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NEWS



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Minnesota Power, GRPUC and partners to bring solar power plus storage to Grand Rapids

Duluth, Minn. — A unique partnership between Minnesota Power, the Grand Rapids Public Utilities Commission, the Itasca Clean Energy Team and US Solar is bringing the region's first solar-plus-battery storage system to the city of Grand Rapids.

The Grand Rapids Public Utilities Commission on Wednesday approved the two-megawatt solar array and one-megawatt/2.5-hour energy storage battery. The endeavor is the first solar and battery project for Minnesota Power and the first clean energy project for the Grand Rapids Public Utilities Commission, and is the result of several years of collaboration between the city's municipal utility, the citizens group and Minnesota Power. The city of Grand Rapids, Minnesota, is Minnesota Power's largest municipal wholesale power customer and provides power to about 7,000 customers.

"Minnesota Power is proud to contribute our expertise and insight to this collaborative, community-driven project," said Julie Pierce, vice president Minnesota Power Strategy and Planning. "It's a fantastic opportunity for us to implement and learn about solar-plus-storage technology while working closely with a valued municipal customer and our partners in Grand Rapids to bring more carbon-free energy to the region. We are reaching a significant milestone of delivering 50 percent renewable energy to our customers by the end of this year and will be poised to advance further through unique opportunities like this one in Grand Rapids."

US Solar, a Minneapolis-based solar developer, is developing the array on a site near the Grand Rapids/Itasca County Airport. Energy generated by the solar panels can be stored in the adjacent battery and then dispatched when demand for energy is high or when the sun isn't shining.

Construction site preparation is already underway thanks to a grant from the Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board and the project is expected to be producing energy for Grand Rapids Public Utilities Customers by the end of 2021. A pollinator garden is planned as part of the development.

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“The Grand Rapids Public Utilities Commission is very excited to bring this project on line,” said Tom Stanley, Commission president. “We have spent many years of working to find a way that we can provide renewable solar power along with battery storage to our system that benefits all of our ratepayers. We would like to thank all of the people involved to get us to this momentous event and we look forward to enjoying the benefits of this project for years to come.”

Bill Schnell, leader of Itasca Clean Energy Team, said, “Almost five years ago a small group of local citizens organized themselves as the Itasca Clean Energy Team and started promoting a community solar garden here in Grand Rapids. Now through this project, we ended up with something better: the benefits of solar power, including lower electric rates, for every GRPU customer. We are extremely grateful for the support of the GRPU Commission and especially for the hard work and persistence of GRPU General Manager Julie Kennedy and Electric Distribution Manager Jeremy Goodell.”

Jeremy Goodell, GRPU Electric Department Manager, said, “After several years of working with the Itasca Clean Energy Team and Minnesota Power, we are looking forward to bringing the first solar storage project to our region. By pairing a utility sized battery with a large-scale solar system, we will be able to store energy generated from the solar panels and use it during times when electrical power demand is higher. We would like to thank our partners in helping bringing this project to fruition and look forward to working with them over the next 25 years.”

The project represents an investment of more than \$6 million and is expected to support more than 25 construction jobs.

Minnesota Power continues to increase its investments in solar energy across the region as it advances its EnergyForward strategy and reduces carbon emissions. Pending approval from the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission, the company plans to add approximately 20 megawatts of utility-scale solar energy in 2021. Projects are planned at Minnesota Power’s Laskin Energy Center, adjacent to the Laskin Energy Park in Hoyt Lakes, Minnesota; near the company’s Sylvan Hydro Station near Brainerd, Minnesota; and on a proposed site in the city of Duluth.

Minnesota Power provides electric service within a 26,000-square-mile area in northeastern Minnesota, supporting comfort, security and quality of life for 145,000 customers, 15 municipalities and some of the largest industrial customers in the United States. More information can be found at www.mnpower.com.

The statements contained in this release and statements that ALLETE may make orally in connection with this release that are not historical facts, are forward-looking statements. Actual results may differ materially from those projected in the forward-looking statements. These forward-looking statements involve risks and uncertainties and investors are directed to the risks discussed in documents filed by ALLETE with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

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