PUBLIC COMMENTS

THURSDAY, APRIL 2, 2009

6:00 p.m.

In the Matter of the Route Permit Application for a 345 kV Transmission Line from Brookings County, South Dakota to Hampton, Minnesota

PUC Docket Number ET2/TL-08-1474

Sibley East Junior High
Middle Gym
500 Court Avenue
Gaylord, Minnesota

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MR. EK: All right. So what we'll do now is we'll open it up to some public comments, questions, concerns that you'd like to -- alternatives as well, I should say, that you'd like to see addressed in an environmental impact statement for this project. And, I guess, anyone have comments?

MR. PLATZ: What's the timetable for the --

MR. EK: We need to have you talk into the mic so we can get the court reporter -- excuse me, sir. If you could state your full name and spell it?

MR. PLATZ: Paul Platz, last name P-L-A-T-Z. What's the timetable for the completed final route choice, when will that be approved?

MR. EK: Yeah, as I said, I showed that flow sheet -- flow sheet -- flowchart, I should say. It's in my handout. Application acceptance, it starts the timetable, and that was January 29th, 2009. It's a year-long process. So by January 29, 2010 is when the Public Utilities Commission would supposedly make a decision on if this project should receive a permit or if it should not.

MR. PLATZ: Okay. I'm also a landowner,

farmer, along the preferred route on the southern side through Alfsborg Township, just south of Winthrop. As farmers, we don't know which side of the -- the line's coming past the township road by my place. It's going to go on one side of the road or the other, most likely. Who can answer the question of which side of the road the poles are going on?

MR. EK: That's a good question. And that's -- that's when I got into the permit and how detailed it can get. What I would suggest is, you know, go ahead and print out one of those maps or you can provide your address on a comment form. At this time we don't know what side of the road. They're just looking at that 1,000-foot route width, and somewhere in there would be that 150-foot right-of-way. However, if you submit a comment and show on one of the maps that one of the folks over there have been nicely printing out, showing, well, I would like it on this side of the road versus this side of the road, and send that in as a comment, we'll take a look at that and consider that. And I urge you to do that, because otherwise we won't know.

And then should a permit become issued,

the Applicants do come out and consult with landowners when it comes to that final, detailed design on where poles would go, as well, so that would also be an opportunity. But it wouldn't hurt to submit a comment or an alternative, I guess, alignment kind of showing your concern.

MR. PLATZ: All right. And then I think a final question from me. I happen to be in Alfsborg Township, Sections 30 and 19, where the line is coming through, and it also goes through Cornish Township there. It's really the fourth -- if people can see it from a distance there, it's the fourth map over from the left there. And the line comes in from the west there, jogs to the south, goes east and then takes a half-mile jog back to the north there and then proceeds east again and then jogs a half mile south.

Why the -- it seems to be a waste of, really, a mile of line either on the west end or on the east end. Somebody help us understand why we're wasting a mile of line. I happen to be on the west end. I'd like it to go north. I'm sure the people on the east end would like it to go south. If somebody could just answer us why we're wasting a mile of line in that area, be it on the west or the

east end.

MR. EK: I think I'll let Craig answer this one.

MR. POORKER: Yeah. People have a lot of questions on why we went one place or the other. And it's hard for me to know exactly, but I think if we -- if we look at that portion, I could probably come up with something, looking at it a little more closely, at the map, and we can do that afterwards. But what we tried to do, again, was stick to roadways as much as we can. I'm not sure if that segment right there (indicating) -- I was out there actually driving through it today on the way here, looking at some of that, and I know that it does take a half-mile jog right there. So I don't know if we're going along a field line right there, if there wasn't a roadway?

MR. PLATZ: Well, on the west end it's about half going through fields and half going along roadways. Looking at the map where I am, I see a feature in there, it's called Sand Lake. And I'm wondering if there are rules or regulations regarding going near lakes. Now, if it were to take -- not take that jog half a mile to the south and then a half mile north on the west end, it would

go closer to the lake than what is proposed, but it still would not -- I don't know what it would be, maybe 500 feet from the lake. So I'm wondering if the lake is the feature there.

MR. POORKER: Okay. Now, if we were a half mile north, we'd be within 500 feet of the lake? Yeah, I don't -- I don't think that would be the issue. Wetlands are sometimes an issue for us, but most wetlands along this -- the route that we've shown you, the two routes, most of them we can span that. We can span about a thousand feet. So we try to stay out of wetlands for construction reasons, for the most part, because it is quite damaging, pretty hard to build. We try to do most of our construction, if we can, in the wintertime so we're damaging fields less and damaging those wetlands or lakes a little bit less. But if we're 500 feet from a lake, I don't know that that was the feature on there for going that direction. But let's take a look at it after the meeting. I'll probably have a better idea for you.

MR. EK: All right. Additional comments, questions for anyone?

Oh, sir, if you could state your name and spell it.

MR. KAMRATH: I am Dwayne Kamrath, the last name is spelled K-A-M-R-A-T-H. I'm a resident of North Le Sueur.

Many of you travel back over here to Gaylord and this area from Minneapolis through Belle Plaine and come down the Minnesota River Valley Road past the Jolly Green Giant sign. And if you know where that is on the four-lane highway, I live right across the street on the opposite side from the Jolly Green Giant sign, up on that hill.

For some reason, when the people plotted on the map over here for Section 10, our home was not even found because it's in the woods, but it's within about 35 to 40 feet, I would say, of the proposed power line. Our home happens to -- when I bought it eight years ago, I bought it for the tremendous view. As you look down the river valley, I can look from my back patio and I can see 10 miles, up to 12 miles down, and I can see the spire of Christ Chapel at Gustavus at St. Peter from my house. If the power line goes where it goes, it's going to ruin the view for many homeowners that are up on that side. There's five older houses up, right up in that area, and within the last ten years there's been a subdivision built back in that whole

area.

I know there's a meeting next Monday night in which many of the people will be coming to Henderson for and I'm not able to be there, so that's why I'm here tonight. I work for the Minnesota Twins, and I'll be up at the Dome watching the Twins play.

But anyhow, getting back, I have some other concerns here. I think one big -- a big concern should be, as we pick the route -- and so I'm speaking that there should be -- we should go on record -- I would like to go on record as one person that we would choose the alternate route, north, saving the beautiful Minnesota River Valley for its view as you come down into the valley, and not put a power line there. But also, number one for my house, if that line came up, and I think the drop-off there from my hill and my corner of my deck is only about 25 feet from that, so I'm really close there, 20, if that came straight up, it would -- if that was the top of the pole, that pole would be right across the view of my personal property, and it would constitute, you know, for me as a property owner -- the reason why I bought that was -- part of that home was the view. And this would be a

really -- that's sort of a minor thing, but it's a major thing to me.

But bigger than that, I think the view and the aesthetics and the environment right below -- right on the Minnesota River directly below our house in the woods as you -- just a half mile out there, hardly that, is Bucks Lake. Bucks Lake this past season had, I believe, seven nests of eagles nesting in there. This power line is going to go right past them, and you can imagine what kind of impact that will have. So I really speak out against that area.

Now, I was talking to somebody else from Le Sueur today and I understand perhaps, and maybe you can answer that, is that the city fathers of Le Sueur want it to come there because it would be closer to their power station. Could there be some truth to that? I believe at a January meeting or something they had representatives from some organization in the city council meeting.

And so I think you got -- and maybe that's the goal. These things all have to be weighed out, and I guess all I want to say is register my one vote. And hopefully -- I was just over there and had the mapmaker make a map.

Hopefully I appear on the next map in Section 10. There's five of our houses right there close to the edge of the road overlooking the river valley. Only four are plotted and for some reason they missed mine. I've got a big picture here I'll show you later.

Thank you.

MR. EK: Thank you. And I just want to let you know you did an excellent job on getting the issues and comments in the record. You specified them just how they should be, so we'll have them on record for you. Also, I'd urge you to send in a letter if you want to, but the comments tonight will suffice as well.

Craig, did you want to maybe answer that question about the...

MR. POORKER: Sure. Mr. Kamrath, nice to finally put a face with the name. We've been playing telephone tag for, what, two or three months, where both of us are rarely in the office or at home. And I appreciate those comments. And it's not minor. You talk about the aesthetics and going through the river valley. Crossing the Minnesota River is a huge obstacle for us. I mean, that's one of our bigger challenges. And we visited

with a lot of folks at the county and at the city, City of Le Sueur. So those are very important issues. Visited with Doris Hagen with Henderson Feathers also. So we're having some good discussions, no doubt.

But your other comment about the City of Le Sueur and how that would benefit them, I'm not sure how it would benefit them exactly because we have a substation which is east of there a few miles. And either Helena Township or Derrynane Township, we're looking at a substation in one of those two locations, depending on where the state sends us for a route in the end, next April or so.

MR. KAMRATH: My question is, if they did the alternative route instead of this preferred route, that would have a bearing on the substation, wouldn't it? And so for the residents of Le Sueur, that's a big issue, I suspect, for the city fathers, cost-wise and everything. What is the issue there in terms of -- you know, so I'm a citizen of Le Sueur too and I pay taxes, et cetera, there too. And so I mean -- but not -- but they have to run the business of providing the costs of electricity. As a citizen, I'm just trying to figure out what's going on here, that most people around that area

seem to be -- to resonate with trying to get a pitch in to have a northern route, the alternate route, chosen rather than the preferred route across the river right there by Le Sueur. But it seems that the city fathers are determined to not listen to these people that live in North Le Sueur proper, and they're bound to do that. If it's, I'm not sure, politically or what's going on.

MR. POORKER: Okay. And the discussion of the preferred route, we would have a substation in Derrynane Township in Le Sueur County. And if we were to -- if we're to go across at Belle Plaine, across the Minnesota River there, we would come back down south into Helena Township and build a substation right there. So, either way, it's not that far apart from each other no matter where those two substations go. But when we have a substation in either Derrynane Township or Helena Township, it's not that far apart from each other. The most -- and to the far west our other substation would be near Franklin, east of Franklin.

So how that would help or not help the City of Le Sueur, I'm not sure. But, of course, they have substations there in their area to serve their electric utility, and there would be a

connection between probably that substation, perhaps, to get into Le Sueur. So I would guess -- I'm not sure, I'm not an engineer. I'm not a planner, I'm not sure how that would affect them, good or bad. And it's probably up to them to make comments on this project as well.

MR. EK: Thank you, sir. Excellent comments.

Any other comments?

Yes, sir. If you could state your full name and spell it, please.

MR. KRAMER: Robin Kramer, K-R-A-M-E-R. The question I have, when you talk about a 150-foot power line right-of-way, does that mean you would stay off the road right-of-way at least 75 feet?

MR. EK: What -- what would usually happen is to share the road right-of-way. So you'd have your -- they'd put the poles as close as they can. And they have to, you know, have conversations with the local -- the county highway or Minnesota Highway Department. But they put the pole as close as they can to the road right-of-way, and they'd share half of that road right-of-way, 75 feet on one side. The other 75 feet would be into, you know, the respective landowner or whatever it may be.

1 Does that answer your question, sir?
2 MR. KRAMER: Yes.
3 MR. EK: If you could state your name and
4 spell it, please?
5 MR. SCHERER: Doug Scherer,
6 S-C-H-E-R-E-R.
7 My question would be the closeness, the
8 proximity to the farm sites and the potential health
9 risks for -- anything, for animals or humans.
10 MR. EK: Yeah, that's a good question.
11 And it's come up a lot in the past, you know, few
12 meetings this week. And that's a subject of
13 electric and magnetic fields as well as with the
14 livestock, the stray voltage issue. And those are
15 two items we do just automatically study in this
16 EIS, and it sounds as if we're going have to --
17 we're going to put some work into those subjects on
18 this EIS because it sounds of great importance to
19 people.
20 So just to let you know, though, we --
21 you know, in past environmental assessments, we have
22 studied EMF and we have found, you know, the studies
23 we've looked at and so forth, they have not found a
24 causal link between electric/magnetic fields and
25 leukemia or cancer. However, they have not ruled it

out. They say the risk is small, or little in some cases.

So that leads us to continue research and researching current -- as current information as we possibly can on those subjects so we get it right in this environmental impact statement so we can provide the right mitigation, provide the right route, and provide the right information to folks when we write this.

Stray voltage, same thing. It is -- it is a grounding type issue. It's something that we put in the permit that if there is a problem, a farmer finds a problem with stray voltage, that the company would have to come out and figure out what the problem is and repair that problem. So those are two very important subjects that have come up at all meetings and something we will -- we will be studying further in depth.

MR. SCHERER: Do they have a footage away from a farm site or do they have a problem going right over a house or, you know, is there a setback from that just like there would be from a wetland or a lake or whatever it might be?

MR EK: Yeah, I guess there is no general rule. I guess the general rule would be is you

cannot have a structure within that 150-foot right-of-way. So I guess my best answer would be is if you had a structure right at that right-of-way, you would be 75 feet away from the center line of that transmission line. So 75 feet. There is no guidelines in Minnesota as to how far, but we do -- they go by the National Electric Safety Code. And when you're talking about going over that distance, it's kind of alarming, I believe it's 30 feet or less, but in this case that's -- no, that's avoided. And so to answer your question, nothing can be within that 150-foot right-of-way. So I guess 75 feet would be a distance that you could kind of look at there.

Any other good questions, sir?

MR. SCHERER: No.

MR. EK: All right. Yes, sir, if you could state your name and spell it, please?

MR. WISTE: Mile Wiste, W-I-S-T-E. First, I'm going to be like everyone, I don't want it to go the way it goes past my place, so I'm going to place the vote to go toward the preferred. Also, what's the definition of the preferred and the alternate? I mean, are you going to flip a coin? I mean, is it 50/50 at this point or is preferred

actually the preferred in my terminology?

MR. EK: No, no. It's -- everything's on the table now. There's no -- oh, yeah, you can call them 1 and 2, you could call them A and B, you can call them green and yellow, whatever you want. It's just, I guess, throughout history they've always been called, you know, a preferred or an alternative. That's the company's choice, you know, they have the preferred and the alternative. But from my understanding, either one of them is fine. They're just required by state law to supply two routes. So I guess they just name them, you know, preferred and alternative. But there is no flipping of coins.

We take a look at the environment -- in the environmental impact statement at both of them and the impacts or potential impacts along both the lines and compare and figure out which one would be better, along with alternatives that are submitted by folks during this comment period.

MR. WISTE: Well, then, I guess when I first got the literature, I saw preferred and alternate and, being as I'm on the alternate, I wasn't quite as concerned. It's kind of a misleading statement, then.

MR. EK: Yeah, I guess it could be. And -- yeah, I agree with you. That's why -- that's why I urge you to get on the mailing list, because if things change, then you will be notified. You know, if things start swaying and alternatives that are submitted by other folk that kind of change the route to different from what you even see up here, being on that mailing list will allow you to receive that information so, therefore, you can comment on those changes when they do happen. But, no, I understand what you're saying when you say preferred and alternative. It's like, oh, this one is a green light, this one...

So any other comments? All right. Thank you.

Any other comments, questions?

Yes, sir. If you could state your name and spell it, please?

MR. WILMOT: Yeah, my name is Jim Wilmot, last name W-I-L-M-O-T.

After reading your sheet here, it says factors considered for the route, use of existing transportation, pipeline and electrical transmission systems. I'm not real sure what the size of the -- of the power line that's south of Hutchinson about

four miles, but it seems there's already an existing route or an existing power line not too far north of the proposed one here. Is there a possibility that they would incorporate this power line or proposed power line with an already existing power line to alleviate a lot of the environmental and other concerns?

MR. EK: That's a good question, and yes, there are. I'll let Craig answer the specifics on the line you're talking about, but there are instances in this project where, yes, indeed, they will be sharing existing transmission lines and building them on the same structure and so on and so forth. Maybe Craig can answer the one about the -- Hutchinson, is that correct?

MR. WILMOT: Yeah.

MR. EK: Okay.

MR. POORKER: I think it's a 69-kilovolt line, if I'm not mistaken. It's a smaller, on wood poles, is that the one?

MR. WILMOT: No, no, it's the -- the line that I'm referring to is high voltage. It's got four whatever, antenna, four-legged --

MR. POORKER: Lattice style?

MR. WILMOT: Yes, thank you.

MR. POORKER: The one you're referring to, that's also a 345-kilovolt line, and that -- and that's one that we want to connect into. That's the one east of the river, right, and goes through Helena Township, Derrynane, comes at a diagonal, I think. But we do --

MR. WILMOT: No.

MR. POORKER: Okay. But we do look at other transmission line routes. Unfortunately, with this one here, it's a double-circuit transmission line -- in other words, there are two transmission lines hanging on that one pole -- and that doesn't allow us to put a third one on there. If we had a third one on there, we'd have to build probably H-frames and that would spread out into ag land. But we did look at perhaps in some areas we could maybe be on the other side of the road of that, but that's not something we like to do either if it is indeed following a roadway. So it's pretty tough because we have two transmission lines already. If we were building a single circuit, then I think we could do that more often or in more locations.

However, at the river crossings, there that's kind of a special issue, because we don't want to create another corridor going across the

Minnesota River. So in those cases, for a short distance, we may hook up with an existing transmission line and put all three of those on a specialty structure. That would not be a single pole, but it would be probably an H-frame structure to get across the Minnesota River and those big backwaters and wetlands and stuff like that. Does that answer your question?

MR. WILMOT: (Witness moved head affirmatively.)

MR. EK: Thank you. Other questions and comments? I should get down here so I can see folks.

All right. If you could state your name and spell it, sir.

MR. YOUNG: Jim Young, Y-O-U-N-G.

Is there any reason that you don't try to follow railroad right-of-ways?

MR. EK: That's a good question, and in some cases road rights-of-way are followed. In this project, offhand I guess I can't think of an area right now where road -- railroad right-of-way is followed, but maybe Craig here can help you out.

MR. POORKER: Yes, we did look at railroad right-of-ways, and the railroad that runs

through the area generally runs along Highway 19. And likewise with Highway 19, both Highway 19 and the railroad present a little bit of a problem for us because they always go through cities. And if we were to follow Highway 19 or the railroad, every time we got to a city, we'd have to go way around it rather than through it, because we -- it's pretty tough for us to go right through town. So that was probably the one factor that kind of took us away from the railroad and Highway 19, because there are all these towns five or six miles apart. So that was a routing challenge for us.

MR. EK: Does that answer your question, sir?

MR. YOUNG: Yes. Although -- it answered my question, but yet it does do some jogging on a half mile that Paul just talked about a little while ago.

MR. EK: I'm not quite sure how to address -- how to address that. But the problem is the different jogs that the line's taking or...

MR. YOUNG: Yeah. I don't know how much more the effort would be to go around some of these smaller towns. I'm sure you must have looked into it in quite some detail. I thought it would be kind

of a waste that we could not use that because we don't have any other real use of any other property there.

MR. EK: And you're speaking of the railroad, railroad right-of-way. Yeah. And I think -- I think Craig addressed that a lot of the lines go through towns, small towns. I think they were trying to avoid those small towns. So, therefore, to avoid the small towns, avoid those railroad right-of-ways. I think that was -- that was the reason for not following that.

Any other additional -- yes, sir. If you could spell and -- state and spell your name?

MR. GREWE: Fred Grewe, G-R-E-W-E.

I'd like clarification on that 150-foot easement. Does that start at the center of the road or does that start on the edge of the county's right-of-way for that road?

MR. EK: It -- it depends on negotiations with the county transportation or Minnesota transportation. But it would start on the road right-of-way or sometimes five feet outside of that right-of-way. Am I correct in saying that?

MR. POORKER: It would be -- the center line of the transmission line would be just outside

of the road right-of-way. When we are following a roadway, whether it's a township road, county road, state road, it's our intent to put the center line of the transmission line just outside of the road right-of-way, outside of the road easement or whatever the road authority may own. So if it's a county road and they have 50 feet of right-of-way, we'd probably be out there about 55 feet with our center line. And then the easement itself would be 75 feet towards the roadway and then 75 feet onto private land ownership.

MR. GREWE: Fred Grewe again. My next question is, then what about existing power lines that are in the area right now that follow the roadway, how would they be affected?

And I have one other question, too. With this 150-foot range, what constitutes a building, a farm site building?

MR. POORKER: Okay. What was your first question, again?

MR. GREWE: Okay. Right now the power line that's going along the highway, right on the edge of the right-of-way for the highway, they're off that, and you said it would be five feet beyond that. What's going to happen to the existing power

line that's there?

MR. POORKER: Okay. The existing power line is probably a distribution line, like the ones that run down in the road right-of-way, go to your homes, supply your homes with electricity. Then that's something we would have to negotiate with the distribution company, whether it's a co-op or a municipal or whoever that may be.

MR. GREWE: Northern States.

MR. POORKER: Northern States? Okay. And so that's who's serving your property, evidently, and we would have to negotiate with them on what to do with that. Sometimes we could just bury it, the distribution line, or maybe they'll ask us to put it on the other side of the road, too. So that's something we would have to negotiate with them.

MR. GREWE: Fred Grewe again. My other question is, you've got a 150-foot right-of-way. What kind of buildings are -- that would be in there, what constitutes farm site buildings?

MR. POORKER: Generally in our 75-foot right-of-way we don't want to have any structures if we can help it. There may be some small ones that can -- if there's enough clearance, of course,

between the wire and the building itself. Sometimes little yard sheds are there, and a lot of times those are okay because our line is going to be up there a little ways. They're going to be 35 to 40 feet above the ground. So it all depends on what kind of structure it might be. But we're also -- we tried to route this so that there are no structures of any kind within that -- within the transmission line right-of-way.

MR. EK: Does that answer your question, sir?

MR. GREWE: Understood.

MR. EK: All right. Thank you.

Any additional questions? Yes, sir.

MR. KAMRATH: Dwayne Kamrath from North Le Sueur again, along the Minnesota River Valley and the Minnesota River there.

Just a point here as to the height of these. I've heard different heights. I've heard sometimes these power lines would be 100 -- over 100 feet tall they could be, from bottom to top. And then I thought I just heard something like 35, 40 feet, something. What's -- what are we normally talking about here?

MR. EK: I think what Craig was talking

about is actual -- the height of the line where it's hanging from the ground would be, you know, 30 to 50 feet from the ground. The actual structure itself are -- you got it, the sag, so that bottom point of the line. The structures themselves in the application are proposed to be 130 to 175 feet high. And that --

MR. KAMRATH: And around?

MR. EK: I don't know what the diameter -- I believe it's four feet in diameter -- or eight feet?

MR. POORKER: Oh, the length from tower to tower is his question. And from one structure to the next structure, that length would be -- average a thousand feet, yeah.

MR. EK: Thank you, sir.

Any additional questions, comments?

Yes, ma'am.

MS. BONLEHE: Hi, I'm Donna Bonlehe, B-O-N-L-E-H-E. It's hard to get a handle on what this really -- what implications this has. What -- can you name some lines that are this size near us and some -- after those lines have been built, what did people nearby say, like, you know, what would they say if they were here about how it affects them

now that it's built? So two things, examples and landowners and communities, how do they feel about it?

MR. EK: Well, that's a good question and a tough question, because I guess I don't have -- I don't have an answer for what communities -- I guess I've never heard personally on what people think after -- you know, after it's been built. I don't hear from them.

Maybe, Craig, have you -- could you give examples of other 345s in the area or...

MR. POORKER: Sure. In this area there's a 345-kilovolt line that runs through Derrynane and Helena Township, that runs from, I believe, Mankato up to near Carver, I think it is, or -- what is it?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Shakopee.

MR. POORKER: Shakopee. And that one is built on both kinds of structures. It's built on H-frame structures, in other words, two poles -- two-pole structures, and also some of them are on lattice structures, and that is a 345-kilovolt line. Ours, of course, is going to be on single-pole structures, but it's the same voltage as that one.

What do people say after they're built? As a small utility company, we stay in pretty good

contact with our landowners, and generally our discussion after that is how we maintain the right-of-way. That's what people want to know, is if we have to come out to their property to maintain something, to trim trees or clear brush or something like that, they want to know ahead of time. And generally our relationships are pretty good after -- after it's built if we take good care of it and respond to them if there's a problem.

MR. EK: Thanks, Craig.

Let me add to that. Also, a form, there is a form -- a complaint form that we include in our permit. So if folks do have complaints with regards to the transmission line that's built, there is a complaint form that's part of the permit that can be sent in to help resolve any problems or issues that have come up, just to let you know.

Does that answer your question?

MS. BONLEHE: Yes.

MR. EK: All right. Any other additional questions, comments?

Yes, sir. If you could just restate your name?

MR. SCHERER: Doug Scherer again. My question would be the difference between -- this is

1 going to be mostly single-pole power line? Why the
2 single-pole versus the H versus your four-pole
3 lattice? And then also on the right-of-way, is
4 right-of-way farmable or what is compensation,
5 anything like that?
6 MR. EK: I can answer the single pole.
7 Yes, most of this will be the single-pole
8 structures. As Craig was stating earlier, the river
9 crossings and difficult topography areas would
10 usually require an H-frame. And it depends on
11 engineering and what the engineers deem is needed to
12 adequately support those conductors through a
13 certain area, so they design the structures to
14 accommodate that.
15 For the right-of-way, your right-of-way
16 question, yeah, you can farm underneath the
17 right-of-way. You can pretty much do whatever you
18 want. Of course, you don't -- they don't want to
19 have high-growing trees that are going to impact the
20 transmission line, or structures underneath. But,
21 yeah, you can farm underneath it, farm around it,
22 and plant under it and do normally what you'd do.
23 I'll let Craig answer your question about
24 easements and payments or compensation, because we
25 at the state don't deal with that part of the whole

process. But -- so let's have Craig answer that one.

MR. POORKER: Thanks. The question on easement acquisition, and I guess that's my background. And we do have to acquire easements from any property that we cross, any private property. And it's 75 feet and, like Scott said, it's -- whatever you're using it for now, you can use it for pretty much whatever you are.

The easement that we acquire is for us to build, maintain, and to operate that transmission line, and that's it. People ask oftentimes what else can go in there, who else can come and build something in there. Nobody can without your permission. So if somebody wants to come in and put a bike path in, a telephone line, a communication line of some kind, a gas line, they can't do that unless they get another easement from you as a landowner.

And a little bit about easement compensation. Easement compensation is based on what your land values are. And you as farmers also have an interest in crop damage, if we damage that during construction. Soil compaction is oftentimes an issue, impact to gates and fences and any and all

that stuff, we have to compensate you for. So not just for the easement acquisition itself, but any construction damage, crop damage. And also, likewise, if we have to come back and maintain the easement or maintain the poles or do any work in the future, we do our best to contact landowners before we do that, but just like during construction, if we damage something while we're doing any maintenance or whatever, we have to settle with the landowner again.

MR. EK: Thanks, Craig.

Does that answer your question, sir?

MR. SCHERER: Pretty much. I guess the question going back to the three different types of poles. Does one system have a better wind tolerance or longevity of the power line? And then referring back to the one question about whether this line couldn't have been piggybacked onto another 345, what are the odds of something like that happening to this line somewhere along the line later?

MR. POORKER: The reason that we decided to go with single-pole structures is because we're going through some significant agricultural areas. And Xcel Energy just did a project down in southern Minnesota through -- or along I-90 and, again,

through a lot of ag land. We went with this structure because we would not have an H-frame -- if you have an H-frame structure, that means we have a pole out in your field. The design that we chose is more expensive than an H-frame or lattice, but I think in the long run it's a better investment to keep it out of fields as best we can.

And your next question was, oh, yeah, how's it built for standing up to wind, ice loading and things like that. It's built for -- to handle a pretty good wind. I don't think a tornado is going to take this down. It's built on a concrete pier that sits in the ground, and that's probably six to eight feet in diameter, and we set the pole on top of that and bolt it down. That concrete pier goes into the ground 30 or 40 feet, depending on what the soil conditions are. And it's, again, about 150 to 170 feet tall. And it's designed also to handle a one-inch ice coating on the conductor wire, which is pretty significant. That means a three-inch diameter ice coating on there, because the conductor itself is about an inch in diameter. So it's pretty sturdy.

If something like this, this pole, should fail, it's going to fail partway up the pole, near

the top. It's just going to fold over and just hang there. These poles are not going to tip over. If they do, it's a significant event and there will be probably other issues that we'll all be worrying about if something like that happens. So it's a pretty sturdy structure.

Oh, what are the odds of another transmission line coming right here and attaching to it? We're designing this pole also to already handle two transmission lines, and that's what we're going to build if we get a permit. So there's not room for a third one to be on there at all. These poles will be designed -- be designed for these transmission lines and that's it. They're not built to handle any more weight other than that, to be added on to that.

So -- and if something like that was to happen, it goes through the whole process all over again. The certificate of need process, the route permit process starts all over. And if there was to be another third line, we'd have to tear this whole thing out and redesign a whole new structure, and that's probably not going to happen. That would be cost-prohibitive, I would think.

MR. EK: Thank you, Craig.

Does that answer your question, sir?

MR. KAMRATH: Just a quick question. Dwayne Kamrath from Le Sueur.

Maybe it's a foolish question, conduction of electricity and stuff. But why aren't the wires buried cable, underground instead of above, and then you could eliminate all these poles and stuff? Cable TV, I mean, all this -- or can't we do something through the satellites? Why are we using this archaic, old method of lines like this? Isn't -- can't we -- is it too cost-prohibitive for Great River or -- why are we, as property owners, having -- having to deal with this in the first place, I guess is my question, going back to square one? If you could answer, why not buried, underground cable?

MR. EK: I think Craig can answer that. But it's technology right now. It's -- it's difficult. This is a large line, a large line to bury. So technology -- large in voltage, I should say. So you have -- it is also cost-prohibitive. It costs quite a bit more money. And also if there are problems in the line, it's hard to find problems if something happens along the line. And maybe I'll let Craig talk about it more, but those are three of

1 the issues: Construction, cost, and the technology
2 available to underground lines of this size.
3 MR. POORKER: That's right, Mr. Kamrath.
4 And it is -- these transmission lines are really
5 hot, and they need to be cooled. And it's the air
6 that cools them when they're aboveground. To
7 construct them underground is a significant
8 construction project, a pretty wide trench, 20 feet
9 wide, and we would probably be required to build a
10 redundancy -- in other words, two sets of
11 transmission lines, one on one side of the trench,
12 one on the other.
13 And a lot of people think that -- that
14 they are kind of out of sight, out of mind, but we
15 do have to keep that right-of-way, then, totally
16 clear of everything. And it is difficult for us to
17 find a fault. It's reliable when it's underground,
18 but if something does go wrong, it's a little bit
19 harder, takes longer for us to find the fault, where
20 it is, and then it's a whole other construction
21 project just to fix that fault as well.
22 The technology is not quite there, but
23 the utility companies -- and there are some
24 electrical trade groups that are always looking for
25 some new technology to do something like that. But

cooling is probably the biggest problem for us right now.

MR. EK: Does that answer your question, sir?

MR. KAMRATH: Thank you.

MR. EK: Yes, ma'am.

MS. HAHN: My name is Vera Hahn, H-A-H-N.

And I want to know -- some of these farmers are paying between $250 and $300 an acre rent. Will that -- will the crop produce just as good underneath them lines and a half a mile away?

And then another thing, too, is when I was taking radiation, I drove past a substation at Waconia, and all the other corn was froze but that corn around that substation was not froze.

And then the other question I want to know is when these homes are close to these power lines, will it affect their TV and the radio? Because last Sunday as we drove to Hutchinson, we drove through that power line and we didn't have no radio. It was all static until we got away.

MR. EK: Thank you. Those are good questions. I think your first question about plants growing underneath the power lines, in all of our studies and cases we've studied, no, that does not

impact the growth of plants. No, not -- no. That's not something we've seen, that EMF, electric or magnetic fields, has an impact on plant growth beneath power lines.

For instance, that's why the power line companies need to go out, to make sure that that right-of-way is cleared of trees and brush.

MS. HAHN: How come around the substation it was green and all the other corn was froze at Waconia?

MR. EK: Yeah, that's -- that's a question I guess I couldn't answer. I'm not -- not sure that I could answer that question. I don't know if -- maybe the pavement around the substation was making it hotter. I don't know. That's a good question, but it's a question, unfortunately, I can't answer for you.

I forget what your third question...

MS. HAHN: How will it affect the homes that are too close to the power line, our TV reception and radio?

MR. EK: Yeah. Good question. And that is also something we do study regardless of comment. It's something that's included in the environmental impact statement. And what we've seen in past

transmission line studies is that that is not a factor. The transmission lines do not impact the television signals and radio signals. We just haven't seen it in the studies that we've looked at. However, that doesn't preclude us from continuing to study that issue in this environmental impact statement and looking at, you know, the new data that comes out. There's always new data, and we'll always keep on top of that to make sure we're informing everybody correctly.

MS. HAHN: Why don't you build this plant down by the Cities where they need the power, instead of 200 miles away and building this line and going through good agricultural land? And I think it's going to cause a lot of diseases and stuff, because if anybody has gone through cancer in seven months, you're going through Prairie Hill.

MR. EK: Yeah, your question addresses -- it's a need issue. And right now for this project there is a need docket, and right here tonight we're talking about routing of the project. April 15th and 16th of this month, the Public Utilities Commission will make a decision on whether this project is needed. Depending on that decision -- if they say it's needed, then this routing continues to

go forward. If they say it's not needed, this routing -- this project and routing ends on that date.

And that question you asked, why don't they build it in the Cities, that's part of the need, that they study in the need process, so we don't address it in the routing here. But the 15th and 16th of this month the utilities commission will address the need of this project.

MS. HAHN: I feel there is so much waste of electricity. I mean, we have to supply our needs, not our wants. I mean, out here we don't care about the ball games down in the Cities. I won't spend a nickel.

MR. EK: Thanks for your comment, ma'am.

MR. KAMRATH: Go, Twins. No, Dwayne Kamrath from Le Sueur again.

Just thinking about this a little bit more, about the -- I'm back there and the distance between the power lines, power poles of a thousand feet you're saying, a baseball guy like me figures, well, that's like three football fields in length, put lengthwise there. That's quite a span. It would be helpful, though, I think, as this committee or whoever is going to be out there, rather than

sending out letters, findings to us who are along the -- whichever line it goes on, and about half of us here probably are going to be affected and half of us won't, but I personally would like the respect of the power company, of the commerce department, and the people -- the powers that be, that before they do that, they stop along the line and meet face to face every individual that's going to have a power pole somewhat close to them. You could do that. I don't know how many -- you know, it's 200-some miles. But every property owner along there deserves the respect and a visit, a personal visit, a face-to-face, not a -- twenty-hundred (sic) letters that do nothing. Because I think in that visit, not -- not that we -- not that I or anyone else would be hostile, but that we would want to say, you know, let's use some common sense where this thousand feet is from one pole to another. We can place -- especially if you've got five houses in a row, like we do in my situation. If you start at point zero over there before point one, maybe there's an alternative where you can get all the way up past five in that thousand feet. That's a long ways. But if they just simply go every thousand feet just down the line because that's the way we do

it and that's the cheapest way, you're going to have a lot of people angry out there.

Thank you.

MR. EK: That's a very good question. And actually, Craig can correct me if I'm wrong, but once -- or if, I should say, a permit is issued, a route width is issued, the power companies do indeed go out to those landowners. They stake the locations and they will work with the landowners.

MR. KAMRATH: And hopefully those stakes are then subject to change as they deal with the local five people as neighbors, to be a good neighbor to one another instead of just that's where the stake is and that's too bad. Hopefully that's not the attitude. That's why I want to go record -- on record as saying, and I hope wherever it goes there's some respect and dignity shown to the farmers and to the landowners, the property owners out here.

MR. EK: Yeah. And as a matter of fact that does happen. And I'll let Craig talk to that as well. But, yes, they are moved. And they're not just placed every thousand feet. They can be 700 feet or -- you know, it's not 1,000 feet, 1,000 feet, 1,000 feet. They will go out and work

with the landowners.

And, Craig, maybe you can speak to this a little more?

MR. POORKER: Yeah. That's exactly right. That's exactly what we do. We visit with every single landowner out there. We have to get easements from them. And we do talk with them about where we put the poles, because there's a lot of drain tile out there that we don't know about. There may be some buried cable that maybe you buried from one building to the next, electric cable or something like that. There's a lot of stuff that an individual landowner knows. And that's why we have an interview process. We sit down and visit with every one of them.

And we do move the poles. What I -- what we do is put a stake in the ground and say this is where we -- where we have designed the pole, how is this? And that's part of the easement acquisition process, the negotiating process. And if you, as a landowner, want it moved maybe, perhaps to your property corner instead of in your yard, that's certainly something we're open to talking about. Or I'd like to show to a landowner, is there anything we need to be concerned about as we're going along a

roadway, and oftentimes it might be sitting on top of a drain tile and let's just move it ten feet, twenty feet, and get it out of the way. And we're certainly open to doing that, absolutely.

MR. KAMRATH: Thank you.

MR. EK: All right. Any other questions or comments tonight?

Well, with that, then, again, I urge you to either grab one of the comment forms in the back, or grab one of the handouts with the presentation that have the websites that you can go on and provide comments. But the comment forms, please submit them by April 30th. If you have any issues give me a call. If you have any problems or need any direction on how to write the comment, how to get it to me, I'd be happy to help you. But it's very important that we hear from you and your comments and concerns so we can get these into the environmental impact statement.

So thank you all for coming.

(Public comment concluded.)