

## **AEP eyeing ‘transmission superhighway’ for wind energy**

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American Electric Power Company Inc. said Tuesday it is considering a multibillion-dollar project aimed at harnessing wind energy through a “transmission superhighway.”

The Columbus-based utility said it is in the conceptual phase of the proposal, which would require construction of more than 1,000 new miles of transmission lines and cost between \$5 billion and \$10 billion. The 765-kilovolt lines would connect wind farms in the upper Midwest – the Dakotas, Minnesota and Iowa – to an existing network that ends near Chicago.

“The wind potential in this region cannot be developed unless we build a very efficient transmission superhighway to bring this clean, renewable generation to population and electricity load centers,” AEP CEO Michael Morris said in a release.

The project, which would require the approval of the region’s Midwest Independent System Operator, likely would be built in stages over 10 years, AEP said. The company plans to work with all stakeholders in the region, including other utilities.

A key piece of the potential transmission line is a North Dakota project dubbed Hartland Wind Farm LLC, which has agreed to collaborate with AEP. The farm, a partnership between Houston-based Montgomery Power Partners LP and Baxter, Minn.-based Denali Energy Inc., would be the western end of AEP’s project.

Denali CEO Curt Johnson told Columbus Business First the collaboration would be beneficial to both parties. AEP would have more access to renewable energy sources and Hartland would have a pipeline to an extra-high-voltage line that could spark additional growth. The wind farm, under development, has commitments for about 60,000 acres of land and expects to take up about 144,000 acres.

Connecting the farm to a fully-developed transmission line from AEP could open up the possibility of expanding acreage and boosting capacity to three or four times its projected 2,000 megawatts, Johnson said.

“Our development can only be limited by our transmission capacity,” he said.

AEP (NYSE:AEP) delivers electricity to 5 million customers. The utility recorded profit of \$1.09 billion on revenue of \$13.4 billion last year.