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NEWS RELEASE

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Cardinal-Hickory Creek Transmission Line Energized

Major transmission line project begins providing significant benefits to electric consumers

Culminating more than a decade of planning and construction, co-owners ITC Midwest, ATC and Dairyland Power Cooperative have completed the western half of the Cardinal-Hickory Creek Transmission Line Project, allowing the entire 102-mile line to be placed in service on Sept. 26, 2024. The new 345,000-volt (345-kV) Cardinal-Hickory Creek transmission line is now providing a vital pathway to help ensure the lower-cost, renewable energy that consumers are seeking is available and affordable by increasing capacity and reducing congestion on the transmission grid. In addition, the new line is improving the reliability and flexibility of the region's transmission system, and providing other economic and public policy benefits.

As of June 2024, there were 160 renewable generation projects in Wisconsin, Iowa and other Upper Midwestern states representing more than 24.5 gigawatts dependent upon completion of the Cardinal-Hickory Creek line – enough to power millions of homes and businesses with lower cost, clean energy.

The western segment of the line, built and operated by ITC Midwest, runs from ITC Midwest's Hickory Creek Substation near New Vienna, Iowa, to ATC's new Hill Valley Substation near Montfort, Wisconsin. The eastern segment, built and operated by ATC,

connects the Hill Valley Substation to the Cardinal Substation near Middleton, Wisconsin, and became operational in December 2023.

“Following years of work, including numerous opportunities for public input, extensive regulatory and environmental review, and construction, the entire Cardinal-Hickory Creek line has been placed in service. This allows the project to begin providing numerous economic benefits for electric consumers and environmental benefits for the entire region,” said ITC Midwest President Dusky Terry. “We are especially grateful to the landowners, federal agency officials, and local leaders who worked diligently with us to make this project possible. We offer particular thanks to our construction crews for building the line safely and in full compliance with comprehensive environmental standards.”

“We are pleased that the Cardinal-Hickory Creek line has been placed into service and electric consumers can now receive the full benefits of this significant project,” said ATC Senior Vice President of Construction and Maintenance Jared Winters. “The Cardinal-Hickory Creek line will provide access to lower-cost energy, improved reliability, and support for the interconnection of renewable generation resources across the Upper Midwest.”

“The safe completion of Cardinal-Hickory Creek is a victory for energy consumers and the environment,” said Dairyland Power Cooperative President & CEO Brent Ridge. “As a backbone interconnection, the line will finally serve as the vital link to a long waiting list of regional renewable energy projects. While supporting carbon reduction goals, Cardinal-Hickory Creek also strengthens grid reliability and resilience at a time of great change in the energy industry.”

The majority of the Cardinal-Hickory Creek transmission line in Wisconsin – more than 95 percent – was co-located with existing infrastructure rights-of-way like roads, railroads and transmission lines. Throughout the project, the co-owner utilities strived to avoid, minimize and mitigate for environmental impacts by using industry-leading best management practices. Seasonal and geographic restrictions on construction protected wildlife, streams and wetlands, while any impacted areas have been or will be restored.

Protecting the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge

ITC Midwest and Dairyland Power Cooperative honored their commitment to construct the project in a manner that minimized environmental impacts to the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge (Refuge). These commitments included a robust set of mitigation and restoration methods set through extensive consultation with federal land management and regulatory agencies, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. All construction work within the Refuge was completed using wooden construction mats to reduce soil disturbance and sedimentation, and provide other environmental protection. No grading took place within the Refuge. These efforts avoided and minimized impacts to plants, animals and their habitats, to the greatest extent possible.

In addition, the overall electric transmission footprint in the Refuge has been significantly reduced. The number of transmission structures in the Refuge has been reduced by approximately half and the Cardinal-Hickory Creek project's low-profile structures use an avian-friendly design. Two existing transmission lines that cross the Refuge are being removed. Once this retired transmission infrastructure has been removed and the land restoration is complete, the existing transmission line easements will be conveyed to the federal government. This allows the utilities to complete restoration of the existing rights-of-way to a more natural state according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers approved restoration plan. The total restoration will encompass approximately 28 acres.

Finally, a land exchange between the co-owners and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has delivered nearly 36 acres of high-quality habitat (the Wagner parcel near Cassville) to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for inclusion in the Refuge. In exchange, the utilities received 19 acres of low-quality habitat along Oak Road near the Mississippi River in Iowa to construct the new line. In totality, these actions have allowed the Cardinal-Hickory Creek project to deliver net benefits to the Refuge environment as promised.

Additional project information is available at www.cardinal-hickorycreek.com.

Project background

The Cardinal-Hickory Creek Transmission Line Project was approved in 2011 as part of a set of Multi-Value Projects (MVPs) by the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO), the independent, not-for-profit regional transmission grid planning agency and transmission system operator that oversees the regional electric transmission grid in portions of the Upper Midwest. As an MVP, the project is designed to improve transmission system reliability and provide a wide range of benefits, including relieving congestion on the transmission system to reduce energy costs and providing greater access to lower-cost renewable generation sources.

Following years of study and thorough environmental review, including extensive opportunities for public input, state and federal regulatory agencies granted approvals for the project based on the benefits it provides. The project was approved by the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin in September 2019, and by the Iowa Utilities Commission in May 2020.

Generation and distribution utilities are depending on the Cardinal-Hickory Creek project to facilitate the region's transition away from fossil fuels. Traditional baseload generation plants are being retired throughout the Upper Midwest at an unprecedented pace, especially coal plants. Requests to interconnect new renewable generation sources with the transmission system are at an all-time high while new projects are backlogged due to a lack of transmission capacity.

The Cardinal-Hickory Creek Transmission Line Project is the essential bridge that enables renewable energy to be brought to market, resulting in a significant reduction in carbon emissions. Governments, corporations, other organizations pursuing

sustainability goals and electric consumers are fueling the demand for clean, renewable energy. The federal government and states including Wisconsin, Iowa and Minnesota have all adopted policies to promote the development of renewable energy resources. These goals can only be accomplished by building the necessary electric transmission infrastructure to connect renewable energy production with consumers, notably the Cardinal-Hickory Creek project.

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About ATC

ATC is a Wisconsin-based company that moves energy along the regional electric grid in parts of Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota and Illinois, serving more than 5 million electric consumers. We are experts at what we do: planning, maintaining, operating and protecting the grid. As the electric industry moves toward renewable generation sources, we are transforming our system to continue delivering energy reliably and safely. We proudly support STEM education programs that empower youth with the skills needed to succeed in tomorrow's energy workforce. For more information, visit www.atcllc.com and follow us on [LinkedIn](#) and [X \(Twitter\)](#).

About ITC Midwest

ITC Midwest LLC is a subsidiary of [ITC Holdings Corp.](http://www.itc.com), the largest independent electricity transmission company in the U.S. ITC Midwest operates more than 6,600 circuit miles of transmission lines in Iowa, Minnesota, Illinois and Missouri, and holds utility status in Wisconsin. ITC Midwest is headquartered in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and maintains regional operating facilities in Dubuque, Iowa City and Perry, Iowa; and Albert Lea and Lakefield, Minnesota. For further information visit www.itcmidwest.com. ITC is a subsidiary of Fortis Inc., a leader in the North American regulated electric and gas utility industry. For further information visit www.fortisinc.com.

About Dairyland Power Cooperative

Dairyland Power Cooperative, with headquarters in La Crosse, Wisconsin, provides wholesale electricity to 24-member distribution cooperatives and 27 municipal utilities. A Touchstone Energy Cooperative, Dairyland's service area encompasses 62 counties in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa and Illinois. For more information, please visit www.dairylandpower.com.