

TO: Whitewater Common Council
FROM: Mason T. Becker, Community Development Director
DATE: August 18, 2026
RE: Resolution No. 2026-R-43— Opposing the Routing of the BECI 765-kV Transmission Line Project Through the City of Whitewater, Its Extraterritorial Planning Area, and Its Designated Growth Areas

BACKGROUND

The Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) approved its Tranche 2.1 long-range transmission portfolio in December 2024 and, in January 2026, selected MGS, a joint venture of Transource Energy and BHE Transmission, to develop the Bell Center–Columbia–Sugar Creek–Illinois/Wisconsin State Line (BECI) Project. BECI is an approximately 190-mile, \$1.2 billion, 765-kilovolt transmission line crossing nine Wisconsin counties, including Jefferson, Walworth, and Rock.

MGS has published preliminary study segments, several of which pass through or immediately adjacent to the City's corporate limits, extraterritorial planning jurisdiction, sewer service area, and lands designated for growth in the City's adopted comprehensive plan and in the proposed Future Land Use and Growth Area Map prepared by RDG Planning and Design as part of the ongoing comprehensive plan update.

Two clarifications are worth stating plainly, because both have already generated confusion among residents. First, the BECI Project is not the same as the study currently being conducted by We Energies in conjunction with Stantec; these are separate projects with different sponsors, purposes, and regulatory tracks. Second, the published mapping shows multiple lines near Whitewater, but those are alternative study segments rather than multiple proposed lines: only one transmission line will ultimately be built, and only one would pass by the City.

PRINCIPAL PROVISIONS OF THE RESOLUTION

Section 1. Formally opposes routing of the BECI Project, including structures, conductors, and right-of-way, within or immediately adjacent to the City's corporate limits; its extraterritorial planning jurisdiction and sewer service area; the southwest growth quadrant encompassing Whitewater High School, planned residential lands north of U.S. Highway 12, and the Hoffman property and surrounding lands south of U.S. Highway 12 planned for manufacturing and mixed-use development, which also includes a current active Tax Increment District #13 created in 2021; and the east-side corridor encompassing the Whitewater University Technology Park and Innovation Center, the City's industrial park, and adjoining future manufacturing lands.

Section 2. Requests that MGS remove all study segments within or adjacent to those areas from further study, and prioritize alternatives that avoid schools, population centers, and municipally planned

growth areas, with preference for co-location within or parallel to existing transmission and transportation corridors.

Section 3. Requests direct, formal consultation between MGS and City staff prior to route refinement, including provision of GIS data for all study segments within five miles of the City, and commits the City to constructive participation in identifying alternatives.

Section 4. Authorizes and directs the City Manager and staff to submit written comments to MGS before the September 7, 2026 deadline with supporting plan documents; to represent the City at MGS open houses and subsequent engagement rounds; to coordinate with the Whitewater Unified School District, UW–Whitewater, the Community Development Authority, Walworth and Jefferson Counties, and adjoining towns toward aligned positions; and to monitor the anticipated Public Service Commission proceeding and return to Council with a recommendation on formal intervention if any proposed route remains in the areas described in Section 1.

Section 5. Directs the City Clerk to transmit certified copies of the Resolution and Exhibit A to MGS, the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin, MISO, the City's legislative delegation, the Walworth and Jefferson County Boards, the School District, and the Towns of Whitewater, Cold Spring, Lima, and Richmond, among others in the study area.

Section 6. Provides that the Resolution takes effect upon adoption.

BASIS FOR THE CITY'S POSITION

The Resolution is grounded in the following findings:

- Scale and permanence. Typical project structures would rise approximately 175 feet above grade within a right-of-way of roughly 180 feet, permanently committing any corridor they occupy and materially constraining adjacent land uses.
- Southwest quadrant impacts. Study segments southwest and south of the City traverse lands that include Whitewater High School, planned residential development north of U.S. Highway 12 adjacent to the school campus, and lands south of U.S. Highway 12, including the Hoffman property, identified for future manufacturing and mixed-use development.
- East-side economic development impacts. Study segments east and northeast of the City pass through or adjacent to the Whitewater University Technology Park and Innovation Center, the City's industrial park, and adjoining future manufacturing lands, areas carrying substantial public infrastructure investment, active tax incremental financing through TID #10 (created in 2021), and private capital commitments made in reliance on the City's adopted land use plans.
- Fiscal consequences under levy limits. Because Wis. Stat. § 66.0602 ties allowable operating levy growth to net new construction, sterilizing developable residential and industrial land would remove taxable development capacity, suppress adjacent property values, and reduce the City's fiscal capacity to serve current and future residents.

- The opposition is to routing, not to the project's purpose. The Resolution expressly affirms the City's support for a reliable and resilient regional grid and recognizes transmission capacity as important to the manufacturing growth Whitewater is actively pursuing. The objection is to alternatives that concentrate the project's most severe and permanent land use costs on a growing city, near its school campus, and its designated growth areas when reasonable alternatives exist.

TIMING AND WHY NOW

MGS has stated that the published study segments are preliminary and subject to change based on landowner and community input, engineering, surveys, and studies. Public comment on the study segments is open through September 7, 2026; refined routes are expected to be presented at open houses in late 2026; and MGS anticipates filing an application for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity with the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin under Wis. Stat. § 196.491(3) in early 2027. The present route development phase — before segments are narrowed and an application is filed — is the appropriate and most effective time for the City to state its position formally and on the record.

STAFF COORDINATION AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

At least one property owner within the City has already received correspondence indicating that a study route may cross their property and has contacted Community Development directly. Staff are in active communication with that property owner, have requested a copy of the correspondence for the City's file, and will continue to serve as a point of contact for any Whitewater property owner who receives project mail. Staff have also coordinated with Jefferson County and Thrive Economic Development to obtain the underlying project materials. A question regarding the extent of the developer's condemnation authority has been referred to the City Attorney.

MGS is holding a series of community open houses throughout the project area, and residents may attend any event regardless of county of residence. The nearest event is scheduled at the Fair Park Activity Center in Jefferson on Wednesday, August 26, 2026, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.; additional open houses are planned in Walworth County and elsewhere along the corridor, and a virtual open house, online comment card, and interactive and PDF route maps are available on the MGS project website. The Community Development Director will attend at least one of these events on behalf of the City to gather first-hand information, raise the City's questions directly with the project team, and be positioned to answer resident inquiries accurately.

FISCAL IMPACT

Adoption of the Resolution has no direct budgetary impact. Staff time associated with comment preparation, open house attendance, and intergovernmental coordination will be absorbed within existing departmental resources. Should the Common Council later authorize formal intervention in a Public Service Commission proceeding, staff will return with a cost estimate at that time.

REQUESTED ACTION

Staff recommend that the Common Council adopt the attached Resolution 2026-R-43 opposing the routing of the BECI 765-kV Transmission Line Project within or immediately adjacent to the City of Whitewater, its extraterritorial planning jurisdiction, and its designated growth areas, and requesting that Midcontinent Grid Solutions, LLC (MGS) remove the associated study segments from further consideration.

Adoption before the September 7, 2026 public comment deadline allows the City's position to be filed on the record during the route development phase, when it carries the most weight.

ATTACHMENTS

- Drafted Resolution No. 2026-R-43 A Resolution Opposing the Routing of the BECI 765-kV Transmission Line Project Through the City of Whitewater, Its Extraterritorial Planning Area, and Its Designated Growth Areas, and Requesting Removal of the Associated Study Segments from Further Consideration
- Proposed Future Land Use and Growth Area Map from the City of Whitewater Comprehensive Plan Update, prepared by RDG Planning and Design (proposed; future Common Council adoption anticipated)
- Information from MGS on proposed BECID 765-kV Transmission Line Project