

March 1, 2024

Minnesota Senate Energy, Utilities, Environment and Climate Committee
The Honorable Sen. Nick Frentz
95 University Avenue W. Minnesota Senate Bldg.,
Room 3109
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Frentz and members of the Energy, Utilities, Environment and Climate Committee,

As a coalition of labor unions and environmental organizations, the Minnesota BlueGreen Alliance writes to express our support for SF 3949. This bill will help ensure that public rights-of-way are open to co-location of high-voltage transmission infrastructure.

Transmission plays a critical role in our clean energy transition. In order to meet our states' clean energy goals, we need high-capacity, long-distance transmission that can transmit electricity from places where it is produced to electricity users across the state. Transmission growth in Minnesota is also vital to relieving energy congestion throughout the Midwest. In terms of overall need, a draft of the U.S. Department of Energy *National Transmission Needs Study* found that the United States needs an additional 47,300 gigawatt-miles of power lines by 2035, a 57% expansion of the current grid.ⁱ

Siting transmission projects along public rights-of-way (ROW)—where appropriate—will help us advance the modernization of our energy grid at scale necessary to meet the demand of this moment. Having the option of ROW co-location can help alleviate tensions in communities and avoid landowner conflicts and other hurdles to siting much-needed projects. With strong coordination between cooperatively owned utilities and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), we can ensure that the process to site these projects is smooth and happens at the scale and speed we need.

In addition, transmission projects are an opportunity to create good, local, union jobs in our state. For example, Tranche 1 projects of the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) Long-Range Transmission Planning (LRTP) is expected to create over 30,000 construction jobs in Minnesota alone.ⁱⁱ Tranche 1 projects alone will not meet the needs of our clean energy demand, therefore creating conditions for the private sector to lead on transmission is essential.

The state requires a dramatic expansion of renewable energy development to meet our goals of a decarbonized electricity market. Our coalition believes expanding transmission lines increases competition in wholesale electricity markets as more generators gain access to a wider set of power generating customers. SF 3949 is a simple and effective solution to create the clean energy transmission system we need to build a clean, thriving, and equitable future for our state. We encourage the author to work with MnDOT and utilities to ensure cost effective siting is maintained.

We urge the committee to support SF 3949.

Sincerely,

Abby Hornberger
Minnesota Policy Organizer
BlueGreen Alliance

ⁱ U.S. Department of Energy, National Transmission Needs Study, December 2023.
https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2023-12/National%20Transmission%20Needs%20Study%20-%20Final_2023.12.1.pdf

ⁱⁱ Americans for a Clean Energy Grid, Transmission and Jobs. <https://cleanenergygrid.org/transmission-and-jobs/>