

Story originally printed in the La Crosse Tribune or online at www.lacrossetribune.com

Published - Wednesday, December 17, 2008

Don't put line through the marsh

By CHUCK LEE | La Crosse

After attending the Xcel Energy public meeting about the CapX2020 power line project, I am very concerned about the alternative route that would bring the line through La Crescent and La Crosse.

This is one of three potential routes presented at the meeting.

The proposed route will bring this massive power line due east from La Crescent, across the Upper Mississippi Wildlife Refuge, across the Mississippi River to a new substation at the southern tip of French Island, east parallel to Buchner Place, east across the La Crosse River Marsh and the La Crosse River to the substation at Lang Drive (at the intersection of Lang Drive, the river, and the hiking/biking trail) which would be enlarged by three acres, due east across the marsh, a 90-degree turn north just east of Red Cloud Park, north through the marsh to a new substation near the junction of Gillette Street and River Valley Drive, then divide, with one route going north to Onalaska and other lines going east over the bluffs.

The route, in short, promises major environmental impact, though no environmental impact study has been done.

A high power line like this will be a hazard to migrating birds on one of the nation's foremost migratory flyways, will bisect one of the region's best views of the Mississippi River and bluffs, looking north from Riverside Park, construction of towers will impact sensitive marsh lands, a three-acre substation will occupy space roughly equivalent to three football fields in the marsh.

Compounding the environmental and community damage this line will cause, this will be a \$1.7 billion investment in old technology. We could invest that \$1.7 billion here in solar and wind, and we should.

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Story originally printed in the La Crosse Tribune or online at www.lacrossetribune.com

Published - Tuesday, December 30, 2008

The lesser of evils on power line issue

By SCOTT LEE | Trempealeau, Wis.

Chuck Lee's letter concerning the CapX2020 project that will bring huge power lines into the area brought up some excellent points. These lines will certainly have major impacts on the environment.

Unfortunately, the alternative to crossing the river into La Crosse will be much worse. Their alternative is to cross at Alma and then proceed down the river to the La Crosse area — the Winona crossing has been nixed by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. This alternative would have a horrible impact on the environment for an extended distance.

If this project must happen, we need to encourage Xcel to get in and out of the river valley as quickly as possible. Unfortunately for those in La Crescent and La Crosse, that would mean following the Interstate 90 corridor from Rochester to La Crescent and crossing into La Crosse. That also, by the way, is easily the shortest route.

Maybe a better question than “where?” would be “why now?” To me, it would seem to make sense to wait on this. We have a new administration coming in that has vowed to take a good look at both alternative energy and infrastructure. Wouldn't it make more sense to hold off on this and see if they will follow through on this vow? Maybe this project won't even be necessary or there will be a better alternative that will have far less impact on this beautiful river valley.

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