

APPENDIX C. SCOPING REPORT

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FINAL North Plains Connector Project Environmental Impact Statement Scoping Report

PREPARED FOR



DATE

January 2025

REFERENCE

0755189



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FINAL North Plains Connector Project Environmental Impact Statement Scoping Report

0755189



Mike Cox
Partner



Ryan Lisson
Project Manager

ERM's Livingston Office
1 Ninth Street Island Drive
Livingston, Montana 59047
T +1 406 223 7088

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CLIENT: Montana Department of Environmental Quality
PROJECT NO: 0755189 DATE: January 2025

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Acronym	Description
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
DOE	U.S. Department of Energy
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
Joint Lead Agencies	U.S. Department of Energy and Montana Department of Environmental Quality
MCA	Montana Code Annotated
MEPA	Montana Environmental Policy Act
MISO	Midcontinent Independent System Operator
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
Project	North Plains Connector Project
Proponent	North Plains Connector LLC
USC	United States Code

1. INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and Montana Department of Environmental Quality (collectively, Joint Lead Agencies) are preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed North Plains Connector Project (the proposed Project) submitted by North Plains Connector LLC (Proponent), a wholly owned, single-purpose, indirect subsidiary of Grid United LLC. The proposed Project crosses Federal lands administered by the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Agricultural Research Service; accordingly, these three agencies must issue respective rights-of-way, permits, and authorizations to the Proponent and have joined the Project as cooperating agencies.

The EIS must comply with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (United States Code, Title 42, Section 4321 *et seq.* [42 USC § 4321 *et seq.*]; DOE NEPA regulations [Code of Federal Regulations, Title 10, Section 1021 (10 CFR § 1021)]; Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR § 1500–1508); Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) (Title 75, Chapter 1, Part 101, *et seq.*, Montana Code Annotated [MCA]); the administrative rules adopted under MEPA; and the Montana Major Facility Siting Act (§ 75-20-101, *et seq.*, MCA). The purpose of the EIS is to analyze the potential environmental impacts of the proposed Project and reasonable alternatives to the Proposed Action, including a No Action Alternative as required by NEPA and MEPA, so that the Joint Lead Agencies, in coordination with the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Agricultural Research Service, can make an informed decision on the proposed Project.

To inform the EIS analysis of—and potential alternatives to—the proposed Project, the Joint Lead Agencies established a public comment scoping period from October 25 to December 9, 2024. During this time, the Joint Lead Agencies received written comments from the public. This report describes the public scoping process, including the public scoping meetings, and summarizes substantive comments received during the scoping period. It also contains materials generated for the scoping process.

The proposed Project is approximately 420 miles long, extending from an existing substation in Colstrip, Montana, to two separate end points in North Dakota: one near the town of Center and the other near St. Anthony. The proposed Project is a 525-kilovolt, high-voltage direct-current overhead transmission line that would provide 3,000 megawatts of bi-directional transfer capability. It would also connect the Western Electricity Coordinating Council of the western grid with the Midcontinent Independent System Operator and Southwest Power Pool of the eastern grid. The proposed Project would be open to all sources of electrical power generation. In response to demand, the proposed Project would be able to transport power in either direction along the line to improve the reliability and resiliency of the grids. The location of the proposed Project is shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1.1-1
Project Overview Map
North Plains Connector Project**

Legend:

- Major Town/City
- Rosebud County Converter Station
- Morton County Converter Station
- Morton County Switchyard
- Colstrip Substation (Existing)
- Oliver County Substation (Proposed by Third Party)
- HVDC Transmission Line
- Morton Transmission Line
- Oliver Transmission Line
- Rosebud Transmission Line
- County Boundary
- State Boundary

Scale: 0 15 30 Miles

North Plains Connector

For Environmental Review Purposes Only

2. SCOPING PROCESS

The purpose of scoping is to provide information about the Proponent's proposed Project to the public, identify issues related to the proposed Project that are likely to involve significant impacts that will be analyzed in depth in the EIS, and identify possible alternatives to be considered. Knowing the scope and the importance of issues assists the Joint Lead Agencies in preparing an accurate and timely environmental analysis. The scoping process also helps identify issues important to the community and is designed to encourage public input.

Comments received during the scoping phase are combined with review of the proposed Project by an interdisciplinary team of technical experts to establish the scope of analysis to be conducted in the EIS. Alternatives will be developed based on issues of concern raised by the public, participating government agencies, and EIS team resource specialists. Following scoping, a Draft EIS will be published and made available for public review and comment.

A total of 28 submittals were received during the public comment scoping period (October 25 to December 9, 2024), which included 85 comments (Table 1, Scoping Comment Count Summary). Comment letters were submitted by email (northplainsconnector@hq.doe.gov) or by mail (Rebecca Boyle, NEPA Document Manager, DOE, Grid Deployment Office, 1000 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20585). The Joint Lead Agencies reviewed, coded, and organized all public comments. Comments on the EIS scoping process are summarized in Section 4, Major Comments Raised During Scoping.

TABLE 1 SCOPING COMMENT COUNT SUMMARY

Comment Type	Number of Submittals	Number of Comments
Unique (emails, letters, handwritten)	22	79
Form Letter 1		
Variants	2	2
Non-Variants	4	4
Total	28	85

3. PUBLIC SCOPING MEETINGS

3.1 NOTIFICATION PROCESS

On October 25, 2024, the DOE published a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the *Federal Register* (Notice of Intent To Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed North Plains Connector Project, Colstrip, Montana to Center/St. Anthony, North Dakota, 89 *Federal Register* 207 [October 25, 2024]), indicating that the Joint Lead Agencies intended to prepare an EIS for the proposed Project. Additionally on this date, the DOE issued a press release on the DOE Grid Deployment Office website (<https://www.energy.gov/gdo/articles/doe-announces-public-scoping-meetings-north-plains-connector-project>) announcing the public scoping meetings; the Montana Department of Environmental Quality issued this same press release on their website. DOE also published a new webpage via the Office of NEPA Policy and Compliance including a summary of the project, an overview of the EIS process and DOE's role, and information on the scoping meetings (<https://www.energy.gov/nepa/doeeis-0568-north-plains-connector-multiple-locations>). After the scoping meetings, DOE uploaded the scoping materials to this webpage and will publish future project updates through this webpage.

The NOI and press release disclosed the times and locations of five public meetings (four in-person and one virtual), as well as information about the proposed Project and EIS process. A legal notice or advertisement was also published in the following local newspapers along the proposed Project route:

- Bowman, County Pioneer
- Beach, Golden Valley News
- Carson Press
- Center Republican
- Elgin, Grant County News
- Hettinger, Adams County Record
- Medora, Billings County Pioneer
- New England, Hettinger County Herald
- Dickinson Press
- Morton County News Journal
- Native America Today
- Forsyth Independent Press
- Miles City Star
- Fallon County Times
- Billings Gazette
- The Bismark Tribune

On October 23, 2024, public meeting notices were mailed to 951 organizations or individuals. Those contacted include impacted landowners, tribal organizations and Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs), federal and state government officials, and others who previously expressed

interest in the proposed Project. DOE also sent meeting notices via email to 165 organizations or individuals who only provided email contact information.

3.2 PUBLIC SCOPING MEETINGS

Four in-person meetings and one virtual public scoping meeting were held in November 2024. Their dates and times were as follows:

1. November 6 at the Venue Twenty5 building in Mandan, North Dakota, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. Central Time
2. November 7 at the Astoria Event Center in Dickinson, North Dakota, from 6pm to 9 p.m. Mountain Time (MT)
3. November 12 at the Custer County Event Center in Miles City, Montana, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. MT
4. November 13 at Colstrip City Hall in Colstrip, Montana, from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. MT
5. November 19 (virtual) from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m. MT

Attendees were required to register in advance for the virtual meeting only. No registration was required for the in-person meetings. During the in-person meetings, DOE provided scoping materials to the public. All materials are now available on DOE's website for review:

<https://www.energy.gov/nepa/doeeis-0568-north-plains-connector-multiple-locations>.

Each public meeting began with an open house. The purpose of the open houses was to provide the public an opportunity to speak with technical experts about the proposed Project. Posters were prepared on the following topics, to which the Joint Lead Agencies' staff were available to speak (as well as other topics the public asked about):

1. Proposed Project Overview with Map
2. Purpose and Need of Proposed Project
3. Proposed Project Design
4. Proposed Project Alternatives
5. Agency Roles and Responsibilities
6. Timeline and Schedule
7. How to Submit Comments

Following the open house, DOE gave a brief presentation about the EIS scoping process and the proposed Project. Finally, the public was invited to ask questions and speak to Joint Lead Agency and Cooperating agency staff. Oral comments raised at the scoping meeting were not recorded as scoping comments. A summary of registered attendance is captured in Table 2 (Summary of Public Meeting Attendance).

TABLE 2 SUMMARY OF PUBLIC MEETING ATTENDANCE

Location	Meeting Date / Time	Number of Attendees
Mandan, North Dakota	November 6, 2024 / 4–7 p.m. Central	37
Dickinson, North Dakota	November 7, 2024 / 6–9 p.m. Mountain	5
Miles City, Montana	November 12, 2024 / 4–7 p.m. Mountain	24
Colstrip, Montana	November 13, 2024 / 6–9 p.m. Mountain	7
Virtual	November 19, 2024 / 12–3 p.m. Mountain	40
Total		113

4. MAJOR COMMENTS RAISED DURING SCOPING

A total of 28 comment letters (i.e., submittals) were received at the scoping meeting and via email or mail (Table 1, Scoping Comment Count Summary). Every comment letter was reviewed by the Joint Lead Agencies or its third-party contractor, Environmental Resources Management, Inc. These 28 submittals contained 85 comments, each of which was coded based on the resource topic it addressed (e.g., water, wildlife, socioeconomics). Table 3 (Summary of Major Comments) identifies the most salient or substantive comment themes regarding the EIS analysis, potential mitigation, and consideration of alternatives. Table 3 does not capture comments verbatim. Table 4 (Scoping Comment Issue Summary) presents the total number of submittals and comments for each resource topic.

TABLE 3 SUMMARY OF MAJOR COMMENTS

Resource Topic	Comment Summary
Air Resources	The EIS should address any ambient dust or emissions that may be created during construction.
Best Available Data, Information, Studies	Commenters sent research articles and reports to provide relevant information regarding the proposed Project.
Best Management Practices	The EIS should address any stormwater discharge runoff with proper permitting and erosion control measures.
Community and Land Use	The EIS should address damage to property value that the proposed Project may cause, especially pertaining to development of the A - Northern Route alternative in Montana. The EIS should analyze the economic opportunities that this proposed Project can provide to local, state, and Tribal governments in the vicinity of the Project area, including tax revenue generation and job creation.
Consultation and Coordination	Commenters requested information, maps, spatial data, and to be added to email lists for service and information about the proposed Project. Information requested included how and where the proposed route of the powerline would connect to existing infrastructure. Information about the proposed and alternate routes, as well as where the routes would intersect U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management lands, was requested. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service requested further coordination regarding baseline surveys along the proposed Project route and to be notified if changes are made to the plans, operating criteria, or if additional information becomes available.
Cultural and Historic Resources	The EIS should consider the impact that construction activities could have on archaeological, paleontological, and cultural sites, as this region and soil type are known to contain important cultural and historical resources.
Cumulative Impacts	The EIS should consider minor changes to the route that could avoid compounding negative environmental impacts. The EIS should identify and consider the impacts of connected future actions, such as a potential build out of wind farms along the proposed powerline.

Resource Topic	Comment Summary
Economic Impact	The EIS should disclose the cost of the proposed Project. Any potential impacts to domestic and commercial livestock due to high voltage should be assessed and mitigated. The EIS should address employing local, skilled, and unionized labor forces for construction and operation of the proposed Project to positively impact the local economy and ensure high safety and quality standards. The EIS should consider the proposed Project's potential to reduce property value as a commercial asset, such as via the presence of noise pollution.
Environmental Impacts	The EIS should address how hazardous waste is properly disposed of, and any impacted areas should be restored.
General Opposition or Support	Comments of general support for the proposed Project discuss the proposed Project's potential to boost American energy independence and economic opportunity. These comments also consider the proposed Project's potential to lower energy costs, improve the grid for local residents, and provide access to affordable, reliable energy across states. Other comments support the proposed Project with the understanding that it will benefit the transmission of clean energy alternatives and minimize adverse environmental impacts.
Native American Cultural Resources	The EIS should address potential impacts to historic Native American trails. The EIS must address how construction of this transmission line could adversely affect or irreparably damage the integrity of these trails, as they are culturally significant Native American sites and an ecotone between fertile grasslands, hardwood draws, and rough breaks.
No Action Alternative	Comments regarding the No Action Alternative indicated regional opposition to development, economic growth, and other factors associated with development (i.e., support for the No Action Alternative).
Other Climate Change Impacts	The EIS should consider how the proposed Project could employ best management practices, alternatives, designs, and mitigation measures to address climate change and widespread species extinction. Commenters expressed opposition of the proposed Project's potential to benefit use of fossil fuels and a need to transition towards clean energy.
Other Comments on Alternatives	Sections of the A - Northern Route alternative in Montana are opposed, and potential alternatives to this route are provided by the commenter. The EIS should consider a route more closely aligned with Interstate 94, which runs through both Montana and North Dakota, to reduce maintenance costs, construction in remote areas, and fire risk, as well as improve emergency response time. Commenters expressed concern about inconsistencies between the proposed Project and existing electrical lines. Commenters proposed an alternative route in Custer County, Montana, to decrease the length and amount of turns in the line and to avoid impacts to feedlot operations, visual and aesthetic resources, and commercial property value.
Public Health and Safety	The EIS should address how high-voltage lines may harm people or wildlife underneath.
Recreation and Visual Resources	Commenters are concerned regarding any degradation of the aesthetic value of the current landscape.
Socioeconomic Impacts	The EIS should discuss how the proposed Project can improve the western and eastern interconnections, as well as mitigate any risks associated with weather events.

Resource Topic	Comment Summary
Soils and Geology	The EIS should review the proposed Project area and avoid any areas that have been known to be impacted by landslides, as well as areas that are characterized as having difficult topography or loose soil, which may prevent access.
Statutory and Regulatory Framework	The EIS should consider any listed species protected by the Endangered Species Act that may occupy the proposed Project area.
Suggested Mitigations for Specific Impacts	Commenters are concerned over the use of unsustainable materials over sustainable materials. The proposed Project should strive to include clean solutions.
Vegetation	The EIS should consider any impact that may contribute to habitat loss, namely sagebrush communities. It should also minimize spread of any invasive species.
Visual/Aesthetic Impacts	Commenters are concerned regarding any degradation of the aesthetic value of the current landscape.
Water Resources	The EIS should discuss that any construction that occurs near water minimizes any negative impacts or hazardous spills.
Wildlife and Habitat	The EIS should demonstrate if this proposed Project will have any impact on habitat loss or a decrease in biodiversity. The Project area should be assessed to determine any effect on listed species or sensitive habitat. The proposed Project should also collaborate with relevant agencies to gather updated information and ensure proper measures for species conservation.

TABLE 4 SCOPING COMMENT ISSUE SUMMARY

Resource Topic	Number of Submittals	Number of Comments
Air Resources	1	1
Best Available Data, Information, Studies	2	6
Best Management Practices	1	4
Community and Land Use	5	5
Consultation and Coordination	4	4
Cultural and Historic Resources	1	1
Cumulative Impacts	2	2
Economic Impact	5	5
Environmental Impacts	1	1
General Opposition or Support	7	7
Native American Cultural Resources	1	1
No Action Alternative	1	1
Other Climate Change Impacts	4	4
Other Comments on Alternatives	6	8
Public Health and Safety	3	3
Recreation and Visual Resources	2	2
Socioeconomic Impacts	1	1
Soils and Geology	3	3
Statutory and Regulatory Framework	1	1
Suggested Mitigations for Specific Impacts	1	1
Vegetation	1	1
Visual/Aesthetic Impacts	2	2
Water Resources	1	2
Wildlife and Habitat	7	18



APPENDIX A

PRESS RELEASES FOR PUBLIC SCOPING MEETINGS

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Major Facility Siting Act | Multiple Locations | Scoping for the North Plains Connector Project | Public Comment Period Ends December 9, 2024 | Public Meetings November 6-19, 2024

OCTOBER 25 2024

DOE and the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) issue a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and announce five public scoping meetings.

On October 25, 2024, the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Grid Deployment Office (GDO) and the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), in coordination with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), and Agricultural Research Service (ARS), jointly issued a [Notice of Intent \(NOI\)](#) to prepare an Environmental Impact State (EIS) for the North Plains Connector Project (NPC). The NPC is a proposed 525-kV, high-voltage direct-current (HVDC) overhead transmission line that would provide 3,000 megawatts (MW) of bi-directional transfer capability and connect the Western and Eastern Interconnections. As proposed, the NPC extends approximately 420 miles from near Colstrip, Montana, to two separate end points in North Dakota: one near Center, North Dakota, and the other near St. Anthony, North Dakota.

More information on the NPC can be found on DOE's website: <https://www.energy.gov/nepa/doeeis-0568-north-plains-connector-multiple-locations>

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA), DOE will host five public scoping meetings to assess the environmental effects of siting, constructing, operating, and maintaining the NPC.

Four of the meetings will be in-person, and one will be virtual to accommodate more attendees. Registration is required for the virtual meeting, and the meeting will be recorded and posted to DOE's website afterward.

Interested parties are invited to participate in the public scoping meetings to learn more about the NPC and DOE's environmental review process, as well as submit formal comments on the proposed project. Personnel from DOE, BLM, USFS, and ARS will be available for informal discussions. However, DOE will not accept oral comments during the scoping meetings.

Learn more about the public comment and meeting opportunities on [DOE's website](#).

Comment Period Ends: December 9, 2024 11:59 PM MT

Send/Submit Comments To:

Electronically: northplainsconnector@hq.doe.gov

Rebecca Boyle
NEPA Document Manager
Grid Deployment Office
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave SW, Suite 4H-065
Washington, D.C. 20585

Public Meeting Information:

Meeting Schedule

Meeting Format	Date	Time	Location	Venue
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Meeting Format	Date	Time	Location	Venue
In person	Wednesday, November 6, 2024	4:00-7:00 PM CT	Mandan, ND	Venue Twenty5 3796 ND HWY 25 Mandan, ND, 58554
In Person	Thursday, November 7, 2024	6:00-9:00 PM MT	Dickinson, ND	Astoria Event Center 363 15 St W Dickinson, ND, 58601
In Person	Tuesday, November 12, 2024	4:00-7:00 PM MT	Miles City, MT	Custer County Event Center 42 Garryowen Road RC Miles City, MT 59301
In Person	Wednesday, November 13, 2024	6:00-9:00 PM MT	Colstrip, MT	Colstrip City Hall 12 Cherry Street Colstrip, Montana, 59323
Virtual	Tuesday, November 19, 2024	12:00-3:00 PM MT	Webex	Register for the virtual meeting here: https://bit.ly/NorthPlainsVirtual

For accommodations, contact U.S. Department of Energy.

Tags: MEPA, Public Comment, Public Meeting and Energy

Grid Deployment Office DOE Announces Public Scoping Meetings for the North Plains Connector Pr...

DOE Announces Public Scoping Meetings for the North Plains Connector Project

DOE and the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) issue a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and announce five public scoping meetings.

[Grid Deployment Office](#)

October, 25 2024

 3 min

*DOE and the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ)
Issue a Notice of Intent (NOI) to Prepare an Environmental Impact
Statement (EIS) and Announce Five Public Scoping Meetings*

On October 25, 2024, the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Grid Deployment Office (GDO) and the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), in coordination with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), and Agricultural Research Service (ARS), jointly issued a [Notice of Intent \(NOI\)](#) to prepare an Environmental Impact State (EIS) for the North Plains Connector Project (NPC). The NPC is a proposed 525-kV, high-voltage direct-current (HVDC) overhead transmission line that would provide 3,000 megawatts (MW) of bi-directional transfer capability and connect the Western and Eastern Interconnections. As proposed, the NPC extends approximately 420 miles from near Colstrip, Montana, to two separate end points in North Dakota: one near Center, North Dakota, and the other near St. Anthony, North Dakota.

[More information on the NPC can be found on DOE's website.](#)

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA), DOE will host five public scoping meetings to assess the environmental effects of siting, constructing, operating, and maintaining the NPC.

Four of the meetings will be in-person, and one will be virtual to accommodate more attendees. Registration is required for the virtual meeting, and the meeting will be recorded and posted to DOE's website afterward.

Interested parties are invited to participate in the public scoping meetings to learn more about the NPC and DOE's environmental review process, as well as submit formal comments on the proposed project. Personnel from DOE, BLM, USFS, and ARS will be available for informal

discussions. However, DOE will not accept oral comments during the scoping meetings.

Meeting Schedule:

Meeting Format	Date	Time	Location	Venue
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In Person	Thursday, November 7	6-9 pm MT	Dickinson, ND	Astoria Event Center 363 15 St W Dickinson, ND 58601
In Person	Tuesday, November 12	4-7 pm MT	Miles City, MT	Custer County Event Center 42 Garryowen Road RC Miles City, MT 59301
In Person	Wednesday, November 13	6-9 pm MT	Colstrip, MT	Colstrip City Hall 12 Cherry Street Colstrip, MT 59323
Virtual	Tuesday, November 19	12-3 pm MT	Webex	Register for the virtual meeting

Interested parties can also submit comments on the NPC via:

- **Email (preferred):** northplainsconnector@hq.doe.gov
- **Mail:** Please address your mail to:
 - Ms. Rebecca Boyle
NEPA Document Manager
Grid Deployment Office
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave SW, Suite 4H-065
Washington, DC 20585

All comments must be submitted in a written format, either by email or mail. Comments are due **by 11:59 pm MT on December 9, 2024.**

While DOE cannot guarantee consideration of comments received or postmarked after December 9, late comments will be considered to the extent practicable.

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Japanese University Students
and Educators Visit Rocky Flats
Site

October 24, 2024

Biden-Harris Administration
Delivers Nearly \$474 Million in
New Grid Resilience Funding to
States and Tribes as Part of
Investing in America Agenda

October 25, 2024

Tags:

- GRID DEPLOYMENT AND TRANSMISSION
- NEPA
- CLEAN ENERGY
- ENVIRONMENTAL AND LEGACY MANAGEMENT
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APPENDIX B

LEGAL NOTICE FOR PUBLIC SCOPING MEETINGS

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AFFIDAVIT OF PUBLICATION

See Proof on Next Page

Billings Gazette
401 N Broadyway
Billings, Montana 59101
(406) 657-1200

State of Florida, County of Orange, ss:

Hannah Ward, being first duly sworn, deposes and says: That (s)he is a duly authorized signatory of Column Software, PBC, duly authorized agent of Billings Gazette, a newspaper of general circulation published that is a "legal newspaper" as that is published daily in the City of Billings, in the County of Yellowstone, State of Montana, and has charge of the Advertisements thereof.

If this certification is for the State of Montana, I hereby certify that I have read sec. 18-7-204 and 18-7-205 , MCA, and subsequent revisions, and declare that the price or rate charged the State of Montana for the publication for which claim is made in printed copy in the amount of \$714.04 , is not in excess of the minimum rate charged any other advertiser for publication of advertisement, set in the same size type and published for the same number of insertions, further certify that this claim is correct and just in all respects, and that payment or credit has not been received.

PUBLICATION DATES: October. 16 2024, October. 30 2024,
November. 10 2024

NOTICE ID: GxzITCu2afR0ygO1WBto

PUBLISHER ID: COL-MT-100334

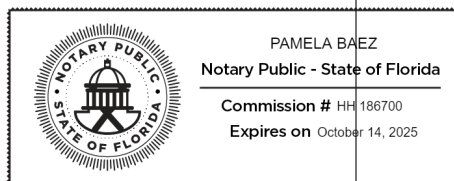
NOTICE NAME: NPC_Scoping_Ad Final Legal Notice

Publication Fee: \$714.04

(Signed) Hannah Ward

VERIFICATION

State of Florida
County of Orange



Subscribed in my presence and sworn to before me on this: 11/12/2024

Notary Public
Notarized remotely online using communication technology via Proof.

Legal Notice

You're Invited!

What: Open house scoping meetings for the North Plains Connector Project (NPC), a proposed 525-kilovolt (kV), high-voltage direct-current (HVDC) overhead transmission line and associated equipment that would connect the Eastern and Western Interconnections (the eastern and western electric grids in the U.S.). As proposed, the NPC would extend approximately 420 miles from near Colstrip, MT, to two separate end points in North Dakota: one near Center, ND, and the other near St. Anthony, ND.

Who: Hosted by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), and the Agricultural Research Service (ARS). Open houses in Montana will also be hosted by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ).

Why: To inform the public of the NPC and help identify potential environmental impacts and other concerns. Federal agencies will provide an overview of the environmental review process and establish opportunities for the public to stay informed of the agencies' actions. Attendees will be able to submit written comments on the scope of the federal agencies' environmental review.

When:

NORTH DAKOTA

Wednesday, November 6

4-7 PM CT

Venue Twenty5

3796 ND HWY 25

Mandan, ND, 58554

Thursday, November 7

6-9 PM MT

Astoria Event Center

363 15 St W

Dickinson, ND, 58601

MONTANA

Tuesday, November 12

4-7 PM MT

Custer County Event Center

42 Garryowen Road RC

Miles City, MT, 59301

Wednesday, November 13

6-9 PM MT

Colstrip City Hall

12 Cherry Street

Colstrip, Montana, 59323

VIRTUAL:

Tuesday, November 19

12-3pm MT

<https://bit.ly/NorthPlainsVirtual>

For more information about the North Plains Connector Project, visit

<https://www.energy.gov/nepa/doeels-0568-north-plains-connector-multiple-locations>

October 16, 30, November 10, 2024 COL-MT-100334 MNAXLP

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See Proof on Next Page

State of Texas, County of Bexar, ss:

Bo Xiang, being first duly sworn, deposes and says: That (s)he is a duly authorized signatory of Column Software, PBC and duly authorized agent of The Bismarck Tribune, and that the publication(s) were made through The Bismarck Tribune on the following dates:

PUBLICATION DATES:

Oct. 16, 2024, Oct. 30, 2024, Nov. 13, 2024

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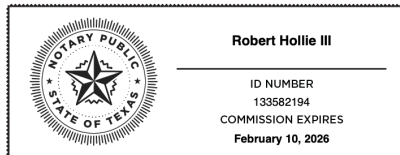
Publication Fee: \$471.96

Bo Xiang

(Signed) _____

VERIFICATION

State of Texas
County of Bexar



Subscribed in my presence and sworn to before me on this: 11/14/2024

[Signature]

Notary Public

Electronically signed and notarized online using the Proof platform.

You're Invited!

What: Open house scoping meetings for the North Plains Connector Project (NPC), a proposed 525-kilovolt (kV), high-voltage direct-current (HVDC) overhead transmission line and associated equipment that would connect the Eastern and Western Interconnections (the eastern and western electric grids in the U.S.). As proposed, the NPC would extend approximately 420 miles from near Colstrip, MT, to two separate end points in North Dakota: one near Center, ND, and the other near St. Anthony, ND.

Who: Hosted by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), and the Agricultural Research Service (ARS). Open houses in Montana will also be hosted by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ).

Why: To inform the public of the NPC and help identify potential environmental impacts and other concerns. Federal agencies will provide an overview of the environmental review process and establish opportunities for the public to stay informed of the agencies' actions. Attendees will be able to submit written comments on the scope of the federal agencies' environmental review.

When:**NORTH DAKOTA**

Wednesday, November 6

4-7 PM CT

Venue Twenty5

3796 ND HWY 25

Mandan, ND, 58554

Thursday, November 7

6-9 PM MT

Astoria Event Center

363 15 St W

Dickinson, ND, 58601

MONTANA

Tuesday, November 12

4-7 PM MT

Custer County Event Center

42 Garryowen Road RC

Miles City, MT, 59301

Wednesday, November 13

6-9 PM MT

Colstrip City Hall

12 Cherry Street

Colstrip, Montana, 59323

VIRTUAL:

Tuesday, November 19

12-3pm MT

<https://bit.ly/NorthPlainsVirtual>

For more information about the North Plains Connector Project, visit <https://www.energy.gov/nepa/doe/eis-0568-north-plains-connector-multiple-locations>
10/16, 10/30, 11/13 - COL-ND-0633

You're Invited!

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APPENDIX C PUBLIC MEETING SIGN-IN SHEETS

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Mandan, ND

Jared Schmidt
Curtis Leingeny
Kathi & John Risch
Cheryl Froelich
Todd Hartlebin
Luke Kapella
George Ferderer
Jane Schwagler
Gary Fitterer
Roger Ulrich
Clyde Fenster
Leroy Kautz
Rod Schaaf
Holly Burch
David Porsborg
Clayton Derby
Kyle Kirchmeier
Rich Haider
Wes Pulkrabek
Robin & Lori Fisher
Todd Porter
Scott Monroe
Alan & Sheiln Schwalbe
Doug Doll
Irene Kautzman
Ralph Kautzman
Bob & Connie Gessek
Timothy Dawson
Joel Schulte
Keith Boehm
Rod & Mary Hatzenbihler
Trina Gress
Ben Gress

Dickinson, ND

Jason Dekker
Mike Teske
Roger Kudrna
Leonard Hilol
Ken Thielen

Colstrip, MT

Duane Ankrey
Ben Hitt
John Williams & Jody Williams
Jack Rosamer
Jim Atchison
Lloyd Gange

Miles City, MT

Ella Engelhard
Will Krutzfeldt
Dale E. Barta
Don Hofmann
Scott Aye
Charlene Reddig
Chris Pileski
Jason Strouf
Jeff Faycosh
Alex Mitchell
Robert Mitchell
George Luther Jr
Ron Slinger
Jeff & Nancy Okerman
Amanda Hall
Kate Koughan
Kevin Krausz
Fritz Zack
James Anderson
Jay Angerer
Colt Coffee
David Stankewitz
Wendy Warren

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APPENDIX D INFORMATION AVAILABLE AT SCOPING MEETINGS

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Welcome

to the
North Plains
Connector Scoping
Meeting

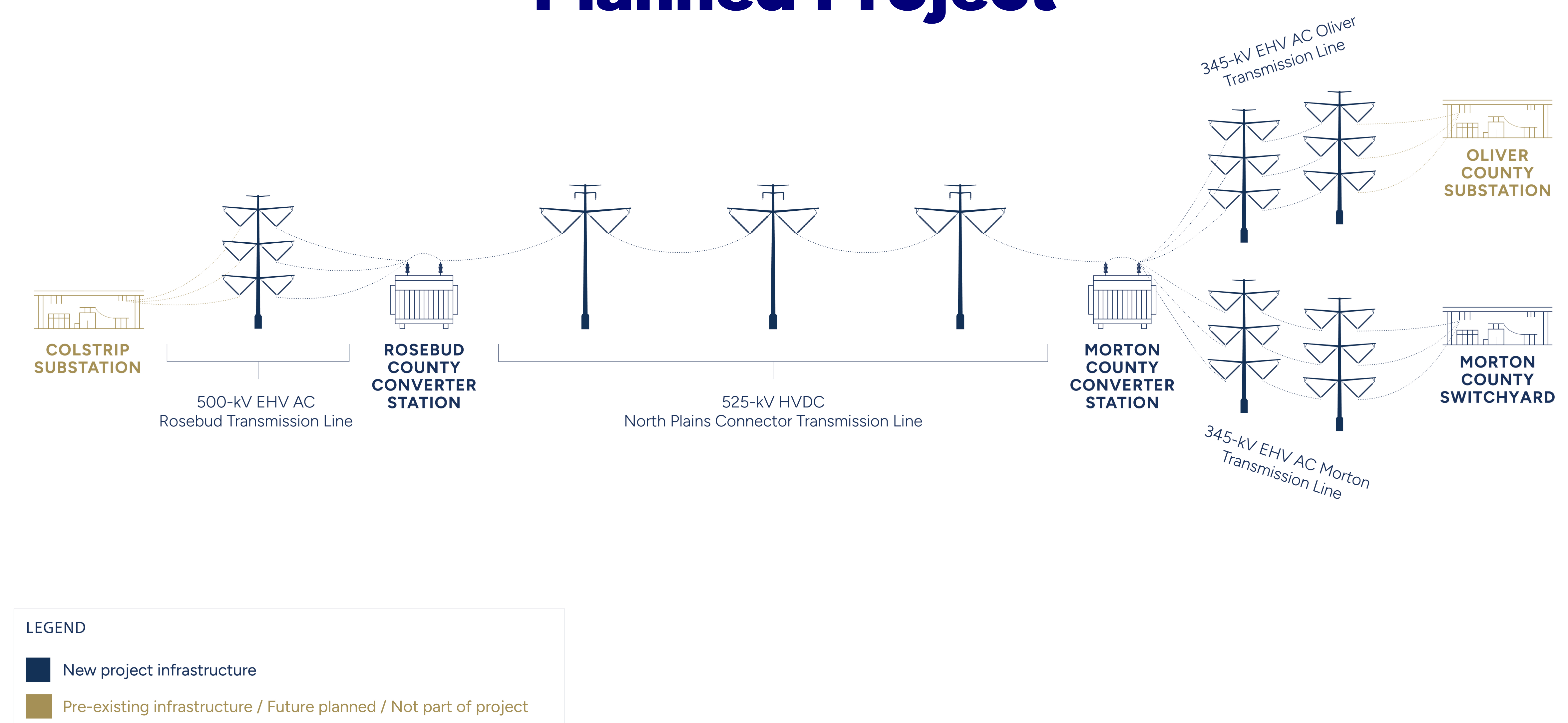
Project Overview

The North Plains Connector Project (NPC) is a proposed 525-kilovolt (kV), high-voltage direct-current (HVDC) overhead transmission line that would provide 3,000 megawatts (MW) of bi-directional transfer capability and connect the Western and Eastern Interconnections (also known as the western and eastern grids).

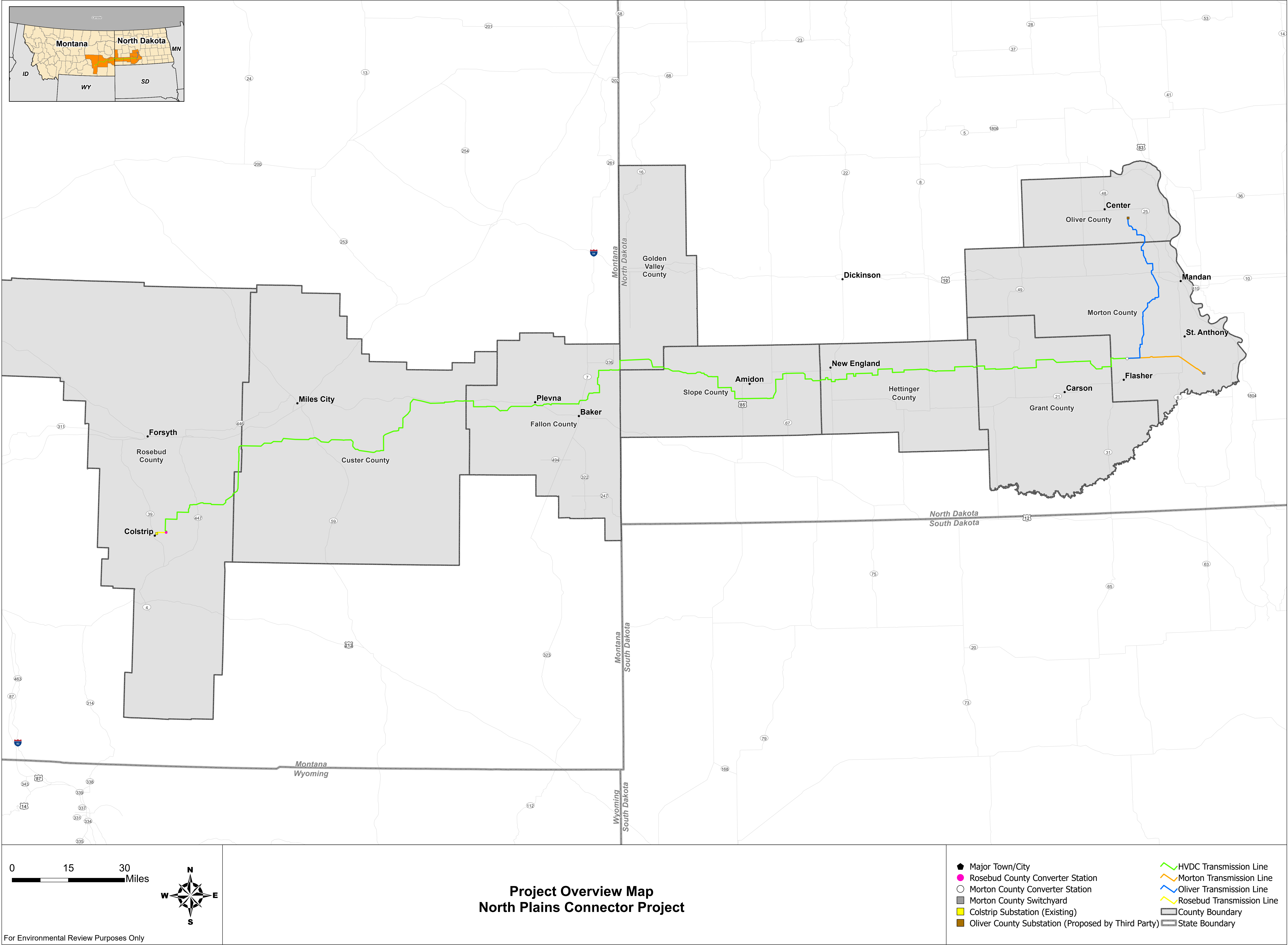
As proposed, the NPC would extend approximately 420 miles from near Colstrip, Montana, to two separate end points in North Dakota: one near Center, North Dakota, and the other near St. Anthony, North Dakota. The NPC would move electricity across the eastern and western grids to help meet the growing need to move power across long distances and improve grid reliability and resiliency.

The NPC would sell transfer capacity via the transmission line without preference toward the potential shipper of electricity nor a particular generation technology. Portions of the NPC or capacity rights may be owned by electric utilities, cooperatives, government entities, corporate energy providers, or independent generators in the regional power systems.

Planned Project

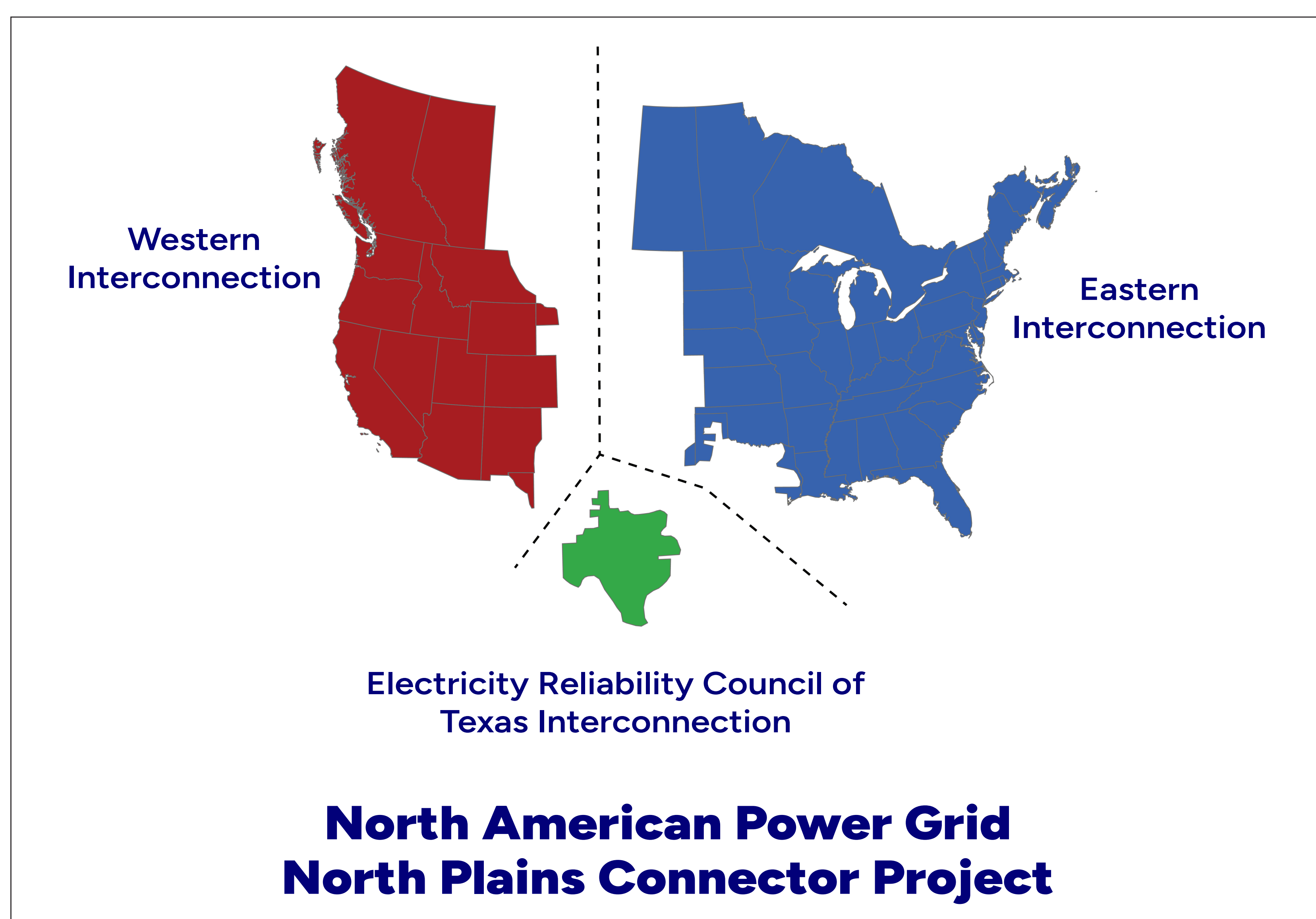


Project Overview Map



Project Purpose and Need

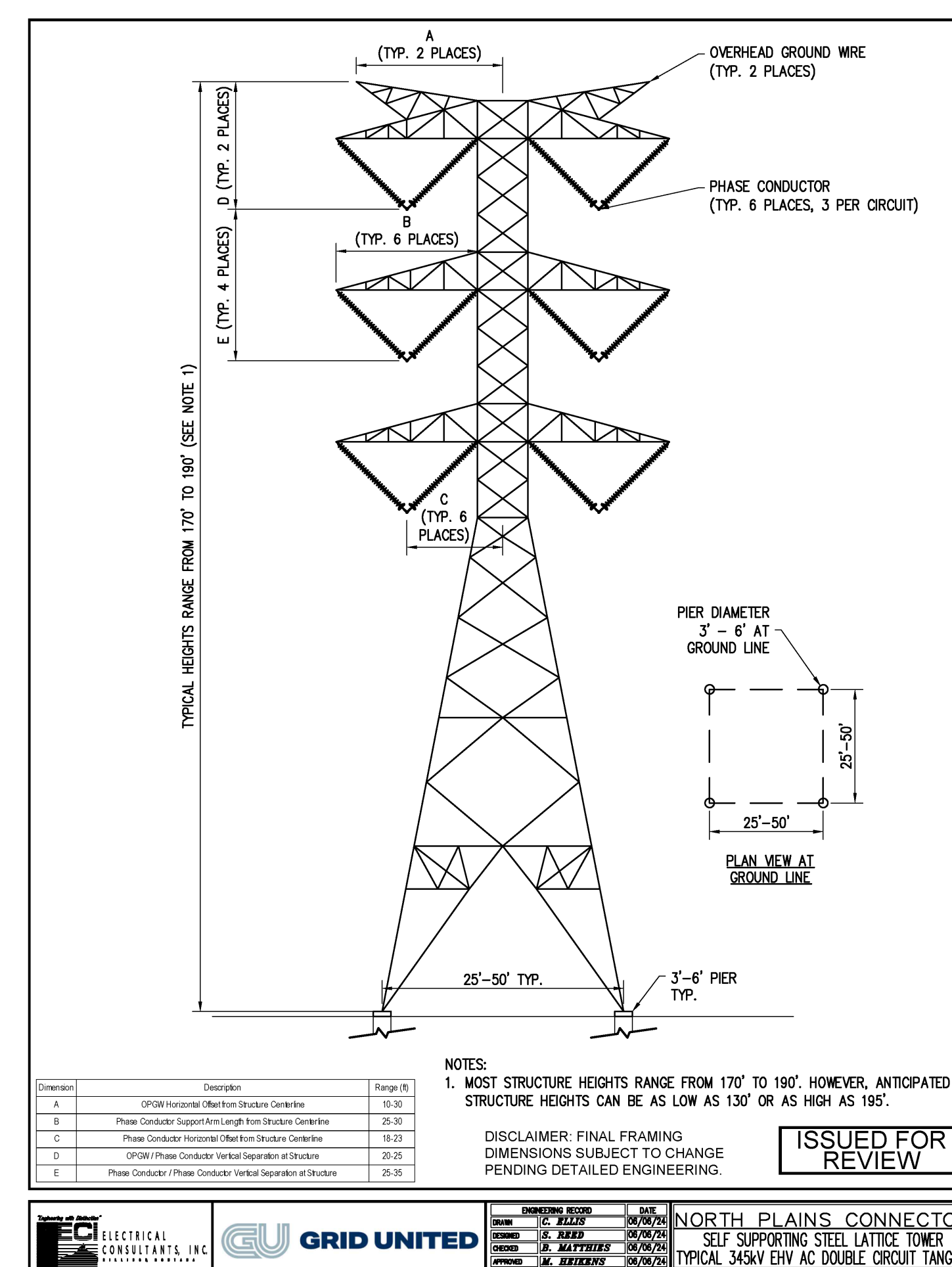
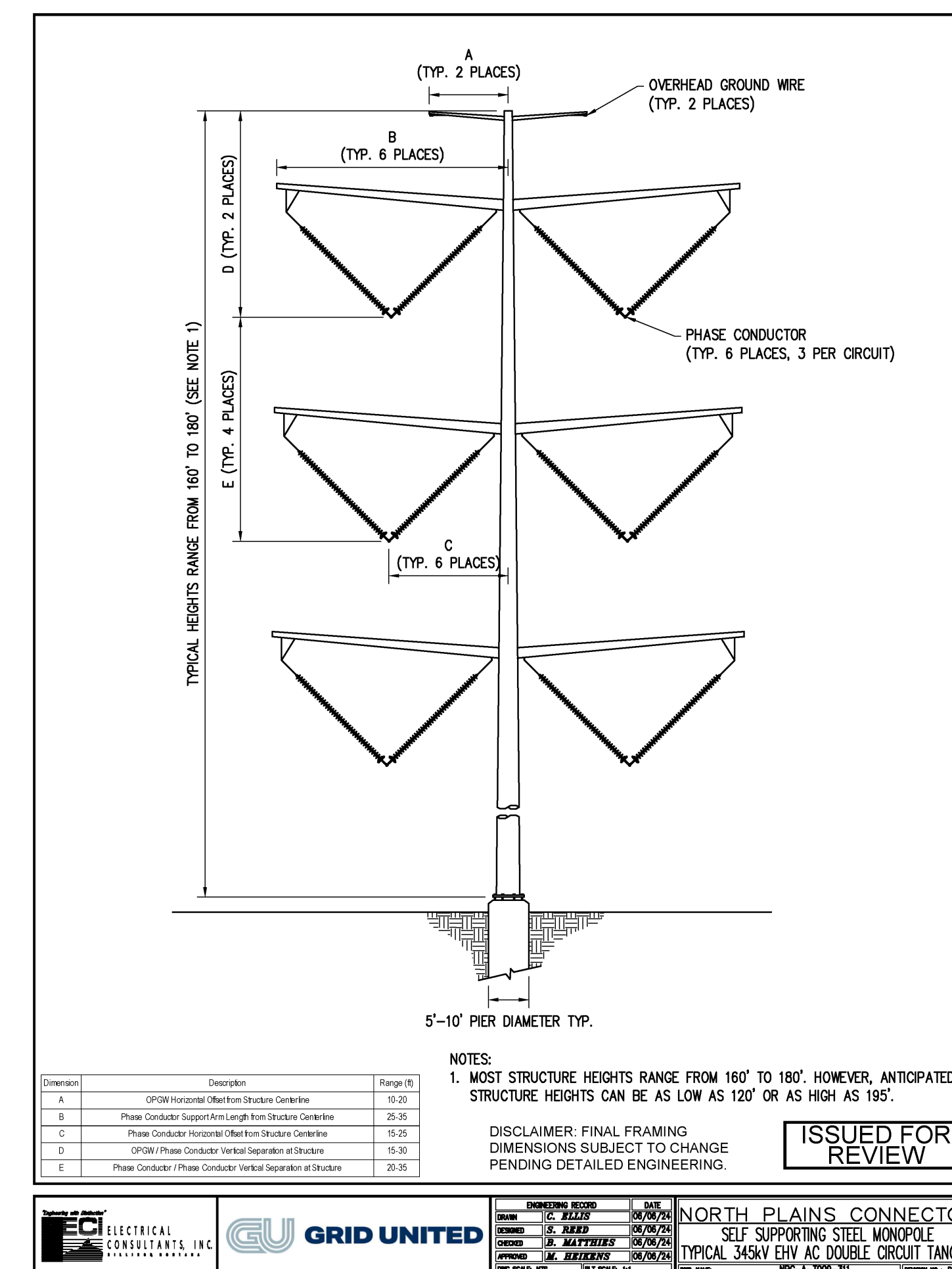
Each agency has its own purpose and need for the project; however, all agencies agree on the general purpose and need for the proposed North Plains Connector, which is to improve reliability by increasing transfer capacity between markets; improve resiliency and flexibility by unlocking a variety of regional power generation options; and provide a system that can shift power quickly and efficiently to mitigate weather-related outages. Decreases in reliable electricity generation capacity, rapid changes in the generation portfolio, and extreme weather events are all contributing to the need for the NPC transmission line.



Monopole Structures

Lattice Structures

High Voltage Alternating Current (HVAC) Structures



A 3D isometric diagram of a power plant layout, enclosed within a perimeter fence. The diagram includes several labeled components:

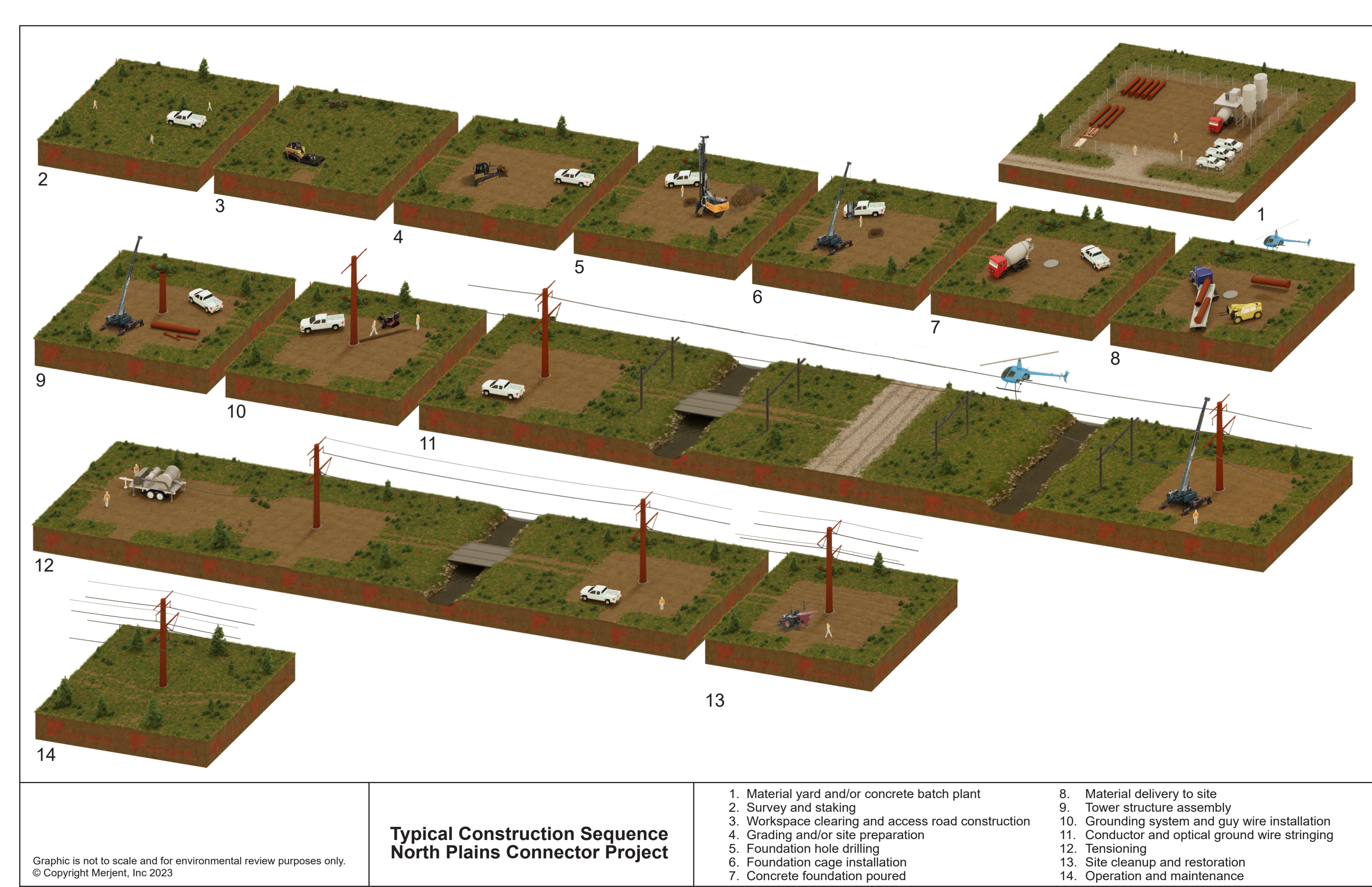
- Cooling Equipment**: Located at the top left, connected by a line to a small building.
- AC Yard**: Located at the top center, connected by a line to a large electrical substation area.
- Spare Part Building**: Located at the top center, connected by a line to a small building.
- Valve Hall**: Located at the top right, connected by a line to a small building.
- DC Hall**: Located at the top right, connected by a line to a small building.
- Control Building**: Located at the bottom right, connected by a line to a small building.
- Generator**: Located at the bottom center, connected by a line to a small building.
- DC Line Entry**: Located at the bottom left, connected by a line to a small building.
- Converter Transformers**: Located at the bottom left, connected by a line to a small building.

The diagram also shows two large blue industrial buildings, two electrical substations with tall towers, and two rectangular areas filled with small green and blue components, likely representing solar panels or batteries.

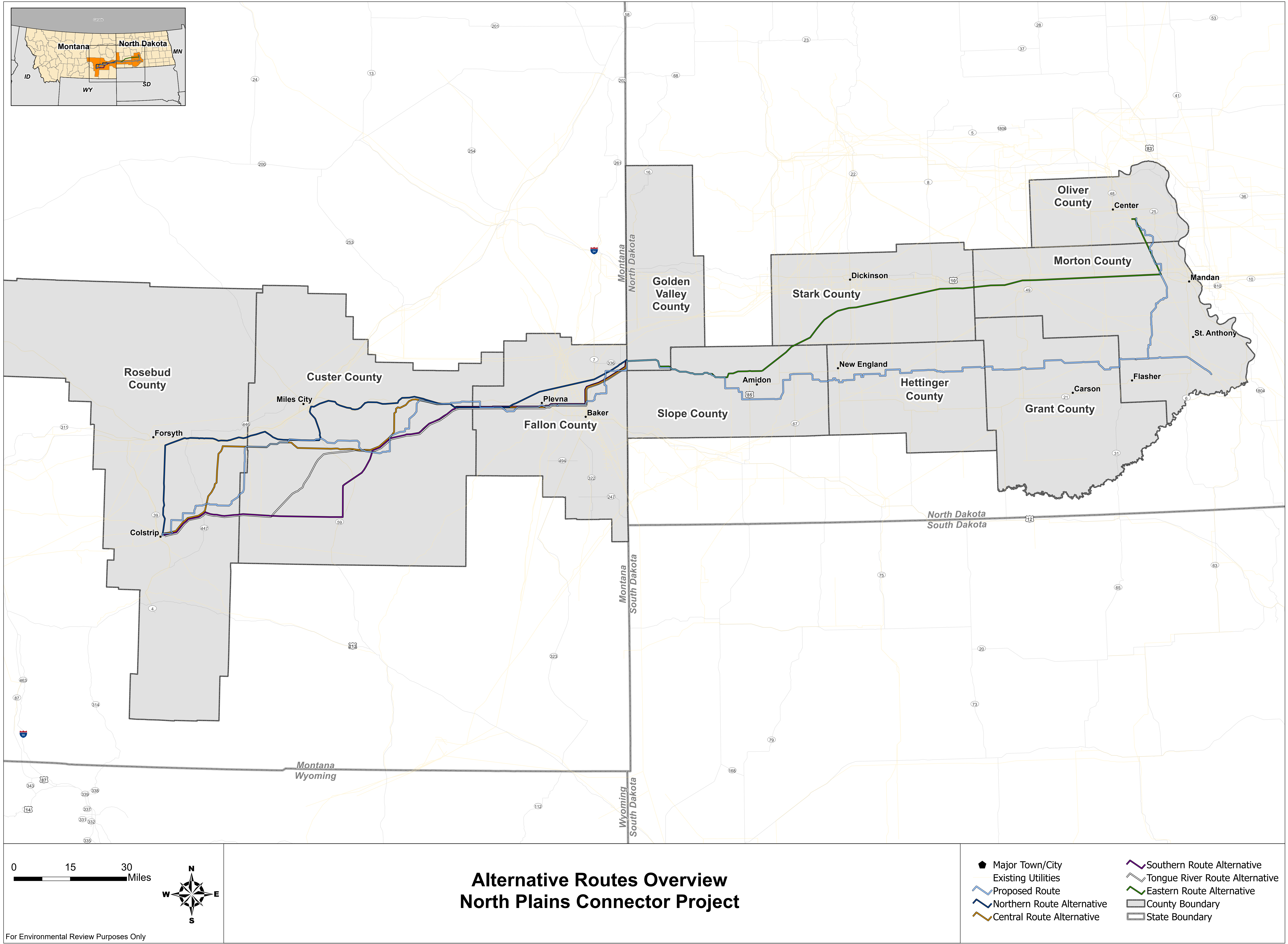
Construction Timeline

North Plains Connector (NPC) anticipates construction on the NPC would start in 2028 and last approximately three to four years, with the line coming online by the end of 2032. NPC would concurrently construct the HVDC transmission line and two new High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) to High Voltage Alternating Current (HVAC) converter stations. NPC would also include construction of HVAC lines to connect the converter stations to the existing grid infrastructure. NPC would involve the installation of additional equipment within and adjacent to the existing Colstrip Substation as well as construction of a new switchyard, the Morton County Switchyard.

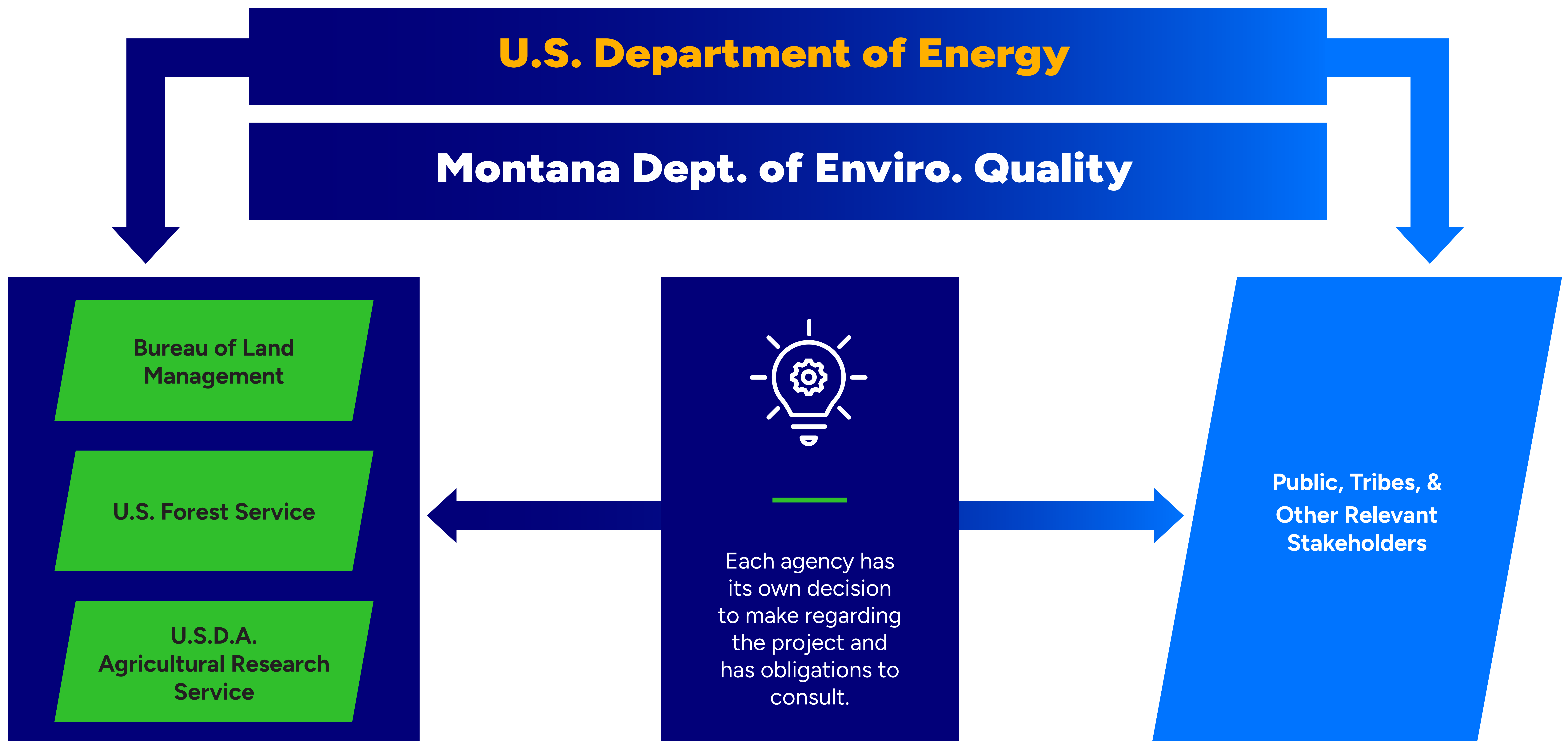
North Plains Connector plans on carrying out construction year-round, weather permitting, with the exception of areas that have applicable timing restrictions to protect sensitive resources. Delays due to weather, material delivery, and natural resources may extend the construction timeline. Further, the start of construction is dependent on receipt of required permits and authorizations. NPC plans to regularly provide updates on its construction schedule and construction activities on federally managed lands as the environmental review and permitting process progresses.



Alternative Routes



Agency Roles and Responsibilities



Environmental Review Schedule



Mapping Station



How to Submit Comments on the North Plains Connector Project

What is scoping, and why should I submit comments?

- Scoping is required for preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).
- Scoping is used to engage state, local, and Tribal governments and the public in early identification of concerns, potential impacts, relevant effects of previous federal actions, and possible alternatives.
- Scoping also provides an opportunity to bring agencies and project applicants together to lay the groundwork for setting time limits, expediting reviews where possible, integrating other environmental reviews, and identifying any major obstacles that could delay the process.
- Scoping is a process that continues throughout the planning and early stages of preparing an EIS. Comments received today will help inform the Draft and Final EIS.

ALL COMMENTS MUST BE SUBMITTED VIA EMAIL OR USPS MAIL.

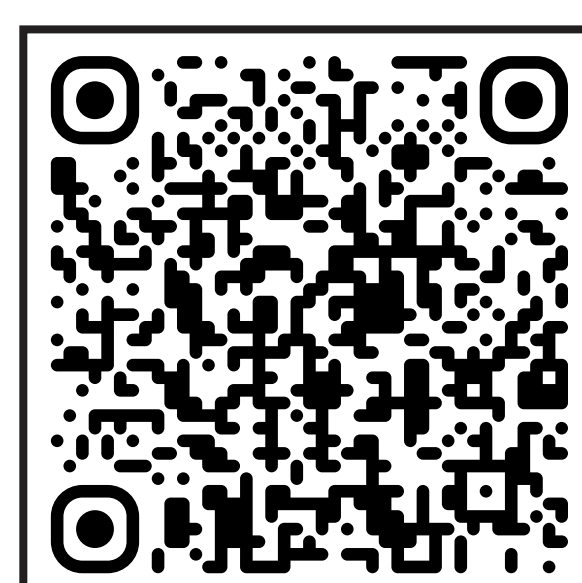
****WE WILL NOT ACCEPT ANY ORAL COMMENTS DURING THE OPEN HOUSE.***

Email: northplainsconnector@hq.doe.gov

Mail: Rebecca "RJ" Boyle, NPC NEPA Document Manager
U.S. Department of Energy, Grid Deployment Office
1000 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20585

To learn more:

www.energy.gov/nepa/doeeis-0568-north-plains-connector-multiple-locations



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North Plains Connector Project

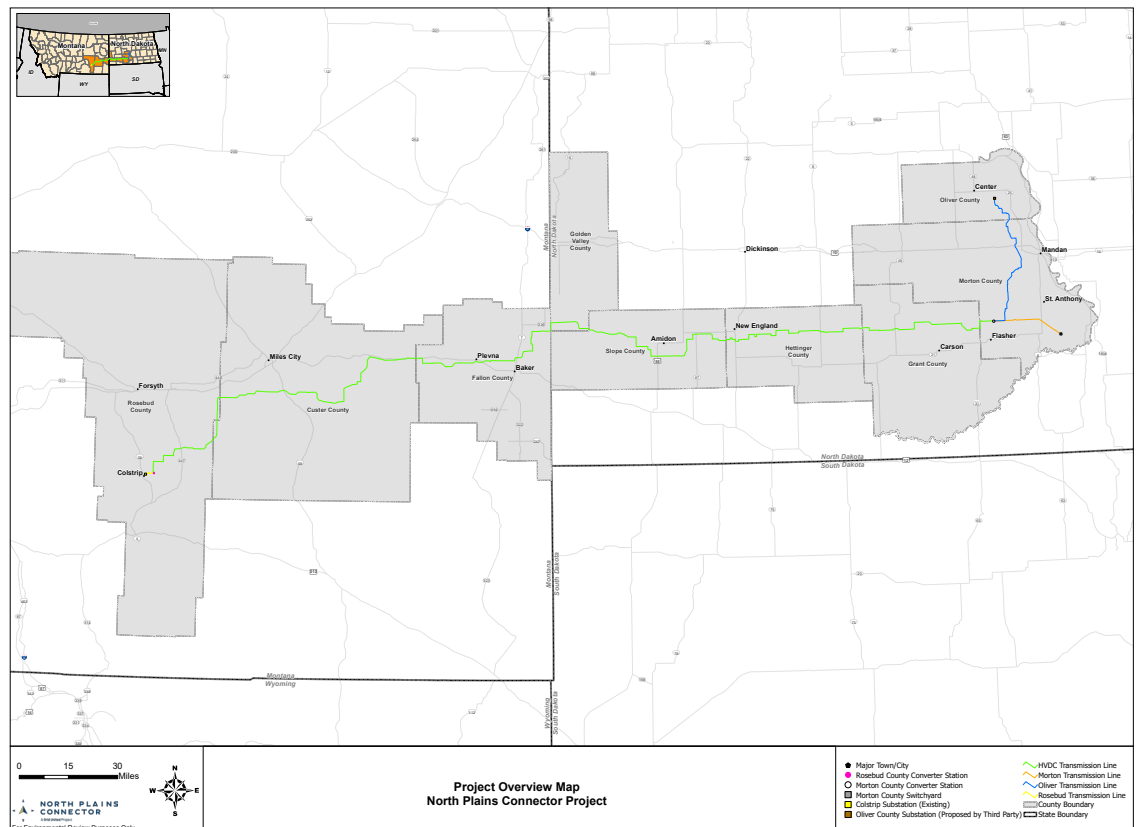
Project Description

The North Plains Connector Project (NPC) is a proposed 525-kilovolt (kV), high-voltage direct-current (HVDC) overhead transmission line that would provide 3,000 megawatts (MW) of bi-directional transfer capability and connect the Western and Eastern Interconnections (also known as the western and eastern grids).

As proposed, the NPC would extend approximately 420 miles from near Colstrip, MT, to two separate end points in North Dakota: one near Center, ND, and the other near St. Anthony, ND. The NPC would move electricity across the eastern and western grids to help meet the growing need to move power across long distances and improve grid reliability and resiliency.

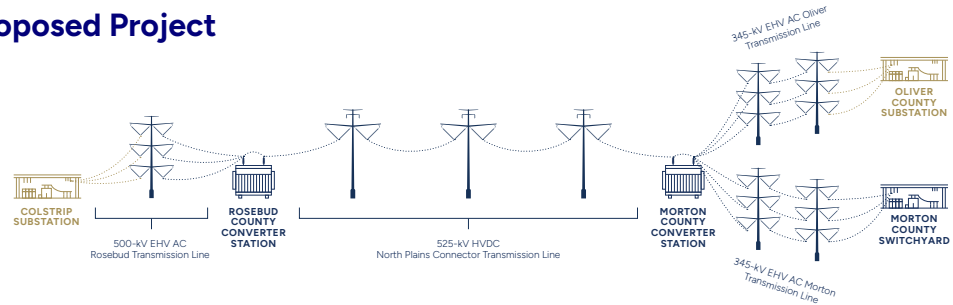
The NPC would sell transfer capacity via the transmission line without preference toward the potential shipper of electricity nor a particular generation technology. Portions of the NPC or capacity rights may be owned by electric utilities, cooperatives, government entities, corporate energy providers, or independent generators in the regional power systems.

Project Overview Map





Key Components of the Proposed Project



The NPC would consist of the following transmission line segments and associated facilities:

Rosebud Transmission Line:

- A new 500-kilovolt (kV) extra high voltage (EHV) alternating current (AC) electric transmission line in Rosebud County, Montana.
 - The new line would consist of two separate, parallel circuits, each approximately 3 miles long, with a right-of-way approximately 320 feet wide.
- The line would extend east from the existing Colstrip Substation (owned by a third-party) to a new AC/direct current (DC) converter station in Rosebud County.
 - The Colstrip Substation would serve as the interconnection point to the western grid.

Rosebud County Converter Station:

- One new AC/DC converter station in Rosebud County, Montana.
 - The converter station would connect the eastern terminus of the Rosebud Transmission Line to the western terminus of the new 525 kV high-voltage direct current (HVDC) electrical transmission line.

HVDC Transmission Line:

- A new 341-mile, 525 kV HVDC transmission line from Montana into North Dakota with a 200-foot-wide right-of-way.
 - In Montana: Approximately 172 miles in Rosebud, Custer, and Fallon Counties. The line would extend east from the new Rosebud County Converter Station to the Montana-North Dakota state line in Fallon County.
 - In North Dakota: Approximately 169 miles in Golden Valley, Slope, Hettinger, Grant, and Morton Counties. The line would extend

east from the Montana-North Dakota state line in Golden Valley County to a new AC/DC converter station in Morton County, North Dakota.

Morton County Converter Station:

- One new AC/DC converter station in Morton County, North Dakota.
- The converter station would connect the eastern terminus of the new HVDC Transmission Line to the western terminus of two new 345-kV EHV AC electric transmission line segments.

Oliver County Transmission Line:

- Approximately 51 miles of new 345-kV EHV AC transmission line in Morton and Oliver Counties, North Dakota, with an associated right-of-way approximately 200 feet wide.
- The line would extend east and north from the Morton County Converter Station in Morton County to a separately planned substation in Oliver County, North Dakota.

Morton County Transmission Line:

- Approximately 22 miles of new 345-kV EHV AC transmission line in Morton County, North Dakota with an associated right-of-way approximately 200 feet wide.
- The line would extend east and southeast from the Morton County Converter Station to a new switchyard.

Morton County Switchyard:

- A new switchyard in Morton County, North Dakota would serve as the interconnection point to the Southwest Power Pool (SPP) system for the eastern grid.



How To Submit Comments

Email: northplainsconnector@hq.doe.gov

Mail: Rebecca "RJ" Boyle, NPC NEPA Document Manager
U.S. Department of Energy, Grid Deployment Office
1000 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20585

Scan here to learn more about the North Plains Connector:



Regulatory Processes

What's the purpose of today's scoping meeting, and what happens next?

On October 25, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) published a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the North Plains Connector (NPC). To satisfy state-level regulatory requirements in Montana, the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) will participate as a Joint Preparer of the EIS to ensure that the environmental review meets both Federal and state requirements. Please see the reverse side for an overview of the relevant Federal and state-level regulatory processes.

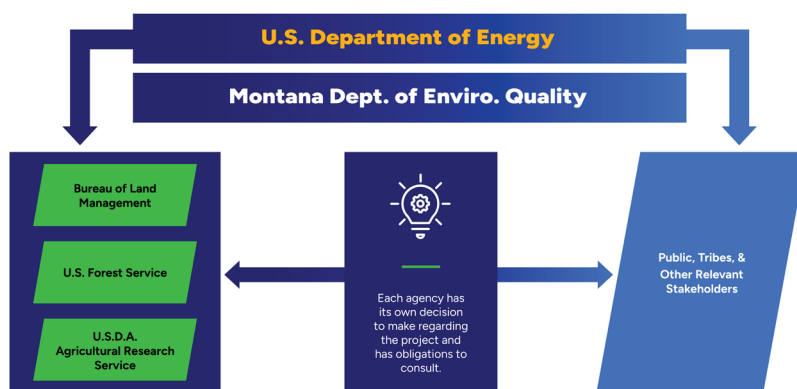
One of the first steps in the process of preparing an EIS is public scoping, during which DOE and MDEQ request that the public help identify the issues that should be addressed in the EIS. As part of the public scoping period for the NPC, DOE and MDEQ are hosting four in-person and one virtual scoping meetings, where the public can learn more about the project and submit written comments.

After the scoping period closes, DOE and MDEQ will review the comments and prepare and publish a Draft EIS for public review and comment.

After reviewing public comments received on the Draft EIS, DOE and MDEQ will publish the Final EIS, which will respond to all substantive comments received on the Draft EIS.

Federal and State Agency Coordination

Because the NPC would cross Federal lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), and the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), these agencies are participating in the NEPA process as cooperating agencies. Cooperating agencies will assist DOE by participating in the scoping process, providing staff support, and providing information and environmental analysis based on their special expertise. DOE, serving as the lead Federal agency, will jointly prepare an EIS with MDEQ and help coordinate communication between the cooperating agencies and stakeholders. At the conclusion of the environmental review, BLM, USFS, and ARS will rely on the findings in the Final EIS as a basis for issuing their respective decisions on the NPC (e.g., issuing or denying rights-of-way and other permits for the NPC to cross their managed lands).



To learn more about the NPC and the timeline for the environmental review, please visit: <https://www.energy.gov/nepa/doeis-0568-north-plains-connector-multiple-locations>.



Overview of Relevant Federal and State Regulatory Processes

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

NEPA is a Federal law that serves as the basic charter for environmental protection in the U.S. NEPA requires that all Federal agencies consider the potential impacts of their proposed actions on the human environment.

Levels of NEPA Environmental Review

There are three levels of environmental review under NEPA: a categorical exclusion, an environmental assessment (EA), and an environmental impact statement (EIS). DOE and MDEQ will prepare an EIS for the NPC.

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

An EIS is a detailed analysis of reasonably foreseeable environmental impacts prepared for a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment, and includes a range of reasonable alternatives under the Federal action. Public participation is an important part of the EIS process.

Following a Federal agency's determination to prepare an EIS, the agency will publish a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register. The NOI serves as a formal announcement of intent to prepare an EIS.

The NOI also marks the start of the public scoping period, during which an agency conducts public scoping meetings (like this one) to help identify important issues and concerns regarding the project to be addressed in the Draft EIS.

More information on NEPA and how the public can participate in DOE's NEPA process is available here: www.energy.gov/node/257107.



Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA)

MEPA is a comprehensive environmental state law that applies to a wide range of activities and entities within the state of Montana and operates similar to NEPA at the state level. MEPA aims to ensure that state agencies consider the environmental consequences of their actions and promote informed decision-making and public participation in the process. More information on MEPA is available here: www.bit.ly/mepa-handbook.

Montana Major Facility Siting Act (MFSA)

The MFSA requires state agencies to consider the environmental and socioeconomic impacts of major projects like the NPC, allow opportunities for public participation in the state's siting decisions, and coordinate with relevant state and Federal agencies on the authorizations required for siting projects. More information on MFSA is available here: www.deq.mt.gov/energy/assistance.

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APPENDIX E LIST OF COMMENTERS

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Name	Email	Agency/Organization (if applicable)
Alexis Stoltzfus		
Brock Wahl	northdakota@backcountryhunters.org	North Dakota Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers
Carol A. Overland		
Darin Meggers		
Debbie Morford		
Fred J. Anderson	fianderson@nd.gov	North Dakota Geological Survey
Hanna Edens	hanna_edens@fws.gov	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, North Dakota Ecological
Jay Caspary		
Jeffrey Smith		
John Dunkum		
Jon Rask		
Kevin Old Bull		
Luke Toso	luke_toso@fws.gov	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, North Dakota Ecological
Nick Fitzmaurice		Montana Environmental Information Center
Richard Spotts		
Rochelle Gravance		
Roger Meggers	bakerair@midrivers.com	Baker Municipal Airport
William Krutzfeldt		
L. David Glatt		North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality
John N. Williams		City of Colstrip

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