

Group challenging plans for three high-voltage lines across Minn.

by [Stephanie Hemphill](#), Minnesota Public Radio
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St. Paul, Minn. — A citizens group is challenging plans for three major transmission lines across Minnesota, but backers of the so-called Cap-X project say the lines are key to the state's energy future.

The Citizens Energy Task Force is asking the state to reconsider its approval of the high-voltage lines, and is taking the matter to the Court of Appeals.

Attorney Paula Maccabee represents the Citizens Energy Task Force. She said projections of energy demand have changed since planning for the power lines began, five years ago.

"We brought together evidence which was only discovered after the hearing closed showing Xcel, which represents almost half of the demand in the CapX case, had experienced not only no increase, but actually a substantial drop in energy use between 2006 and 2008," Maccabee said.

Maccabee said, with the Minnesota law requiring utilities to conserve one-and-a-half-percent of their output every year, the state's need for electricity should not grow.

But Jim Alders, from Xcel Energy, said even with slower demand growth, the lines are needed to beef up the grid, and to bring on more wind power.

"You reach a point where it's much more efficient to move traffic using a freeway instead of a lot of gravel roads," Alders said.

The state Public Utilities Commission approved the project last spring; it's now considering possible routes. Construction could begin about a year from now.

More info: www.cetf.us