission Line Construction Steps:

- 1) Survey structure locations and identify ingress and egress locations
- 2) Auger the holes where the structures will be set
- 3) Assemble the structure on the ground adjacent to the holes
- 4) Lift structure, place in hole, and backfill with soil or crushed rock
- 5) Sting wires
- 6) Restore right-of-way
- 7) Energize line

**What is the typical ground disturbance?**

MDU will minimize impacts during construction of the transmission line by using existing public and private roads, where possible, and all construction equipment will follow the same two-track to ingress and egress the Project site. The total area that may be temporarily disturbed within the vicinity of each structure is expected to be confined to an area within the right-of-way of about 50-feet-wide by 50-feet-long (2,500 ft or 0.06 acres).

No permanent access roads will be constructed for the Project; however, temporary construction access roads will be needed in some locations to access pole locations. Temporary construction access roads will utilize existing public and private roads where possible, and will be up to 20-feet-wide and located through disturbed uplands (e.g., farmed land) where no existing roads provide access.