Gopher to Badger Link

# Overview

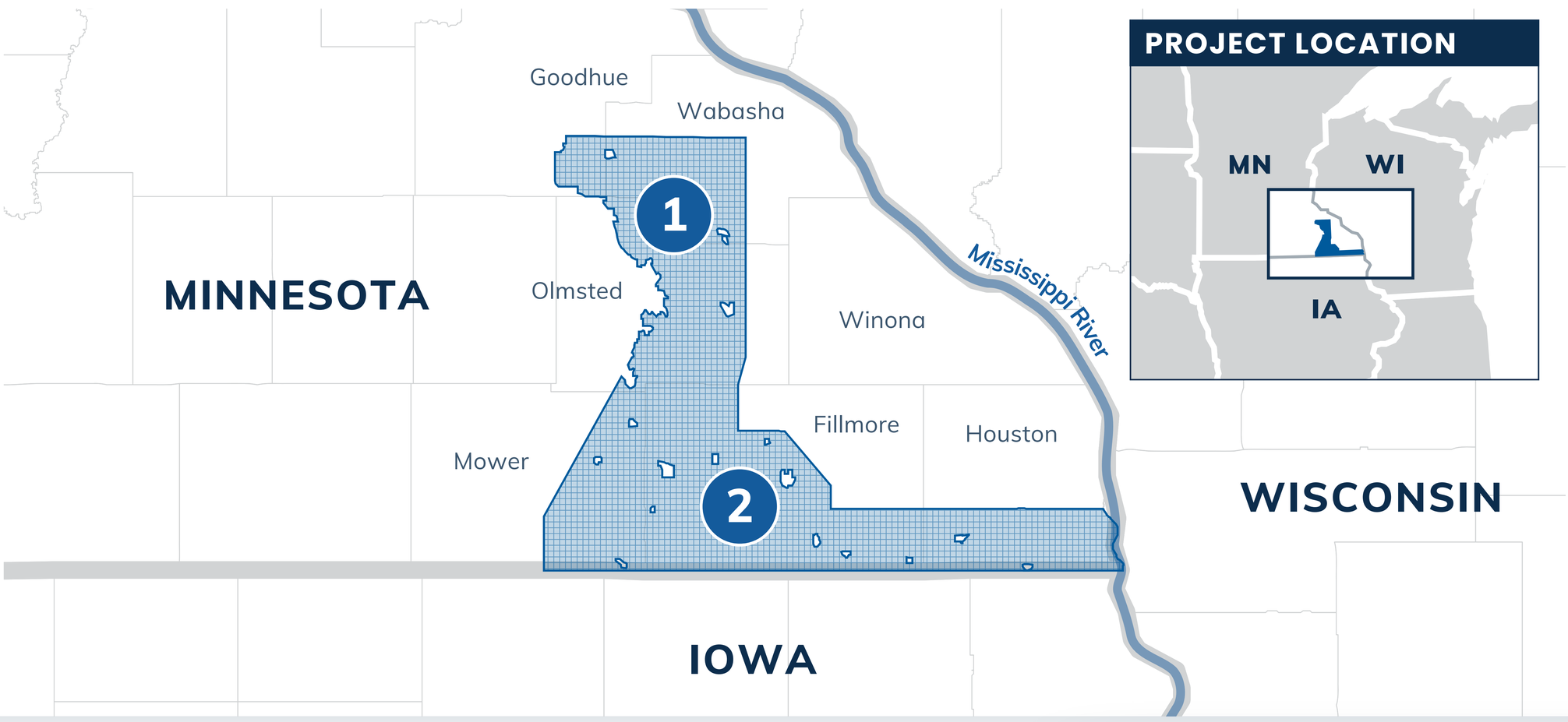
The Gopher to Badger Link transmission line project is being proposed to deliver reliable power to homes, farms and businesses across the region. This project will strengthen the electric grid and facilitate access to new energy sources.

## 1 North Rochester to Marion Segment

Xcel Energy is developing approximately 35 miles of a new single-circuit 765 kV transmission line that will run from the North Rochester Substation near Pine Island to Marion, Minnesota.

## 2 Marion to Mississippi River Segment (MariBell Transmission Line)

Dairyland Power Cooperative is developing the MariBell segment of the project in Minnesota, which will extend approximately 105 miles from Marion to the Mississippi River. This segment consists of replacing an existing 161 kV transmission line with a new 765/161 kV double-circuit transmission line.

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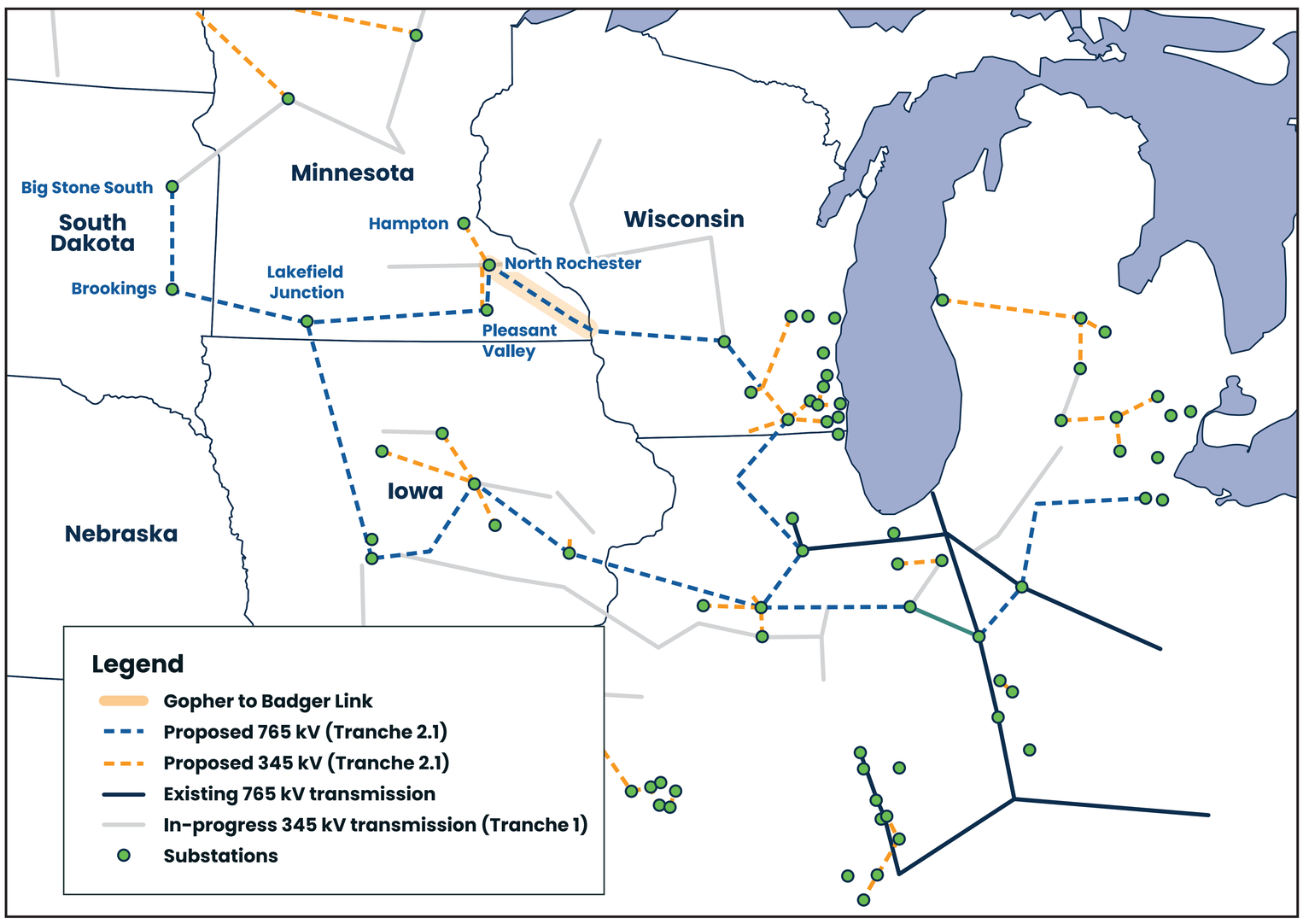
# MISO Overview

## Meeting Our Region's Energy Needs

The Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) conducted a 2-year, regional planning process, with extensive input from utilities and stakeholders, to identify a portfolio of 24 transmission projects to enhance the reliability of the electric grid, improve access to remote energy resources and deliver reliable power to homes, farms, and businesses throughout the Midwest region. Gopher to Badger Link was identified as one of the projects in MISO's proposed Long Range Transmission Plan (LRTP).

***MISO is the electric grid operator and regional transmission planner for the central United States. MISO is a non-profit organization that works to keep electricity reliable across 15 states and the Canadian province of Manitoba.***

## MISO's Final Tranche 2.1 Map




**The lines on this map do not represent proposed route options.*

*Learn more at misoenergy.org*

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# Benefits

The Gopher to Badger Link will deliver key benefits:

## Enhance the reliability of the electric grid

Helps ensure the transmission system can deliver electricity to customers where and when it's needed, regardless of weather, demand or generation source.

## Help meet growing energy demand

Supports the projected growth in electricity use over the coming decades by providing more capacity to deliver energy to customers.

## Expand access to more energy resources

Improves access to energy sources throughout the region to create a stronger, more reliable power system for the future.

## Support the region's growing economy

Creates opportunities for new jobs and business growth in the region.

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# Anticipated Schedule

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

**1** — **2025 – 2026**

- Initial public, landowner, agency, Tribal and stakeholder engagement

**2** — **2026 – 2027**

- File Gopher to Badger Link Certificate of Need (CON) application with Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (MPUC)
- CON application review process
- Route development
- File route permit (RP) application with MPUC
- RP application review process

**3** — **2028 – 2030**

- Detailed engineering design
- Environmental surveys and permitting
- Easement acquisition

**4** — **2031 – 2034**

- Pre-construction activities
- Construction
- Restoration

**5** — **2034**

- Anticipated in-service

*Preliminary schedule is subject to change.*

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# Project Partners

## A Collaborative Effort

Dairyland Power Cooperative and Xcel Energy bring collective local experience, community connections and expertise in building and managing large energy projects to strengthen regional power reliability.

## Dairyland Power Cooperative

Headquartered in La Crosse, Wis., Dairyland provides wholesale electrical requirements to 24 distribution cooperatives and 27 municipal utilities. These cooperatives and municipals, in turn, supply the energy needs of approximately 750,000 people in four states (Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, and Illinois).

## Xcel Energy

Xcel Energy is a leading energy provider, dedicated to serving millions of customers with reliable, affordable energy.

We make energy work better for customers, helping them thrive every day. Headquartered in Minneapolis, we work every day to generate and distribute electricity and gas to customers across eight states.

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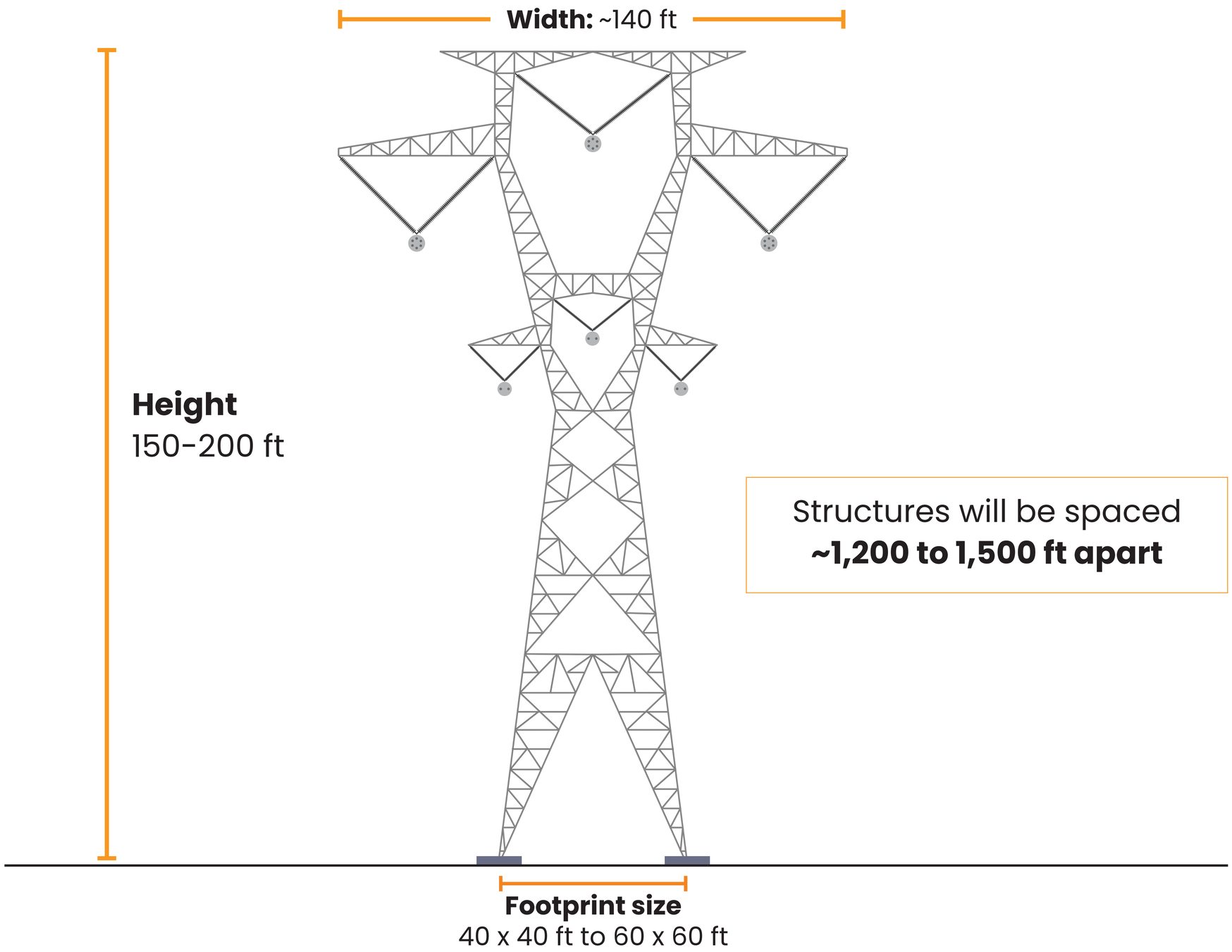
# 765 kV Structure

## MariBell Segment

This is an example of a double-circuit 765/161 kV steel lattice structure, similar to what could be used on the MariBell segment.

**Typical lattice tower structure**




Structures will be spaced
**~1,200 to 1,500 ft apart**

**NOTE:** Preliminary design, not to be used for construction.

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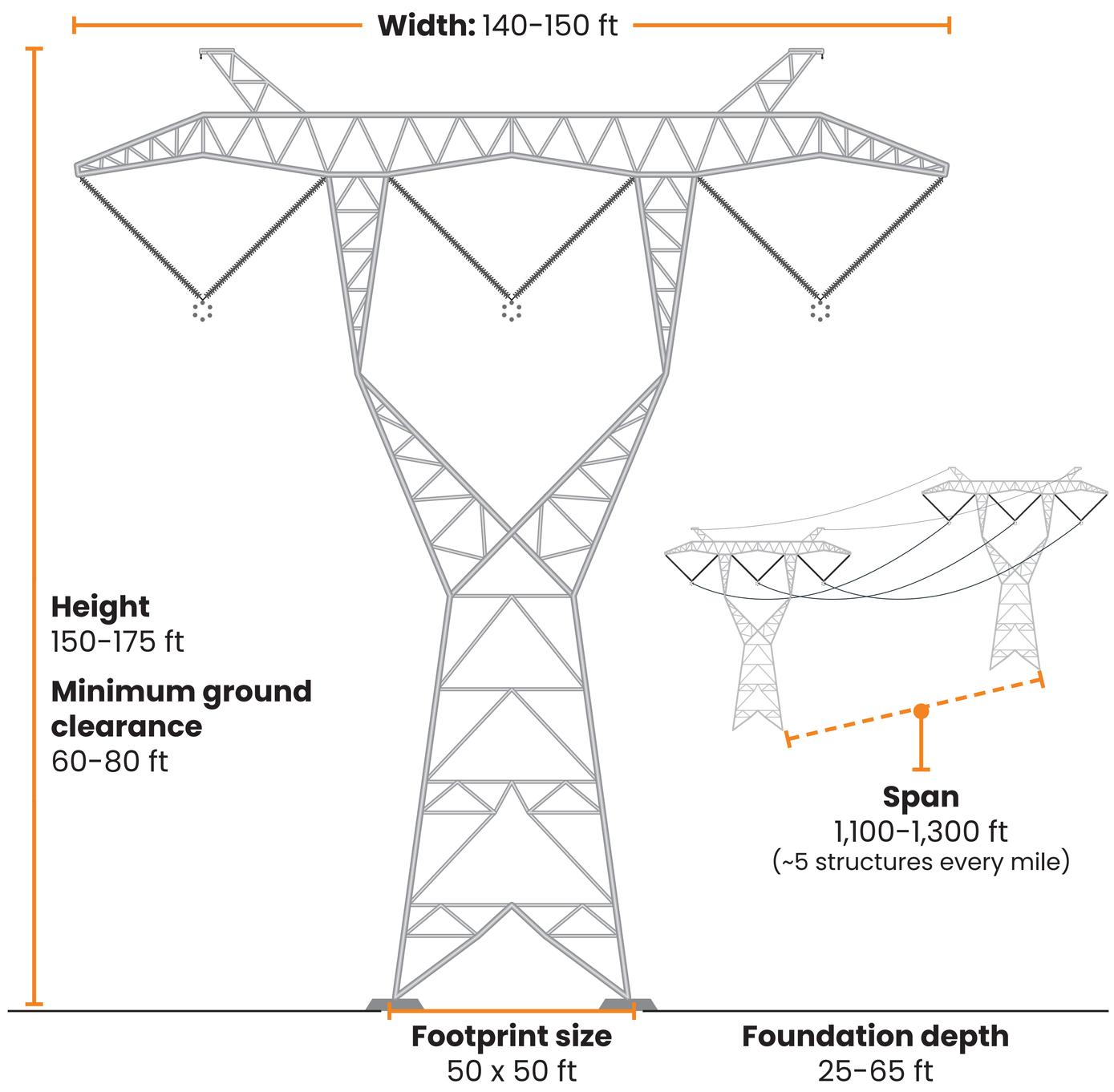
# 765 kV Structure

## North Rochester to Marion Segment

This is an example of a typical single-circuit 765 kV structure, similar to what could be used on the North Rochester to Marion segment.




**NOTE:** Preliminary design, not to be used for construction.

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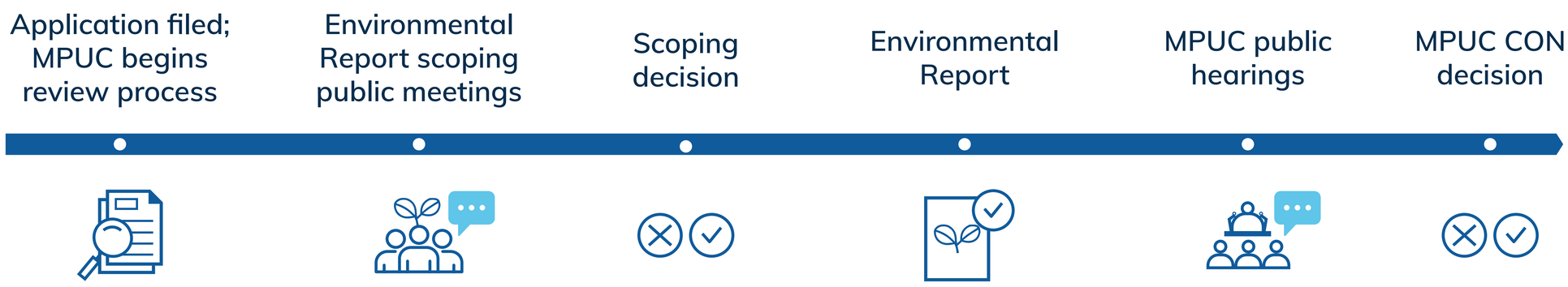
# Regulatory Process

We're at the start of a multi-year regulatory process that includes evaluation of the project's need and routing by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (MPUC).

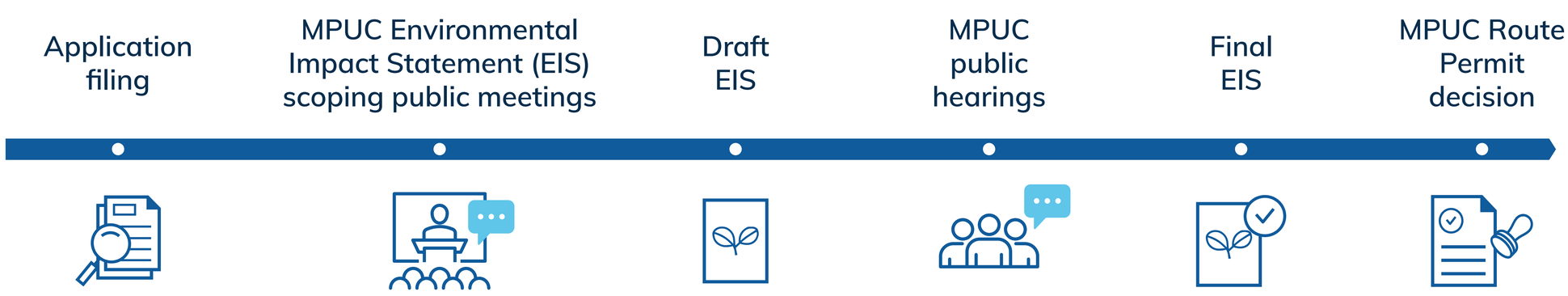
The MPUC ultimately determines whether the project is needed and, if so, the project's final route for proposed transmission lines. The MPUC will thoroughly review all project information provided by the applicants and input from stakeholders, landowners and the general public before making its decisions.

Two key approvals must be obtained from the MPUC before the project can be built:

1 A **Certificate of Need (CON)** to determine whether the project is necessary and appropriately sized.




2 A **Route Permit (RP)** to determine where the project will be located.




***Input and engagement opportunities will be available throughout these processes.***

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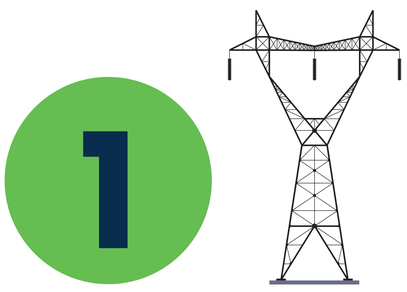
# 765 kV Technology

765 kV technology was identified in the MISO planning process as the preferred solution for the region, presenting several advantages:

- Efficiently carries large amounts of power over long distances while reducing overall project costs and reliably delivering electricity to customers throughout the region.
- Needs fewer transmission lines to carry the same amount of power.
- Requires fewer structures, reducing impact on land, communities and the environment.
- Provides additional capacity to power new manufacturing, homes, businesses and farms.

*MISO's analysis showed that one 765 kV transmission line can carry as much power as six 345 kV single-circuit lines—**minimizing the land needed** by as much as 70-80%.*

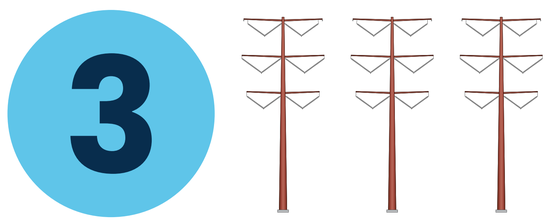



Single-Circuit Tower

**765 KV**

**250 FT**

Total right-of-way

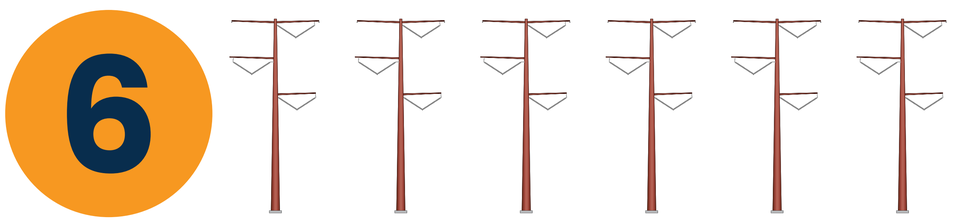



Double-Circuit Towers

**345 KV**

**450 FT**

Total right-of-way




Single-Circuit Towers

**345 KV**

**900 FT**

Total right-of-way

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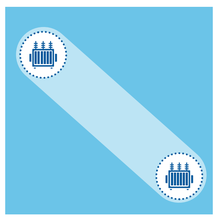
# Applicant's Routing Process

## How Routes are Developed

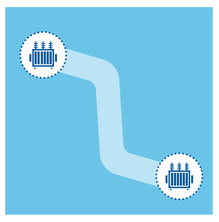
The route development process is a multi-step analysis that considers constraints, opportunities and alternatives that aim to minimize impacts to humans and the environment. Public input and the project team's own expertise all play a vital role in developing and finalizing a proposed route.

***Community feedback is essential at every stage, so we encourage you to stay engaged throughout the process.***



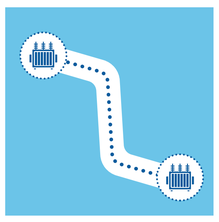
### 1. Develop preliminary route options **WE ARE HERE!**

*Identify areas for potential transmission line route options.*



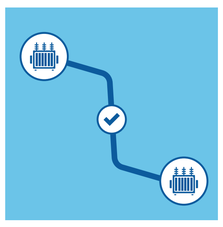
### 2. Refine route options

*Using public feedback, we'll further refine and narrow the preliminary route options to develop the proposed route for the route permit application.*



### 3. Identify a proposed route to submit in the application

*We'll submit a proposed route to the MPUC later in 2026.*



### 4. MPUC issues a decision on a final route

*The MPUC will issue a final determination on the route at the conclusion of the route permit application review process.*

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# Routing Criteria

During the routing process, our team will identify opportunities where routes and route alternatives could be located while evaluating sensitivities or areas that would make routing difficult.

## + Opportunities

Linear features that are oriented in the direction of the project:

- Field lines
- Property lines
- Section lines
- Roads
- Utility corridors

## Sensitivities

Area resources or conditions that may require additional review and consideration

- Agricultural impacts
- Cemeteries, religious facilities and cultural and historic resources
- Communication towers
- Conservation area/ nature preserves
- Contaminated areas
- Forest
- Hospitals
- Levees/dams
- Mines/quarries
- Pipelines
- Planned developments
- Protected federal and state lands
- Public airports
- Railroads
- Public recreational land
- Residences and schools/daycares
- Rivers, lakes, streams and wetlands
- Protected animal and plant species

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# Transmission Line Easements and Rights-of-Way

Energy companies build transmission lines to serve customers, connect new generation sources and help ensure the reliable delivery of electricity to customers. The area around a transmission line is called a right-of-way (ROW) and is governed by an easement, a legal document noting the easement that is recorded with the property.

## What are ROWs?

- Rights-of-way are the actual land areas acquired for a specific purpose such as a transmission line, roadway or other infrastructure.
- We anticipate an easement of up to 250 feet wide (125 feet on each side of the center of the structure) will be necessary for the new transmission line. The ROW is typically secured through negotiation and purchase of a transmission line easement.

## Can I still use the area in the ROW?

- Land within the ROW may be used for any purpose that does not interfere with the construction, operation or maintenance of the transmission line. In agricultural areas, the land may continue to be used for crop production and pasture.

## What is a transmission line easement?

- A transmission line easement is a property right that allows our team to construct, operate and maintain transmission structures and lines on your property while you maintain ownership and use of your land.

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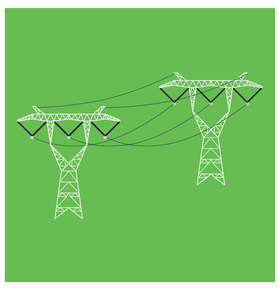
# Why This Project Is Needed

This new, 765 kilovolt (kV) ‘back-bone’ transmission line represents the next step in our region’s energy story. MISO and energy companies plan decades ahead to make sure we can meet the future electricity needs of our customers, and the Gopher to Badger Link is part of a series of proposed new regional transmission projects across the Upper Midwest to support the energy system as it grows and evolves.

## Evolving the Grid

The electric grid must evolve as our region transforms how it generates and uses electricity. As older power plants retire and new sources of electrical generation are developed Gopher to Badger Link will help ensure reliable electricity for customers as these changes occur.



## Sustaining Reliability

Our current system delivers 99% reliability as a direct result of the infrastructure built and operated over many decades. This next phase of transmission investments will maintain that high reliability into the future.

## Strengthening the System

Upgrading our transmission system supports electric reliability, fosters economic growth, meets rising energy demand, and ensures customers have electricity wherever and whenever its needed, even during extreme weather.

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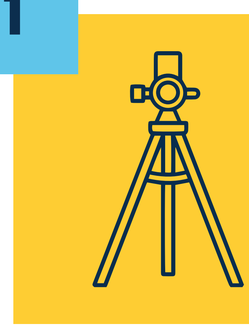
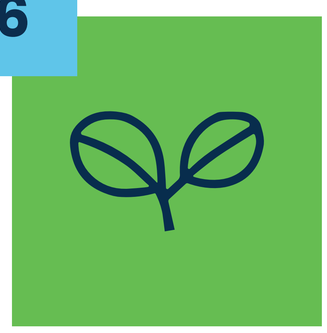
# Construction

Our typical transmission line construction process includes the following steps:

1. 
   - Soil surveys and property staking
2. 
   - Construction access and vegetation clearing
3. 
   - Mobilizing equipment and delivering material
4. 
   - Foundation construction
5. 
   - Installing structures and stringing conductor
6. 
   - Land restoration

***We currently expect construction to start in 2031 with the project in-service in 2034.***

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# Connect with Us

## Your Feedback is Needed!

Community feedback is essential at every stage, so we encourage you to stay engaged throughout the process. We have several ways for you to provide input and ask questions.

**Complete a comment card at today's meeting.**

**Visit:** www.GophertoBadgerLink.com

**Email:** Connect@GophertoBadgerLink.com

**Call:** 612-474-7799

**Mail:**

Dairyland Power Cooperative
Attn: Eric Jacobson
P.O. Box 817
La Crosse, WI 54602

**Participate in our virtual open house.**

*Scan here to visit the official project website*

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