

***Notice of North Star Solar PV LLC Filing a Combined Site Permit Application and  
Route Permit Application as a Joint Proceeding with the  
Minnesota Public Utilities Commission***

***PUC Docket No. IP6943/GS-15-33***

Community Energy Solar is pleased to provide you with formal notice that North Star Solar PV LLC (“North Star”) filed a Combined Site Permit Application and Route Permit Application as a Joint Proceeding with the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (the “Commission”) on February 11, 2015, for a 100 megawatt solar energy generating facility and associated transmission line. This Notice provides information on the projects, the overall permitting process, and how to register your name on the Commission’s Project contact list to ensure you receive future notices.

**Project Description**

North Star proposes to construct a 100 megawatt (“MW”) photovoltaic (“PV”) solar energy generating facility and associated systems (“North Star Solar Project” or “Solar Project”) in Chisago County Minnesota – approximately four miles southeast of North Branch, Minnesota. The North Star Solar Project will utilize a single axis tracker system to move the PV modules with the sun from east to west every day. The final Solar Project design is expected to occupy approximately 800 acres of agricultural land.

North Star also proposes to construct an approximately one-mile long, 115 kilovolt (“kV”) high voltage transmission line to connect the North Star Solar Project to the existing Xcel Energy Chisago Substation (“NS HVTL Project”).

A preliminary map of both the Solar Project and the NS HVTL Project is included as Attachment A.

**Site and Route Permit Process**

A Site and Route Permit from the Commission is required before the North Star Solar Project and the NS HVTL Project can be constructed. The Power Plant Siting Act (Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 216E) and implementing rules in the Minnesota Administrative Rules (parts 7850.1000 to 7850.5600) establish the requirements for submitting and processing a Site and Route Permit Application. The statutes and rules also establish notice requirements for various stages of the process.

The Site Permit and Route Permit Application will be considered by the Commission under the alternative permitting process in the Power Plant Siting Act (Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 216E.04) and Minnesota Administrative Rules (7850.2800 to 7850.3900). The Commission has up to nine months from the time the Application is accepted as complete to process and make a decision on the Site and Route Permit according to state law. (Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 216E.04, subd. 7 and Minnesota Administrative Rule 7850.3900, subp. 1.)

Within 60 days after the Commission accepts the Site and Route Permit Application as complete, the Commission and the Department of Commerce, Energy Environmental Review and Analysis (“EERA”) unit will hold a public scoping meeting to provide information and seek comments from the public. At the meeting, members of the public may propose scope recommendations and alternatives for consideration in the environmental assessment that will be conducted by the EERA. Once the public meeting is scheduled, notice of the meeting will be provided to persons whose names are on the Solar Project and the NS HVTL Project contact list and will be published in a legal newspaper of general circulation in the project area.

After the environmental assessment has been completed, the Commission will hold a public hearing on the Site and Route Permit Application. Any person may speak at the public hearing, present documentary evidence, ask questions of North Star representatives and EERA staff, and submit comments.

### **Certificate of Need**

Pursuant to Minnesota law (Minnesota Statutes, Section 216B.243, subd. 9), no separate Certificate of Need is required for the North Star Solar Project as it was selected in Docket No. E002/M-14-162.

The NS HVTL Project is exempt from Certificate of Need requirements because it does not meet the voltage and length requirements of a “large energy facility” (Minnesota Statutes, Section 216B.2421). The NS HVTL Project is a 115kV transmission line, that is less than 10 miles in length and does not cross a state border, therefore, a Certificate of Need is not required.

### **Eminent Domain**

North Star does not have the authority to exercise the power of eminent domain to acquire the land necessary for the Solar Project or the NS HVTL Project.

### **More Information**

#### **Department of Commerce Project Website**

<http://mn.gov/commerce/energyfacilities/>

**North Star Solar Project and NS HVTL Project Contact List:** Sign up to receive notices about the projects and opportunities to participate (public meetings, comment periods, and documents). Contact [docketing.puc@state.mn.us](mailto:docketing.puc@state.mn.us) or call 651-201-2204 with the docket number (15-33), your name, mailing address, and email address.

**Complete Project Information:** All documents filed in the North Star Solar Project and NS HVTL Project docket are available on the Commission’s website at [mn.gov/puc](http://mn.gov/puc). Select “Search eDockets”, enter the year (15) and the docket number (33), select “Search”.

**Subscribe to the Docket:** Receive email notifications every time new documents are filed.

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**Application:** Please see **Attachment B** for a list of locations where the application may be viewed. You may also contact North Star (contact information below) to request a copy of the Site and Route Permit Application.

**Minnesota Statutes and Rules:** The North Star Solar Project and the NS HVTL Project are being reviewed as a Joint Proceeding under Minnesota Statute, Section 216E.04 and Minnesota Administrative Rules Chapter 7850, available at [revisor.mn.gov](http://revisor.mn.gov).

### **Project Contacts**

**Public Utilities Commission Public Advisor**

Tracy Smetana at [consumer.puc@state.mn.us](mailto:consumer.puc@state.mn.us), 651-296-0406 or 1-800-657-3782

**Public Utilities Commission Staff Analyst**

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**Department of Commerce Environmental Review Manager**

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