AGRICULTURAL IMPACT STATEMENT


DATCP File Photo

Ozaukee County Distribution Interconnection Project

Calumet, Fond du Lac, Manitowoc, Ozaukee, Sheboygan, and Washington counties

DATCP #4675

PSC Docket #137-CE-221

PUBLISHED JUNE 16, 2026

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

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Ozaukee County Distribution Interconnection Project

Calumet, Fond du Lac, Manitowoc, Ozaukee, Sheboygan, and Washington counties

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, TRADE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

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MISSION STATEMENT

Dear Reader,

Through the Agricultural Impact Statement ("AIS") program, agricultural operations have the opportunity to provide feedback, document impacts, and suggest alternative solutions when their agricultural lands are affected by an entity with the potential powers of eminent domain. The AIS program also provides affected agricultural landowners time to gather information to make well-informed decisions before a project begins. Lastly, the AIS program makes suggestions and recommendations to project initiators to promote project alternatives and management practices that would reduce potential impacts to agricultural lands and operations.

The AIS program also serves the needs of the project initiator by conducting the AIS analysis and publishing the statement within a timely manner as required by Wis. Stat. § 32.035. In addition, the AIS program provides a continuing presence throughout project development and oversight processes in order to support agricultural operations and the statewide priority to preserve prime farmland.

The Agricultural Impact Statement program and the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection are honored to provide this essential state service to the agricultural landowners and operators of the state.

Thank you,

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ACRONYMS

AEA	Agricultural Enterprise Area
AIN	Agricultural Impact Notification
AIS	Agricultural Impact Statement
CPCN	Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity
CREP	Conservation Reserve and Enhancement Program
CRP	Conservation Reserve Program
DATCP	Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
EA	Environmental Assessment
EMF	Electromagnetic fields
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
FP	Farmland Preservation Program
FSA	Farm Service Agency
IAM	Independent Agricultural Monitor
IEM	Independent Environmental Monitor
kV	Kilovolt
MFL	Managed Forest Law
NEV	Neutral to Earth Voltage
PSC	Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
ROW	Right-of-Way
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
DNR	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

TERMS

CIRCUIT	A continuous electrical path along which electricity can flow from a source, like a power plant, to where it is used, like a home. A typical transmission circuit consists of three phases, with each phase on a separate set of conductors.
CONDUCTOR	A wire composed of multiple aluminum strands wrapped around a steel core that together carry electricity. A transmission line is constructed with three conductors, one for each phase of the circuit generated by a power plant.
DOUBLE-CIRCUIT	Electric lines with two sets of three conductors, totaling six conductors on one structure. These two circuits are independent of one another.
DISTRIBUTION LINE	An interconnected group of lines and equipment for the delivery of low voltage electricity between the transmission network and end users (i.e. home/business)
GREENFIELD	Greenfield segments, also referred to as "new builds" are route segments that do not parallel existing transmission line infrastructure lines and/or rebuild them to expand existing ROW.
KILOVOLT (kV)	A unit of electricity equal to 1,000 volts.
LAYDOWN YARD	Temporary equipment staging and storage areas.
SINGLE-CIRCUIT	Electric lines with one set of three conductors.
TRANSMISSION LINE	An interconnected group of lines and equipment for transporting electric energy on a high voltage power line between power plants and substations.

SUMMARY OF AGRICULTURAL IMPACT STATEMENT

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (the Department) has prepared Agricultural Impact Statement (AIS) #4675 for the Ozaukee County Distribution Interconnection Project in Calumet, Fond du Lac, Ozaukee, Manitowoc, Sheboygan, and Washington counties, WI ("the Project") by American Transmission Company, LLC and its corporate manager ATC Management, Inc. (Collectively, "ATC").

The proposed Project is a combination of new construction, rebuilding of existing lines, and uprates of existing lines and is split into two scopes, North and South. According to the CPCN application, the Noth Scope of the Project involves the construction of a new 345 kV transmission line from the Forest Junction Substation near Forest Junction in Calumet County to the proposed Sheboygan River Substation near Eden in Fond du Lac County Wisconsin (ATC, 2025a). The South Scope of the Project involves construction of a new 345 kV transmission line from the Cedar Creek Junction substation near Cedar Creek in Washington County to the proposed Mullet River Junction substation near Sheboygan Falls in Sheboygan County (ATC, 2025a).

The Northern portion has a Proposed Route (preferred by ATC) and an Alternate Route, while the Southern portion has a Proposed Route (preferred by ATC) that also has a Contingent Route option along select segments, and an Alternate route (Figure 1). Additionally, there are common segments in the North and South scopes which are described as the Common Route. Including the Common Route, the combined length North and South Proposed Route is 90.3 miles (38.8 + 51.5 miles respectively), and the combined length of the North and South Alternate Route is 101.5 miles (52.7 + 48.8 miles respectively). The final length of the Project will ultimately depend on which route is selected. Not accounting for the uprate modifications, the northern aspect of Project will impact between approximately 1022.9 – 1187.5 acres of agricultural lands, and the southern aspect of the project will impact between approximately 1017.8-1207.1 acres of agricultural land and up to 330 agricultural landowners, depending on the selected route. The uprate modifications will occur across 842.21 acres of land on existing transmission lines, approximately 460.67 acres of which is within land identified as being in agricultural use according to the Wiscland 2.0 data layer.

The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) has authority over the Project, and ATC must obtain a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) to obtain the right to proceed with the Project. Through the issuance of a CPCN, the PSC would select the project route and other project criteria ATC shall follow. The Department will provide the PSC with AIS #4675 as evidence to aid in determining the outcome of ATC's CPCN application. PSC has assigned docket number 137-CE-221 to the Ozaukee County Distribution Project.

In accordance with Wis. Stat. §32.035(3), ATC has provided the Department with the necessary information and materials to conduct an AIS. The Department has also contacted the agricultural

property owners and operators impacted by the alternative routes. In accordance with Wis. Stat. §32.035(4)(b), the Department has reviewed and analyzed ATC's materials and the comments obtained by the Department from the affected agricultural property owners and operators to assess the agricultural impacts of the proposed project. Through the AIS analysis, the Department offers a set of recommendations and conclusions to the PSC, ATC, and the agricultural landowners and operators to help mitigate current and future impacts on agricultural lands and agricultural operations along the selected route.

The set of recommendations are located within the AIS Recommendation Section beginning on page 8. The AIS analysis begins on page 12 with information on the project located in Section 2. Information and conclusions on the agricultural setting of Calumet, Fond du Lac, Ozaukee, Manitowoc, Sheboygan, and Washington Counties and impacted areas can be found in Section 0. The agricultural impacts of the project on the impacted land, landowners, and operators can be found in Section 3.3.2. Appendices for AIS #4675 contain the following information: additional project figures and tables (Appendix A), information on the appraisal and compensation process (Appendix B), a complete record of comments submitted to the Department from agricultural landowners and operators (Appendix C), a copy of Wisconsin's agricultural impact statement statute (Appendix D), various additional sources of related information for agricultural landowners and operators (Appendix E), a copy of the Department's agricultural monitoring form for transmission line projects (Appendix F), and a copy of the Project Initiator Feedback Form (Appendix G).

If ATC deviates from the proposed route segments, alternatives, or the selected sites, ATC shall re-notify the Department. The Department shall review the re-notification for new potential impacts to agricultural lands and may generate an addendum to this AIS, if warranted.

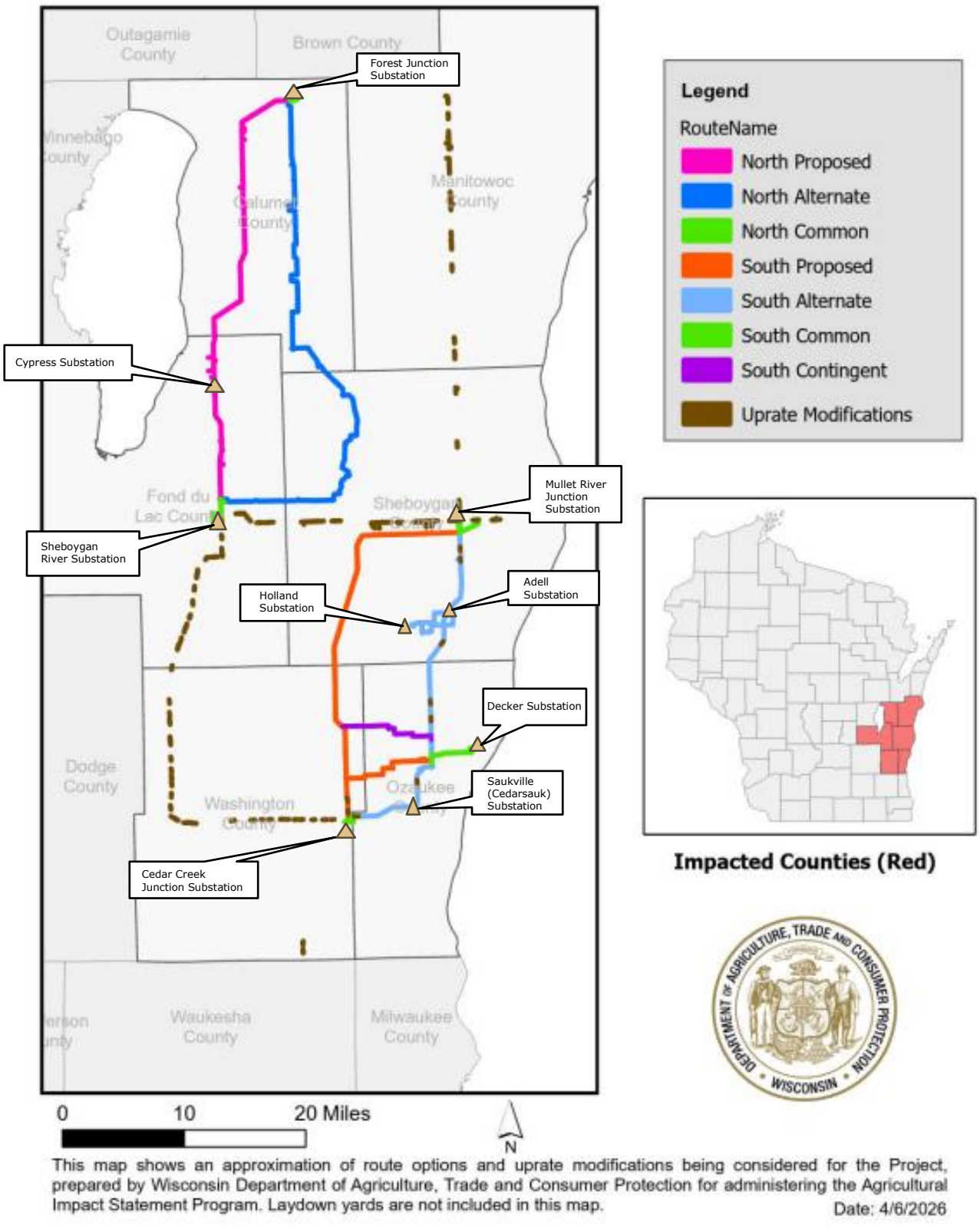

Figure 1: Location of the proposed routes for the Project, prepared by DATCP.

AGRICULTURAL IMPACT STATEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (the Department) has reviewed and analyzed the materials provided by the project initiator, American Transmission Company, LLC (ATC) and comments from the affected agricultural property owners and operators regarding the proposed Wisconsin Ozaukee County Distribution Interconnection Project. Should the Public Service Commission (PSC) approve the Project, the Department provides the following recommendations, in accordance with Wis. Stat. §32.035(4)(b), to the PSC, ATC, and agricultural landowners and operators to help mitigate impacts on agricultural lands and agricultural operations. ATC was offered the opportunity to review and comment on this analysis ahead of publication. See Appendix E for a copy of ATC's comments regarding the Department's recommendations.

Recommendations to the Public Service Commission

1) Of the two northern route alternatives proposed by ATC, the Department recommends PSC consider approving the North Proposed Route (ATC's preferred route) as it utilizes significantly more shared Right-of-Way (ROW) (61%) compared to the North Alternate Route (38% shared ROW), resulting in fewer new impacts to agricultural fields. Of the three southern route alternatives, the Department recommends PSC consider approving the South Alternate Route due to its lower impact on prime agricultural land and less overall impact to agricultural conservation programming such as Farmland Preservation Planning and MFL agreements.

2) If approved by the PSC, the Department recommends that for the duration of project construction, ATC be required to hire an Independent Environmental Monitor (IEM) and/or an Independent Agricultural Monitor (IAM), or an individual with the capacity for both an IEM and IAM. If the latter option is chosen, the individual should only have stop-work authority when acting in the capacity of the IEM. The PSC, DATCP, and DNR should be consulted and approve the hiring of the IEM/IAM, and all reports generated by the IEM/IAM should be shared with the PSC, DATCP, and DNR.

3) Should the PSC require an IAM or an individual with the combined capacity of an IEM and IAM for the Project, the Department recommends the individual with IAM capacity complete the Department's standard Agricultural Monitoring Form for Transmission Line Projects (ARM-LWR-543) seen in Appendix F or an equivalent form.

Recommendations to ATC

1) The Department recommends ATC follow all the additional recommended mitigation efforts described in Section 5.4 through Section 5.7 to mitigate Project impacts to or regarding the topics of soil health, drainage, agricultural infrastructure, erosion, and conservation practices.

2) ATC should provide agricultural landowners and operators advanced notice of acquisition and construction schedules so agricultural activities can be adjusted accordingly.

3) ATC should provide landowners with direct phone numbers and email addresses of the Agricultural Specialist that it will hire for the Project or another contact that is able to respond to a range of topics including but not limited to: environmental and agricultural impacts, land acquisition and ROW, project schedule, access limitations, compensation for release of lands from conservation programming, and project complaints.

4) If there is an adequate growing season for a crop to mature and be harvested after ATC has an interest in the impacted lands but before construction along the Project corridor begins, ATC should allow the current agricultural operators to harvest a crop for that season to the extent possible, or the ATC shall compensate the agricultural operators for crop damages.

5) ATC should consult with the affected agricultural landowners and operators to ensure any relocated, temporary, or newly established agricultural land access points are located in areas that provide safe and efficient access to remnant agricultural properties.

6) ATC should provide appropriate compensation to all landowners with land enrolled in a conservation easement or farm program if the landowner must reimburse the administering agency for the land's removal or alteration. These conservation or farm programs could include, but are not limited to, Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Conservation Reserve and Enhancement Program (CREP), Farmland Preservation Program (FP), or Managed Forest Law (MFL).

7) ATC should consult the Department as soon as a route is selected, affording as much time as possible prior to construction to provide information regarding the status of effective agreements within the project corridor and required releases of land and repayment of funds for any CREP or FP agreements within the chosen project corridor.

8) ATC should provide the Calumet County Land and Water Conservation Department and DATCP with selected route information affecting the Hilbert Ag Land on Track AEA when available.

9) ATC is advised to consult the applicable County Land Conservation Department on the existence of installed SWRM conservation practices within the Project area.

10) ATC should implement training for all construction supervisors, inspectors, and crews to ensure that they understand the steps needed to protect the integrity of agricultural lands and operations during project construction and restoration.

Recommendations to Agricultural Landowners and Operators

1) Agricultural landowners and operators should review Wis. Stat. §182.017 (i.e. the Landowner Bill of Rights) in Appendix D (V) to understand their rights prior to the start of easement negotiations.

2) Landowners should review the recommended mitigation efforts described in Section 5.4 through Section 5.7 to mitigate Project impacts to or regarding the topics of soil health, drainage, agricultural infrastructure, erosion, and conservation practices.

3) The Department recommends that the landowners or farm operators with a CREP or CRP agreement consult with their local FSA contact and discuss the impacts of the proposed project to determine what information is necessary to share with the ATC in order to maintain compliance with CREP or CRP agreements, as well as to receive any necessary FSA authorizations or approvals.

4) The Department recommends that agricultural landowners work with ATC to discuss agricultural practices that may be impacted by the project and provide a list of contact information for land operators, renters, or tenants that ATC may reach out to for a complete understanding of these practices.

5) The construction of a new transmission line is a non-conforming land use on lands subject to an effective farmland preservation agreement according to Wis. Stat. § 91.62(1)(c). Agricultural lands covered by an effective FP agreement, where a non-conforming land use is planned, are required to release the affected lands prior to the initiation of the non-conforming land use. Landowners should contact the Department to release affected agricultural lands from an FP agreement.

6) Landowners should consider potential implication of the proposed route to their lands enrolled in MFL. Impacted landowners should reach out to their local DNR Tax Law Forestry Specialist and discuss the implication of the route to these lands.

7) Agricultural landowners have the authority under Wis. Stat. § 182.017(7)(d)) to allow or deny herbicide applications within the ROW they own, and agricultural landowners should provide written consent or written lack of consent to ATC regarding herbicide applications.

8) Landowners with conservation easements within the ROW should consult with the conservation program provider to determine if any effects will occur due to the land's alteration or removal from the contract. If the landowner is charged a fee for removing or altering the land within the conservation easement, the landowners should contact the ATC staff member, as designated by ATC, responsible for handling compensation for release of lands from conservation programs.

9) Landowners who are aware of any SWRM cost-shared practices on their farm within the proposed Project area should consult with the County Land Conservation Department to determine 1) the compatibility of the proposed ROW easement with the existing conservation practice and 2) if any effects will occur due to alteration of a practice during construction activities.

10) Landowners concerned about potential impacts to their agricultural land should keep records of the conditions of the ROW before, during, and after construction, including field moisture conditions, historic presence/absence of ponded water prior to the start of construction for post-construction comparisons, crop yield records, and photographs taken every season.

11) Landowners should fully describe and discuss property improvements and agricultural operations with appraisers so the appropriate value of the affected property is established.

12) Prior to the start of construction, landowners should identify for ATC where construction activities may interfere with farm operations, farm building/facilities, or farming infrastructure, including but not limited to drain tiles, wells, watering systems, drainage ditches, drainage tile, culverts, fencing, farm access roads, or grain bins.

13) Affected farmland owners should inform the tenant agricultural operators if an easement has or will be obtained by ATC on the land they rent, whether by judicial offer or voluntary negotiation.

AGRICULTURAL IMPACT STATEMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (the Department) has prepared Agricultural Impact Statement (AIS) #4675 in accordance with Wis. Stat. §32.035 for the proposed project that is a combination of new construction, rebuilding of existing lines, and uprates of existing lines. The applicant is proposing to construct the Ozaukee County Distribution Interconnection Project ("the Project"). American Transmission Company, LLC and ATC Management Inc., its corporate manager, (collectively ATC), propose to construct the Project, which will be 100%-owned by ATC. We Energies notified ATC of a new load interconnection via the Load Interconnection Request Form (LIRF). New end-use customer facilities are to be located in the Port Washington area as part of the Port Washington Data Center being developed by Vantage Data Centers Management Company, LLC. The data center is not a part of the Ozaukee County Distribution Interconnection Project and will not be analyzed as part of AIS 4675.

According to Wis. Stat. §32.035, the AIS is designed to be an informational and advisory document that describes and analyzes the potential effects of a proposed project on agricultural operations and agricultural resources, but it cannot stop a project. This analysis is limited to routes submitted by the ATC within the AIN. The Department is required to prepare an AIS when the actual or potential exercise of eminent domain powers involves an acquisition of any interest in more than five acres of land from any agricultural operation. The term agricultural operation includes all owned and rented parcels of land, buildings, equipment, livestock, and personnel used by an individual, partnership, or corporation under single management to produce agricultural commodities.

The AIS reflects the general objectives of the Department in its recognition of the importance of conserving vital agricultural resources and maintaining a healthy rural economy. The Department is not involved in determining whether or not eminent domain powers will be used or the amount of compensation to be paid for the acquisition of any property.

ATC has submitted a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) to the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) (REF # 567811) to obtain approval to construct the Project (ATC, 2025a). The PSC has assigned the Project PSC Docket ID: 137-CE-221, which can be followed within the PSC Electronic Records Filing System. The PSC will analyze the need for the project and the potential environmental and community impacts in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). In addition, the PSC will receive testimony and hold hearings to further assess the impacts of this project. Afterwards, the PSC will approve, modify, or deny ATC's proposed project. Construction on the project cannot begin before ATC receives a CPCN from the PSC, as well as permits and approvals from other regulatory entities. The agricultural land data was prepared by ATC and exact

numbers for this agricultural soils analysis may differ from the numbers provided in the CPCN application ATC prepared as DATCP considers all impacted acreage, inclusive of existing project ROW proposed for the Project routes, and divides land classifications into the following categories: cropland, forest management land, pasture, specialty farmland, and other agricultural land. This analysis additionally considers temporary ROW utilized for the project, such as work areas, laydown yards, and off-ROW access areas.

As established under Wis. Stat. §32.035(4)(d), if ATC intends to actualize its powers of condemnation at any point during the project through a jurisdictional offer(s), ATC may not negotiate with an owner or make a jurisdictional offer until 30 days after the AIS has been published. If ATC deviates from the selected alternative or the selected sites, ATC shall re-notify the Department. The Department shall review the re-notification for new potential impacts to agricultural lands and may determine to generate an addendum to this AIS.

The full text of Wis. Stat. §32.035 is included in Appendix D. Additional references to statutes that govern eminent domain and condemnation processes, and other sources of information, are also included in Appendices B and E.

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2.1. Project Summary and Need

ATC has provided the Department with an agricultural impact notification (AIN) and requested spatial materials for analysis for the proposed project (DATCP, 2026). The AIN, requested materials from ATC, and ATC's CPCN application to the PSC, serve as the main reference documents for the Project. The proposed project route alternatives presented here do not represent the final project route, which requires PSC approval.

In the North Scope of the Project, ATC is proposing to construct a new 345 kV transmission line in Calumet and Fond du Lac and potentially Sheboygan Counties with the new line connecting the Forest Junction Substation to the proposed Sheboygan River Substation. In the South Scope of the project in Ozaukee, Sheboygan and Washington counties, ATC is proposing to construct a new 345 kV Mullet River Junction Substation, new 345 kV Decker substation, and new Cedar Creek Junction Substation. Additionally, line LSEC31 from Mullet River Junction Substation to Cedar Creek Junction Substation will be rebuilt. Two new double circuit lines will be constructed that connect to the new Decker Substation: one from interconnection point on line 796L41 and one from interconnection point on line LSEC31. Including the Common Route, the combined length North and South Proposed Route is 90.3 miles (38.8 + 51.5 miles respectively) and the combined length of the North and South Alternate Route is 101.5 miles (52.7 + 48.8 miles respectively).

Not accounting for the uprate modifications, the northern aspect of Project will impact between approximately 1022.9 – 1187.5 acres of agricultural lands and the southern aspect of the project

will impact between approximately 1017.8-1207.1 acres of agricultural land and up to 293 agricultural landowners, depending on the selected route. The uprate modifications will occur across 842.21 acres of land on existing transmission lines, approximately 460.67 acres of which is within land identified as being in agricultural use.

ATC was notified by We Energies of a new load interconnection of great magnitude via Load Interconnection Request (LIRF) #41052-2 (Appendix D of the CPCN Docket ID:137-CE-221). New end-use customer facilities are to be located in the Port Washington area as part of the Port Washington Data Center being developed by Vantage Data Centers Management Company, LLC.

By completing the Ozaukee County Distribution Interconnection Project, ATC has stated that they will meet the expected additional load need by bringing additional 345 kV sources to the area through creation of new facilities and modification of existing lines (ATC, 2025a). Contingent on review and approval by the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO), an electric grid operator for the central United States, this project would be included in MISO's 2026 Transmission Expansion Plan (MTEP26) which is aimed at upgrading the regional grid to support load needs. ATC has sought approval through MISO's Expediated Project Review process.

2.2. Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC)

The PSC is an independent regulatory agency that regulates public electric, natural gas, water and sewer utilities in Wisconsin. Through PSC regulations, public utilities must obtain PSC approval before setting new utility rates and undertaking major construction projects, such as electric transmission lines or substations. Prior to gaining approval, PSC staff review the utilities application and prepare either an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or an Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate the need, alternatives, cost, and environmental and social impacts of the proposed project.

Approval from the PSC is obtained by the issuance of a CPCN or a Certificate of Authority (CA), both of which grant the utility the right to proceed with the project as described within the CPCN or CA. Issuance of a CPCN or CA is determined by a three-member PSC Commission. PSC Commissioners are full-time staff, appointed by the Wisconsin Governor, tasked with reviewing the project case file (documents, reports, testimony) and ultimately deciding whether to approve, modify, or deny a project. If the PSC determines that the project is needed and feasible, the utility must adhere to the PSC ruling and project alternatives/route selected by the Commission. As part of the PSC's review process, a project initiator's proposed "preferred" or "alternate" route design as well as individual proposed route segments and associated impacts are analyzed to determine the final, approved route for the Project. If applicable to the Project, it is within the Commission's authority to choose a differing combination of the proposed route segments using connecting methods that have been assessed by the project initiator for potential impacts and practicability and are described in the Project's PSC docket record.

ATC submitted the final, complete application for a CPCN for the Project to the PSC on November 14, 2025 under PSC Docket ID: 137-CE-221 as document reference number 567811 (ATC, 2025a). DATCP expects the PSC to utilize the information contained within this AIS, the EIS, the CPCN application, and testimony from the public to determine the degree of impacts each route alternative will have on the agricultural landscape and economy, prior to issuing a ruling.

2.3. Project Design and Purpose

The proposed Project, including uprate modifications, spans 6 counties in Wisconsin: Calumet, Fond du Lac, Ozaukee, Manitowoc, Sheboygan, and Washington (Figure 1). According to the CPCN application, ATC will carry out the following activities across the North and South Scopes of the project (ATC, 2025a):

- Construction of two new dual-circuit lines (four lines) between a new proposed Decker Substation in Port Washington to the existing transmission system.
- Rebuilding and upgrading existing lines to connect a new proposed Mullet River Junction Substation in Town of Lima, Sheboygan County with a new proposed Cedar Creek Junction Substation in Town of Jackson, Washington County.
- Building a new 345-kilovolt power (kV) line from the Forest Junction Substation in Town of Brillion, Calumet County to a new proposed Sheboygan River Substation in Town of Osceola, Fond du Lac County.
- Building up to 5 new substations and completing minor remote end substation work.
- Uprate sections of existing transmission lines through structure replacements, burial of distribution spans, or amp-jacking structures (allow for raising high voltage towers while energized to expand grid capacity while minimizing power disturbance).
- Dependent on the chosen route (proposed or alternate), construct two new 138kV transmission lines from a new proposed Adell Substation (also referred to as the Adell Switching Station) in Town of Sherman, Sheboygan County to Holland substation in Town of Holland, Sheboygan County.

The Project's CPCN (REF # 567811) contains information on the routing and siting process performed by ATC (ATC, 2025a). ATC evaluated potential routes based on existing linear features, such as transmission lines, other utilities, highways, and railroads. ATC stated they selected chosen proposed and alternative routes that minimized impacts to residences, business, industrial buildings, and community facilities.

2.3.1. Project Location

The proposed Project is located northwest of the City of Port Washington in Calumet, Fond du Lac, Ozaukee, Sheboygan, Manitowoc, and Washington Counties in WI (Figure 1). Table 1 shows which routes (proposed, alternate, or existing line modifications) cross through impacted municipalities.

Table 1: Municipalities impacted by ATC's proposed Project.

County	Municipality		
	Proposed Route	***Alternate Route***	***Existing Line Modification***
Calumet	Town of Brillion Town of Brothertown Town of Chilton Town of Woodville	Town of Chilton Town of Brillion Town of Charlestown Town of New Holstein Town of Rantoul	
Fond du Lac	Town of Calumet Town of Empire Town of Forest Town of Marshfield Town of Osceola	Town of Empire Town of Forest Town of Osceola	Town of Ashford Town of Eden Town of Forest Town of Osceola
Ozaukee	Town of Port Washington Town of Saukville	Town of Cedarburg Town of Fredonia Town of Port Washington Town of Saukville Village of Fredonia Village of Saukville	Town of Cedarburg Town of Saukville Town of Fredonia Village of Fredonia
Manitowoc			Town of Cato Town of Franklin Town of Liberty Town of Meeme
Sheboygan	Town of Greenbush Town of Lima Town of Lyndon Town of Mitchell Town of Rhine Town of Russell Town of Scott Town of Sheboygan Falls	Town of Holland Town of Lima Town of Sherman	Town of Herman Town of Holland Town of Mitchell Town of Lima Town of Lyndon Town of Sheboygan Falls
Washington	Town of Farmington Town of Jackson Town of Trenton	Town of Jackson	Town of Addison Town of Hartford Town of Jackson Town of Polk Town of Trenton Town of Wayne Village of Germantown

2.3.2. Route Alternatives Overview

The Project features two sections, the North and the South scopes. Both the North and South scopes have uprate modifications proposed. The North Scope features a Proposed, Alternate and Common. The South Scope also includes a Proposed, Alternate and Common routes as well as a Proposed Contingent Route option for the west-eastward segment of the South Proposed Route.

All route options would include the construction of the following substations: Sheboygan River, Mullet River Junction, Decker, and Cedar Creek Junction. Only the North Proposed Route includes modification to the existing Cypress Substation. Only the South Alternative Route includes the new Adell Substation and modification work to existing Holland and Saukville (Cedarsauk) Substations. All of the substations to be constructed as part of the project occur on agricultural land (Table 2).

Table 2: New Proposed Project Substations

New Substations	Approximate Parcel Size	Route	Agricultural Land Use? (Yes or No)
Decker	40 Acres	South Common	Yes
Sheboygan River	18 Acres	North Common	Yes
Mullet River	16 Acres	South Alternate	Yes
Cedar Creek	20 Acres	South Alternate	Yes
Adell	10 Acres	South Alternate	Yes

Northern Routes Description

The northern routes consist of constructing 345 kV circuits, modifications to existing lines, as well as construction of new substations and modifications to existing substations (Figure 1). As a part of the North Proposed Route, ATC has proposed the following (REF#: 567811):

1. An existing 345 kV single circuit transmission line will be rebuilt with a new 345 kV circuit. The existing 345 kV circuit will be relocated/rebuilt onto the new double circuit (345 kV/345 kV) steel structures with the new 345 kV circuit. The new 345 kV double circuit structure centerline will be located approximately eighty feet offset to the East of the existing 345 kV circuit centerline. Both 345 kV circuits will be routed into the new Sheboygan River Substation.
2. From the Sheboygan River Substation, both 345 kV circuits will be routed North toward the Forest Junction Substation. The existing 345 kV circuit will maintain its route into and out of the existing Cypress Substation and then continue North to the Forest Junction Substation where it will terminate. The new 345 kV circuit will bypass the existing Cypress Substation and continue into the Forest Junction Substation where it will terminate.
3. Once the new 345 kV double circuit is built, the existing 345 kV circuit will be taken out of service, and all structures and wires will be removed from the existing ROW.

As part of the North Alternate Route, ATC has proposed the following (REF#: 567811):

1. The new 345 kV circuit will be routed into the new Sheboygan River. From there, the new 345 kV circuit will be routed West and then North into Forest Junction where it will terminate.

The new 345 kV single circuit will be built on a combination of greenfield and existing ROW. Where routed along existing ROW, the new 345 kV circuit will parallel existing 138kV transmission circuits.

Southern Routes Description

The Southern Alternate routes consist of constructing 345 kV circuits, modifications to existing lines, as well as construction of new substations and modifications to existing substations (Figure 1).

As part of the South Proposed Route, ATC has proposed the following (REF#: 567811):

1. Two out of the four 345 kV transmission lines from the new Decker Substation will head west on a greenfield centerline to connect to an existing 345 kV transmission circuit.
2. The existing 345 kV line will be rebuilt as a double circuit between the new Mullet River Junction Substation and Cedar Creek Junction Substation.
3. The remaining two 345 kV transmission lines from Decker Substation will connect to the existing 345 kV transmission line and will tie into the new Mullet River Junction Substation on the north, and existing Saukville Substation on the south.

The South Proposed Route also has a Proposed Contingent Route option that would replace the west-eastward segments S17 and S18 with west-eastward segments S22A-E located further north (Figure 1). ATC proposed this contingent option due to environmental and constructability considerations, as well as input received during public outreach (ATC, 2025a).

As part of the South Alternate Route, ATC has proposed the following in the CPCN application (REF#: 567811):

1. Two out of the four 345 kV transmission lines from Decker Substation will head north to the new Mullet River Junction Substation in an existing corridor.
2. The remaining two 345 kV transmission lines will head south; one to existing Saukville Substation and the other to the new Cedar Creek Junction Substation. A 138 kV transmission line will be converted to 345 kV as part of this scope.
3. The South Alternate Route also includes building two new 138kV transmission circuits to connect the new Adell Substation and the existing Holland Substation. These 138 kV circuits will require building on greenfield ROW.

2.3.3. Off-ROW Access Roads

ATC's will develop off-ROW access roads to allow safe delivery of equipment and materials to the proposed ROW or other workspaces (ATC, 2025a). ATC has proposed off-ROW access roads where the routes do not intersect or parallel existing roads, and/or where the terrain, such as steep slopes, prevents travel within the proposed ROW or other workspace or where ATC was aware of landowner preference for access roads from historical interactions. Lastly, ATC intends to use off-ROW access roads to avoid large wetland and waterway crossings in the Project area.

ATC will protect sensitive resources by using construction matting to minimize soil rutting and mixing, as well as the placement of appropriate sediment and erosion control devices and measures to prevent sedimentation off-site (ATC, 2025a). Once construction is complete, ATC has reported that any off-ROW disturbances will be restored to pre-construction conditions or, depending upon landowner negotiations and requirements, improvements made to the access paths may be left in place, unless in conflict with Project permits. The Project's Restoration Plan can be found in the CPCN Application, Appendix F, Exhibit 1 (REF # 563367; ATC, 2025b) and a site map of proposed off-ROW access roads can be found in the CPCN Application Appendix A, Figure 4 Parts 1-5 (Docket ID: 137-CE-221).

2.3.4. Staging Areas

ATC will use temporary staging areas (also referred to as laydown yards or laydown areas) to store job trailers, construction vehicles and equipment, and other related material/equipment (ATC, 2025a). ATC has identified potential laydown yards based on proximity to the proposed routes, with ATC stating that preference has been given to existing improved lots, gravel pits, and quarry yards. Laydown yards are still preliminary and actual space used may change during construction. ATC has identified forty-six potential laydown yards along the northern route and nineteen along the southern route. ATC discusses all potential staging areas in Table 5.7-1 within the CPCN application and within Appendix A Figure 7 Parts 1-4 (Docket ID: 137-CE-221). Of these laydown yards, eleven are located within agricultural land for the northern scope of the project, and seventeen are located within agricultural land for the southern scope of the project (refer to the Appendix A, Table 2).

2.3.5. Existing Transmission Lines

The Project as proposed will connect new substations to the existing 345/128kV Forest Junction Substation in Brillion, WI that is owned by ATC. The project will interact with the following existing transmission lines based on whether the proposed or alternate routes are chosen:

- Proposed Route: In the Northern section of the project, ATC will rebuild existing transmission lines 971L51 and LCYP31 From the Forest River Junction Substation to the Cypress Substation to the new Sheboygan River Substation. In the southern half of the project, ATC will rebuild existing line LSEC31 from Mullet River Junction Substation to Cedar Creek Junction Substation
- Alternate Route: In the northern half of the project, a new line will travel alongside existing lines X-106, 4035, LYNG11, and X-97. In the southern half of the project, ATC will rebuild existing line 796L41+(8222/8231/HOG21) from Mullet River Junction Substation to Cedar Creek Junction Substation.

Additionally, ATC will perform existing line modifications consisting of replacing select structures on existing transmission lines to improve clearances due to line uprates (ATC, 2025a). Line uprating increases the current flowing through the lines.

ATC plans to uprate the following newly established transmission lines:

- Sheboygan Energy Center – Mullet River Junction 345 kV line
- Sheboygan River – Mullet River Junction 345 kV line
- Two Mullet River Junction – Edgewater 345 kV lines
- Mullet River Junction – Cedar Creek Junction 345 kV line
- Sheboygan River – Cedar Creek Junction 345 kV line
- Cedar Creek Junction – Arcadian 345 kV
- Cedar Creek Junction – Granville 345 kV

ATC will also uprate the existing Branch River – Sheboygan Energy Center 345 kV line (W-14).

The North scope includes the replacement of sixty (60) structures across three (3) lines. The South scope includes the replacement of sixty-one (61) structures across 5 lines (ATC, 2025a). These uprate modifications will occur on both existing transmission line ROW as well as temporary workspaces. ATC proposes these uprate modification construction activities associated with these uprate modifications occurring across 842.21 acres of land. Based on information received in October 2025 from ATC, as well as DNR's Wiscland 2.0 land use data and 2025 state parcel information, DATCP determined that approximately 460.67 acres of that total temporary workspace acreage is on land identified as being in agricultural use and impacts approximately 219 agricultural landowners.

2.3.6. Project Routing and Siting

ATC identified routes based on system planning requirements, engineering requirements, and impacts to the natural environment and land use (ATC, 2025a). ATC considered route alternatives within the North and South Scopes of the Project that prioritized existing transmission line rebuilds

wherever possible and identified greenfield components where rebuilds were infeasible or new transmission corridors were required.

Within their CPCN application, ATC stated they applied the criteria set forth in Wis. Stats. § 1.12(6) Siting of Electric Transmission Facilities contained within the State Energy Policy in its route development process. The following corridors should be utilized in the following order of priority:

1) Existing utility corridors
2) Highway and railroad corridors
3) Recreational trails, to the extent the facilities may be constructed below ground and that the facilities do not significantly impact environmentally sensitive areas.
4) New corridors

As mentioned within the CPCN application, ATC prefers the North and South Proposed Routes as these are anticipated to minimize impacts on population centers and sensitive environmental resources to a greater degree and utilizes opportunities to stay along existing transmission corridors. ATC believes that the Proposed Routing Options more favorably meet the siting criteria identified in Wis. Stat. § 196.491(3)(d), while minimizing environmental, land use, social, and engineering considerations

Additional information on route alternatives and ATC's analysis can be found within the Project application for a CPCN to PSC, under PSC Docket ID: 137-CE-221 (ATC, 2025a).

2.3.7. Project Schedule

According to the AIN and the CPCN application, pending approval by the PSC, obtainment of all state agency permits, and outage constraints, the estimated construction duration for the project is approximately 19 months (ATC, 2025a; DATCP, 2026).

Originally, ATC was anticipating PSC CPCN Approval and Order by April 2026, to start construction by May 2026 with a project in-service date of December 2027. At this time, the PSC decision on the Project is expected in the fourth quarter of 2026 (PSC, 2026).

2.4. Project Right-of-Way (ROW)

All network upgrade work within the South and North Scopes of the project will be built completely within existing ROW. While there are workspaces required for uprate work modifications, no ROW expansion is proposed.

As for the transmission line construction and substation work outlined in the Project routes, the amount of existing ROW to be used compared to new ROW anticipated depends on location of

existing infrastructure and which route is chosen. The table below shows how much required ROW would be shared with existing infrastructure, including existing transmission line, railroad, roadway, and gas pipeline ROW.

Table 3: Existing Shared and New ROW by Route. Total includes common segments, but does not include off-ROW areas, modifications, substations and laydown yards.

Route Name	Total ROW Area (acres)	Existing ROW Shared Area (acres)	New ROW Area (acres)	Percentage of Shared ROW (%)
North Proposed	1117.3	677.9	439.4	61%
North Alternate	1127.4	430.6	696.9	38%
South Proposed (with segments S17 and S18)	1209.0	837.7	371.2	69%
South Proposed Contingent (with Segments 22A-E)	1227.4	860.8	366.5	70%
South Alternate	880.5	549.8	330.6	62%

North Scope of the Project:

- While the North Proposed Route will be built entirely along existing ROW corridors with ROW expansion, the North Alternate Route will require a combination of greenfield and partially overlapping existing transmission ROW (ATC, 2025a). ATC proposes a typical ROW width for the North Scope of the project ranging from 100 to 280 ft.
- The Common Route, included in both the Proposed and Alternate routes, will be built completely along existing ROW corridors for the segment routing into Forest Junction Substation and will require a combination of greenfield and partially overlapping existing transmission ROW for the segment routing into the new Sheboygan River Substation (ATC, 2025a).

South Scope of the Project:

- In the South Scope of the Project, ATC's submitted AIN states that the Proposed Route will be constructed in existing ATC right of way and will require minimal expansion of the existing ROW corridor. The Alternate Route would require an expansion of all existing ROW and a minimal number of greenfield easements (ATC, 2025a). The proposed typical ROW width for the South Scope ranges from 100 feet to 250 feet.
- According to the CPCN application submitted by ATC, the required ROW expansion for either the South Proposed or Alternate routes are as follows (ATC, 2025a):
    - For both the South Proposed and Alternate routes, the four new 345 kV circuits going to Decker Substation will require 250 feet of new ROW width, the 345 kV transmission facilities routed into Cedar Creek Junction Substation will require 150 feet of new ROW on the north end of the substation (for 0.19 miles) and 250 feet on the east end of the substation (for 0.5 miles), and the 345 kV transmission

facilities routed into Mullet River Junction Substation will require an additional 150 ft on the north end of the substation (for 0.19 miles).

- The South Proposed Route will require an additional 350 feet at the south end of the Mullet River Junction. At the south end of the substation, the South Alternate Route will require 250 feet (for 0.57 miles) while the South Proposed Route will require 350 feet. The South Proposed Route will then require 150 feet for a new double circuit 345 kV line (approximately 8.75 miles to connect to an existing transmission corridor). There is an existing 138kV transmission facility for 4.5 miles in the southern part of the South Proposed Route that the new double circuit transmission line will parallel. However, in this corridor, the new double circuit 345 kV will require an additional 12.5 feet of ROW width in the 220 feet shared corridor. From here, the new 345 kV transmission line routes east to Mullet River Junction Substation, where the existing corridor of 150 feet will be utilized. The South Alternate Route will require 25 feet of additional ROW width so that the new double circuit line can be rebuilt offset from the existing transmission line.
- The South Alternate Route that connects two 138kV circuits between Adell Substation and Holland Substation will require new ROW ranging from 100 feet to 150 feet.

3. AGRICULTURAL SETTING

3.1. Farmland Preservation

Wisconsin's farmland preservation (FP) program provides local governments and landowners with tools to aid in protecting agricultural land for continued agricultural use and to promote activities that support the larger agricultural economy. Lands that are planned for farmland preservation by the county and included in a certified zoning district or located within an Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA) are afforded land use protections intended to support agriculture and are eligible for the farmland preservation tax credit.

3.1.1. Farmland Preservation Planning

Northern Routes Review

There are four counties with certified FP plans impacted by the Project's proposed North Routes: Calumet, Fond du Lac, Manitowoc and Sheboygan. The Department certified these four FP plans in 2019, 2021, 2025 and 2023, respectively, for ten-year periods. The common criteria for land planned for FP in these counties includes land in certified FP zoning districts; land in productive agricultural uses; lands mapped for agriculture in local comprehensive plans; lands with prime agricultural soils; lands with managed forestry; and lands adjacent to or near agricultural infrastructure (DATCP, 2019a; DATCP, 2021b; DATCP, 2025a; DATCP, 2023). Approximately

1,609.19 acres planned for farmland preservation in the counties' FP plans are affected by the Project's proposed North Proposed Route. Approximately 1,509.94 acres planned for farmland preservation in the counties' FP plans are affected by the Project's proposed North Alternate Route.

Southern Routes Review

There are three counties with certified FP plans impacted by the Project's proposed South Routes: Fond du Lac, Sheboygan and Washington. The Department certified these three FP plans in 2019, 2023 and 2025, respectively, for ten-year periods. The common criteria for land planned for FP in these counties includes land in certified FP zoning districts; land in primarily agricultural uses; lands mapped for agriculture in local comprehensive plans; lands with prime agricultural soils; lands with managed forestry; and lands adjacent to or near agricultural infrastructure (DATCP, 2021b; DATCP, 2023; DATCP, 2025b). Approximately 633.99 acres planned for farmland preservation in the counties' FP plans are affected by the Project's South Proposed Route. Approximately 585.81 acres planned for farmland preservation in the counties' FP plans are affected by the Project's proposed South Alternate Route. There are no FP Plans that would occur within Segments S17 and S18 of the Proposed Route nor the Contingent Route Segments S22A-E that would replace them if it was selected.

3.1.2. Farmland Preservation Zoning

Establishing FP zoning strengthens farmland protections beyond what an FP plan affords. ATC has applied for a CPCN under Wis. Stat. § 196.491 from the PSC. If such certificate is issued, the Project will be a permitted use in the FP zoned area under Wis. Stat. § 91.44(f). If a CPCN is not issued, the Project will be subject to conditional use regulations in the FP zoned area under Wis. Stat. § 91.46(4) and must meet the requirements listed under Wis. Stat. § 91.46(4)(a)-(4)(e).

The Project's proposed routes will cross the following areas with certified FP zoned areas: the towns of Brillion, Charlestown and Woodville under Calumet County zoning; the towns of Chilton and Rantoul in Calumet County under town administrated zoning; the towns of Gibson, Liberty and Meeme under Manitowoc County zoning; the towns of Auburn, Calumet, Eden, Empire, Forest, Marshfield, Osceola and Taycheedah in Fond du Lac County under their own town zoning; and the towns of Greenbush, Holland, Lima, Lyndon, Russell, Scott, Sheboygan Falls, and Sherman in Sheboygan County under their own town zoning. FP zoned areas within the counties and towns restrict covered lands to agricultural uses and uses compatible with agriculture and is certified to be consistent with the state's FP Law, Chapter 91. Impacted parcels zoned for FP by these counties and towns would require a conditional use permit under Wis. Stat. § 91.46(4) for transportation, communications, pipeline, electric transmission, utility or drainage use, to remain in the district.

Within the CPCN application, Section 1.7.3 on page 14, ATC discusses local permits that would apply to the project depending on whether the Project is awarded a CPCN by the PSC as well as what local authorities have been reached out to at this time (ATC, 2025a).

3.1.3. Agricultural Enterprise Areas and Farmland Preservation Agreements

AEAs are community-led efforts to establish designated areas important to Wisconsin's agricultural future. This designation highlights the importance of the area for local agriculture and further supports local farmland preservation and agricultural development goals. Designation as an AEA also enables eligible landowners to enter into FP agreements. Through an FP agreement, a landowner agrees to voluntarily restrict the use of his/her land to agriculture for a minimum of ten years (or fifteen years if signed before December 8, 2023) in exchange for eligibility for the farmland preservation tax credit. It is possible that new agreements could be enrolled between the time of this analysis and potential construction of finalized designs related to the Project corridor. The Department recommends ATC consult the Department in the year preceding construction regarding the status of effective agreements within the Project corridor and for information regarding required releases of land from effective farmland preservation agreements.

A review of the Project's proposed routes identified that Calumet County contains a designated AEA within the Project's proposed routes (DATCP, 2026b). The Hilbert Ag Land on Track AEA has approximately 26.47 acres within the Project's North Proposed Route and 179.28 acres within the Project's North Alternate route.

The construction of a new transmission line is a non-conforming land use on lands subject to an effective farmland preservation agreement within an AEA, according to Wis. Stat. § 91.62(1)(c). Agricultural lands covered by an effective FP agreement, where non-conforming land use is planned, are required to release the affected lands prior to the initiation of the non-conforming land use. Landowners should contact the Department to release affected agricultural lands from an FP agreement. As part of the release, the Department is required to collect a conversion fee, according to Wis. Stat. § 91.66, to release lands from an FP agreement. Compensation to landowners for required releases of land enrolled in a conservation easement program is typically determined as part of the appraisal and acquisition process with the project initiator under Wisconsin Statute § 32. Refer to Wisconsin Statute § 32.06 for condemnation procedure in non-transportation matters.

The Project's North Alternate Route will encroach upon two effective FP agreements within the Hilbert Ag Land on Track AEA, being 24.76 acres in agreement number 692, recorded as Document number 525635 on September 27, 2017 in the Calumet County Register of Deeds, and 5.08 acres in agreement number 708, recorded as Document number 526603 on November 3, 2017 in the Calumet County Register of Deeds. Both these agreements are effective through 2032.

Prior to 2009, owners of eligible farmland could sign 10- to 25-year FP agreements outside of AEA boundaries. There are no effective pre-2009 FP agreements located within the Project's proposed routes.

3.1.4. Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement Programs (PACE)

The 2009 - 2011 State of Wisconsin budget authorized the state Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement (PACE) Program under Wis. Stats. § 93.73, which is intended to provide matching funds to assist local governments and non-profits with the purchase of permanent agricultural conservation easements. The intent of the PACE program is to preserve agricultural land of significance at risk of development and to provide an additional layer of permanent protection to certified FP planned areas and designated AEAs. Post PACE acquisition, the partnering local entity and the Department co-hold the agricultural conservation easement voluntarily purchased from landowners. At the time of this analysis, the state's PACE Program is not currently funded or accepting new applications. However, the state holds 17 PACE easements.

A review of the Department's PACE Program shows the Project would not impact any state held PACE easements.

Government and private non-governmental organizations (NGO) such as land trusts may also hold agricultural conservation easements. Based on a review of publicly available online resources, the Department found that some publicly-held easements in Calumet (WRP-NRCS), Fond du Lac (Statewide Non-Point Easement-DNR, Stream Bank Easement-DNR), Sheboygan (Stream Bank Protection-DNR) and Washington (Stone House-NGO) counties may be impacted by the Project (USGS-PAD, 2026).

Compensation to landowners for required releases of land enrolled in a conservation easement program is typically determined as part of the appraisal and acquisition process with the project initiator under Wisconsin Statute § 32. Refer to Wisconsin Statute § 32.06 for condemnation procedure in non-transportation matters.

3.2. Drainage Districts

Drainage districts are local governmental entities governed under Wis. Stat. Ch. 88 and organized under a county drainage board for the primary purpose of draining of lands for agricultural use (DATCP, 2021a). Landowners who benefit from drainage pay assessments to cover the cost to construct, maintain, and repair the district's drains. According to the Department, approximately 190 active districts exist within 27 of Wisconsin's 72 counties.

A review of the Department's Drainage Program database indicates that the Project's proposed southern routes cross two active drainage districts in Ozaukee County: the Mequon # 2 District #4602 and the Mequon # 8 District #4608.

Under ATCP 48.40 landowners are required to notify a county drainage board of any action, including a change in land use that will alter flow of water into or from a district drain, increase soil erosion or movement of suspended soils to a district drain, or affect the operation of the drainage district or costs incurred by the district. ATC should give this notice at the Project planning stage and shall invite DATCP and the county drainage board to identify potential concerns.

Within the CPCN application (REF#: 567811, page 118), ATC identified these two drainage districts, but indicated that coordination with the respective county drainage districts will occur once the PSC issues an order and routes are selected (ATC, 2025a).

3.3. Conservation Programs

Voluntary conservation programs such as the USDA Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and the USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) are financial incentive programs to help agricultural landowners meet their conservation goals. The USDA and the Department jointly administer the CREP program in Wisconsin.

It is the responsibility of the landowner to maintain their CREP or CRP agreements, and they can work with the ATC to maintain this compliance. The Department recommends that the landowners or farm operators with a CREP or CRP agreement consult with their local FSA contact and discuss the impacts of the proposed project to determine what information is necessary to share with the ATC in order to maintain compliance with CREP or CRP agreements.

Compensation to landowners for required releases of land enrolled in a conservation easement program is typically determined as part of the appraisal and acquisition process with the project initiator under Wisconsin Statute § 32. Refer to Wisconsin Statute § 32.06 for condemnation procedure in non-transportation matters.

3.3.1. Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

CREP pays eligible agricultural landowners enrolled within the program to install filter strips along waterways or to return continually flooded fields to wetlands while leaving the remainder of the adjacent land in agricultural production. To be eligible for CREP payments, a recipient must have agricultural lands in crop production that are within 150 ft of a stream or water body or 1,000 ft from a grassland Project area (DATCP, 2019b).

Northern Routes Review

A review of the Department's CREP records indicates that as of March 2026, the Project's proposed northern routes, regardless of selection, may encroach upon two effective CREP agreements in Manitowoc County. Further site verification is required to determine exact impacts.

Southern Routes Review

A review of the Department's CREP records indicates that as of March 2026, the Project's proposed South Proposed Route may encroach upon one perpetual easement in Washington County. The Project's proposed southern Alternate Route may encroach upon one CREP agreement in Sheboygan County. Further site verification is required to determine exact impacts.

The Department advises ATC to:

- Work with landowners to identify effective CREP agreements prior to any construction or site disturbance activities
- Coordinate with the appropriate Wisconsin CRP contact regarding effective CRP contracts within the Project area and coordinate with FSA regarding impact mitigation to CREP enrolled lands and/or potential contract (CRP-1) releases within 12 months of expected construction or site disturbance activities
- To limit situations of CRP-1 contract termination, limit site disturbance of CRP/CREP to times outside of the Primary Nesting Season (May 15th to August 1st) to the extent practicable and necessary in coordination with FSA to ensure compliance with these contracts
- Consult with the Department as soon as a route is selected affording as much time as possible prior to any construction or site disturbance activities to determine the impact of the selected route on any CREP easements consult with the Department on impacts to any state agreements that may require termination and repayment of funds. If any portion of the CRP-1 contract is terminated by USDA-FSA, the corresponding area under the state CREP agreement must also be terminated. Termination of any part of a CREP agreement requires repayment of any funds issued to the landowner under the terms of the agreement.

3.3.2. Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

CRP is a land conservation program administered by the Farm Service Agency of the USDA. In exchange for a yearly rental payment, eligible agricultural landowners enrolled in the program agree to remove highly erodible land from agricultural production and plant resource-conserving plant species such as grasses or trees that will improve environmental health and quality (USDA, 2026). Eligible agricultural landowners must possess lands with the potential for long-term improvements to water quality, prevent soil erosion or establish beneficial wildlife habitats according to the USDA Environmental Benefits Index (USDA, 2026). CRP enrollment information is privileged to the USDA and CRP program participants. The Department is therefore unable to determine if any of the impacted agricultural parcels are enrolled within the CRP program, unless landowners voluntarily share this information with the Department.

Of the 107 responses to the Department's pre-construction questionnaire, one of the landowners impacted by the project included that part of their land is enrolled within CRP.

The Department advises ATC to:

- Work with landowners to identify effective CRP agreements prior to any construction or site disturbance activities
- Coordinate with the appropriate Wisconsin CRP contact regarding effective CRP contracts within the project area and coordinate with FSA regarding impact mitigation to CREP enrolled lands and/or potential contract (CRP-1) releases within 12 months of expected construction or site disturbance activities.

3.3.3. Managed Forest Law

The MFL program is a voluntary sustainable forestry program administered by DNR under subch. III of ch. NR 46. In exchange for reduced property taxes, eligible landowners commit to a 25–50-year sustainable forest management plan on their privately owned woodlands. Sustainable forestry practices such as harvesting mature timber according to sound forest management practices, reforestation and afforestation of the land, are required in enrolled landowner's management plans. Potential enrollees must also show their parcel complies with size and density requirements under Wis. Stat. § 77.82(1)(a)2, which states that at least 80% of the parcel must be producing or capable of producing a minimum of 20 cubic feet of merchantable timber per acre per year. Land with buildings or improvements associated with buildings are not eligible for MFL. Exceptions such as utility ROWs are permitted such that the Project and its ROW will not interfere with future or current MFL eligibility (DNR, 2022).

In order to analyze Project impacts on MFL enrollments, the Department conducted a spatial analysis to determine total acres impacted on parcels enrolled in MFL as compared to their sizes, and therefore their MFL eligibility.

Northern Routes Review

This analysis indicated that the Project's North Proposed Route will impact approximately 16.65 acres of MFL enrolled land, including three parcels where the impacted acres are greater than 10% of the parcel's total, meaning there is a greater potential that they no longer meet the 80% eligibility requirement to remain enrolled in the MFL program. These parcels' state IDs are 0152691, 039T131619301600300 and 039T131619310100100. The Project's North Alternate route will impact approximately 33.39 acres of MFL enrolled land, including four parcels where the impacted acres are greater than 10% of the parcel's total, meaning they may no longer meet the 80% eligibility requirement to remain enrolled in the MFL program. These parcels' state IDs are 0153571, 0159416, 11759002003200 and 11759020282620.

The Project's South Proposed Route will impact approximately 22.68 acres of MFL enrolled land, including four parcels where the impacted acres are greater than 10% of the parcel's total, meaning they may no longer meet the 80% eligibility requirement to remain enrolled in the MFL program. These parcels' state IDs are 11759010122590, 11759010122360, 11759008091652, 089080190200000 and 089080190500100. These parcels' state IDs are 089080190500100 and 089080190200000. Of the South Proposed Route, segments 17 and 18 will impact 7.87 acres of parcels with MFL enrolled land, specifically two parcels where the impacted acres are greater than 10% of the parcel's total: state IDs 089080190500100 and 089080190200000. The Project's South Contingent Route which would replace segments 17 and 18 of the Southern Proposed Route if selected, would impact approximately 0.46 acres of MFL enrolled land, including no parcels where the impacted acres are greater than 10% of the parcel's total, meaning they may no longer meet the 80% eligibility requirement to remain enrolled in the MFL program.

The Project's South Alternate Route will impact approximately 11.68 acres of MFL enrolled land, including one parcel where the impacted acres are greater than 10% of the parcel's total, meaning they may no longer meet the 80% eligibility requirement to remain enrolled in the MFL program. That parcel's state ID is 11759008091652.

The Department recommends that all landowners review potential implications of the proposed routes to their MFL enrolled lands. Impacted landowners should visit the DNR Forestry Assistance Locator website www.dnr.wi.gov/fal to find their local DNR Tax Law Forestry Specialist and discuss the implication of the routes to their MFL enrolled lands.

3.3.3 Soil and Water Resource Management Grant Program (SWRM)

The state has a SWRM program with goals including enhancing surface and groundwater protections, providing financial and technical assistance for locally led conservation, and addressing soil and water resource concerns. Through the SWRM Program, the Department allocates funds to county conservation departments to facilitate landowner cost-share for installation of conservation practices. When a cost-share contract is issued under Wis. Stat. §92.14, a landowner and or grant recipient agrees to install and maintain the conservation practice according to an operation and maintenance plan.

Landowners who are aware of any SWRM cost-shared practices on their farm within the proposed Project area should consult with the county land conservation department to determine 1) the compatibility of the proposed ROW easement with the existing conservation practice and 2) if any effects will occur due to alteration of a practice during construction activities.

ATC is advised to consult the applicable county land conservation department on the existence of installed SWRM conservation practices within the Project area. Practices that are not maintained in

accordance with the terms of the contract operation and maintenance plan may be subject to repayment of cost-shared funds. If a landowner is required to repay any cost-share funds because a construction impact resulted in a violation of the SWRM contract, the landowners should contact the ATC staff member, as designated by ATC, responsible for handling compensation for release of lands from conservation programs.

Compensation to landowners for required releases of land enrolled in a conservation easement program is typically determined as part of the appraisal and acquisition process with the project initiator under Wisconsin Statute § 32. Refer to Wisconsin Statute § 32.06 for condemnation procedure in non-transportation matters.

4. AGRICULTURAL IMPACTS

In addition to being a key component of Wis. Stat. §32.035, documenting the agricultural impacts of a project provides the ATC and the agricultural landowner the opportunity to better understand the project in its own right as well as learn how the project will impact agriculture. Furthermore, the documentation of agricultural impacts by agricultural landowners and operators creates the opportunity for discussion of alternatives that may reduce impacts to agricultural lands.

In order to promote the opportunity for alternatives, the Department has used information provided by ATC for this AIS and information gathered by the Department to analyze the potential agricultural impacts of the Project in Calumet, Fond du Lac, Manitowoc, Ozaukee, Sheboygan, and Washington counties, WI. The analysis of the agricultural impacts and conclusions drawn from said analysis form the basis of the Department's recommendations within the AIS Recommendation Section.

Agricultural operations and future productivity may be affected during construction of the Project. Impacts to agricultural lands may include but are not limited to:

- Interference with farm operation access in the ROW and adjacent areas
- Alteration of surface and subsurface drainage systems
- Impacts to grazing areas, row crops or existing fencing
- Use of prohibited substances on farms that follow organic or other sustainable management practices

Following construction, some impacts may affect agricultural operations for years. These long-term impacts may include but are not limited to:

- Yield reduction due to erosion, topsoil mixing and/or compaction
- Ponding from altered surface and subsurface drainage profiles
- Inadequate restoration resulting in alteration to original land contours

ATC has cited agricultural mitigation practices that can be found in section 7.4.4 of ATC's CPCN application (ATC, 2025a). Pending Project approval, ATC will coordinate and consult with each agricultural landowner to obtain detailed information about each agricultural operation including but not limited to locations of farm infrastructure, livestock and crops, current farm biological security practices, use of access roads, and landowner concerns (ATC, 2025a). ATC shares in the CPCN application and it will use agricultural landowner feedback to identify potential project impacts to each agricultural operation along the Project route and to the extent practicable, implement measures to mitigate impacts. Subsequent discussion includes agricultural acquisitions and recommendations for additional agricultural mitigation practices beyond what ATC cites within their CPCN application.

4.1. Landowner Rights

Wisconsin Statute § 182.017, also referred to as the "Landowner Bill of Rights", describes the rights of landowners and the requirements the utility must adhere to, when a transmission line will be constructed on private property. The transmission line applicant and contractor operating on the applicant's behalf must comply with all aspects of this statute, which covers the range of topics described below:

- Compensation
- Infrastructure Repair
- Soil Conservation & Erosion
- Debris Removal
- Consent for Weed & Brush Control
- Landowner and Utility Liabilities
- Tree Harvesting and Tree Ownership
- Interference with television & radio reception
- Right-of-way Restriction

The applicant may request landowners to waive some rights during the negotiation process, but landowners are not required to do so. The Landowner Bill of Rights is still applicable to condemned land. The Department recommends that each affected landowner review the Landowners Bill of Rights (refer to Appendix D Section V) in its entirety prior to the start of easement negotiations.

4.2. Agricultural Land Acquisitions

In spatial data provided in the AIN, the ATC reported the route alternatives for the northern aspect of Project will impact between approximately 1022.9 – 1187.5 acres of agricultural lands and up to 293 agricultural landowners; the route alternatives for the southern aspect of the project will impact between approximately 1017.8-1207.1 acres of agricultural land, depending on the selected route and affect up to 330 agricultural landowners. Proposed laydown yards are described in Section 2.3.5. *Staging Areas*.

The Department attempted to contact 246 agricultural landowners across the route alternatives for the northern and southern portions of the Project who had agricultural impacts of five or more acres. All landowners impacted by the project, including those not contacted by the Department, are listed in Appendix A, Table 1. The following section relays the feedback and comments received from stakeholders and agricultural landowners through the Department's efforts. The information obtained from these responses helped form the basis of the Department's analysis of agricultural impacts to specific agricultural landowners and agricultural landowners in general.

Agricultural tenant operators impacted by the Project may be eligible for a farm replacement payment from ATC in accordance with Wis. Stat. §32.19(4m)(b) if ATC exercises the powers of eminent domain through a jurisdictional offer to the agricultural property owner. A voluntary sale between ATC and an agricultural property owner, after a jurisdictional offer has been made, would not negate the potential for a farm replacement payment.

4.3. Summary of Landowner Concerns

In order to gather additional information about the project's impact to agricultural lands and farm operations, the Department mailed surveys, referred to as "pre-construction questionnaires", to agricultural landowners in the Project routes alternatives who had agricultural impacts of five or more acres. In total, the Department mailed 246 surveys. Agricultural landowners were given the opportunity to respond by mail or call the AIS program manager to give a verbal response. A total of 107 agricultural landowners responded, resulting in a response rate of 43.5%. A complete record of responses received for the Project can be found in Appendix C: Agricultural Landowner Comments.

When asked to select any of the concerns shown in Figure 2 about the Project, the primary concern identified by respondents was crop yield (66%), followed closely with soil productivity and health (55%) (Figure 2). Respondents were also concerned about impacts related to drainage or drain tile, erosion control, manure or fertilizer application/storage (Figure 2). Other areas of concern reported by the respondents are shown in Figure 2. The "other" category consists of the following: one landowner mentioned having a DATCP-registered private fishpond that may or may not be impacted by the project (Daniel O'Neil); one landowner noted a quarry within the project ROW (Casper Quarry LLC); two landowners noted wetlands within project ROW (Dennis and Lynn Fredrickson; Daniel and Julie Raab); two landowners noted prairie/forested wetlands within project ROW (Sargento Foods Inc.; John and Karen Wilde).

Agricultural landowners were also asked to indicate if they participated in any conservation or agricultural programming including FP agreements, FP zoning, CREP, CRP and MFL. Twenty-nine respondents indicated that they have land enrolled in FP agreements and/or FP zoning and one

landowner noted having a CRP agreement on their land. Respondents did not report participation in other conservation or agricultural program.

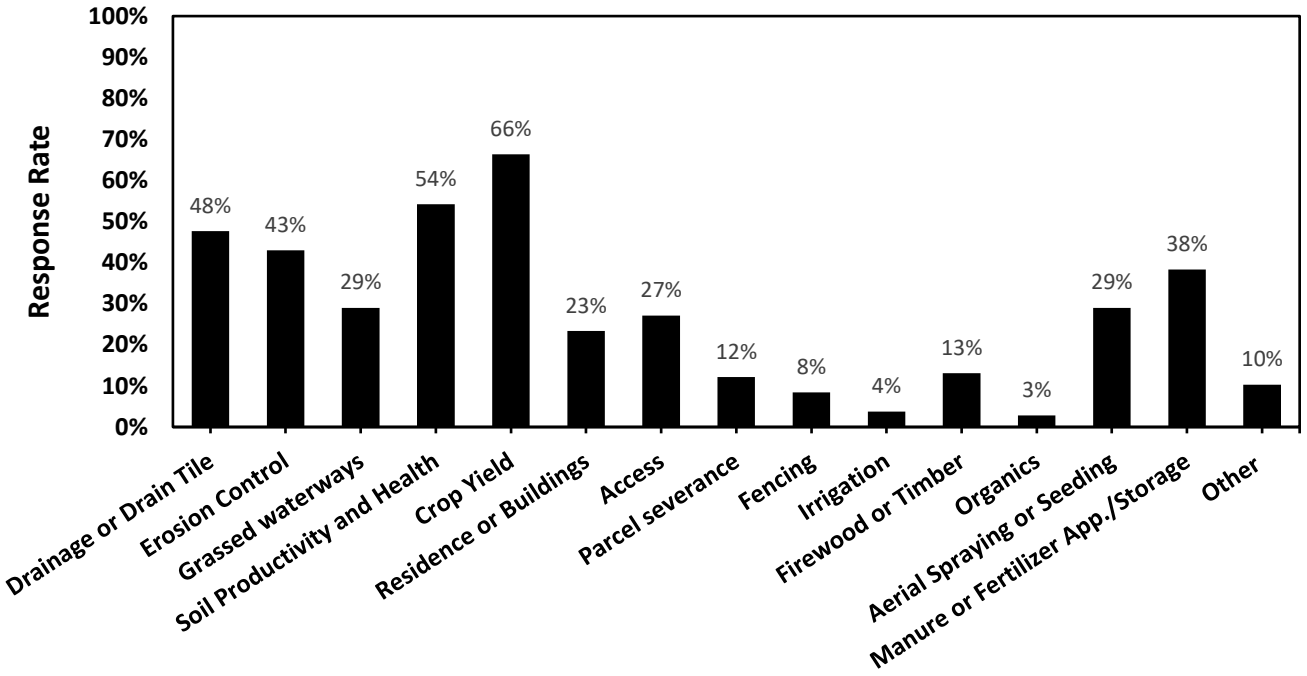

Figure 2: Landowner concerns resulting from the proposed Project.

The majority of the respondents (94 of the total 107 landowners, or 88%) reported cropland was impacted by Project ROW (Figure 3). Crop Production is defined as an "Agricultural use" under Wis. Stat. § 91.01(2) if it's conducted for the purpose of producing an income or livelihood. Of the total respondents, 16% or seventeen landowners cited that the impacted parcels also had homes and farm buildings within Project ROW, 18% or nineteen landowners cited that managed woodlands were located within project ROW. Other land use impacted within Project ROW is document in Figure 3. Forty-one respondents (38.3%) also indicated their agricultural operations possessed livestock and farm animals, including dairy cattle, replacement dairy cattle, beef cattle, pigs, sheep/goats, poultry, and bees. One landowner mentioned having a DATCP-registered private fishpond that may or may not be impacted by the project (Daniel O'Neil).

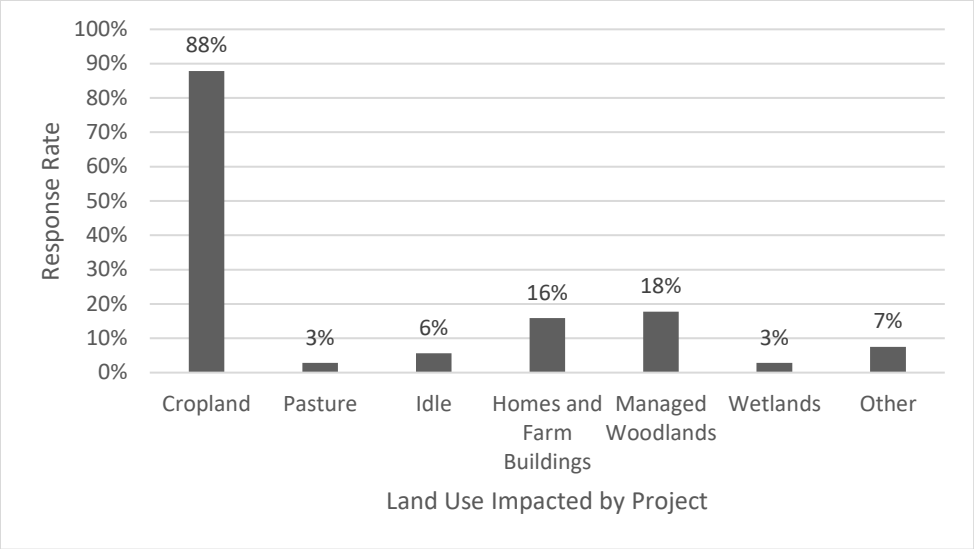

Figure 3: Land use of impacted agricultural parcels as reported by pre-construction questionnaire respondents.

4.3.1. Landowner Concern Conclusions

After review and analysis of the agricultural landowner responses obtained from the Department's pre-construction questionnaire surveys, the Department has identified the following priority areas of agricultural landowner concerns: crop yield, soil productivity and health, drainage/grassed waterways, erosion control/grassed waterways, and manure/fertilizer storage (Figure 2).

Crop yield and soil productivity and health can be impacted and/or impeded whenever there is a change in soil structure. Placement of transmission poles could lead to a decreased area of farmable land, while construction activities and movement of construction vehicles within Project ROW could impact the surrounding soil and future yield due to potential compaction. For more information related to crop yield and soil productivity and health, refer to Sections 5.3 "Cleanup and Restoration", 5.4 "Soil Health", and 5.7 "Erosion and Conservation Practices".

A large group of respondents also indicated concerns related to drainage/drainage tiles (48%) and grassed waterways (29%). To mitigate impacts to drainage systems, agricultural landowners should provide ATC with locations of drainage structures and waterways; in turn, ATC should provide additional considerations to preserve these structures, which are linked to the productivity of the impacted agricultural land. Please refer to Section 5.5 "Drainage" for additional information about drainage damage mitigation practices.

Forty-three percent of respondents were concerned about erosion control issues associated with the Project. Transmission line projects can exacerbate soil erosion on agricultural land by disturbing soil, removing vegetation, and increasing runoff. These disturbances often lead to greater soil erosion, reduced soil fertility, and potential sedimentation in waterways. Additionally, farmland drainage systems are an important tool for managing water levels especially on hydric soils and for

increasing crop yield. Please refer to Section 5.7 "Erosion and Conservation Practices" for additional information about erosion and related mitigation practices.

Beyond general soil productivity and health issues, the positioning of transmission structures within fields can greatly impact both land operators and landowners alike through disrupting agricultural practices, efficiency and improvement projects, and movement of equipment within a field. Thirteen of the landowners who responded shared concerns about the placement of the line in their field and the difficulty of navigating around transmission line poles in general. One of the landowners impacted by the Project, James Drake/Drake Dairy Inc., shared that the project, namely the North Alternate Route, could impact twenty-two of their fields that they either own or rent and impact approximately 972 total acres of farmland. In some of the fields, the transmission line almost bisects the farmland diagonally across parcels such as state ID 11759020280510. Drake noted that their farming practices uses GPS technology that designates precision for row cropping, planting and spraying of manure that would have to be redesigned if structures were added at a cost. Additionally, Drake shared that deviation from straight row could cause compaction of the soil, inconsistent fertilizing, and difficulty and safety issues while harvesting crops. Introduction of transmission structures in a farm field also decreases the amount of farmable acreage by creating small wasteland areas that farmers must avoid when navigating around structures for safety reasons – refer to section 4.4.3 Wasteland for additional information and illustration of this phenomenon. Within their questionnaire responses, two landowners (Winkels Family Farm and Steve Holland) noted that the loss of farmable land and potential for lower productivity, economically impact for both the land operator and landowner.

Two landowners (Spieker's Pumpkin Farm and Larry Laux) noted having agritourism businesses such as pumpkin farms. Agritourism, or agricultural tourism, includes agriculturally based activities that bring visitors on to a farm operation. In the case of this Project, two pick-your-own pumpkin farm operations are impacted. While any crops lost as a result of the Project are compensated for at market value (see Appendix B for discussion of the appraisal and compensation process), the income agritourism generates may go beyond the base costs of the crops, such as providing facilities for school visits, wagon rides, and more. Additionally, agritourism businesses must also consider the safety of visitors who often walk across the property to engage with hands-on activities such as picking their own pumpkins. Construction could halt these typical activities, causing a greater loss of income the land operations may depend upon as well as general safety concerns for customers that would typically walk freely amongst the fields. As planting these "pick-your-own crops" and having visitors would occur during the time of project construction, one of the businesses impacted, Larry Laux, inquired whether it was possible for ATC to avoid construction on their land between June 6 through October 31 on their land if the South Preferred Route was chosen for the safety of customers who walk on the land and to avoid impacting a large source of their revenue. The Department shared this inquiry with ATC, who responded that ATC is aware of the potential issues facing these property owners and will work to either mitigate or avoid impacts

as much as practically possible to impacted agritourism businesses or compensate for any damages through the damage claims process. ATC noted that it cannot commit or agree to this potential mitigation measure until the PSC reaches a decision regarding the CPCN application and determines a route, which will inform ATC's acquisition process and construction sequencing (David Hastings, ATWELL, Personal Communication, April 2026).

Some landowners noted unique concerns regarding the location of the transmission lines impacting residences or farm structures (Jeffrey Optiz, John and Karen Wilde Lee, Pam Schlenvogt Revocable Trust Mark McMullen, and Mark Arentsen), impairing erosion mitigation practices such as grassed waterways (James Winkel, Mary Lou Poch, and Scott Ott), causing a large loss of managed forest land (Kenneth and Erica Liss; Paula and Brad Scholz), or in the case of Magnolia Acres Farm, potentially impacting a rare, historic apple variety. In the case of Paul and Jennifer Thill, the landowners request that transmission towers be moved to the west of their property. The Department recommends siting transmission lines to the edge of fields to the degree possible to limit the loss of agricultural land around structures as well as for the safety of farmers navigating around structures, as well as using existing transmission corridors to the degree possible to limit new impacts as discussed so far. For landowners with concerns on the specific location of transmission poles within proposed ROW, the Department recommends sharing these concerns with ATC and suggesting minor adjustments to the route that would limit impact to sensitive resources, structures, and existing mitigation practices. The Department further compares impacts of each route in Section 4.5 "Prime Farmland and Soils".

Fourteen landowners also shared concerns of stray voltage from construction of the project. In particular, Jeffrey Optiz shared concerns that the proposed transmission line would be close to his cattle barns and parlor and that placement of the towers could disturb drainage tile, and that stray voltage/electromagnetic fields (EMF) could follow tile line to farmstead and associated buildings. Opitz noted having issues with stray voltage in the past and is concerned that having a major powerline close to facilities would render them unusable and that he'd wanted the lines at least a quarter of a mile away for no impact. Pete Scheuerman noted concerns that lines could impact personal health, impact the growth of plants and impact the honeybees they farm. Duane and Joan Lisowe noted the North Proposed Route is close to their buildings and on top of their feed pile for their dairy business. Additionally, the Lisowes had concerns that based on past experiences with stray voltage on the existing line that goes through their property, that new stray voltage impacts will put their dairy operation out of business. Please refer to section 5.7.5 *Stray Voltage* for additional discussion.

Many landowners also noted a concern that there would be a loss in property value with the installation of powerlines on their land, an impediment to future development upon a parcel, and if the addition of powerlines would cause part of their land to be pulled out of land conservation programs such as farmland preservation. DATCP cannot estimate the potential loss in property value a project such as a transmission line may impose upon a parcel of land as there are many

considerations involved that is beyond the scope of this analysis. DATCP recommends that agricultural landowners who wish to obtain their own appraisal on the value of their land proposed to be impacted by the project should hire an appraiser experience in agricultural lands and refer to Appendix B: Appraisal and Compensation Process for additional details. Additionally, compensation to landowners for required releases of land enrolled in a conservation easement program is typically determined as part of the appraisal and acquisition process with the project initiator under Wisconsin Statute § 32. Refer to Wisconsin Statute § 32.06 for condemnation procedure in non-transportation matters. Refer to AIS Sections 3.1 through 3.3 for a discussion of associated agricultural and general land conservation programs.

A number of landowners also shared environmental concerns regarding the project, such loss of wildlife habitat (David Aversa; Sarah Strzelcxyk; Kenneth and Erica Liss), loss of trees acting as sound barrier between a busy highway and the property (Gerhard Weinhold), impacting an archaeological site (Daniel and Julie Raab), the project impacting an quarry operations/storage (Casper Quarry LLC and Hartmann Sand and Gravel Co Inc), as well as concerns that the project would impact state natural areas or impact conservation easements. Additionally, there were residential/community concerns noted, such as the project encroaching on planned subdivisions for housing (Connie and Randolph Koehler). Environmental and residential concerns are beyond the scope of the agricultural analysis this AIS is covering. However, where these concerns were not already addressed in the project PSC docket (137-CE-221) and the EIS that the PSC and DNR are preparing as part of the docket, the concerns have been passed directly to PSC and DNR for consideration in the EIS analysis. All landowner responses are included in Appendix C: Landowner Responses.

Please refer to Section **Error! Reference source not found. Error! Reference source not fo und.** for a comparative analysis of route impacts to agricultural soils. The Department also recommends additional mitigation efforts to reduce as much potential impact as possible beyond what ATC cites for their standard practices. Please refer to Section 5 *Agricultural Impact Mitigation* for additional agricultural mitigation practices.

4.4. Severance, Access and Wasteland

The temporary and permanent easements of agricultural property required to implement any of the proposed Project alternative routes could result in agricultural parcel severance, removal of existing field access points and potentially the creation of wastelands and uneconomic remnant parcels. The circumstances (i.e. loss of access, severance, wasteland etc.) surrounding the impacts to each remnant agricultural parcel are unique, thus some agricultural parcels may remain economically viable, while others may not. The following analysis will document the potential for severance, loss of access and potential creation of wastelands and uneconomic remnant parcels for the agricultural parcels impacted by the route alternatives for the proposed Project in Calumet, Fond du Lac, Manitowoc, Ozaukee, Sheboygan, and Washington, WI.

4.4.1. Severance

As proposed, the Project will temporarily and/or permanently sever agricultural parcels to accommodate the construction of the transmission line. Severance may be a physical barrier such as a temporary access road or a non-physical barrier such as permanent land use restrictions. Imposing land use restrictions as part of a transmission line easement ROW may still allow an agricultural landowner to access lands. However, barring the growth of trees or other woody plants as part of an easement may prevent the continuation of an existing agricultural land use, such as managed forestlands. Regardless of the means, severing an agricultural parcel effectively splits the existing parcel into two or more smaller parcels. Severing an agricultural parcel may also remove existing access points, create agricultural wastelands or uneconomic remnant parcels, and even divide the operation of a farm. Under Wisconsin's Eminent Domain Statute, compensation for damages resulting from severance is described in Wis. Stat. § 32.09(6).

Within AIN materials and the CPCN application, ATC discusses that the proposed Project was designed to follow existing roads and/or utility corridors and is not aware of any locations where the proposed project would sever farm parcels or prevent continued access or cattle passes (DATCP, 2026). Refer to Section 2.4 for a discussion of new versus existing ROW that will be used for the Project.

Landowners are encouraged to review Section 7.4.4 *Mitigation of Construction Impacts – Agricultural Lands* in the project CPCN application (REF # 567811) for specific details regarding mitigating or minimizing construction impacts in and around agricultural lands prior to easement negotiation and construction.

Where the proposed Project impacts MFL lands, the Department recommends the ATC utilize the mitigation efforts described in Section 5.7.4 "Managed Forest Law, Trees and Other Woody Vegetation" to mitigate impacts to managed forests and preserve continuous tracks of managed forests where possible.

4.4.2. Access

As proposed, the Project has the potential to temporarily limit agricultural field access and limit access to agricultural operations during construction. When agricultural lands and operations lose access, even temporarily, agricultural productivity may be impacted if crops, livestock or other agricultural products cannot be tended too. Lost access may also directly result in lost income if a field cannot be planted or harvested, or if an agricultural operation as a whole is hindered.

Site-specific access limitations will be specific to temporary and permanent easements utilized for laydown yards, staging areas, off-ROW access roads and the transmission line ROW. Construction mitigation efforts for each farm will vary according to land use activities of the farm operator, type of farm operation, soil conditions, extent of construction activities on the parcel or farm operation, and feasibility to avoid areas of concern. Landowners and farm operators with concerns related to

access on their farm operation should discuss them with the ATC during easement negotiations and in subsequent communications.

4.4.3. Wasteland

Acquisitions and easements that impact farmland frequently create small remnant fields that may be difficult to access, are irregularly shaped, or are no longer able to produce the pre-existing agricultural crop (e.g. timber). These small irregularly shaped remnant fields may also contain numerous obstacles, such as transmission line poles, that can make it difficult for agricultural equipment to navigate and reduce the amount of tillable acres. This in turn reduces agricultural productivity, decreases the economic viability of the land and increases the likelihood of creating undeveloped land (Wis. Stat. § 70.32(2)(a)(5)) or what is commonly referred to as wasteland as shown in Figure 4 A and B. Compensation for the reduction in the value of parcels that are small and/or irregularly shaped and the potential creation of uneconomic remnant parcels according to Wisconsin Statute § 32.06(3m) should be addressed in the appraisal of each affected parcel.

4.4.3.1. Wasteland

By the nature of transmission line projects, both the northern and southern aspects of the Project have the potential to permanently create small amounts of agricultural wastelands in the immediate area surrounding each transmission line pole (Figure 4 A and B). Thirteen agricultural landowners and tenants (12% of respondents) reported to the Department concerns about driving farming equipment around transmission towers and the lost productivity and revenue that would result from altering planting patterns around the towers (Appendix C: "Agricultural Landowner Comments"), which elevates the cause for concern around the creation of tower induced wastelands. To mitigate the impacts of wasteland creation, the Department recommends that design practices be applied that prioritize edge of field siting for transmission structures in agricultural areas to minimize farmland conversion.

Where the transmission line would require the deforestation of managed forestlands and prevents further growth of timber, the entirety of Project ROW within an MFL parcel may become wasteland if that land does not have a suitable secondary agricultural purpose.

To mitigate the potential to create wastelands of MFL land, the Department recommends that the PSC select a route that avoids the fragmentation of major blocks of forest and prioritize the preservation of windbreaks and MFL lands. Furthermore, the Department recommends the ATC utilize the mitigation efforts described in Section 5.7.4 "Managed Forest Law, Trees and Other Woody Vegetation" to mitigate impacts to managed forests and preserve continuous tracks of managed forests where possible.

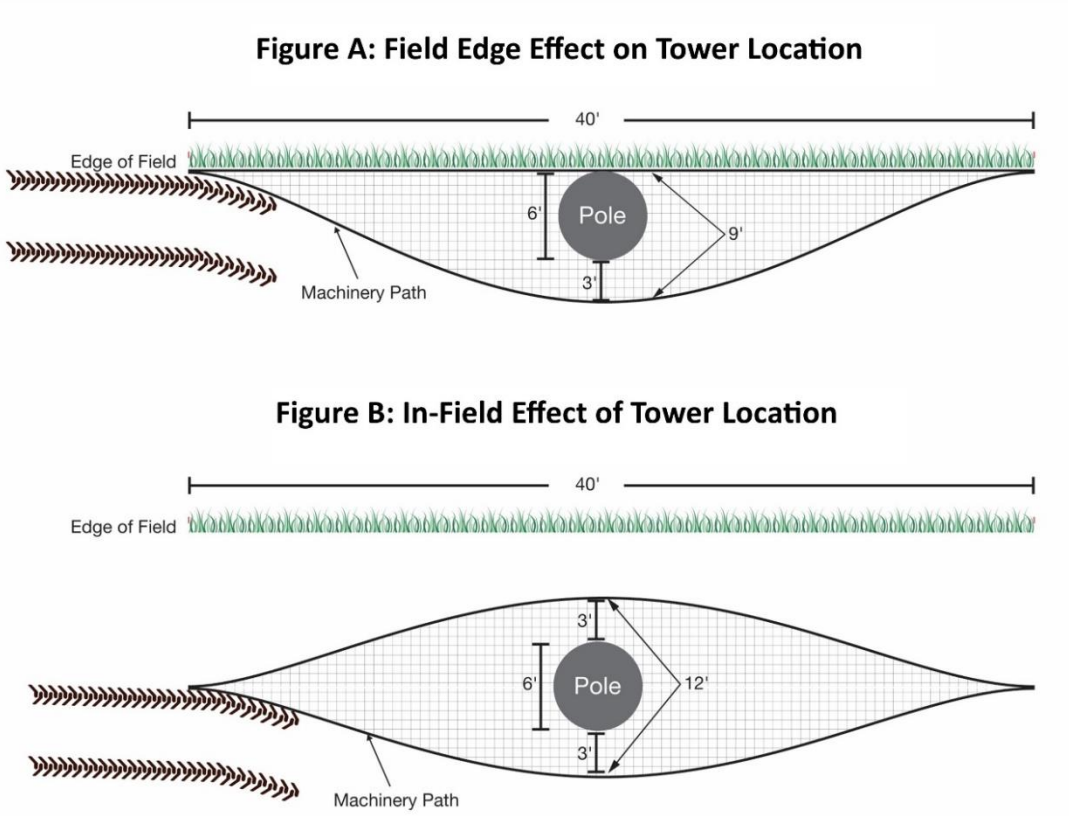

Figure 4 A and B: Examples of agricultural wastelands created by altering the pathway of agricultural machinery to navigate around transmission line towers along a field edge (Figure A) and within a field (Figure B).

4.4.3.2. Uneconomic Remnant Fields

Uneconomic remnant is defined in Wis. Stat. § 32.06(3m)(a) to mean "the property remaining after a partial taking of property, if the property remaining is of such size, shape, or condition as to be of little value or of substantially impaired economic viability. Under this provision, if the acquisition of only part of a property for the benefit of the project would leave the landowner with an uneconomic remnant, a condemnor shall offer to acquire the remnant concurrently.

Landowners or operators who are concerned about the creation of a physical or financial remnant that is negligible in value as a result of acquisition of any permanent easement affecting their farm operation should share information regarding impaired use or lost income or value in consultations or easement negotiations with the ATC.

To mitigate the potential creation of uneconomic remnant fields, if the PSC approves the Project the Department recommends the PSC consider selecting a route that minimizes the creation of new ROW and maximizes total shared ROW.

If the proposed Project is approved, narrow tracks of MFL forestlands would no longer be permitted to grow timber, yet the impacted land may have no suitable alternative agricultural use as they are

part of larger blocks of MFL land. In effect, the land use restrictions on the impacted MFL land could turn the remnant field into uneconomic remnants. To mitigate the potential creation of uneconomic remnant fields, if the PSC approves the Project the Department recommends the PSC consider selecting a route or building a route from individual segments that share existing ROW to the greatest extent possible in order to mitigate impacts to MFL lands and the potential creation of uneconomic remnant fields.

4.5. Prime Farmland and Soils Analysis by Route

In spatial data provided in the AIN and not accounting for the uprate modifications, the northern aspect of Project will impact between approximately 1022.9–1187.5 acres of agricultural lands and the southern aspect of the project will impact between approximately 1017.8-1207.1 acres of agricultural land, depending on the selected route.

Impacts to prime farmland and soils measured in this analysis reflect the Project's cumulative impact and does not necessarily differentiate between permanent or temporary impacts to an agricultural operation. This soils analysis includes lands to be used for transmission line route alternatives' ROW, work areas, laydown yards, substations, and off-ROW access roads. The soils impacted by the proposed Project were cataloged and analyzed by farmland classification, for each route alternative, using the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service prime farmland soils GIS layer. Farmland soil classifications impacted by the Project include prime farmland, prime farmland if drained, farmland of statewide importance or farmland of local importance (tables 4, 5, and 6). Prime farmland is designated by the USDA according to section 622.3 of the National Soil Survey Handbook (USDA, 2017b) and is based on the ability of the land and soil to produce crops. Definitions of prime farmland, prime farmland if drained and farmlands of statewide/local importance are provided under tables 4, 5, and 6. The soil texture of agricultural soils impacted by the Project was analyzed, in general terms, across the project ROW.

Northern Routes Soils Analysis

If selected, the North Proposed Route (including the North Common Route, transmission line ROW, work areas, laydown yards, substations, and off-ROW access roads) will impact up to 1187.5 acres of agricultural soils (refer to Table 5). Across impacted parcels in the Northern Proposed Route, 93% hold some level of Federal or State priority designation, with 7% classed as not prime farmland. An estimated 553.42 acres of agricultural lands within the route's transmission line ROW, work areas, laydown yards, substations, and off-ROW access roads are known to be hydric or contain hydric inclusions. Refer to Section 5.5.1 "Drainage Tiles" for additional discussion of hydric soils.

If selected, the North Alternate Route (including the North Common Route, transmission line ROW, work areas, laydown yards, substations, and off-ROW access roads) will impact up to 1022.9 acres of agricultural soils. Across impacted parcels in the North Alternate Route, 86% hold some level of Federal or State priority designation, while 14% are classed as not prime farmland. An estimated 381.93 acres of agricultural lands within the route's transmission line ROW, work areas, laydown yards, substations, and off-ROW access roads are known to be hydric or contain hydric inclusions.

Across the impacted agricultural parcels in the northern project routes, the soils primarily consist of loam and silt loam textured soils of various soil series (Table 5). Loam and silt loam soils are medium-textured soils (Cornell, 2017) with good soil structure, possess an ideal ability to hold onto water without becoming excessively wet and are usually well suited for crop production (UW-Extension, 2005). Comparing the northern routes impacts, the acreage of potential impacts to prime farmland posed by the Northern Proposed Route (1187.5 acres) have 1.16 times more potential impacts posted to prime farmland than the Northern Alternate Route proposes (1022.9 acres). When evaluating the cumulative impacts to all farmlands with some designation of federal and state importance, the Northern Proposed Route impacts 1.26 times the potential impacts to prime or important farmland (1108.7 acres) compared to the Northern Alternate Route (880.3 acres). However, the majority of the Northern Proposed Route is proposed to be sited along existing infrastructure and ROW. As noted in Section 2.4 Project Right-of-Way, 61% of the North Proposed Route utilizes shared ROW, while only 38% of the North Alternate Route consists of shared ROW.

This soils analysis shows that both of the northern Project routes will impact or remove prime farmland and high-quality soils. In general, the Department recommends selecting a route that shares existing ROW to the greatest extent possible to mitigate new or expanded impacts to prime farmland and agricultural soils.

Comparing the northern routes, the acres of prime farmland impacted across both are fairly similar. However, as the North Proposed Route utilizes almost double the amount of existing ROW. Expansion of existing ROW is generally considered to have less impact on the surrounding area than creating ROW corridors on Greenland sites, especially for utilization of existing transmission corridors in agricultural fields where agricultural practices have adapted to working around transmission lines.

The Department also considers the proposed project's impact on agricultural conservation programs as reviewed in Section 3: "Agricultural Setting":

- The North Proposed Route impacts 1,609.19 acres of land under FP planning, the North Alternate Route impacts 1,509.94 acres under FP planning.
- The Hilbert Ag Land on Track AEA has approximately 26.47 acres within the Project's North Proposed Route and 179.28 acres within the Project's North Alternate route. The Project's

North Alternate Route will also encroach upon two effective FP agreements within the Hilbert Ag Land on Track AEA.

- Both of the Northern Routes may encroach upon two effective CREP agreements in Manitowoc County.
- Review of MFL enrolled land within the project corridor indicated that the Project's North Proposed Route will impact approximately 16.65 acres of MFL enrolled land, including three parcels where the impacted acres are greater than 10% of the parcel's total, meaning there is a greater potential that they no longer meet the 80% eligibility requirement to remain enrolled in the MFL program. The Project's North Alternate route will impact approximately 33.39 acres of MFL enrolled land, including four parcels where the impacted acres are greater than 10% of the parcel's total, meaning they may no longer meet the 80% eligibility requirement to remain enrolled in the MFL program.

Within the lens of mitigating agricultural impacts to the degree possible, the Department recommends that the PSC consider approving the North Proposed Route due to its significantly greater use of existing ROW corridors and less overall impact to agricultural conservation programming such as AEA and Farmland Preservation Plans and MFL agreements.

Table 4: Northern Route Soils Analysis Table

Soil Texture	**Prime Farmland*** (acre)	**Prime Farmland if Drained◊** (acre)	**Farmland of Statewide Importance‡** (acre)	**Not Prime Farmland◊** (acre)	**Total** (acre)
North Common Route					
Loam	0.8	0.0	0.6	2.0	3.5
Peat	0.0	0.0	2.1	0.0	2.1
Silt Loam	52.3	171.1	13.4	21.6	258.3
Silty Clay Loam	0.0	1.5	0.0	0.0	1.5
				North Common Route Total	265.4
North Proposed Route					
Loam	125.5	0.0	34.0	5.8	165.4
Muck	0.0	0.0	6.8	0.0	6.8
Other, Hydric or Parent Material	0.0	13.4	0.0	3.8	17.1
Peat	0.0	0.0	2.4	0.0	2.4
Sandy Loam	0.0	1.7	0.0	1.7	3.4
Silt Loam	322.4	243.7	24.6	26.0	616.7
Silty Clay Loam	0.0	53.5	0.0	0.0	53.5
				North Proposed Route Total	865.2

North Alternate Route					
Loam	102.6	4.4	40.8	31.4	179.1
Loamy Sand	0.0	0.0	3.8	0.0	3.8
Muck	0.0	0.0	29.4	2.1	31.6
Other, Gravel or Hydrc or Parent Material or Water	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.5	3.5
Peat	0.0	0.0	2.5	2.6	5.1
Sandy Loam	3.3	5.3	0.5	46.6	55.6
Silt Loam	218.9	138.6	30.8	14.9	403.1
Silt Clay Loam	0.0	18.9	0.0	0.0	18.9
				North Alternate Route Total	700.6
North Laydown Yards					
Loam	0.9	0.0	1.6	0.4	3.0
Other, Gravel/Quarry	0.0	0.0	0.0	16.6	16.6
Sandy Loam	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.8	1.2
Silt Loam	17.8	0.4	0.2	0.0	18.3
Silty Clay Loam	14.6	2.3	1.0	0.0	17.8
				North Laydown Yards Total	56.9

*__Prime farmland__ is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops, and may be utilized for cropland, pastureland, rangeland, forest land, or other lands excluding urban built-up land or water. It has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce economically sustained high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods, including water management.

◊__Prime farmland if drained__, indicates that if farmland is drained it would meet prime farmland criteria.

ŦFarmlands of statewide importance are set by state agency(s). Generally, these farmlands are nearly prime farmland and economically produce high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods. Some may produce yields high as prime farmlands under proper conditions.

Φ__Not Prime farmland__, indicates farmland is neither prime farmland nor of designated importance.

Definitions: Parent Material is the mineral or organic matter from which a soil forms.

Southern Routes Soils Analysis

If selected, the South Proposed Route (including the South Common Route, transmission line ROW, work areas, laydown yards, substations, and off-ROW access roads) will impact up to 1207.08 acres of agricultural soils. Across impacted parcels in the South Proposed Route, 92% hold some level of Federal or State priority designation, with 8% classed as not prime farmland (refer to Table 6 below). An estimated 649.55 acres of agricultural lands within the route's distribution line ROW, transmission line ROW, work areas, laydown yards, substations, and off ROW access roads are known to be hydric or contain hydric inclusions.

The South Proposed Route additionally has a Contingent Route Option proposed that could replace two of its segments, segments S17-S18, with segment S22A-E. Segments S17-S18 and Segments S22A-E are directly compared below:

- As proposed, segments S17-S18 will impact 91.8 acres of agricultural land. Of these acres, 74% hold some level of Federal or State priority designation, with 26.3% classed as not prime farmland (refer to Table 6). As noted in Section 2.4 Project Right-of-Way, the South Proposed Route with segments S17-18 consists of 69% shared ROW.
- The South Contingent Route, Segments S22A-E, will impact 77.5 acres of agricultural land as proposed. Of these acres, 85% hold some level of Federal or State priority designation, with 15% classed as not prime farmland (refer to Table 6). As noted in Section 2.4 Project Right-of-Way, the South Proposed Route with segments S22A-E consists of 70% shared ROW.

If selected, the South Alternate Route (including the South Common Route, distribution line ROW, transmission line ROW, work areas, laydown yards, substations, and off-ROW access roads) will impact up to 1017.8 acres of agricultural soils. Across impacted parcels in in the South Alternate Route, 88% hold some level of Federal or State priority designation, with 12% classed as not prime farmland. An estimated 588.86 acres of agricultural lands within the route's transmission line ROW, work areas, laydown yards, substations, and off-ROW access roads are known to be hydric or contain hydric inclusions. As noted in Section 2.4 Project Right-of-Way, 62% of the North Proposed Route utilizes shared ROW.

Across the impacted agricultural parcels in the southern project routes, the soils primarily consist of loam and silt loam textured soils of various soil series (Table 6). Loam and silt loam soils are medium-textured soils (Cornell, 2017) with good soil structure, possess an ideal ability to hold onto water without becoming excessively wet and are usually well suited for crop production (UW-Extension, 2005). Comparing the southern route alternatives' impacts, the Southern Proposed Route (1207.1 acres) impacts 1.18 times more agricultural land than the Southern Alternate Route (1017.8 acres). When evaluating the cumulative impacts to all farmlands with some designation of Federal and State importance, the Southern Proposed Route impacts 1.23 times the potential impacts to prime or important farmland (1106.5 acres) compared to the Southern Alternate Route (900.8 acres). Taking into consideration the use of existing corridors, a majority of both the Southern Proposed Route (69-70%) and the Southern Alternate Route (62%) are proposed to be sited along existing infrastructure and ROW.

This soils analysis shows that both of the southern project routes will impact or remove prime farmland and high-quality soils. In general, the Department recommends selecting a route that shares existing ROW to the greatest extent possible to mitigate new or expanded impacts to prime farmland and agricultural soils and/or mitigates loss of agricultural land to the degree possible.

The Department also considers the proposed project's impact on conservation programs as described and reviewed in Section 3: *Agricultural Setting*:

- The South Proposed Route impacts 633.99 acres of land under FP planning, the South Alternate impacts 585.81 acres under FP planning.
- The Project's South Proposed Route may encroach upon one perpetual easement in Washington County. The Project's proposed southern Alternate Route may encroach upon one CREP agreement in Sheboygan County.
- A review of the Department's Drainage Program database indicates that each of the Project's proposed southern routes cross two active drainage districts in Ozaukee County: the Mequon # 2 District #4602 and the Mequon # 8 District #4608.
- The Project's South Proposed Route will impact approximately 22.68 acres of MFL enrolled land, including four parcels where the impacted acres are greater than 10% of the parcel's total, meaning they may no longer meet the 80% eligibility requirement to remain enrolled in the MFL program. The Project's South Alternate Route will impact approximately 11.68 acres of MFL enrolled land, including one parcel where the impacted acres are greater than 10% of the parcel's total, meaning they may no longer meet the 80% eligibility requirement to remain enrolled in the MFL program.

Within the lens of mitigating agricultural impacts to the degree possible, the Department recommends that the PSC consider approving the South Alternate Route due to its lower impact to prime agricultural land and hydric soils as well as less overall impact to agricultural conservation programming such as Farmland Preservation Planning and MFL agreements.

Table 5: Southern Routes Soils Analysis Table

Soil Texture	Prime Farmland* (acre)	Prime Farmland if Drained◊ (acre)	Farmland of Statewide Importance₸ (acre)	Not Prime Farmland⌽ (acre)	Total (acre)
South Common Route					
Loam	5.8	0.0	12.4	2.2	20.5
Muck	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.6	4.6
Other, Gravel, Landfill or Parent Material	0.0	1.4	0.0	2.3	3.8
Peat	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.8	1.8
Sandy Loam	1.6	0.0	1.3	0.1	3.0
Silt Loam	187.4	22.2	0.0	2.2	211.9
Silty Clay	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.4	2.4
Silty Clay Loam	13.6	16.0	30.4	0.0	60.0
				South Common Route Total	307.9
South Proposed Route					
Loam	12.0	1.5	30.7	29.1	73.3
Loamy Sand	0.0	0.0	3.4	0.9	4.3
Muck	0.0	0.0	19.7	0.1	19.8
Other, Gravel, Water or Parent Material	0.0	11.4	3.1	0.0	14.5
Peat	0.0	0.0	16.1	7.1	23.2
Sandy Loam	1.3	4.9	30.6	0.4	37.1
Silt Loam	361.9	126.2	77.8	19.9	585.9
Silty Clay	0.0	0.0	2.1	0.0	2.1
Silty Clay Loam	10.4	6.7	6.2	0.0	23.3
				South Proposed Route Total	783.5
South Alternate Route					
Clay Loam	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.1	1.1
Loam	9.4	5.3	10.9	18.9	44.6
Loamy Sand	0.0	0.0	2.2	0.6	2.9
Muck	0.0	0.0	9.2	1.7	10.9
Other, Parent Material	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.3	8.3
Peat	0.0	0.0	8.1	15.1	23.2
Sandy Loam	7.1	0.0	0.0	0.7	7.9
Silt Loam	263.3	56.5	38.7	13.1	371.5
Silty Clay	0.0	0.0	1.6	13.2	14.8
Silty Clay Loam	57.1	28.6	22.4	1.2	109.3
				South Alternate Route Total	594.2

South Laydown Yards					
Loam	0.0	0.0	3.5	6.5	10.0
Other, Gravel or Water	0.0	0.0	0.0	11.0	11.0
Peat	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.3
Sandy Loam	0.0	0.0	7.6	0.0	7.6
Silt Loam	36.8	3.4	25.9	2.0	68.1
Silty Clay	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.7	7.7
Silty Clay Loam	9.9	0.7	0.4	0.0	11.0
				South Laydown Yard Route Total	115.7

*__Prime farmland__ is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops, and may be utilized for cropland, pastureland, rangeland, forest land, or other lands excluding urban built-up land or water. It has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce economically sustained high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods, including water management.
◊__Prime farmland if drained__, indicates that if farmland is drained it would meet prime farmland criteria.
ŦFarmlands of statewide importance are set by state agency(s). Generally, these farmlands are nearly prime farmland and economically produce high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods. Some may produce yields high as prime farmlands under proper conditions.

Φ__Not Prime farmland__, indicates farmland is neither prime farmland nor of designated importance.

Definitions: Parent Material is the mineral or organic matter from which a soil forms.

Table 6: Soils Analysis comparing South Contingent Route with South Proposed Route Segments S17 and S18.

South Contingent Route Segments S22A-E					
Loam	4.7	0.0	0.1	3.4	8.2
Peat	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.3
Sandy Loam	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.2
Silt Loam	46.8	6.4	6.3	5.9	65.5
Silty Clay	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.1	2.1
Silty Clay Loam	1.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	1.3
				South Contingent Route	77.5
South Proposed Route Segments S17 and S18					
Loam	11.1	0.0	2.0	11.8	24.8
Other, Gravel or Water	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.6	1.6
Peat	0.0	0.0	8.7	2.0	10.7
Sandy Loam	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.7	5.7
Silt Loam	31.0	2.1	5.6	1.1	39.8
Silty Clay	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.1	2.1
Silty Clay Loam	7.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.1
				South Proposed Route Segments S17 and S18 Total	91.8

*__Prime farmland__ is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops, and may be utilized for cropland, pastureland, rangeland, forest land, or other lands excluding urban built-up land or water. It has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce economically sustained high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods, including water management.
◊__Prime farmland if drained__, indicates that if farmland is drained it would meet prime farmland criteria.
ŦFarmlands of statewide importance are set by state agency(s). Generally, these farmlands are nearly prime farmland and economically produce high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods. Some may produce yields high as prime farmlands under proper conditions.
Φ__Not Prime farmland__, indicates farmland is neither prime farmland nor of designated importance.

5. AGRICULTURAL IMPACT MITIGATION

ATC has indicated within their CPCN application and AIN, pending Project approval, they will coordinate and consult with each agricultural landowner to obtain detailed information about each agricultural operation including but not limited to locations of farm infrastructure, animals and crops, current farm biological security practices, use of off-ROW access roads, and landowner concerns. ATC will use agricultural landowner feedback to identify potential project impacts to each agricultural operation along the Project route and to the extent practicable, implement measures to mitigate impacts (ATC, 2026; DATCP, 2026). Additionally, ATC prepared a Restoration and Post-Construction Monitoring Plan as part of their CPCN application, Appendix F, Exhibit 1 to the PSC (REF #: 572208).

The Department recommends that landowners who are concerned about potential impacts to their agricultural land should keep records of the conditions of the ROW before, during, and after construction. Records could include keeping crop yield records, beginning once the ROW is known, and photographs taken every season. These measures can help a landowner negotiate for compensation, should damages caused by Project occur.

5.1. Environmental Impact Monitor (IEM), Agricultural Inspector (AI), and Independent Agricultural Monitor (IAM)

When a project affects environmental and agricultural resources, an environmental and/or agricultural monitor or inspector or equivalent may need to be hired. Environmental Inspectors (EIs) and Independent Environmental Monitors (IEMs) monitor project construction activities and report on a wide range of environmental issues such as construction impacts to wetlands, waterways, protected species, archaeological sites, state and federal properties, and erosion control. When hired, an IEM works on behalf of the regulatory agency as opposed to the utility, but salary and expenses of the IEM are paid by the utility. The IEM is also responsible for reporting incidents and has the power to stop project work if construction activities would violate permits, approvals, PSC order conditions, or agreement with a state regulatory agency.

An Agricultural Inspector (AI) or Independent Agricultural monitor (IAM) operates similarly to their environmental counterparts but monitor project construction and restoration activities and report on a wide range of agricultural issues including but not limited to construction impacts to soil health, soil erosion, crop damage, agricultural operations, irrigation, and impacts to surface and subsurface drainage. Each will also verify if the ATC is complying with any agricultural best management practices or conditions established by the ATC or required by a regulatory agency. The main difference between an AI and an IAM is that an IAM works on behalf of the regulatory agency, as opposed to the utility, but salary and expenses of the IAM are paid by the utility.

IEMs and IAMs allow agencies involved with the Project such as the PSC, DNR, and DATCP to obtain a current and consistent record of construction activities and concerns as well as environmental and agricultural protection measures being implemented. IEMs and IAMs can act as representatives of these agencies in the field and proactively present or minimize potential impacts with timely consultation from agencies. The PSC has the authority to require the hiring of an IEM or IAM as part of an order point for approval of a project and has done so for large-scale projects and/or for projects that propose to impact sensitive environmental and agricultural resources. Past PSC-regulated projects that DATCP has been involved with and has recommended the use of an IEM and/or an IAM include: Cardinal-Hickory Creek Project (DATCP #3873; PSC Docket # 5-CE-146); the Ashland-Ironwood Transmission Project (DATCP #4424; 4220-CE-183); Alma-Blair Transmission Project (DATCP #4594; PSC Docket #1515-CE-103); Grid Forward (DATCP #4605; PSC Docket 5-CE-157).

The construction of the Project has the potential to cause various environmental and agricultural impacts. ATC stated within the AIN that they have hired an Agricultural Specialist (AS) to work with farmers now and through negotiations, construction and restoration (DATCP, 2026a). The AS will work with farmers through negotiations, construction, and restoration, as week as coordinate with agricultural landowners to settle damage claims. Additionally, ATC noted in their restoration and post-construction plan that they will hire an experienced Environmental Monitor (EM) that will oversee ATC and contractor activities for the project. The EM will be onsite during clearing, construction and restoration phases to verify compliance with issued permits, authorizations, and environmental plans associated with the Project (ATC, 2025b).

Given the extended linear length of the Project (between 38.8-52.7 miles long for the North Scope and between 48.8-51.5 miles long for the South Scope) and the magnitude of easements and acquisitions proposed across Calumet, Fond du Lac, Manitowoc, Ozaukee, Sheboygan, and Washington counties, there is the potential for a range of environmental and agricultural impacts. As outlined in the draft EIS prepared by PSC and DNR, the project poses various impacts to soil, wetlands, woodlands, wildlife, archaeological sites, stream crossings, surface water quality and more (PSC, 2026). When combining both the northern and southern scopes, the total project will require between approximately 2040.7-2,394.6 acres of agricultural land (not including existing transmission line modifications). Associated agricultural impacts may include but are not limited to crop damage, soil compaction, mixing of topsoil, soil erosion, impacts to surface and subsurface drainage, impacts to irrigation systems and stray voltage.

If approved by the PSC, the Department recommends the PSC consider requiring ATC to hire an IEM and an IAM or combine the roles of the IEM and IAM into one position under the IEM title, but when working in the capacity as the IAM they do not have stop work authority. The IEM/IAM should be hired in consultation with and the approval of the PSC, DATCP, and DNR and all reports generated by IEM should be shared with the PSC, DATCP, and DNR.

5.2. Agricultural Mitigation Measures

ATC proposes mitigation and best management practices in agricultural areas in Section 7.4 of their CPCN application narrative and in their Restoration and Post-Construction Monitoring Plan (ATC, 2025a; ATC, 2026). ATC denotes that there are likely to be temporary impacts to agricultural land during construction that may include crop loss, soil compaction and damages to tile drainage patterns and/or to drainage tiles. Additionally, transmission structures that are placed in existing cropland may result in permanent impacts that will impact crop production in the immediate surrounding area, as well as requiring adjustment to large farm equipment and maneuverability around structures, and potential fencing impacts.

ATC notes that each agricultural landowner will be consulted regarding farm structures, locations of farm animals and crops, current farm biological security practices, landowner concerns, and use of access routes. Potential impacts to each farm property along the route will be identified and, where practicable, construction impact minimization measures may be implemented (ATC, 2025a). Site-specific practices will vary according to the activities of the landowner/farm operator, the type of agricultural operation, the susceptibility of site-specific soils to compaction, the construction activities occurring on the parcel, and the ability to avoid areas of potential concern.

At the time of developing this AIS, ATC does not have an Agricultural Impact Mitigation plan for this Project. ATC plans to minimize Project impacts to agricultural lands such as the loss of tillable land through careful consideration of agricultural impacts through consideration of routing alignment and individual structure siting, such as routing along public road ROW so structures are located along the edges of land or routing along existing transmission line ROW (ATC, 2025a). ATC plans to mitigate short-term construction-related impacts through compensation to producers and restoring agricultural lands to the extent practicable, incorporating mitigation techniques such as topsoil replacement and deep tilling where appropriate.

Subsequent discussion includes agricultural acquisitions and recommended additional agricultural mitigation practices beyond what ATC has proposed within their CPCN application narrative.

5.3. Cleanup and Restoration

In accordance with Wis. Stat. § 182.017(7)(c), following the completion of construction activities, ATC will restore the area to preconstruction conditions. In general, cleanup and restoration activities include the removal of construction mats, temporary clear span bridges, and any other material or debris (including stones and rocks) from the ROW. Stockpiled topsoils and subsoils removed during construction are returned, in the proper order, and graded to match the existing topography and slopes. All ruts and depressions are restored and new topsoil may be brought in where topsoil has been lost or seriously mixed with subsoils. Agricultural soils are also monitored for compaction and when required undergo decompaction efforts to return the soil structure to its original condition. In areas where crops are not present – such as roadsides, pastures, old fields or

upland woods – native seed mixes (or other appropriate seed mixes approved by the landowner) may be sown.

Under Wis. Stat. § 182.017(7)(c), if drainage tiles, fencing or other agricultural features are damaged during construction, ATC is responsible for repairing and/or replacing the damaged feature. ATC is also responsible for paying for any crop damages caused by construction or maintenance of the transmission line. ATC is responsible for repairing and/or replacing the damaged feature. Settling compaction claims will depend on whether the farm operator repairs the compaction or if the project initiator construction crews repair the compaction. Under this same statute, ATC is also responsible for paying for any crop damages caused by construction or maintenance of the transmission line. Yield losses would be supplied by the farm operator and agreed to in a damage report once construction commences (DATCP, 2026a). ATC addresses potential construction impacts, their best management practices and resulting restoration practices in Section 5.5.2 *Construction Impacts by Phase* of the PSC CPCN application (ATC, 2025a).

ATC uses the USDA Custom Rate Guide as a guideline for crop damage payments and yields are confirmed by the National Agricultural Statistics Service web site which gives the average yield by crop by county. Crop damages and impacted areas are measured using GPS by the contractor. ATC will hire an Agricultural Specialist to assist and coordinate with agricultural landowners to settle damage claims (ATC, 2025a; DATCP, 2026a). Agricultural landowners should work with ATC and the Agricultural Specialist to determine the most appropriate way to determine the value of the crop within the ROW during the year of construction, as well as future crop value. The Department acknowledges the potential of lingering post-construction yield reductions that may take multiple years to recover.

For any dairy farm or livestock operation impacted by the removal of feed supply within the construction workspace, the Department recommends that agricultural landowners request compensation for increased costs associated with the purchase of forage. Other compensation considerations could include requesting repayment for the cost of boarding an animal off-farm.

The Department recommends that ATC continue to monitor the ROW for soil erosion and maintain erosion control practices until there is sufficient vegetative growth in the ROW to mitigate soil erosion. Only after restoration activities are complete and vegetation has re-established within the ROW, should temporary restoration erosion control devices, not designed to be left in place, be removed. ATC noted within the CPCN application that, pending PSC approval of the Project, the project initiator will apply and obtain a Wisconsin Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (WPDES) stormwater permit from the DNR, which will establish erosion and stormwater control requirements for the project (ATC, 2025a).

5.4. Soil Health

Soil structure, texture, organic matter and microorganisms are all important factors that influence soil health (Wolkowski and Lowery, 2008). Project construction activities with the potential to impact soil health include excavation and the movement of heavy equipment through the Project ROW that may compact soil. UW-Extension report A3367 states that heavy equipment with axle loads that exceed 10 tons increases the risk of soil compaction into subsoil layers that cannot be removed by conventional tillage (Wolkowski and Lowery, 2008). This construction-caused soil compaction may also damage drain tiles leading to ponded water where none existed prior to construction. Construction activities may also disrupt and/or mix soil profiles within the Project ROW, as well as the surrounding area. Research has also shown that construction related impacts (e.g. equipment axle weight, use of excavation, intermixing of soil layer etc.) have the potential to negatively impact crop yields for up to a decade within the ROW depending on the type and severity of the construction impacts (Culley and Dow, 1988; Shi et al., 2014).

5.4.1. De-icing and Traction Control

Construction crews commonly apply various products to improve vehicle traction across temporary road matting within the construction ROW to control for wet, slippery, or icy conditions. The application of sodium chloride (e.g. rock salt), as a de-icing agent, to temporary road matting within the construction ROW can lead to sodium chloride rich runoff that has potentially detrimental impacts to the health of nearby soils, ecosystems and surface waters (Richburg, 2001; Kelly et al., 2008; Corsi et al., 2010). Alternative de-icing products, which are less damaging to the health of soil, vegetation and ecosystems as compared to sodium chloride, do exist. For example, county highway departments commonly apply sand or small lime chips (1/8" to 3/16" diameter), or a combination of the two as an alternative to sodium chloride, especially when surface temperatures are colder than 15°F when sodium chloride is less effective. University of Wisconsin Madison – Extension publication A3877 provides a list of alternative de-icing products ATC may wish to consider when selecting an alternative(s) to sodium chloride-based products (Jull, 2009). However, sodium chloride may still be required to mitigate situations that pose elevated safety risks.

The Department did not find mention of mitigation practices related to de-icing and traction control within ATC's AIN or CPCN application. To address impacts related to salt applications on temporary road matting over agricultural soils, ATC should consider utilizing the following BMPs:

1) ATC should use alternatives to sodium chloride, when safety conditions allow, for de-icing and traction control on temporary road matting when crossing agricultural soils.

2) When the application of sodium chloride is necessary to resolve a matter of safety an alternative method cannot, ATC should limit the sodium chloride application rate to the lowest level required to maintain a safe working environment.

3) ATC should prepare a spill response plan in the event sodium chloride or an alternative product is over applied or spilled onto agricultural soils.

ATC shared the following feedback on the recommendations that the Department provided (refer to Appendix G: "Project Initiator Feedback Form"):

> ATC's general practice is to utilize a sand-salt mixture, with the salt content not exceeding 5 percent, for application on mat roads and work pads. This mixture is not applied directly on the ground surface under normal operating practices. On properties with organic or other certifications, ATC's contractor coordinates with the landowner or agricultural specialist to select an acceptable product. Lime chips or other organic mineral alternatives may be used, subject to prior approval and consistency with past accepted practices. Additionally, any spills of excessive de-icing or traction material is removed under ATC's existing spill response program.

5.4.2. Soil Compaction

Soil compaction is widely known to have a range of potential negative impacts to the productivity of soil, including reduced crop productivity, reduced crop uptake of water and nutrients, restriction of plant rooting depth, decreased water infiltration and increased surface runoff.

Several factors influence whether soil becomes compacted. An important influence is soil moisture: the wetter the soil, the more likely it is to be compacted from traffic. The potential for compaction also depends on the soil texture. Coarser textured soils, like sand or sandy loam, are less likely to become compacted than are clay or silty clay loams. Equipment used to construct electric transmission lines has the potential to compact soil and reduce soil productivity on the farmland traversed during construction, a concern that is noted across many of the pre-construction questionnaire respondents (refer to Section 4.3 "Summary of Landowner Concerns"). Research has shown that construction activities can negatively impact soil properties, soil health and crop yields for up to a decade within the ROW depending on the type and severity of construction impacts (e.g. equipment axle weight, use of excavation, intermixing of soil layer etc.) (Culley and Dow, 1988; Shi et al., 2014). UW-Extension report A3367 states that heavy equipment with axle loads that exceed 10 tons increases the risk of soil compaction into subsoil layers that cannot be removed by conventional tillage (Wolkowski and Lowery, 2008). The expected compaction depth increases as the axle load and soil moisture content increases. In general, heavy equipment use on dry or frozen soil reduces damage to vegetation and soil.

If development activities must occur on moist, non-frozen soil, potential soil compaction mitigation practices such as access mats can be used to redistribute the weight of heavy equipment over a large surface area. Access matting can aid in mitigating soil compaction, rutting and water infiltration issues (Thompson et al., 2023), though some scientific field studies document a potential imbalance in soil microbial communities in grasslands or pastures by altering soil moisture

levels and increasing nutrient availability due to plant die-off under matting with prolonged use (Thompson et al. 2020; Thompson et al. 2023). Overall, access matting aids mitigation of soil compaction and rutting. These mats should be used as needed with thought to avoid prolonged impact, especially on grasslands/pastures.

After construction is complete, the ROW will be compacted to some degree. Due to the large scale of the project, the Department recommends measuring for soil compaction post-construction when it is suspected or when a landowner has filed an inquiry with ATC's land agents and the Agricultural Specialist ATC plans to hire. Agricultural landowners and operators with concerns regarding possible soil compaction should file an inquiry with ATC's land agents or the Agricultural Specialist. ATC should measure for soil compaction post-construction within the Project ROW and outside of the Project ROW with a penetrometer throughout the soil horizon and comparing the measurements. If soil measurements within the Project ROW are comparatively higher, this is an indication that compaction has occurred. In areas where soil compaction occurred, the Department recommends ATC take steps to decompact the soils by conducting a sufficient amount of deep tillage (V-ripper, chisel plow, para plow or other depth-appropriate tillage implement) within the ROW to help restore the soil structure to pre-construction productivity. Following decompaction, the soil should be measured again for signs of compaction to ensure proper decompaction has occurred throughout the topsoil and subsoil profile. The Department also recommends ATC monitor soil moisture conditions post-construction throughout the Project ROW for signs of standing water. Areas with standing water may also have experienced soil compaction and should be measured for compaction.

ATC shared within the AIN materials that soil compaction issues associated with construction activities would be mitigated to the degree possible using the following practices (DATCP, 2026a):

- completing construction during dry or frozen conditions to the extent practicable
- the use of equipment with low-ground pressure tires or tracks
- placement of construction matting to help minimize soil and vegetation disturbances
- distribute axle loads over a larger surface area thereby reducing the bearing pressure on agricultural soils
- the use of ice roads.

The Department recommends the following for agricultural landowners and operators:

1) Agricultural landowners and operators with concerns regarding possible soil compaction should file an inquiry with ATC's land agents or the Agricultural Specialist.

The Department recommends ATC consider the following additional measure to prevent soil compaction during wet weather:

1) If rutting occurs, allow sufficient time for the soil to dry before repairing the ruts.

2) Measure for soil compaction post-construction within the Project ROW and outside of the Project ROW with a penetrometer throughout the soil horizon and comparing the measurements when it is suspected or when a landowner has filed an inquiry with ATC's land agents and the Agricultural Specialist ATC plans to hire. If soil compaction is found, the soil should be decompacted using deep tillage practices as noted above.

ATC shared the following feedback on the recommendations that the Department provided (refer to Appendix G: "Project Initiator Feedback Form"):

> Soil will be allowed to dry before being repaired, if practicable. Examples of when it would not be practicable include when safety is an issue or if there is a risk of erosion getting worse.

5.4.3. Topsoil Mixing

Agricultural topsoil is an invaluable resource that should be preserved. Excavation activities required to create the structural foundations for electric transmission line poles have the potential to mix highly productive topsoil with underlying less productive and potentially rocky subsoils. Deep rutting also has the potential to intermix topsoil. If intermixing of topsoil occurs, the resulting soils are generally known to be less productive and in turn reduce the agricultural productivity of the impacted area. When excavation is needed, ATC is required by Wis. Stat. § 182.017(7)(c) to segregate and stockpile topsoil from subsoil. As stated within their CPCN, ATC will store the topsoil and subsoil separately with erosion control BMPs and return the soil during restoration activities to preserve the natural seedbank (ATC, 2025a; ATC, 2026). Additionally, ATC noted it would provide topsoil replacement as appropriate (ATC, 2025a).

The Department recommends that ATC take the following additional steps to prevent the mixing of topsoil with subsoil layers within the Project ROW:

1) If rutting occurs, allow sufficient time for the soil to dry before repairing the ruts.

2) If topsoil mixing occurs, remove the intermixed soil and replace with new topsoil.

5.5. Drainage

Maintaining proper field drainage and preserving soil health is vital to the success of an agricultural operation. Construction of an electric transmission line can disrupt improvements such as drainage tiles, grassed waterways, and drainage ditches, which regulate the flow of water on farm fields. If drainage is impaired, water can settle in fields and cause substantial damage, such as reducing soil health, harming or killing crops and other vegetation, concentrating mineral salts, flooding farm

buildings, or causing diseases that affect livestock. Construction-caused soil compaction or damaged drain tiles can lead to ponded water where none existed prior to construction. Soil structure, texture, organic matter and microorganisms are all important factors that influence soil health (Wolkowski and Lowery, 2008).

Prior to the start of construction, landowners should identify for the ATC where construction activities may interfere with farm operations, farm building/facilities or farming infrastructure including but not limited to drain tiles, wells, watering systems, drainage ditches, drainage tile, and culverts, amongst others.

5.5.1. Drainage Tiles

Construction activities may affect the existing surface and subsurface (i.e. drain tile) drainage patterns of agricultural fields if drainage tile lines are broken or if the topography of grassed waterways, known water flowlines or erosion control structures are altered. Agricultural landowner feedback gathered by the Department indicates that several impacted agricultural parcels contain drainage tile that could be affected by the Project (Appendix C: Agricultural Landowner Comments). The agricultural soils impacted by the proposed Project are also widely known to be hydric or contain hydric inclusions. Hydric soils are commonly saturated, flooded or ponded for an extended period during the growing season, causing anaerobic conditions within the upper soil layer and may be associated with wetlands. It is common practice for agricultural operations to install drainage systems to mitigate the impacts of hydric soils, however drainage is most common in eastern and southern areas of the state where soils and topography preclude adequate drainage (Olson, 2020).

If drain tiles are damaged, ATC is required by Wis. Stat. § 182.017(7)(c) to repair or replace the damage drain tile.

Within their CPCN application, ATC states that they will work with the landowner to address drain tile concerns throughout the construction phase of the (ATC, 2025a).

To help mitigate the potential for drainage impacts, the Department additionally recommends the following for agricultural landowners and operators:

1) Agricultural landowners should inform ATC about the existence and location of drainage systems or planned drainage systems that could be affected by the Project.
2) Agricultural landowners should document field moisture conditions and the historic presence/absence of ponded water prior to the start of construction for post-construction comparisons. If problems are observed that can be attributed to construction, the landowner and ATC should work together to develop a mutually agreeable solution.

To help mitigate the potential for drainage impacts, the Department additionally recommends the following for ATC:

1) Where construction activities have created new wet areas, ATC should work with the landowner to determine the best means to return the agricultural land to pre-construction function.

5.5.2. De-watering

During excavation/auguring of the structure foundation for a transmission line pole, de-watering may be necessary. Improper de-watering can result in soil erosion, sedimentation and deposition of gravel, sand, or silt onto adjacent agricultural lands, and the inundation of crops. The discharge of these construction waters must be in compliance with current drainage laws, local ordinances, DNR permit conditions, and the provisions of the Clean Water Act. ATC is required by Wis. Stat. § 182.017(7)(c) to compensate the landowner for any damage to agricultural fields caused by construction de-watering activities.

In section 5.5.5 of ATC's CPCN application, they describe dewatering methods proposed to be used for excavation activities (ATC, 2025a).

The Department recommends ATC consider the following additional practices to mitigate the impacts of construction water discharge on agricultural lands:

1) ATC should identify prior to construction 1) excavation sites with low areas and/or hydric soils where de-watering is likely and 2) suitable upland areas for discharge.

2) Discharge locations should be well-vegetated areas with topography that will prevent the water from returning to the ROW, resist soil erosion, and allow for infiltration and settling of gravel and other unwanted sediments prior to entering a field, pasture, or waterbody.

3) ATC should consider using pre-filter bags or other filter devices, prior to discharge, in order to capture sediments, gravel and rocks.

4) Cropland, pasturelands and other agricultural areas selected for discharge should not be inundated for more than 24 hours, as longer durations could result in crop damage.

5) ATC should not directly discharge or allow construction waters from non-organic farms to enter an organic farming operation.

ATC shared the following feedback on the recommendations that the Department provided (refer to Appendix G: "Project Initiator Feedback Form"):

DATCP Recommendations 1) though 4) are permitted practices through WDNR WPDES General Permit WI-S067831-6 which includes Dewatering. ATC's practices generally align with 5) to not directly discharge or allow construction waters from non-organic farms to enter an organic farming operation and will follow this recommendation if ordered by the Commission.

5.5.3. Stormwater & Erosion Control Permitting

The Project's land disturbance activities may be subject to municipal stormwater management and erosion control ordinances, in addition to all state and federal level permitting requirements. Project activities may also be subject to shoreland zoning ordinances.

ATC states that it works with all local units of government so that the representatives of those units of government affected by ATC's proposed construction projects are informed concerning ATC's proposed construction activities (ATC, 2025a). Under Wisconsin Statute § 196.491(3)(i) and detailed under Wisconsin State Statute § 196.491(6), if the PSC issues a CPCN for the Project, ATC is not subject to local ordinances that would preclude or inhibit construction or operation of a facility for any matter that the PSC has addressed or could have addressed during the administrative proceeding. If a CPCN is not issued, the Project's land disturbance activities may be subject to municipal stormwater management and erosion control ordinances, in addition to all state- and federal-level permitting requirements. Project activities may also be subject to shoreland zoning ordinances.

DATCP recommends that ATC consult with all impacted zoning authorities for applicable construction site erosion control and stormwater management requirements, shoreland zoning requirements, and other permits to ensure construction proceeds in a manner minimizing drainage issues and soil erosion for the project site. As stormwater and erosion control activities are regulated by other levels of governance – federal, state, county, and local – analysis of the Projects potential for stormwater and erosion impacts are beyond the scope of this AIS.

5.6. Agricultural Infrastructure

5.6.1. Aerial Application of Seeds and Sprays

The location of an electric transmission line on cropland can restrict the aerial application of seeds and chemicals and can increase the danger of making aerial applications. In turn, agricultural pilots have to maneuver to avoid transmission lines, which may result in uneven, imprecise or missed aerial applications. When aerial applications are restricted or prevented agricultural produces may experience 1) increased weed growth and pest infestations that reduce crop yields, 2) increased cost and labor from land-based application of seeds and chemical in non-applied areas.

ATC noted that there is the potential for aerial seeding or spraying activities to be temporary limited during the construction of the project (ATC, 2025a).

To mitigate the potential for impacts to aerial application, the Department recommends the following for agricultural landowners and operators:

1) Agricultural landowners inform ATC if they use aerial applications and work with ATC to determine the most effective techniques to minimize the impact to their aerial applications.

To mitigate the potential for impacts to aerial application, the Department recommends the following for ATC:

2) ATC work with the impacted agricultural landowners work to determine the most effective techniques to minimize the impact to their aerial applications.

3) ATC should install a visual indicator to increase visibility of transmission line wires to aerial application pilots, such as colored wire shielding, marker balls or equivalent marker as appropriate.

5.6.2. Biosecurity

Farm biosecurity is the implementation of measures designed to protect a farm operation from the entry and spread of diseases and pests. Construction activities can spread weeds, diseases, chemicals and genetically modified organisms (GMO's) that impact an agricultural operation. Certified organic farms and farms with other certifications such as pesticide-free are susceptible to the widest range of biosecurity impacts and may suffer greater negative impacts if their agricultural operation is exposed to a biosecurity threat. For more information on basic biosecurity protocols, please visit the Department's Basic Biosecurity website at the provided link or at https://DATCP.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/BasicBiosecurity.aspx.

The Department recommends agricultural landowners and operators consider the following mitigation measures to mitigate biosecurity risks within the Project ROW:

1) If a landowner or farm operator has a biosecurity plan or have required biosecurity protocols, this information should be shared with ATC for use during Project construction and restoration

The Department recommends ATC consider the following mitigation measures to mitigate biosecurity risks within the Project ROW:

1) ATC and their contractors should avoid contact with livestock and manure throughout the Project.

2) If livestock need to be moved, ATC should work with the livestock owner to move the livestock.

5.6.3. Fencing

The construction process may require fences that cross the Project ROW to be severed. According to Wis. Stat. § 182.017(7)(c), if ATC is required to cut or sever a fence they are required to install a temporary gate and repair all damages to fencing. Changes to existing fence lines can interfere with grazing activities, particularly for rotational grazing operations that depend on precise, scheduled grazing in particular areas.

To mitigate the impacts to fencing, the Department recommends agricultural landowners and operators consider the following recommendations:

1) Agricultural landowners should work with ATC to determine appropriate measures to prevent livestock from entering the Project ROW.

To mitigate the impacts to fencing, the Department recommends ATC consider the following recommendations:

1) Prior to construction, ATC should consult with agricultural landowners with grazing operations in and adjacent to the Project ROW and modify construction activities and timing to mitigate impacts to livestock.
2) ATC should work with agricultural landowners to determine appropriate measures to prevent livestock from entering the Project ROW.
3) ATC should develop a plan for livestock to access pastures adjacent to the Project ROW or otherwise compensate the landowner for the costs related to restricted grazing.

5.6.4. Irrigation

Electric transmission line construction activities and the placement of transmission line poles can interfere with the operation of linear or center pivot irrigation systems used to irrigate crops. Soil compaction from construction equipment may also impact or damage underground piping that supplies irrigation systems. Any interruption to irrigation systems cause by the Project can deprive crops from needed water and nutrients resulting in decrease crop yields.

The Department recommends agricultural landowners and operators consider the following additional practices to mitigate the impacts to irrigation systems:

1) Prior to construction, agricultural operations that use irrigation within or adjacent to the Project ROW should inform ATC of their irrigation system, how the Project may impact the system, irrigation schedules frequency of irrigation and weather conditions that may change the irrigation schedule.

The Department recommends ATC consider the following additional practices to mitigate the impacts to irrigation systems:

1) If the Project plans to disrupt an irrigation system, ATC should notify the landowner beforehand and establish a mutually acceptable amount of time that the system will be taken out of service.

2) If any part of an irrigation system is damage as a result of construction activities, ATC should pay for and repair reported damages as soon as possible.

3) If an irrigation system needs to be reconfigured as a result of the Project, ATC should work with the irrigation operators to reconfigure the irrigation equipment where necessary and to compensate them for any portion of cropland where the irrigation system no longer operates.

5.6.5. Organic Farms & Other Areas with Certifications

Construction and ongoing maintenance activities for the Project may jeopardize a farm's organic certification or other certifications such as *pesticide-free* (certified areas) if a prohibited chemical is used on their certified land, drifts from a neighboring field or enters their land on construction machinery, construction matting or improper de-watering. ATC and their contractors must use caution and care where the Project ROW borders or crosses an area with certification. Wis. Admin. Code § ATCP 29.50(2) states that no pesticides (includes herbicides) may be used in a manner that results in pesticide overspray or significant pesticide drift. In addition, any oil or fuel spill on these farms could prevent or remove a farm's certification.

ATC addresses organic certified farm operations within section 7.4.4 of their CPCN application and in AIN materials. For identified organic farms, ATC will work with landowners to minimize potential impacts to their organic farming status from the Project, including (ATC, 2025a; DATCP, 2026a):

- offsetting transmission line structures from the property line to maintain tree lines or buffers
- cleaning construction vehicles prior to entering organic farm parcels
- not applying herbicide within portions of an easement based on landowner guidance.
- Where necessary, ATC will follow organic protocols consistent with those of the certifying agency employed by the farmer

The Department recommends the following additional practices for agricultural landowners and operators:

1) Agricultural landowners with organic certification or other certifications should inform ATC of their certifications, provide documentation of certification and inform ATC of prohibited and/or limited activities and the range and type of substances that are and are not permitted according to their certifications.

2) Agricultural landowners and beekeepers should consider using the free online DriftWatch™ and BeeCheck™ registries, operated by FieldWatch™ to communicate areas containing specialty crops or beehives with pesticide applicators, in order to minimize the risk of accidental exposure. For more information on DriftWatch, please visit DATCP's DriftWatch website at the provided link or at https://wi.DriftWatch.org.

3) Prior to construction, the farms with areas of certification and ATC should determine the appropriate methods to avoid unintentional contacts or applications of prohibited chemicals from entering their farms.

The Department recommends the use of all the mitigation measures mentioned above for organic farms within the CPCN, as well as the following additional practices for ATC:

1) ATC and its contractors that are applying herbicide or pesticides should utilize the Department's DriftWatch™ online mapping tool to locate agricultural lands and operations that are susceptible to herbicide or pesticides. If the online mapping tool locates an agricultural operation on or near areas that will receive herbicide or pesticide applications, ATC should contact the operation to discuss the appropriate methods required to minimize the risk of accidental exposure.

2) ATC should generate and distribute a list of organic farms or other certified farms and the prohibited chemicals to their construction staff and contractors.

3) Prior to construction, ATC and the farms with areas of certification should determine the appropriate methods to avoid unintentional contacts or applications of prohibited chemicals from entering their farms.

4) ATC may wish to underlay heavily used areas of the ROW with geotextile fabric or similar matting in order to limit the potential for prohibited substances from contaminating areas with certification.

Regarding recommendation two, ATC shared the following feedback on the recommendations that the Department provided (refer to Appendix G: "Project Initiator Feedback Form"):

> The Agricultural Inventory form provided to landowners allows for the documentation of organic farms within the project corridor to provide notice to construction.

5.7. Erosion and Conservation Practices

Electric transmission line construction activities and the placement of transmission line poles can destabilize existing erosion control practices such as diversion terraces, grassed or lined waterways, outlet ditches, water and sediment control basins, vegetated filter strips, etc. The destabilization of these erosion control practices have the potential to cause soil erosion within the ROW, but also from upland fields. During wet conditions the risk of soil erosion is increased, as exposed soils, especially areas with increased slope, may more easily erode and move downslope. Wind erosion may also be of concern if existing windbreaks are removed from the ROW, especially when soils are dry. If left unchecked, significant erosion can have an adverse effect on the long-term productivity of agricultural lands. ATC is required by Wis. Stat. § 182.017(7)(c) to restore existing erosion control practices such as diversion terraces, grassed or lined waterways, outlet ditches, water and sediment control basins, vegetated filter strips, etc. that are damaged by construction activities to pre-construction condition and function.

The Department recommends the following practices to mitigate soil erosion within the Project ROW for ATC:

1) Once construction is complete, pending soil decompaction, ATC should return impacted agricultural lands within the ROW to cropland or seeded with the appropriate seed mix.

2) ATC should inspect all temporary erosion controls structures on a regular basis and after significant rain events throughout construction and restoration phases and undertake erosion control structure maintenance as required to prevent soil erosion within the ROW.

3) ATC should avoid impacting any existing permanent erosion control structure (e.g diversion terraces, grassed or lined waterways, outlet ditches, water and sediment control basins, vegetated filter strips, etc.) that's intended to prevent soil erosion from an upland agricultural area.

4) Should ATC disrupt an existing permanent erosion control structure, a temporary structure should be installed until the permanent erosion control is restored.

ATC shared the following feedback on the recommendations that the Department provided (refer to Appendix G: "Project Initiator Feedback Form"):

> ATC is required to follow DNR WPDES General Permit WI-S067831-6 plus standard ATC Practices regarding soil erosion mitigation practices (also detailed in project specific Restoration Plan).

The Project's Restoration Plan can be found in ATC's CPCN Application within PSC Docket #137-CE-221, Appendix F, Exhibit 1 (REF # 563367; ATC, 2025b).

5.7.1. Construction Debris

After construction is complete, there may be construction debris remaining on the field. If large pieces of debris or rocks are left in the field, agricultural machinery may be damaged when the landowner first works the land. ATC is required by Wis. Stat. § 182.017(7)(c) to clear all debris and remove all stones and rocks resulting from construction activity upon completion of construction. To that end, ATC shall also clear the ROW of signage, construction mat debris, litter, and spoil piles etc.

ATC addresses cleanup and restoration of ROW in Section 5.5.2 *Construction Impacts by Phase* of the PSC CPCN application (ATC, 2025a) and Section 3.2.1 Site Cleanup within the Restoration and Post-Construction Monitoring Plan (ATC, 2026) for the Project.

To mitigate the potential impact of construction debris, the Department recommends the following for ATC:

1) Should a landowner find construction debris remaining in the field after ATC has cleared the field, the landowner should contact the Agricultural Specialist, or equivalent contact, to report the debris prior to operating agricultural equipment in the field.

2) Should ATC remove an existing power line pole from within or immediately adjacent to cropland, ATC should remove the old structure at a minimum of four feet below the ground surface where practicable.

3) Should the ATC create a hole within croplands during the removal of any part of the existing transmission structure, the Department recommends that ATC preserve each layer and then backfill in soil sequence to keep it to the original soil to the degree possible, dressing with topsoil as needed. If backfilling with gravel is determined to be necessary and if it is within or immediately adjacent to cropland, then the Department suggests backfilling with gravel to a minimum of four feet from the ground surface to ensure tillage equipment would not be impacted or spread gravel throughout the soil horizons, or ATC should consult the agricultural operator for an appropriate depth depending on how deep their tillage equipment runs.

ATC shared the following feedback on recommendation three that the Department provided (refer to Appendix G: "Project Initiator Feedback Form"):

> For structure removals, ATC places existing soil back into the hole and the surface is restored with existing topsoil.

5.7.2. Construction Noise and Dust

During each phase of the Project, noise and dust is likely to be generated. Landowners near the Project ROW may experience noises and dust associated with construction techniques, movement of heavy equipment, and helicopters. This noise and dust may cause dairy, beef cattle and other

grazing livestock to stampede, break through fences, and escape from the farm property. Fur animals, poultry and other confined livestock may also be impacted by these sounds.

ATC notes in section 7.5 of the CPCN application (ATC, 2025a) that the equipment noise levels of construction along the transmission line route and laydown yards will be consistent for general truck traffic. Most noise will occur from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday (ATC, 2025a).

To mitigate impacts of noise and dust, the Department recommends the following for agricultural landowners and operators:

1) Livestock owners and operators within the Project ROW who are concerned about the noise potential for the Project should inform ATC or their representatives during the easement negotiation process.

2) Livestock owners & operators near the Project ROW who are concerned about the noise potential for the Project should inform ATC of their concerns prior to the project construction.

To mitigate impacts of noise and dust, the Department recommends the following for ATC:

1) ATC should identify agricultural livestock operations with sensitive animals within and adjacent to the Project ROW and provide them appropriate advance warning of construction activities, including the use of helicopters, so they may take steps to safeguard their animals.

2) ATC should clean all roadways (private, county, state, etc.) of debris, dirt and rocks caused by construction activities for the Project.

3) When construction activities have the potential to generate substantial amounts of dust that could impact livestock or an agricultural operation, ATC should apply water over the dust generating areas to reduce dust output.

5.7.3. Crop Rotation and Dairy Operations

The construction of an electric transmission line may disrupt a planned crop or crop rotation. Impacts to alfalfa fields and planned alfalfa seeding are especially disruptive to dairy operations as they need to maintain a proper supply of alfalfa to feed dairy cows. Any delays, yield reductions or damages to an alfalfa crop may require the dairy operation to buy haylage or hay, obtain more corn silage, and/or provide protein supplements such as soybean oil meal to make up for the lost alfalfa. With advanced notice of the Project's construction schedule, a dairy operator would be better able to adjust forage requirements and plan for any increased associated costs.

If the Project is approved, the Department recommends that ATC provide any impacted dairy operations with advanced notice of the construction schedule across their operations and

compensate the landowner for any increased costs associated with construction impacts to forage requirements.

5.7.4. Managed Forest Law, Trees, and other Woody Vegetation

If approved, the Project will impact MFL agreements. An explanation of the state's MFL program and what that means for the woodlands enrolled within the program is provided in Section 3.3.3 "Managed Forest Law". Additional acres of unmanaged forest lands will also be impacted but are beyond the scope of this AIS as unmanaged forest lands are not defined as an agricultural use according to Wis. Stat. § 91.01(2). Both managed and unmanaged woodlands can provide financial benefit to the landowner either directly through the sale of managed forest for timber, the sale of firewood, or the harvest of tree sap for sale. The removal of any trees from a property may also decrease the market value of the property.

Prior to the start of construction, ATC will remove all woody vegetation, trees and brush not already removed by the landowner from the full width of the Project ROW. Vegetation will be cut at or slightly above the ground surface using mechanized equipment or by hand. Tree stumps are generally left in place, except in areas where stump removal is necessary to facilitate the movement of construction vehicles or required by the landowner. Once removed, trees are not permitted to regrow or be replanted in the Project ROW after construction is complete or while maintained by ATC. According to Wis. Stat. § 182.017(7)(e) affected landowners will maintain ownership of all trees removed by ATC during construction. ATC is also required to provide the landowner with a reasonable amount of time, prior to construction, to harvest the trees on their own. Post construction and restoration, the deforested land could be used for farming so long as the intended crop or agricultural equipment does not interfere with transmission line facilities. ATC will manage and maintain deforested areas, including vegetation removal and management within the deforested ROW for those areas that landowners do not wish to crop or maintain.

The Department recommends the following to mitigate the impacts of tree and woody material removal from the Project ROW for ATC:

1) ATC should discuss the placement of transmission line poles with landowners to minimize the need for tree removal and prioritize the preservation of trees used for windbreaks to the degree practicable.

2) ATC should compensate agricultural landowners for the construction of any additional structures that serve in the place of the harvested trees.

3) ATC should hire an appraiser who has experience and expertise in valuing trees.

The Department recommends the following to mitigate the impacts of tree and woody material removal from the Project ROW for agricultural landowners and operators:

1) Landowners who wish to obtain their own appraisal should also hire an appraiser who has experience and expertise in valuing trees.

2) Landowners who wish to farm within the deforested area should discuss tree stump removal with ATC during the easement negotiation process.

5.7.5. Stray Voltage

Electric distribution systems are grounded to the earth to ensure safety and reliability. At the site of the grounding, electrical current enters the earth where voltage can be detected. This is generally known as Neutral to Earth Voltage (NEV). When a person, animal or object is near an NEV, the voltage may pass to them resulting in electrical contact (i.e. shock); this is generally known as stray voltage. Stray voltage often goes unnoticed by humans, but stray voltage from NEV may affect animals on farms. Animals may encounter stray voltage any time the animal makes contact with an electrified point such as fencing, feeder, the earth, or stalls. Animals affected by stray voltage may show changes in behavior or milk production. The Midwest Rural Energy Council (MREC) created a Self-Help Stray Voltage Detection guide which covers reported symptoms of stray voltage in dairy livestock, potential causes, and monitoring forms that could be used to document stray voltage concerns in addition to requesting stray voltage testing (MREC, 2010).The PSC administers Wisconsin's Stray Voltage program under Wis. Stat. § 196.857 in cooperation with the Department. The PSC established the Phase II Stray Voltage Testing Protocol to fulfill its duty to create a standard stray voltage NEV testing protocol as required by Wis. Stat. § 196.857(b). Under the Phase II testing protocol, a utility is mandated to take corrective action to resolve any electrical contact at or above 0.5 volts (Reines and Cook, 1999). The Stray Voltage program is able to review voltage testing data generated by the utility and the conclusions the utility has reached. For more information on the PSC Stray Voltage program, impacts to agricultural operations and mitigation steps, visit https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/Programs/StrayVoltage HomePage.aspx.

Should additional concerns for the health of a herd arise from stray voltage testing, the Department's Herd-Based Diagnostic Program may be able to assist. The program provides a licensed veterinarian, free of charge, to help producers investigate concerns with milk production, milk quality, herd health, and more. For more information on the Herd-Based Diagnostic Program visit https://DATCP.wi.gov/Pages/Herd-basedDiagnostics.aspx.

In the case of honey bees, colonies near transmission lines generally perform normally. Stray voltage from power lines or the transmission line's electric and magnetic field has not been consistently shown to impact brood development, honey production, or overwintering success (Treder et al., 2023). Some lab and small-scale studies suggest that there could be changes in foraging behavior through slight disruption of communication, however, these effects are inconsistent and often only seen at higher than environmental exposure levels. The magnetic field from power lines are typically too low to disrupt bees' homing behavior (Clark et al., 2017; Shepard et al., 2018; Thielens et al., 2020; Treder et al., 2023).

ATC addresses NEV and Induced Voltage in Section 7.4.7 of their CPCN application (ATC, 2025a). ATC has identified twenty-six confined animal dairy operations along the proposed route in which they recommend NEV testing (ATC, 2025a). As required by PSC guidance set forth under Wis. Stat. § 196.857, ATC shall take action to work with local distribution companies to resolve electrical contacts at livestock feeding operations detected at or above 0.5 volts that are a result of the Project.

The Department recommends the following to mitigate the impact of stray voltage within the project ROW for agricultural landowners and operators:

1) Confined animal feeding operations or any operation with livestock facilities within ½-mile of the proposed power line should request Phase II Stray Voltage Testing pre- and post-transmission line energization testing from their utility provider, which ATC can assist in coordinating.

The Department recommends the following to mitigate the impact of stray voltage within the project ROW for ATC:

1) ATC should inform each landowner with livestock facilities within ½-mile of the Project ROW of their ability to request Phase II Stray Voltage Testing from their local utility provider. ATC should be responsible for costs associated with Phase II Stray Voltage Testing within ½-mile of the Project corridor.

5.7.6. Temporary Access Roads

ATC has proposed installing temporary access roads as part of the Project, when an alternative access road does not exist, to allow personnel and construction equipment to access the Project corridor. When a temporary access road is constructed, there is a range of potential negative effects to agricultural lands including the mixing of topsoil with subsoil & rocks, soil compaction, soil erosion, and interference with existing drainage & irrigation. New temporary access roads also have the potential to impact agricultural operations by severing cropland or pastures, limiting field access or limiting access to agricultural infrastructure & buildings. Any of these impacts can result in lost agricultural productivity whether from lost soil productivity, crop losses or the direct loss of agricultural revenue when access to agricultural infrastructure is limited. When the Project has completed, ATC is required by Wis. Stat. § 182.017(7)(c) to restore the land to its original condition, clear all debris and remove all stones and rocks associated with the access roads. However, if desired by the landowner and in consultation with ATC, temporary access roads may be left in place after construction.

The Department recommends ATC consider the following to mitigate the impacts of access roads when they cross agricultural lands within the Project ROW:

1) ATC should consult with agricultural landowners before siting any temporary access roads.

2) ATC should strip and stockpile the topsoil for later re-use during restoration.

3) Access roads should be designed to allow proper drainage and minimize soil erosion.

5.7.7. Weed Control

The Project may introduce noxious weeds or other invasive plants species into the Project ROW that compete with agricultural crops. Noxious weeds may also spread from parcel to parcel by construction equipment and project activities. Once weeds establish, they can interfere with agricultural harvesting equipment, attract unwanted insects, and require physical removal or chemical applications to remove.

Post construction and restoration, agricultural operations may resume normal agricultural cropping activities within the ROW so long as the crop or agricultural equipment do not interfere with transmission line facilities. After construction and during the operation of the line, ATC is required by Wis. Stat. § 182.017(7)(d) to control weeds and brush around the transmission line facilities. However, ATC shall not use herbicide for weed and brush control without the express written consent of the landowner (Wis. Stat. § 182.017(7)(d)).

The Department recommends agricultural landowners and operators following to control for and manage the spread of noxious weeds within the project ROW:

1) Agricultural landowners should state in writing whether they do or do not give ATC their consent for herbicide to be applied within the ROW they own.

2) Agricultural landowners and beekeepers should consider using the free online DriftWatch™ and BeeCheck™ registries, operated by FieldWatch™ to communicate areas containing specialty crops or beehives with pesticide applicators, in order to minimize the risk of accidental exposure. For more information on DriftWatch, please visit DATCP's DriftWatch website at the provided link or at https://wi.DriftWatch.org.

The Department recommends agricultural landowners and operators following to control for and manage the spread of noxious weeds within the project ROW:

1) ATC should clean construction equipment and materials prior to entering an area of certification.

2) ATC should clean all roadways (private, county, state etc.) of construction debris, dirt and rocks.

3) ATC and its contractors that are applying herbicide or pesticides should utilize the Department's DriftWatch™ online mapping tool to locate agricultural lands and operations that are susceptible to herbicide or pesticides. If the online mapping tool locates an agricultural operation on or near areas that will receive herbicide or pesticide applications, ATC should contact the operation to discuss the appropriate methods required to minimize the risk of accidental exposure.

ATC shared the following feedback on recommendation one that the Department provided (refer to Appendix G: "Project Initiator Feedback Form"):

> ATC cleans equipment and materials as part of its standard BMPs.

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- Governor Tony Evers

State Senators

- Honorable Patrick Testin (Committee on Agriculture)
- Honorable André Jacque (Senate District 1)
- Honorable Devin LeMahieu (Senate District 9)
- Honorable Dan Feyen (Senate District 20)

State Assembly

- Honorable Travis Tranel (Committee on Agriculture)
- Honorable Ron Tusler (Assembly District 3)
- Honorable Lindee Rae Brill (Assembly District 27)
- Honorable Robert Brooks (Assembly District 59)
- Honorable Jerry O'Connor (Assembly District 60)

Federal, State, and Local Units of Government

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP)

- DATCP Public Information Officer – Daniel Richter
- DATCP Legislative Liaison – Patrick Walsh
- DATCP Administrator, Agricultural Resource Management Division – Tim Anderson
- DATCP Director, Bureau of Land and Water – Christopher Clayton

Public Service Commission of Wisconsin

- Environmental Affairs Coordinator Supervisor – Adam Ingwell
- Environmental Review Coordinator – Andrew Craft
- Case Coordinator – Allison Martinson

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- County Clerk Beth Hauser
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- County Conservationist Anthony Reali
- County Zoning Director Chris Meuer

Fond du Lac County Wisconsin

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- County Conservationist Brad Murry

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County Zoning Administrator Barry Sullivan

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