

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 28, 2016

Brandon McBride
Administrator
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Rural Utilities Service
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20250-1510

Dear Administrator McBride:

I write to urge you to update and expand the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) public scoping process for the proposed Cardinal Hickory Creek transmission line [81 FR 71696] to allow adequate time for public comment during this process.

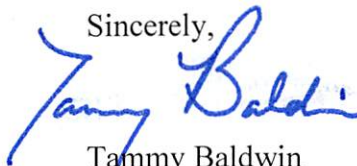
Many constituents in Wisconsin are paying close attention to the Cardinal Hickory Creek project and are seeking opportunities to participate in public meetings and public comment periods to ensure their input on the proposed line is incorporated into federal and state decisions. Although they have been paying close attention to opportunities to provide input, several constituents contacted me with concerns that the public notice for the upcoming federal RUS public scoping process did not reach many interested stakeholders, including local government officials. By the time local leaders learned about it, they had little time to rearrange their schedules to attend. Additionally, the November 2 public scoping meeting in Dodgeville, Wisconsin conflicts with a related meeting being held by the American Transmission Company in Pewaukee. I am concerned this scheduling conflict could limit participation in these public processes for the many Wisconsin residents who wish to attend both meetings.

In order to ensure adequate time for members of the public to prepare meaningful input to inform the public scoping for the proposed Cardinal Hickory Creek transmission line, I ask that you extend the public comment period, and hold an additional public scoping meeting in Wisconsin.

In addition, several stakeholders raised concerns about the lack of direct outreach to municipal governments that could be impacted by the proposed 345-kilovolt (kV) transmission line. A project this size requires significant communication and consultation among affected communities, private entities, and state and federal governments. The EIS process is a critical opportunity for members of the public to provide meaningful input. As you continue to move through the EIS process, I ask you to directly contact the municipal governments along the proposed route of the Cardinal Hickory Creek transmission line to provide updates on the process, details about upcoming meetings, and ample notification of any additional public comment opportunities.

Thank you in advance for your attention to the concerns of Wisconsin residents, and for upholding the integrity of the public engagement process for this project.

Sincerely,



Tammy Baldwin
U.S. Senator