

RESOLUTION NO. 2026-02

RESOLUTION

Submitted By:

Town Board of the Town of Seneca

Date Drafted:

July 15, 2026

**RESOLUTION STATING THE OPPOSITION OF THE TOWN OF SENECA TO
THE PROPOSED MARIBELL 765 KILOVOLT ELECTRIC TRANSMISSION
PROJECT DUE TO ENVIRONMENTAL, WILDLIFE, ECONOMIC, AND
COMMUNITY SENSITIVITY WITHIN THE DRIFTLESS AREA**

WHEREAS, Dairyland Power Cooperative, through the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO), is proposing the construction of a 765-kilovolt electric transmission line extending from Marion, Minnesota to Bell Center, Wisconsin, commonly referred to as the MariBell Project, and identified as part of MISO Tranche 2.1; **and**,

WHEREAS, until September 2024, MISO Tranche 2.1 planning maps avoided the Driftless Area option for a more northerly route through the Xcel Energy territory. After years of planning otherwise, in just three months between September and December of 2024, a less direct route through the central Driftless Area was adopted and awarded without competitive bidding to a partnership of GridLiance and Dairyland Power Cooperative; **and**,

WHEREAS, the proposed MariBell Project route is intended to traverse areas in the Town of Seneca in Crawford County, Wisconsin and adjacent Townships and the Village of Bell Center; **and**,

WHEREAS, the Town of Seneca is located within the Driftless Area, a region characterized by steep and fragile topography, cold water streams, productive agricultural lands, extensive timber resources, landscapes that are unusually sensitive to disturbance from largescale linear infrastructure and karst geology—with the highest concentration of sinkholes of any town in Crawford County, Wisconsin; **and**,

WHEREAS, the proposed project is in proximity to the Upper Mississippi River National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, including Pool 9 of the Mississippi River, an area of national ecological significance; **and**,

WHEREAS, Pool 9 and adjoining blufflands provide critical habitat for nesting bald eagles and lie within a recognized tundra swan migration corridor, both of which are highly sensitive to habitat fragmentation, aerial obstructions, construction disturbance, and long-term landscape alteration; **and**,

WHEREAS, transmission lines of the 765-kilovolt class require wide permanent easements, tall structures, and ongoing vegetation management that result in substantial ground disturbance and may adversely affect wildlife behavior, nesting success, migratory patterns, and the ecological integrity of protected and sensitive areas; **and**,

WHEREAS, the construction and permanent presence of a 765-kilovolt transmission line may result in measurable reductions in property values for affected and adjacent landowners due to visual intrusion, limitations on land use within easements, loss of privacy and rural character, and perceived safety risks; **and**,

WHEREAS, reductions in assessed property values or changes in land classification associated with the proposed transmission corridor may lead to long-term loss of property tax revenue for the Town of Seneca, shifting the tax burden to other residents and constraining the Town's ability to fund essential local services and infrastructure; **and**,

WHEREAS, the proposed MariBell Project would require permanent clearing and perpetual maintenance of a broad transmission right-of-way, resulting in the irreversible loss of productive timberland, forest habitat, and associated ecological, economic, and carbon-sequestration benefits, **and**,

WHEREAS, the scenic blufflands, river corridors, forested landscapes, and undeveloped rural character of the Driftless Area are essential to tourism, outdoor recreation, and associated local business activity, and the introduction of large-scale transmission infrastructure may substantially diminish tourism appeal and result in long-term economic losses to the Town of Seneca and surrounding region; **and**,

WHEREAS, residents, landowners, and the electorate of the Town of Seneca have expressed significant concern regarding the cumulative environmental, agricultural, economic, scenic, and property-related impacts associated with the proposed MariBell Project; **and**,

WHEREAS, the Town of Seneca Board of Supervisors has a responsibility to represent the interests, welfare, and expressed concerns of the Town of Seneca's electorate and to communicate those concerns to state regulatory authorities;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town of Seneca Board of Supervisors, on behalf of the electorate of the Town of Seneca, formally states its opposition to the proposed MariBell 765-kilavolt transmission project as currently proposed, due to the exceptional sensitivity of the Driftless Area and the unacceptable potential impacts on wildlife habitat, natural resources, agricultural, and timber lands, property values, the Town of Seneca's tax base, tourism revenues, and overall community character;

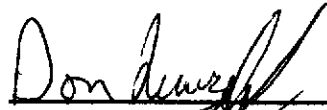
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Seneca Town Board respectfully requests that the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin give careful and deliberate consideration of the Driftless Area, the presence of the Upper Mississippi River National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, and the formal concerns of affected local governments and residents during its review of the MariBell Project;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this resolution be entered into the official records of the Town of Seneca and transmitted to:

- The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
- Dairyland Power Cooperative
- GridLiance Heartland, LLC
- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
- Any other state or regional agencies involved in the review of the MariBell Project



Tom Kearns, **Town Chairman**

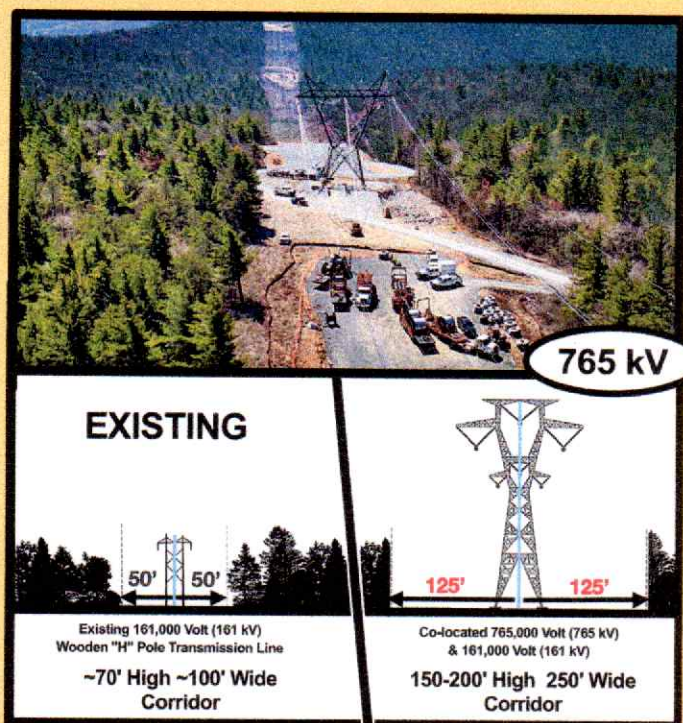


Don Lenzendorf, **Town Supervisor**



Dan Snyder, **Town Supervisor**

We don't need a 765kV transmission line!



If the 200-mile Maribell Transmission Project proceeds as described, there would be two separate 765 kV expansion transmission line proposals made to the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC). Dairyland Power Cooperative with GridLiance-Heartland would propose building and owning a roughly 20-mile segment. It would cross the Mississippi River and the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge at Genoa, WI and travel south and east through Vernon and Crawford Counties to a little known substation, Bell Center, a few miles south of Gays Mills in Crawford County. Transource LLC would continue the planning and building of the massive 765 kV project from Bell Center to Portage and beyond. This segment of the project could potentially have a major impact on additional areas of Crawford, Vernon, and Richland Counties.

Regional utility interests have put forward a \$22 billion plan that includes a gigantic 200-mile 765kV transmission line that would stretch across the Driftless Area from Genoa to Portage before heading south to the Wisconsin/Illinois border and terminating in Chicago. Use of existing transmission corridors that co-developers see as their primary focus would involve substantial expansions of existing 161kV transmission corridors that cut through countless private lands and wildlife habitats. Corridor widths would have to be expanded from roughly 100' to 250' and tower heights increased from 70' to as much as 200'. It would be the largest and tallest transmission line ever built in Wisconsin, and it would not serve our area or electric customers across the state. It is believed that Dairyland and GridLiance's 765 kV proposal may be submitted to the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin as early as July.

Now is the time to learn more and to demand that the detailed maps and other siting information requested by potentially directly-impacted landowners be immediately provided to them.

If eventually approved by the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin, where would the 765 kV transmission line be located?

Preferred and alternative routes will not be officially known until the developers submit their application to the PSC. Submittal may be delayed to allow Dairyland's 'Maribell' segment to be folded into a single application including all preferred and alternative routes between Genoa and Portage — spanning Vernon, Crawford, Richland, Sauk & Columbia counties. Despite owning several 69 kV and 161 kV transmission lines that could be included in the eastern portion, Dairyland Power Cooperative and its business partners are not discussing routing of the eastern half of the 765 kV transmission project.

Is the multi-billion dollar 765 kV line needed?

Need has been very vigorously challenged by an impartial, reputable expert. The economics firm whose job it is to review the regional utilities' transmission planning, has formally stated that in terms of potential benefits for electric customers, no need for the 765 kV layer has been accountably established. Five state utility commissions have followed suit by formally complaining to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission that their customers should not have to pay for unneeded utility infrastructure. Dr. David Patton of Potomac Economics has

found these shortfalls in the regional utilities' (MISO) 765 kV "Tranche 2.1" transmission planning:

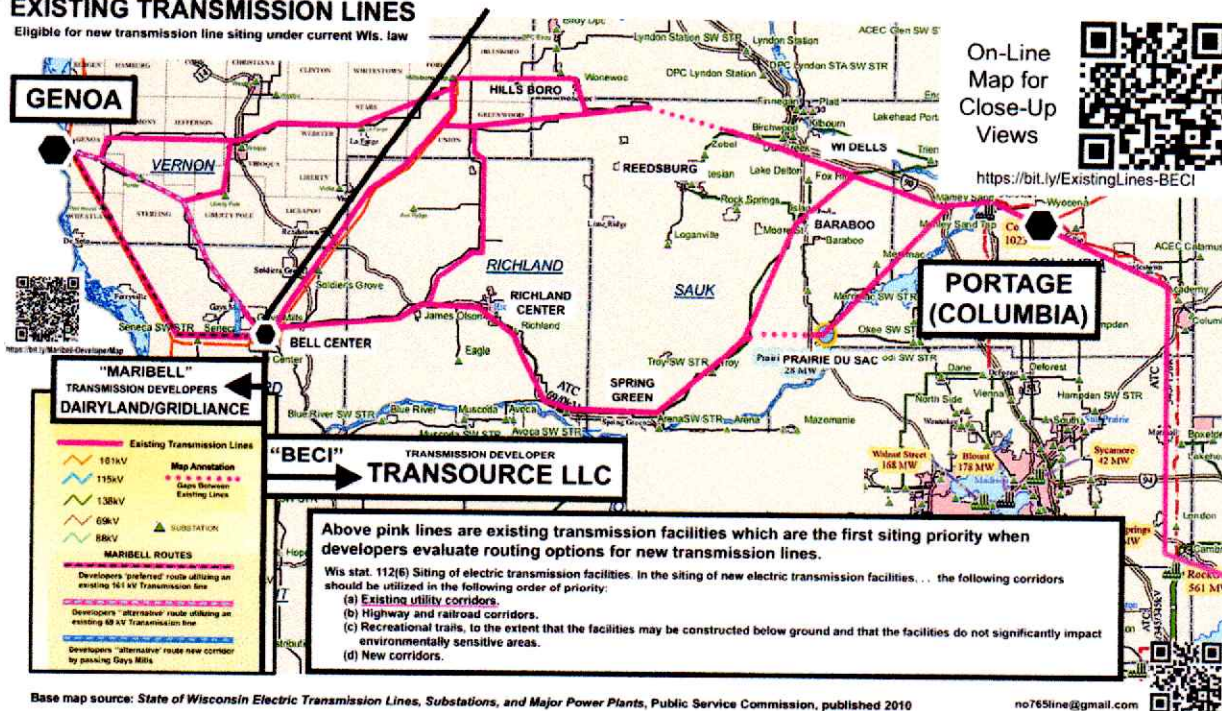
- Assumes a view of the future that is, "extremely unlikely."
- Predicts "overstated" or "invalid" benefits for customers in five of eight key categories.
- Would undermine customer-side investments in "resources, [battery] storage and other alternatives to transmission."
- Transmission projects including 765 kV lines should be "postponed" until previously planned 345 kV transmission projects are built and their impacts on the electricity market are known.

Are imposing 765 kV systems suitable for pristine areas like the Driftless? Could they be located, instead, alongside other existing large transmission lines, along interstate highways or rail lines?

1960's style, 765 kV corridors which often hold multiple, huge lines traditionally pass through wide open and existing corridors, avoiding environmentally sensitive areas. In fact, 2023-2024 Midwest regional utility planning for the same 765 kV system sited the facility much more compatibly utilizing existing, 345 kV transmission lines and interstate highway corridors. *continued*

EXISTING TRANSMISSION LINES

Eligible for new transmission line siting under current Wis. law



Further, modern, High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) transmission lines, such as the SOO Green Line in Iowa and Illinois are being developed for the same purposes but are invisibly buried along existing railroad lines. A map of existing rail lines reveals that a HVDC facility could alternatively run aside Mississippi River rail lines and terminate in the same area proposed for the 765 kV system – without passing through Wisconsin.

Is this a 'done deal'?

No. If transmission developers decide to go ahead with the 765 kV proposal, a one year review by the Public Service Commission would ensue with the robust participation of intervenors representing landowners, at risk habitats, electric customers and alternatives stressing highly cost-effective, energy efficiency-related investments such as dwelling improvements, rebates for appliance upgrades, modern load management, on-site solar and battery storage. The questioning of need for the 765 kV projects is likely to intensify with the recent expiration of the sizeable federal, "Production Tax Credit" incentives that have been central to developing remote wind and solar power plants in the past.

Has electricity use in Wisconsin been increasing?

Most definitely not. In the face of unrelenting utility public relations campaigns that are promoting the development of data centers, electricity use in Wisconsin is demonstratively flat. According to the US Department of Energy, Wisconsin electricity use in 2024 was 3% less than it was in 2004!

Would a 765 kV transmission line be visible from where I live?

200' high towers would definitely protrude above trees and be quite visible whether located on ridgetops or low-lying areas. Furthering disrupting views, natural habitats and daily life, the 1960 era 765,000,000 volt technology is infamous for emitting annoying visible and audible "corona" disturbances including glowing violet light discharges and buzzing, crackling and hissing noises, especially under high humidity and damp

conditions. Studies have established that birds, raptors, water fowl, cattle, pigs, cats, dogs, and trout are more sensitive to the UV light pollution and will avoid the impacted area at distances up to 2 miles. Whitetail deer are also more sensitive to UV light, but the species' response is lesser known. Emitted noises can be as loud as a hand-held vacuum cleaner [60 dB(A)] and possess distinctive sonic characteristics that enable them to be heard at surprising distances in quiet, natural settings.

Do transmission lines of this scale decrease property values?

Yes. For the physically smaller, 345 kV Cardinal-Hickory Creek transmission line, a Wisconsin-based land appraiser estimated that property values decrease from 10%-45% depending on how the line is situated on the property and the size of the affected land parcel. Because of its unprecedented size, there are no statistics on the effect of 765 kV lines on property values.

Would I pay for the added transmission lines in my electric bill?

Yes. All Wisconsin electric customers pay for all transmission additions. Just Dairyland's Maribell segment has an estimated cost of \$900 million but this expense does not cover associated power plant costs which regional utilities estimate at 4-5 times transmission line costs. Regional utilities (MISO) have estimated additional charges of \$13.50 / month per customer using 1000 kWh/month for the Tranche 2.1 transmission projects.

What can I do to help protect my property & community?

The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin defines the current Public Information Phase as the time for landowners, local governments, communities and state agencies to ask questions and receive detailed answers concerning potential siting and other impacts.

For ALL potentially directly-impacted landowners and concerned citizens, consider the actions listed in the *Take Action Today* document at the resources link provided below.

Resources, maps, and other supporting documents are at:

<https://bit.ly/765links>

- Landowner maps and template letters
- Action items for ALL concerned citizens
- Petition supporting landowner information needs
- Links to videos and podcasts
- Developer contacts
- Criticisms of MISO's Tranche 2.1 / 765 kV Planning
- Historical documents

Latest updates: <https://bit.ly/no765line-Facebook>

Questions? no765line@gmail.com

Join the the no765line mailing list to obtain news, updates and action alerts.

<https://bit.ly/no765line-updates>



Additional Materials



<https://bit.ly/765links>