Birtle Transmission Project

Round 2
Preferred Route

What is it and why do we need it?

Manitoba Hydro is proposing to construct a 230-kilovolt transmission line to the Manitoba–Saskatchewan border. This transmission line is needed to fulfill a 20-year agreement to sell 100 megawatts (equivalent to powering 40,000 homes) of renewable hydroelectricity to SaskPower, beginning in 2020–2021.

Where is the project located?

The Birtle Transmission Project will originate at the Birtle Station, south of the community of Birtle, to the Manitoba–Saskatchewan border.

What's new?

During the first round of engagement, a number of alternative segments and a north and south border crossing option were presented. Feedback on these segments and border crossings was collected from participants and study team specialists. Once all the feedback was collected, routes made up of segments to each border crossing were evaluated and compared. Based on feedback received through the engagement and environmental assessment processes, a preferred route has been determined. This preferred route aims to balance different interests on the landscape.

Manitoba Hydro is presenting this preferred route to the public and Indigenous communities and organizations to gather feedback that will assist in determining a final preferred route and help to complete an environmental assessment to present to regulators at the end of 2017. Feedback received as we progress will assist in:

- Further assessments undertaken by discipline specialists;
- Determining the final placement of the transmission line;
- Determining mitigation measures to minimize the potential impacts on people and the environment.

What's next?

Following the selection of the final preferred route and the development of the environmental assessment (EA) report, Manitoba Hydro will submit the EA report to the Environmental Approvals Branch of Manitoba Sustainable Development.

The EA report for the Project will include:

- a description of the Project, through construction, operation, and maintenance;
- study area characterization through fieldwork and background investigation;
- an outline of the public and Indigenous engagement processes, and the feedback received;
- identification and assessment of potential environmental and socio-economic effects; and
- development of mitigation measures to minimize negative effects while enhancing positive effects on people and the environment.

Following the submission of the environmental assessment to regulators, a public review period will be provided for interested parties to share their concerns and ask questions about the report.

Manitoba Hydro will continue to contact potentially affected landowners as these processes progress.

Manitoba Hydro

What we heard – Round 1

Manitoba Hydro has gathered feedback on the Project through open houses, workshops and meetings, as well as phone calls, emails and letters. The following table lists the key issues that were received during the first round of the engagement processes.

Feedback from participants	How was the feedback considered?
"The transmission line will impact agricultural operations."	Manitoba Hydro avoided half-mile (quarter section) alignments where possible and followed existing mile lines and road rights-of-way when available. Tower design and placement will also assist in reducing potential agricultural impact.
"There will be a loss of productive farm land."	Based on feedback, the line will be routed adjacent to road allowances, where possible, to reduce potential agricultural impacts. Class of land and current land use were considered in determining a preferred route for the Project.
"Routing through the southern Community Pasture (Ellice-Archie) should be considered."	A route through the southern community pasture was developed and considered in the route selection process but was not selected as the preferred route.
"Follow existing infrastructure."	Participants identified existing corridors and linear features as possible routing opportunities and they were taken advantage of where possible.
"Homes should be avoided as much as possible."	Proximity to homes is a consideration in the transmission line routing process. The current route has eight homes between 100-400 metres away from the line.
"Natural and recreation areas are important to my community."	Participants outlined many areas for recreational use in the area and they were considered when determining a preferred route for the Project. Manitoba Hydro will identify sensitive sites and will consider specific mitigation or construction scheduling to minimize potential effects on natural areas.
"Stay out of natural, intact wilderness."	Manitoba Hydro considered the intactness of the area when selecting the preferred route.
"Will this project affect water?"	Surface and groundwater quality will not be degraded. The project will use buffers and setbacks, erosion and sedimentation control measures as well as stream crossing measures.
"Stay off of Crown lands."	A preference Manitoba Hydro often heard was for the route to be located on Crown lands, whereas this routing option was raised as a concern from First Nations, the MMF and other stakeholders. The preferred route aims to balance different interests on the landscape.
"Cultural and burial heritage sites are important and should be avoided."	Manitoba Hydro acknowledges the need for careful protection and respect for culture and heritage resources and implements a number of measures to safeguard these resources. A Cultural and Heritage Resources Protection Plan will be developed that describes processes and protocols to protect discovered cultural and heritage resources during construction.
"Native grasslands and grassland birds are very important. Priority species to be considered include Sprague's Pipit and the Chestnut Collared Longspurs."	Manitoba Hydro will continue to consider native grassland and grassland bird species in route refinement, the environmental assessment, and mitigation planning.

Why does Manitoba Hydro involve our communities?

We actively seek feedback as it helps inform the environmental assessment and the routing processes for the Project.

Engagement goals were developed for the Birtle Transmission Project to encourage and involve local community members. These goals include:

- sharing information;
- learning about and understanding local interests;
- integrating interests and concerns into the assessment process; and
- discussing potential mitigation measures.

These goals will be met by:

- involving the public and Indigenous communities and organizations throughout the routing and environmental assessment stages;
- providing clear, timely, and relevant information and responses;
- delivering engagement processes that are adaptive and inclusive;
- informing the public and Indigenous communities as to how their feedback influenced the Project; and
- documenting and reporting on feedback received.

Why does Manitoba Hydro export power?

In 2013–14, Manitoba Hydro export sales totaled $439 million. These export sales to neighbouring provinces and the United States produce additional revenue for Manitoba Hydro. This revenue keeps electricity rates lower for Manitoba customers than they would otherwise be.

For more information on the value of exports, see our video on the Project website www.hydro.mb.ca/birtle

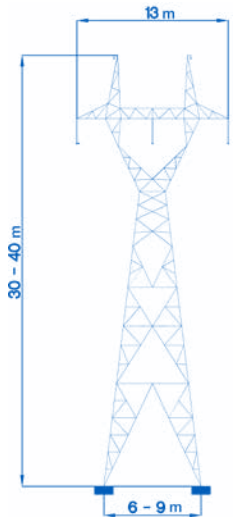
Why does Saskatchewan want our power?

SaskPower announced last year that it plans to double the percentage of its renewable electricity generation capacity up to 50 per cent by 2030. Meeting this target will significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions – about 40 per cent below 2005 levels. Importing power from Manitoba is attractive environmentally because there are almost zero emissions associated with hydropower.

What will the line look like?

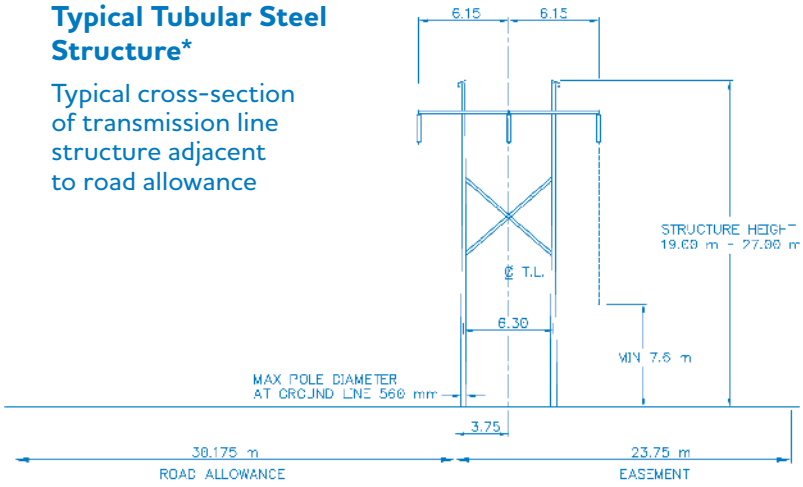
Depending on terrain and the location of the final preferred route, the following tower designs will be used if the Project is approved.

Self Supporting Suspension Lattice Steel Structure*



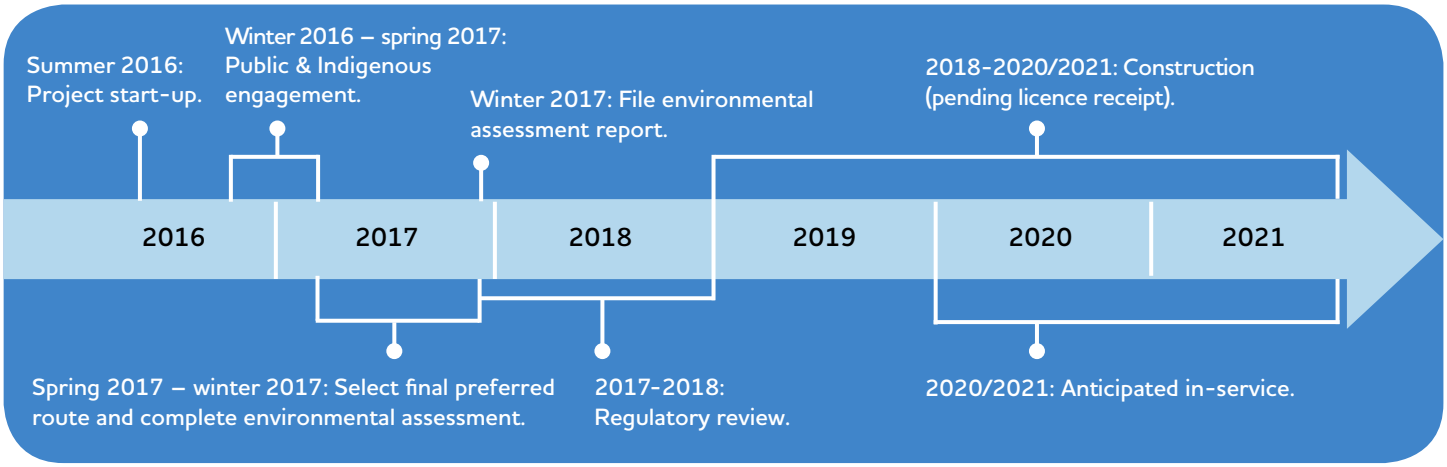
Typical Tubular Steel Structure*

Typical cross-section of transmission line structure adjacent to road allowance



* Tower height and design are estimations and are dependent on terrain and final placement of the transmission line.

Anticipated project timelines



The schedule is subject to change as we progress through the routing and environmental assessment processes.

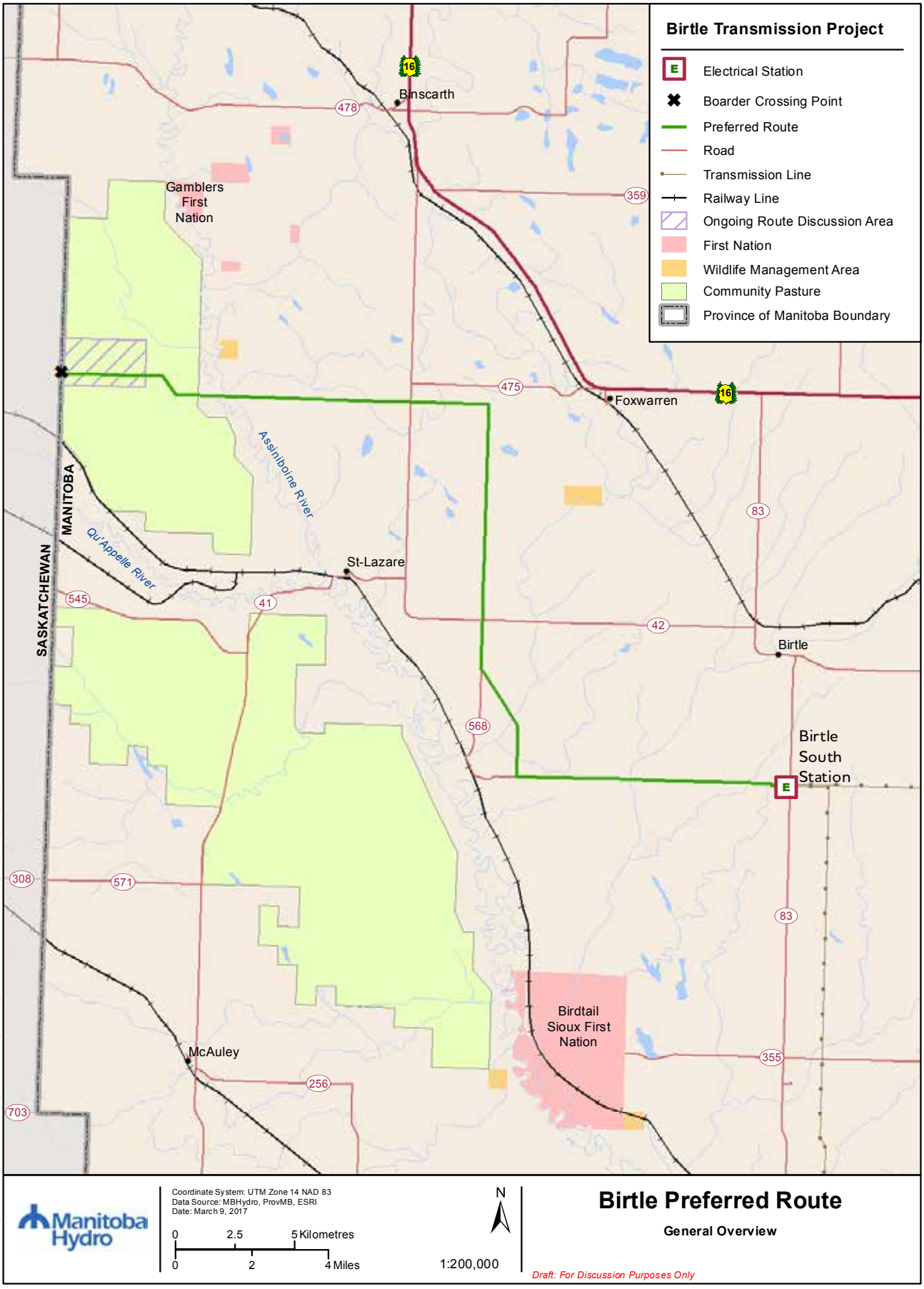
What happens after a final preferred route is selected

- Manitoba Hydro will notify Indigenous communities and organizations and other interested parties;
- Manitoba Hydro will notify potentially affected landowners by letter which will outline the upcoming regulatory review process;
- Manitoba Hydro will continue to notify potentially affected landowners of key project milestones;
- Manitoba Hydro will continue to maintain a project information line and email address to address project-related questions.

We would like to hear from you.

For more information about the Birtle Transmission Project and to sign up for email notices, please visit **www.hydro.mb.ca/birtle**.

If you would like further information please contact us at **LEAprojects@hydro.mb.ca** or call **1-877-343-1631**.



Available in accessible formats upon request.