

March 9, 2023

Minnesota House Transportation Finance and Policy Committee
Written Testimony of Deb Birgen
March 10, 2023

Chair Hornstein and members of the committee. My name is Deb Birgen, Vice-President of Government Relations for Missouri River Energy Services (MRES). I am submitting this written testimony in support of HF 2570.

MRES is a municipal power agency, also known as a joint action agency. We are a member-driven organization owned and operated by 61 member municipal electric utilities in four states: Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota. 25 of our member utilities are located in Minnesota. Like the member municipal electric utilities that we serve, MRES is also a not-for-profit entity, providing supplemental wholesale power and other energy services to municipal electric communities. In addition to generation assets to serve its customers, MRES also owns some transmission resources through its financing agency, Western Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (WMMPA). MRES is one of the utility partners in the CapX2020 projects. Additionally, MRES (through WMMPA) will co-own a new high-voltage transmission line with OtterTail Power that will run from Big Stone City, South Dakota to Alexandria, Minnesota. This line is part of the regionally-planned Tranche I transmission projects approved by the MidContinent Independent System Operator (MISO).

As MRES and other utilities move forward on the 100 percent by 2040 carbon free mandate, more transmission will be needed. In fact, a recent federal Department of Energy (DOE) [draft report](#) (February, 2023) indicates that the nation will likely need 47,300 Gigawatt-miles of new transmission by 2035, a 57 percent increase compared to today's transmission system. The DOE noted that significant transmission

deployment is needed as soon as 2030 in the Great Plains, the Midwest and Texas regions. Increased transmission capacity is needed to improve grid reliability, resilience and resource adequacy; enhance renewable resource integration and access to clean energy; decrease energy burdens; support electrification efforts; and reduce congestion and curtailment.

In order to meet these transmission needs, there will be a need for a large build-out that will cross large swaths of land. In order to minimize the impacts on landowners, consumers, and businesses, it is best to use existing right-of-way corridors as much as possible for new transmission infrastructure. This includes public road rights-of-way. HF 2570 clarifies that Minnesota Department of Transportation, under its rule-making authority may not bar high-voltage transmission from using public road rights-of-way. Likewise, it clarifies that any entity receiving a transmission route permit, may make use of public road rights-of-way as necessary to construct, interconnect, and operate the permitted transmission project.

We support HF 2570 as a reasonable scheme to streamlining and moving forward needed transmission projects that will benefit Minnesota. We urge the committee members pass HF 2570.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.