



Project: **Midwest Transmission Project**

Location: **Nebraska City, Neb., to Sibley, Mo.**

Clients: **Transource and OPPD**

Public Process Narrows Options From Trillions to One

Finding a route for running 180 miles of new high-voltage electric transmission line between substations in Nebraska and Missouri isn't as simple as drawing a straight line.

"We were looking at a spider web of 326 different line segments — that's more than 3 trillion route options," says Chris Wood, project manager. "We had to develop an algorithm just to analyze them all."

Within a year — after 20 public meetings, dozens of formal and informal contacts and hundreds of questions answered, concerns addressed and transactions completed — the Midwest Transmission Project indeed had a route for a new 345-kV electric transmission line: between an Omaha Public Power District (OPPD) substation near Nebraska City, Neb., and a Kansas City Power & Light (KCP&L) substation near Sibley, Mo.

Slated for construction beginning in the summer of 2015, the estimated \$400 million project will address increasing demands for reliable electric service in eastern Nebraska and northwest Missouri.

Transource (a joint venture between American Electric Power and Great Plains Energy) and OPPD hired routing and public involvement specialists from Burns & McDonnell to gather information, develop

route options, assess alternatives, analyze data, assist with selecting a final route and, eventually, secure necessary permits. Specialists worked with both companies to inform and engage people who live, govern and work in 17 counties within the study area. More than 2,000 people attended public meetings.

"We cultivated relationships throughout the project area," says Joab Ortiz, the project's public involvement manager for Burns & McDonnell. "We made it a collaborative process with a defensible routing decision."

The project team factored in how potential routes would affect farmers, wildlife, recreational areas, environmental resources, state and federal lands, and private properties. Meetings and site visits settled some issues and uncovered others. Public involvement professionals tracked ongoing efforts, contacts and agreements. A website provided schedules, explanations, contacts and answers to frequently asked questions.

Wood and Ortiz know the work — the outreach, the trillions of route options, all of it — paid off. "We didn't go with the shortest route," Wood says. "We came up with the best route for everybody."

For more information, contact Chris Wood, 816-822-3917.