PUBLIC COMMENTS

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1, 2009

12:00 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

Prairie's Edge Casino & Resort
5616 Prairie's Edge Lane
Granite Falls, Minnesota

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MR. EK: So now we'll open it up to comments that any of you have. Comments, issues, concerns, alternatives that you'd like to be included for us to look at in the environmental impact statement. So I guess we'll just kind of go by show of hands.

Who has comments?

Please spell your name for the court reporter.

MR. ANDERSON: Gary Anderson, G-A-R-Y, A-N-D-E-R-S-O-N.

And I know there's always concern on stray voltage, and I've got a livestock operation and it's a concern and I'd like to have you cover that a little bit.

MR. EK: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Anderson. That's a good question and, as a matter of fact, many of the past projects -- in fact, all of the past projects we've done include that category of stray voltage we look at. We haven't -- you know, we haven't found that to be a problem. If it is a problem, it's something that's put in the permit and it's something that is required to be resolved by the applicant.

However, we still continue to look at it,

we continue to look at new information to make sure we're looking at that impact and issue properly. So it will be included in this environmental impact statement.

Thank you.

Yes, sir. If you could spell your name.

MR. GENE STENGEL: Yes. My name is Gene Stengel. Gene is G-E-N-E, Stengel is S-T-E-N-G-E-L. I'm also a Minnesota Falls supervisor.

I guess I'm going to try to address just what you were talking about, I have some comments. Stray voltage is a problem, I can relate to that, I can equate to that. We have had instances where under a 115 kVA (sic) line, we could not remove a tire off a silage wagon because of the stray voltage transfer that happened. We had to literally insulate ourself from the ground with a piece of plywood in order to put a lug wrench on the tires, in order to get the tire off.

So stray voltage is a problem, it is going to pose a number of our neighbors some problems with regards to milking setups. We know for a fact that this thing is going to come within a dairy that is -- I'm not exactly sure what the

footage is, but it's extremely close to the existing power line right now as the preferred route. It doesn't happen to be in Minnesota Falls Township, it's in another township.

We also grew up on a farm that my brother happens to live on right now. We have 60-year-old trees that are ash trees along with evergreen trees. Environmentally, there is something wrong with the trees when they grow next to and under a power line. Those 60-year-old trees are probably about a foot across and that is extremely unusual. You cannot get evergreen trees to survive underneath a power line, stray voltage is a problem.

I can't imagine for one second living next to a 345 kVA line and not having power problems -- stray voltage problems at some point in time. My brother's place has a cattle feeding setup on it, it's directly going to be impacted. Cattle get wet feet, they stand in manure, the energy transfer is going to be phenomenal. They're going to act like magnets.

We strung, years ago, a small electric fence line 300 feet between a pole set and a pole set underneath of that 115 kVA line. You could not grab onto that electric fence wire without getting a

1 jolt off of the existing electric fence line that
2 was not hooked up to anything. There was that much
3 voltage transfer from the existing power line. So
4 that is a very, very dynamic thing.
5 And growing up as kids -- his name was --
6 What was Iverson's (phonetic) first name,
7 Allen?
8 MR. ALLEN STENGEL: Jim.
9 MR. GENE STENGEL: Jim. His name was
10 Jim Iverson. It took us probably about 15 years to
11 figure out why we had such serious problems with
12 television sets that were the tube-type TVs. And
13 the nearest thing Jim could figure out, he says you
14 guys are having extreme, extreme issues with
15 electronics. And he says the only thing I can
16 equate it to is the energy transfer coming off the
17 transmission line itself, and it is being bottled up
18 by the tube and it doesn't know how to deal with the
19 magnetic energy that's being created inside the TV
20 set. And we would prematurely -- five years, a TV
21 set would burn itself out.
22 So there are problems. Thank you.
23 MR. EK: Thank you. Those are good
24 concerns. And unfortunately, I'm not an electrical
25 engineer and I can't, you know, comment about how

that all works and so on and so forth.

MR. GENE STENGEL: Then something has to be done.

MR. EK: It's something we've heard quite a bit about in the past couple of meetings. Stray voltage, we just heard it from the gentleman behind you, the radio and FM/AM frequency, GPS, that's all been brought up as well a number of times. So now we have that in the record as something, you know, people feel very strongly about. So we will take a look at that -- a strong look at that and make sure that we're getting our information right. So when a final decision does come, we can, you know, put the appropriate conditions into a permit or whatever it need be.

So I appreciate your comment and it just helps us. You know, we're going to categorize all these and so we're going see a big -- whole -- a list underneath stray voltage. And that will just signal us that that's something we need to focus on quite a bit in this environmental impact statement.

MR. GENE STENGEL: Another question I guess I've got, and I don't know who can take and field it, but when it comes to the existing towers at 150 feet and a 30-foot or 40-foot base in the

ground, is that cement and rebar base part of a ground system to transfer some of the energy that's going to be accepted by the tower?

MR. EK: Craig can answer that one probably a little better.

MR. POORKER: Well, I'm not an engineer, first off, but that's a question I've had, too. And in fact, every pole is grounded, whether it's grounded through that structure -- and I think it would be. A lot of times, though, you'll see on wood poles there will be a wire coming down -- all the way down into the ground to ground every single structure like that. So it's grounded somehow, whether it's in that column or a separate wire running down, it would be grounded.

MR. GENE STENGEL: Okay.

MR. EK: Thanks for your comment.

MR. GENE STENGEL: Yup.

MR. EK: Any other comments folks have, issues, concerns?

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

MR. WAMBEKE: My name is Dick Wambeke, W-A-M-B-E-K-E.

My question relates to, we have a

1 possibility of a rather large wind project in
2 western Yellow Medicine County, but they need a
3 place to wheel their energy. If this line is built,
4 would they be allowed to, you know, use it as an
5 electrical highway for new wind power, a renewable
6 source?
7 MR. EK: Very good question. And
8 actually, that is -- one component of this project
9 is the need for -- is to -- those wind facilities
10 that are coming on line in southwest Minnesota and
11 so forth. This is going to provide a conduit for
12 that energy coming out of those wind farms to make
13 it to this line. So that is a purpose for this
14 line, specifically, yes.
15 And I know it all depends if MISO, I
16 think there's -- they have their MISO queue and
17 connections, and I'm not quite exactly sure how that
18 works. But there's -- you know, you might even know
19 more about it than I.
20 But yeah -- and Craig, maybe you could
21 speak to it a little more on the interconnection.
22 MR. POORKER: Sure. And that's a good
23 question, that's something I forgot to address, too,
24 is that this line significantly serves a lot of new
25 generation that's coming on line. And of course in

1 this area, I don't have to tell you about wind
2 generation, that's pretty significant out here. And
3 typically -- substations, too, we'll have
4 substations along the way and some of the co-ops and
5 distribution companies have substations that they're
6 going to be able to take a lot of that wind
7 generation on.
8 And of course, you probably heard about
9 the 25 percent by -- renewables by the year 2025,
10 and that's going to help address a lot of that. And
11 there are a lot of wind projects waiting for a
12 project like this one to come on line.
13 MR. EK: Does that answer your question,
14 sir?
15 MR. GENE STENGEL: Yes, it does.
16 MR. EK: Thank you. Back there, if you
17 could state and spell your name, please.
18 MR. SHEGGEBY: Paul Sheggeby,
19 S-H-E-G-G-E-B-Y.
20 I'd like to know what the status is of
21 that Hazel Creek substation, and if could you
22 discuss a little bit about the lines coming into one
23 and going out, and the size of the substation and
24 just discuss a little bit more about that, please.
25 MR. POORKER: That's a good question.

Mr. Sheggeby's question is a good one about the Hazel Creek substation, and we don't know exactly where that's going to go. You've probably seen in the permit, we have a search area for a spot. We don't have a spot for that yet, but we'll probably spend some more time looking for a substation site.

And what does it look like? That's one of those substations that's going to be an important one. Our transmission line would come into that substation and would leave it again to get across the Minnesota River into the existing Minnesota Valley substation. That would also serve as a good feeder for other transmission projects that might be serving some of those wind generation projects as well, and especially just west of here and probably some more even coming in the area.

Does that answer your question on that?

MR. SHEGGEBY: So it wouldn't necessarily be just the 345-kilovolt line coming in and going out of there, there could be other lines?

MR. POORKER: Yes. There could be some other additional lines coming into that, but wherever you'd -- we might be collecting some of that wind generation to get it to the substation and then we could get it onto the whole grid system that

way, the 345 kV grid system.

MR. EK: Any more comments, questions, concerns you'd like to address?

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

MR. HENDRICKS: Jon Hendricks, J-O-N, H-E-N-D-R-I-C-K-S. I'm actually from the New Prague area, but because of scheduling, this is the best meeting for me to attend.

In our area, the power -- the preferred route comes on the north side of New Prague. And so when you're evaluating the possibilities, I'd like the evaluation to consider not only the impact on the existing homes, but the future growth of the area, the density -- proposed housing density. And not only in New Prague, but in southern Scott County where it's going to have a greater impact, I guess, on the existing homes and future development.

And if the power line would stifle or deter people from moving into the area near the power line, then that would affect property values and have an economic impact. So I hope that would be considered.

MR. EK: Thanks. Just to clarify, so then, you're -- you'd like us to make sure that we

take a look at property values as compared to this line, comprehensive plans for various cities and counties that may be impacted by the line, and developments that -- you know, that we -- comments we receive from people about developments. And also it sounds like proximity to, you know, existing residential areas and so forth.

Does that kind of sum up --

MR. HENDRICKS: Right. The impact on existing, and then in the future, assuming the natural growth of cities and counties and so forth, how many people five, ten years from now might be impacted by the future -- in the future by the line. I guess that relates, maybe, to the land use or zoning laws that the counties and -- or something like that.

MR. EK: Yeah. Yeah. You're very correct. It would come down to land use and the plans -- and future plans for these various cities and communities. And that is something we definitely look at and it's important in this process.

So thank you.

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

MR. SWOBODA: I'm Don Swoboda, S-W-O-B-O-D-A.

I've got a couple comments. The first one I'm worried about is the impact on all the farmland. I mean, how are we -- how are farmers supposed to be farming around poles and stuff?

Another concern is, why don't you run it down Highway 23? That's a major highway, this way you won't have -- you won't be by livestock facilities, farmhouses, and you won't have to impact all the tile lines. And another thing with the power station, why don't you put it where the original one is right now in Granite Falls? This way we've got all the transmission lines going out, this way, you don't have to -- you don't have to buy no more farming land. All you've got to do is just put -- add on where the existing power plant (sic) is right now, this way everything is right there.

So thanks.

MR. EK: I'll let Craig answer a couple, but the first thing, I just wanted to make sure, you suggested an alternative that they go down Highway 23?

MR. SWOBODA: (Nods head.)

MR. EK: Okay. I just want to make sure

that that gets on the record.

And maybe, Craig, could you address the -- going through agriculture? I'm not quite sure --

MR. POORKER: Sure. And you're right, that was a question or a comment that came up a lot. Especially when we're in this area and even in more -- the south metro area, too. I mean, it's significant, the impact to farming. We -- I certainly understand that people don't like going around with huge equipment, your equipment is not small like it used to be, and some of those things are out there 50 feet away and it's kind of sometimes hard to judge.

And so we're aware of that, and that's why we tried to hug the road right-of-way as much as we can. And then also, at the same time, we try to keep our spans fairly long, too, so you don't have so many poles in there. We try to keep them at least 1,000 feet apart from each other so it hopefully minimizes, to an extent, farming around those.

Your comments also about Minnesota Valley substation, we did look at that. And that substation is getting so congested that it's hard to

find a lot more room in there. And not just for ours, but for those existing interconnections coming from future wind developments and things like that, some of those 115 kVs that may have to come into that substation to serve those wind farms that are coming up.

Did you have another question in there, too, about tile lines -- why don't we follow Highway 23? That's another thing we heard a lot of comments on that, too, was the impact to tiles. And that's -- and not just that, but rural water was an issue. There are buried cables in there, all kinds of things we need to be looking out for, buried gas. And so there's going to be a lot of coordination no matter where we go, with you as a landowner and with the other utilities as well.

So -- and Highway 23 is a challenge for us, too. In fact, we heard a lot of suggestions, why not follow Highway 19? As much as we'd like to, that's where the cities get built, are right along those highways. And it's an effort for us to get around cities, we don't want to go through urban areas, residential area. We try to avoid cities like that.

So our preferred route is following that

existing 115 kV line, that to us seems like a good one. The alternative route was, for the most part, again, following roadways. I think there is some where we follow quarter-section lines, things like that. So we're not, again, out in the middle of fields.

So those are all things we need to weigh, and now the state needs to weigh that along with their consultant as well and go through our route and see and scrutinize that along with all the comments that we get, too.

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

MR. SWOBODA: Yes.

MR. EK: Any other comments, questions? Yes, sir.

MR. PRINS: Corey Prins, C-O-R-E-Y, P-R-I-N-S, with Northwestern Farm Management out of Marshall.

And in regards to the agricultural impact, I know you're -- the focus is to run along right-of-ways along the roads, but there are multiple places where the proposed and alternate route are going through the middle of sections. I know that's done to avoid residential sites as much

as possible, which many of my clients can agree with. But as it pertains to going across the middle of a section, most properties are divided at the half-section line. But I specifically have four clients that this proposed and alternate route will divide the farm because it is a half section or full section of ground, and having the power line poles in the middle of the farm will affect the value of the property.

And I'm willing to address those properties one on one with you as it affects everyone here, but we do have a big concern in those cases where the power line proposal is in the middle of a section. And we would like to see that avoided when it does divide a single ownership of a land.

MR. EK: So just to get this right -- I don't know if you'll be submitting a comment by letter, but just to get this right, what you'd like us to look at is the prospect of the line when it goes through sections that it shouldn't -- instead of cutting through a center section or a quarter section, that it would follow section boundaries instead. Or do you have some alternative in mind in that area?

MR. PRINS: My suggestion is that you

follow property ownership lines as it affects -- because each parcel has different acres in ownership of where you have a large single ownership of 640 acres, there is -- I actually have a case where an owner owns 640 acres and this power line is proposed to go right the middle of it -- through the middle of a section.

So case by case, half section lines does make sense, but there are exceptions to that rule that will affect agriculture ownership.

MR. EK: Okay. What I would suggest -- great comment. What I would suggest in those areas are, if you're representing folks, is possibly -- you have an opportunity to go back and print out a map here, and at least show us those areas that you have concern where it's dividing the land and maybe show alternatives or something that could be done to resolve that problem so we know about it and know where it is.

So that would be the first step, I'd suggest you go back there and do that today. Otherwise, also submit a comment, e-mail, mail, and let us know so we do have an idea of your concern and the areas of those concerns.

So thank you.

1 Any other comments, questions, concerns?
2 If you could state your name, spell it,
3 please, sir.
4 MR. HINZ: David Hinz, H-I-N-Z.
5 And I just want to make sure that after
6 the transmission line gets bumped up on the voltage
7 if my cell phone will still work? Every time I get
8 next to a high-voltage line, I lose contact, dead
9 spots, every time I'm on my cell phone. I use it
10 continuously, 60, 70 phone calls a day, and we're
11 going to be living pretty close to it. So that's
12 what I need to know, is how does it affect cell
13 phone usage?
14 MR. EK: That's a good question, sir.
15 And in past studies, again, that is something that
16 we do -- have studied and we have found that it --
17 generally, no, that is not a problem. Of course,
18 there's many, many, many, many things that go into
19 why your cell phone goes out. You know, carrier and
20 where the poles are placed, transmission -- not the
21 electric transmission, but the carrier poles and so
22 forth.
23 But that is something -- we look at radio
24 interference, that was brought up earlier, and FM.
25 As I said, the GPS, the global positioning farming,

that's another issue that was brought up that -- you know, that's very similar to the cell phone issue you're bringing up. And that's something that we will look at and study in the environmental impact statement.

Does that --

MR. HINZ: (Nods head.)

MR. EK: Okay. Any other questions, comments?

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

MR. JOHNSON: I can't spell. Gary Johnson, Yellow Medicine County Commissioner, J-O-H-N-S-O-N.

I have about five, six different questions. Who's actually going to own this line, is one of the questions. Is this thing being built on demand or speculating? And I'd like to know the percentage of wind versus coal, and I'm wondering what guarantee you have to put wind on there?

And my two other questions are, who's going to pay for the line, the people that own it or -- I was at REC meetings last Saturday and I understand there's legislation going out there by Kubly and Aaron Falk (phonetic). If that

legislation goes through this legislative session, each individual person that pays a light bill is taxed and will be paying for lines and everything else to do renewable energy. I think everybody's in favor of renewable energy, but find it some other place. I mean, you can't be taxing people in one company to help your competition get going.

And my last and final question, if you need them repeated, I can go one by one. I drove B3 County Road the other day, your highway poles right now are ten feet from the shoulder of the road, not the right-of-way, the road. And if you look at that and you know the Selter (phonetic) farm he's talking about down there, the dairy setup, there isn't room between there and the county right-of-way to put a pad like you're talking. I guess, how are you going to address that?

And if you're going to still put them in the county right-of-way, will the power company that owns it sign a release to the county releasing us of liability if somebody hits that pole?

MR. POORKER: Mr. Johnson, thanks, those are all excellent questions, but I don't have a memory. So I'd like you to repeat them.

MR. JOHNSON: Okay. The first one was

the cost to built this thing.

MR. POORKER: The cost to build it, the cost for our preferred route, I believe it's $700 million, and for the alternate route, $755 million.

MR. JOHNSON: Second one is, are you building it because of the demand or speculating the demand coming? At the REC meeting, I talked to some individuals and I don't know if people realize it, but if the Big Stone Two line doesn't get built, there is such a demand in the fall of the year when corn driers are running that somebody's going to have blackouts sooner or later.

MR. EK: Just so you folks know, there are two dockets right now. And when you're talking about demand, that kind of feeds into need. There's a need docket open right now and this is the routing docket. They are going to be making a decision within the next few weeks here on the need for this project, which feeds into the demand.

So once the Public Utilities Commission makes their decision on whether this project is needed or not needed, kind of decides whether this goes forward. So that's where the demand kind of ends. If they say yes, it's a go, well, then we

1 continue this routing process. If they say no,
2 well, then it kind of ends right here for now, to
3 answer that question.
4 MR. ALLEN STENGEL: Yeah. Allen Stengel,
5 A-L-L-E-N, S-T-E-N-G-E-L.
6 My question to the Commission is, how
7 many nos have you got? I mean, how many people have
8 sat down and actually said no, we don't we want
9 this, we want smaller power lines, not 345 kVA. Can
10 we get by with less?
11 MR. EK: Unfortunately, I'm with the
12 routing process and I'm not with the Public
13 Utilities Commission. So I can't answer, you know,
14 where that is, what their decision might be, what
15 they've looked at. And I know it's not a yes/no
16 voting process, kind of how you're describing it.
17 But they will ultimately come to a
18 decision, and I guess I can't comment and answer the
19 question as to how they will come to that decision
20 because I'm not a part of that. It's separate from
21 what I'm doing here today, so I apologize, I can't
22 answer that.
23 MR. ALLEN STENGEL: If you go and you
24 look at the wind energy that's down south and you're
25 looking at wind energy up here, like Granite Falls,

what's wrong with forgetting the line altogether and building yourself an energy (sic) down by Hampton? I mean, you can put the windmills everywhere. You don't necessarily need power lines to transmit all this energy all over the country just because we have a pod here and one down there. You can go and build them down there by the Cities, too, where the power is actually going to be needed.

MR. EK: That's a good comment. And I'm not in the business of building power lines, I'm in the business of reviewing people who would like to build power lines or windmills.

Maybe, Craig, could you -- we want to get back to this gentleman's questions.

MR. POORKER: Mr. Johnson, ask me another question, I know you had quite a few.

And we'll get to yours, too.

MR. JOHNSON: I asked what percentage of it will be for wind and what percentage for coal.

MR. POORKER: That's a good question, we get that one a lot. There's a strong wind presence out here and we're hearing from a lot of wind developers to move this along, they're waiting for us to build this. So what percentage of what kind? I mean, it always fluctuates. When the wind is

blowing, there's going to be a lot of wind generation on the line. And if the wind isn't blowing and there's a huge demand in the Marshall or the Twin Cities area, it could be coming from coal, it could be coming from some other biomass, it could be coming from -- onto the system, all kinds of different types of generation. And that's the way the electric grid system works, there can be all kinds of generation at any one time. But it's going to significantly support some of the wind projects coming on.

MR. JOHNSON: Okay. The other question, what is -- what guarantee we'd have to put on -- wind on this line? Because I know on the Big Stone line coming south down into Canby, there was a small percentage of the grid that was going to be allowed for wind, and what guarantee -- is it cost-feasible to tie wind into this?

MR. POORKER: I'm not sure about the guarantee, but I think that might have to do with, probably, the need portion that they're talking about. And I don't know if they -- I don't think they put wind conditions on that, I think they're going determine that they're possibly -- if it's going to be needed. We haven't gotten a

determination from the PUC that it is going to be needed, and I don't know about if they're putting stipulations on that. I'm not -- haven't been following that because I'm the routing guy.

MR. JOHNSON: So there will be another meeting coming up to address more of these questions? This is more of an impact study, I understand now, and people's feelings and that, but there will be another hearing for this?

MR. POORKER: For the need portion?

MR. JOHNSON: Well, for just general question like this, what percentage -- what guarantee do we have if do have people that start a wind farm in Canby that they could tie into this line at a feasible cost?

MR. POORKER: Yeah. I'm not familiar with that, but I know that's a separate issue dealing with the need portion, and it has to do with building new substations. And windmills have to go through the -- through a process as well, a permitting process.

MR. JOHNSON: Okay. The other question -- I have two more -- who's paying for it, who's paying for this line? It is your utility companies out there, your easements, or who's paying

for it? And does it tie in with this legislation that Kubly and Falk are laying there with where every individual sitting here will be paying for?

MR. POORKER: That's a good question. And the short answer is, it's you as a consumer of electricity that pays for it. But there's -- the CapX 2020 projects are a group of 11 utilities that are all paying for it. Depending on how many folks that they may serve and things like that, there's a formula -- I'm not sure how much each utility is paying, but they're all paying for it. So it's those 11 utilities -- transmission utilities that are helping to pay for this whole project.

MR. JOHNSON: Okay. The last one I had was right-of-way, the county doesn't want to push it out on the property owner, but, say, take B3 where they're only ten feet from the edge of the gravel right now, if we reconstruct that road in ten, 15, and looking further -- I won't be around, probably, in 30 years, but if they reconstruct it then, how are you going to reconstruct it when you have these power lines right in the right-of-way?

MR. POORKER: Yeah, that's a good question. That existing 115 kV line now that runs along the county road is really close to the road.

I mean, it's like you said, about ten feet from the edge of the gravel, right -- from the edge of the shoulder, pretty close. And we do visit with the county highway departments and we visited with all of them, I think, along the project. And they do have the same concerns, that we are not too close to the roadway, because that is a significant structure. In fact, they have state and federal rules that they need to go by in order to permit -- to permit -- to help us permit a transmission line.

But we have to get permits from each utility to put something like this in, and we have to negotiate with them and talk to them about what projects they have coming up. But what we're going to hear from the county and the state is that we be outside of the road right-of-way, right up against the edge. Not to be in the road right-of-way, but just outside the edge of that.

MR. JOHNSON: And you're going to hit that situation I was addressing where you're going to have not enough room between road right-of-way and a building site. So if you have to go into the county road right-of-way, will this power line company sign a release to the county from liability if somebody runs into the ditch and hits that thing?

MR. POORKER: That I don't know, but I would guess that's something we'd very likely have to negotiate with the road authority, whether it's the township, the county, or the state. But generally, they don't even want us in the right-of-way at all because of that.

We've done other projects before where we may have to be inside the right-of-way. But there would be guardrails there to protect that, both for our interest and for the county's interest as well, for their traveling public.

But you're right, those are tight spots for us, especially when you get close to farms, if we're going to be out there at the edge of the right-of-way and the existing line is really close to the road. So yes, we are going further out than what's existing right now.

MR. JOHNSON: About 90 percent of your high-line wires now, if you go out and you drive around, are just outside the edge of the right-of-way.

MR. POORKER: Right.

MR. JOHNSON: And these are worst-case scenarios I seen the other day when I drove this line.

MR. POORKER: Yeah.

MR. EK: Thank you, sir.

Getting back to your question, here.

MR. ALLEN STENGEL: Yes. Like my house is 126 feet from the road right-of-way and I have a set of poles that's existing there right now, with one hundred and, what, 15 kVA? Now, what are they going to end up doing, are they going to end up buying my house or moving me or what is that -- what's going to be the option there? I mean, I don't know.

MR. POORKER: Okay. Good. The question is -- probably easement acquisition first, let me address that. We do have to acquire easements from anybody -- any property we cross. We have to get an easement even if there's already an easement there for that 115 kV line because the easement that addresses that 115 kV line does not address what we're doing. So we have to negotiate a new easement with you for that.

Now, if -- and you, the landowner, we'll be negotiating that with you and I think we -- the utilities in Minnesota, I think, do a pretty good job of negotiating easements with landowners overall. And you're asking about whether or not you

1 want to live there, there is a statute, it's called
2 by its nickname, Buy the Farm Statute. It came into
3 existence about 30 years ago, that if you, the
4 landowner, want us to buy you out, we go through the
5 eminent domain process to do that. And you can
6 option that, to buy your property that we're
7 crossing with the transmission line. So that is an
8 option if that's what it comes down to. But it's
9 something, again, that we would negotiate with the
10 landowner.
11 MR. EK: Does that answer your question,
12 sir?
13 MR. ALLEN STENGEL: Yeah, in a way. It
14 sounds to me like they could take my house and leave
15 me out in the cold.
16 MR. POORKER: That is something that
17 we -- when we were designing this line, we decided
18 that we were not going to displace anybody. We were
19 going to route this so that we're not heading toward
20 somebody's house. That is -- so we spend a lot of
21 time doing that, trying to find routes that did not
22 impact that. So it's you, as a landowner, however,
23 you do have that option, but we are not going to
24 displacing any residents.
25 MR. EK: Additional questions here?

1 If you could state and spell your name,
2 please.
3 MS. STENGEL: My name is Pam Stengel,
4 S-T-E-N-G-E-L.
5 Okay. If you're not going to displace
6 anyone, then there's concern over health here. And
7 I feel it is up to you folks to provide us with
8 information on what the risk -- what the risks are
9 in association with putting this line in place. As
10 a healthcare provider, I have concerns about this,
11 and what is safe and what isn't.
12 MR. EK: That's a very good question, and
13 it's come up many times in the past couple days. I
14 believe you're talking about electric and magnetic
15 fields. That you if --
16 MS. STENGEL: This is the only booklet I
17 have. You can't hear me? This is the booklet I
18 have, and I called Washington, D.C., asked if they
19 had any more of these. It's out of print and they
20 told me that there has been no new information since
21 this was printed. But -- and it's from the
22 Department of Energy.
23 Now, I do see that you do provide us with
24 a little bit from the World Health Organization.
25 However, all of this further reading, how can I get

1 my hands on this information? You have things
2 listed under here, under further reading, how do I
3 get my hands on that information?
4 MR. EK: Sure. If I could see that real
5 quick? The further -- most of it would likely --
6 you go could online.
7 MS. STENGEL: We did.
8 MR. EK: You could go to the library.
9 MS. STENGEL: We have already been to
10 that website.
11 MR. EK: Okay. Well, just to let you
12 know, in all these transmission line cases, we look
13 at electric and magnetic fields and look at the
14 potential impacts and the studies. In all the
15 cases, we've found -- you know, we go through the
16 research and we found there seems -- the consensus
17 seems to be there's no -- what is it? There's no
18 demonstrated relation to cancer risk when living
19 next to a high-voltage line. However -- however --
20 MS. STENGEL: This book says stay away
21 from it.
22 MR. EK: However -- no, no, no. The
23 science -- the literature out there, they're unable
24 to conclude that it is completely risk-free.
25 MS. STENGEL: Right.

MR. EK: So, you know, the risks are small. But at the same time, we here at the State of Minnesota will continue to study that subject as it pertains to this project, as it pertains to projects that move on. And continue looking at the new research that comes out and the new information that comes out to ensure that we're providing the public with accurate and good information on this subject.

MS. STENGEL: I want further information from you with regards to that.

MR. EK: Yeah. If I could meet you after the meeting, get your name, and maybe we can --

MS. STENGEL: Yup.

MR. EK: -- through e-mail or telephone.

MR. GENE STENGEL: Yeah. My name's Gene Stengel, again, S-T-E-N-G-E-L.

I guess I'm going to address here a little more of my concerns with regards to, I'm going to use the words your primary route. And I don't want to speak on behalf of the township at this point, but I'm going to interject, basically, it's my opinion that the primary route right now is touching too many homesteads, it is touching too many people within Minnesota Falls Township.

There's alternative -- the second alternative, I have to say, is better. Do I like it? No, sir, I do not like it.

The alternative that was brought up earlier, running it up Highway 23, is an open corridor right now. And in my judgement call of being able to look at affected landowners, homes, and the like, are a lot less coming up that corridor than it is right now with either your primary or your optional. And I guess I would advise you to take a good look at the primary route and say, how many landowners, especially in Minnesota Falls Township, is the existing line affecting? And I'd like you to address that, I'd like you to look at that.

MR. EK: Just to make sure I have this right, Little Town (sic) you're from?

MR. GENE STENGEL: Minnesota Falls Township.

MR. EK: Minnesota Falls Township, and you want us to make sure we take a look at the proximity of homes to the proposed transmission line in that area. You also mentioned that you feel that the alternative route would be more suitable than the preferred.

MR. GENE STENGEL: Correct.

MR. EK: And you also mentioned that that alternative going down Highway 23 would be a more suitable alternative --

MR. GENE STENGEL: Correct.

MR. EK: -- than the preferred.

Okay. Do I have everything?

MR. STENGEL: Correct.

MR. EK: Okay. Thank you. Any other questions?

Yes, sir. If you could restate your name.

MR. SHEGGEBY: Yeah. Paul Sheggeby, again.

A lot, you know, on this preferred route, you know, right now a 115-kilovolt goes on the same side of the road all along. At the very least, I would think when you encounter a farm homestead, you could jog to the other side of the road and that would get us -- get you further away from the line. And I don't -- you know, you've got a corridor there on both sides of the road, and I would think it would be best to -- at the very least, you could just jog on the other side of the road from a farmstead whenever you encounter it.

Thank you.

MR. EK: Thank you, sir. That's a good comment. And actually, that's something that can be done during this -- as we go through the process, something that can be looked at, for the line to jump from, either be it the north side to the south side or the east side to west side, whatever direction road you're looking at.

What would be helpful for us is, if you could -- if you have a specific area in mind that you're talking about, is maybe get one of those maps today. You don't necessarily need to hand it in today, but give us a map, give us an idea of the area you're looking at so we can then identify that when we're going through this scoping and environmental impact statement process, otherwise we don't know. So it's handy to have, you know, an area on a map to show where your concerns are at, so I would suggest you do that today.

Does that help you?

MR. SHEGGEBY: (Nods head.)

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

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

1 MR. KINKER: John Kinker, K-I-N-K-E-R.
2 I also manage land for absentee owners.
3 Right now I have one property that would -- your
4 primary line would touch, six properties that the
5 secondary line would touch, or the alternate route.
6 My question is, as you analyze all this information,
7 will it be one route totally or the other route
8 totally or is it going to be mixed and matched to
9 where it might be part of your primary and part of
10 your alternate?
11 And then, also, based on the comments
12 made by other people, I would have farmsteads
13 impacted by the secondary route, whereas the primary
14 route is not impacted because it's a bare land piece
15 of ground. So I'm just curious of whether or not
16 there's got to be one total route approved, if not,
17 the second one kicks in, or can it be mixed and
18 matched?
19 MR. EK: Very good question. And that's
20 actually the purpose of these scoping meetings and
21 this scoping process, is to get those ideas of
22 alternatives that you're talking about. And then to
23 answer that question, no, the routes you -- the
24 proposed routes you see could change with those
25 comments -- those alternatives, I should say, that

are suggested by folks. And it could be a meld of a bunch of different routes that may not even look like what you see up here today in the end.

And what we do is, we'll take those alternatives and we look at the impacts and compare the impacts to each of the alternatives as compared to the proposed as compared to the alternative and so forth. And which has greater impacts, which -- and we look at it that way through the environmental impact statement.

So what I'd suggest is, it sounds like you were either for -- or against the alternative, is from my understanding?

MR. KINKER: (Nods head.)

MR. EK: So I would advise you, then, to go ahead and maybe just put in a comment, I would rather see the preferred route, just to let us know of your concern.

Does that answer your question?

MR. KINKER: (Nods head.)

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

Well, with that then -- yes, sir.

MR. TIM STENGEL: My name is Tim Stengel.

And I guess I'm just wondering if you

guys are going to have any more meetings, keeping us more updated and more of what you guys want to do? And if we have more questions further down the line, if you're going to be doing this again, or if this is a one-shot deal?

MR. EK: Good question. As I said, we're going to have meetings through the end of this week -- what -- today's Wednesday, through Thursday. And then all next week going -- we're moving east now here, and you're welcome to attend any of those meetings. This is the scoping part of this and then you have until April 30 -- of this month to, you know, submit any comments, e-mail, mail, and so forth.

At any time in the process -- past April 30 any time, you can always call me or any one of our staff. E-mail me with any questions you might have, we can see if we can address them. And as I showed you on that flowchart, there is -- once the draft EIS comes out and it's issued, there is another comment period for folks, very similar to this, where people can comment on what they see was put into the draft environmental impact statement.

And there is also that opportunity in front of the hearing -- the administrative law

1 judge, the contested case hearing, for folks to
2 comment. And at the final decision at the Public
3 Utilities Commission, that final date, there's
4 opportunity usually for the public to come and
5 comment during that final permit decision made by
6 the PUC.
7 So there are plenty of opportunities
8 throughout this process for you to comment more or
9 additionally, and you're always welcome to call me
10 and ask questions. So --
11 MR. GENE STENGEL: Yeah, there's one more
12 thing I'd like you to take and consider. And I'm
13 bothered by the fact that if the eminent domain is
14 used to acquire the types of properties that get in
15 the way of transmission line, my concern is, there
16 is eminent domain and there also is fair market
17 value. And I would be asking that fair market value
18 be the consideration rather than the use of eminent
19 domain to acquire the properties if they have to be
20 acquired, versus just walking through a landowner
21 and saying, sorry, we gotcha. Okay.
22 MR. EK: I'll let Craig comment on -- the
23 state doesn't deal with the negotiations when it
24 comes to --
25 MR. GENE STENGEL: I understand. I

1 understand.
2 MR. EK: -- eminent domain, but maybe
3 Craig can comment on that one for you.
4 MR. POORKER: Yes. Mr. Stengel, your
5 question is probably more how we acquire easements
6 and what we pay for --
7 MR. GENE STENGEL: I understand the use
8 of eminent domain.
9 MR. POORKER: Yes. And we what pay for
10 easements, we negotiate that. And it is based on
11 your land value. And so we pay not just for land
12 value, we have to pay for other things as well. We
13 need to buy an easement from a landowner, and that
14 easement entails the right to built that line and yo
15 maintain it and that's it. It's still your private
16 property, nobody else can come along and put a bike
17 path in or put a water line in or a communication
18 line. It's your property and if somebody else wants
19 to use that corridor for something, they need to get
20 an easement from you as well.
21 But when we come along to get an easement
22 from you, we will pay an easement for the use of
23 your property, we'll pay for crop damage if there's
24 damage to your crop, compaction, soil compaction's
25 an issue. If we damage fences, tile line, those are

all things we either need to fix or pay for.

And even before we even get to that step, we want to work with landowners in the design phase as to where the poles go and make sure we're not damaging things on your property, we're not damaging a fence or a tile line or a waterline or something like that.

MR. GENE STENGEL: I guess I want it be understood and be very clear that I'm not only talking about those instances, but I am also talking with regards to residences directly. Whether it involves a farm site, a house, or the like, that eminent domain is not used because it can be used, but rather a fair market value be looked at and used to purchase the property versus the use of eminent domain alone.

MR. POORKER: And I think what you're interested in is, you want us to negotiate with you as a landowner and not use eminent domain. And believe me, we try really, really hard to not have to go through eminent domain. Will we have to use it on this project? Most definitely. I mean, we've got hundreds of landowners we're going to have to be dealing with. But in a high, high percentage, I think we'll be successful in negotiating the

1 easement with the landowner, not just for
2 easements -- and I think you're also concerned with
3 proximity to homes and how that might impact your
4 home value. And we've got to pay for that, too. If
5 we're impacting your property value and your
6 building site, that's a separate issue and that
7 could be an even higher payment.
8 So -- and that's both -- in the
9 right-of-way acquisition business, that's called
10 damages. If we impact your property value because
11 of this transmission line, we have to pay you for
12 that. Okay? And there are ways that we can
13 determine that. If we can't negotiate it, we can
14 hire an independent appraiser to work on that with
15 us --
16 MR. GENE STENGEL: Um-hmm.
17 MR. POORKER: -- in that negotiation,
18 too. So sometimes we're wrong, and if we can't come
19 to an agreement, we can do an appraisal and work
20 on -- and negotiate from that, too.
21 MR. GENE STENGEL: (Nods head.)
22 MR. EK: Yes, sir.
23 MR. BUESING: Dean Buesing, Granite
24 Falls.
25 My question is, any time that you do a

negotiation with different landowners and property owners for property and things, will that process be transparent? Will it be -- I mean, will everybody know, okay, the land on this quarter here was priced at this, this building site received this kind of compensation? Will it all be, I guess, public -- public knowledge?

MR. POORKER: Yeah. Mr. Buesing, I think your concern is that we're going to treat somebody differently than somebody else just because of the way somebody else might negotiate. But we -- I know for -- I don't want to say we're open, because our negotiation with you as landowner, to us, we're not going to go to your neighbor and say, hey, we just paid Mr. Buesing this and this is what we're going to pay you. Neighbors talk, however, and we're certainly aware of that and we know that we need to treat everybody equally.

And also, too, land values can change while we're negotiating as well. And we oftentimes will go back, if we paid somebody $6,000 an acre, but two months later, land's going for $8,000 an acre, corn's back up to $8 a bushel, along with that goes your land value. A lot of times we'll go back and make -- even do make-up payments with the

landowner if it's enough disparity and it's worth that. We're not afraid to have to go back and level the playing field. We don't want to -- we don't treat anybody differently.

However, when it comes to easement acquisition, everybody's property is different. Your property is not like the Stengel property, every property's different. Every home is going to be impacted differently. And so all those things are going to be unique in those negotiations.

But are we going to treat people fairly? Yes. I think we have to, because the community's going to know how we're doing out there in our right-of-way acquisition, and we'll hear about it if we're not doing it right.

MR. EK: All right. Do we have any other questions or comments today?

Well, with that then, we'll wrap it up. And I urge you to, if you'd like, go ahead and get a map printed out of your area to submit as a comment. Grab a comment form in the back, hand it in today or hand it in before April 30.

And thank you all for coming, I appreciate it.

(Public comment concluded.)