

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 2, 2019

Chad Rupe
Acting Administrator, Rural Utilities Service
USDA Rural Development
STOP 1560, Rm 5165
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20250-1560

Dear Acting Administrator Rupe:

I am writing to highlight local stakeholders' concerns about the draft environmental impact statement (EIS) for the proposed Cardinal Hickory Creek high-capacity transmission line. My constituents contacted me to share their concerns that the draft EIS lacks a thorough analysis of alternatives to constructing the project and did not consider a full range of potential locations for crossing the Mississippi River. I urge you to include a meaningful analysis of non-transmission alternatives and additional river crossing locations in the project's final EIS. While I support the Rural Utilities Service's mission to improve rural electricity infrastructure, it is also important to comprehensively evaluate the need for new transmission infrastructure, particularly when much of the cost of this construction will be borne by electricity ratepayers for decades to come.

For years, local leaders and residents across southwest Wisconsin have been actively engaged in the planning process for this project that could substantially impact their communities. Non-profit groups and many individuals submitted numerous comments during the project's scoping process, requesting that the draft EIS for the Cardinal Hickory Creek project include a thorough evaluation of alternatives to constructing the high-voltage transmission line. The draft EIS, released in December 2018, did not accommodate these requests and instead provided only a cursory evaluation of possible alternatives to constructing a transmission line. I request that you respond to the community's request for a thorough analysis of non-transmission alternatives prior to finalizing the EIS.

Local leaders who have reviewed this project point out that evaluating these alternatives is particularly important because projections for electricity demand in Wisconsin and across the region have changed significantly since the project was first proposed over ten years ago. Similarly, the technology of non-transmission alternatives has advanced substantially and their cost has declined. In addition, regional transmission planning will soon provide updated analyses

of regional transmission needs that are informed by these substantial changes. These are all significant changes that ought to be addressed.

Thank you for your attention to the concerns of the communities that would host this project. I again urge the agency to produce a final EIS that meaningfully reflects their important input.

Sincerely,



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

CC: Margaret Everson, Principal Deputy Director, United States Fish and Wildlife Service