PUBLIC COMMENTS

TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 2009

7:00 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

Midwest Center for Wind Energy
2390 County Highway 1
Hendricks, Minnesota

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MR. EK: So at this point, we'll go ahead, and this is your opportunity if you'd like to submit comments orally. Comments and suggestions for issues, concerns, alternatives that you would like to see included in the environmental impact statement that will be prepared for this project as shown to you on the flowchart.

We did have green cards out here, but there's not too many people here today as compared to other meetings, so why don't folks just go ahead and raise their hand. And if you could, say your name and spell it out for the court reporter and just go ahead and voice your questions.

So any questions? Yes, sir.

MR. OERTER: Norris Oerter, O-E-R-T-E-R.

I wanted a clarification on the process. From what I gather now, you folks are pretty confident that this is going to get a green light when you're done with all the paperwork. April 30, which is coming along, is the last time you'll be taking comments from the public?

MR. EK: No. No, that's incorrect. And actually, there is no green light on the project right now, as a matter of fact.

MR. OERTER: But you're fairly

comfortable you're going to get it?

MR. EK: There is no green light on the project right now, I can tell you that. But as a matter of fact, there are two different dockets. Right now there's a certificate of need that the PUC is going through and that's -- it is the same project but they are different dockets. They, right now, are -- in the next few weeks, I believe -- or next month, will decide -- make a decision on whether this project is indeed needed. That decision would determine the fate of this whole routing process. If they decide that it is not needed, well, this routing process goes away and so does the project at this point. There is no green light for this project as of right now.

MR. OERTER: How does that correlate to the -- January 29 of 2010?

MR. EK: Oh, okay. Well, that's part of this whole process. And you asked the question, April 30, was that your last time to comment --

MR. OERTER: Because you have that date in writing.

MR. EK: Right. That's for the scoping part of the --

MR. OERTER: Okay.

1 MR. EK: -- environmental review. And
2 that's to get your comments into the scope, which
3 is -- what I said is the table of contents, kind of,
4 what would we study in the environmental impact
5 statement. So what we do, we take that, we put
6 together the environmental impact statement. And
7 then there would be another opportunity, once that
8 EIS is issued, for the public to comment on that
9 EIS, on the alternatives that were analyzed in that
10 EIS, maybe what alternative is better.
11 And at the same time, there's a contested
12 case hearing with an Administrative Law Judge where
13 the public has an opportunity to provide testimony
14 on, you know, the process that's already gone on and
15 what's been found -- what's been shown in the EIS,
16 the alternatives, what alternative's better.
17 And all that information, including your
18 public comments, is taken by my office and we put it
19 all together, we funnel it to the PUC, and it's
20 considered the record of the docket. And what they
21 do, they take a look at all that information and we
22 also provide them a recommendation on what we think
23 would be the best route for this project.
24 On that January 29 date, 2010, you're
25 talking about, that would be the date they would

decide, well, we'll give this project a permit, or we won't give this project a permit. If they do give the project a permit, they'll decide what the route would look like, what the conditions would be in the permit for that route, so on and so forth. So there's a lot of process left here and by no means is there a green light on this project.

So -- but good question. Good question. Thank you.

MR. OERTER: One final comment, then. The preferred and the alternate routes can be changed up to the 2010 date, then?

MR. EK: Well, certainly, that's actually part of tonight. That's part of the public comment process, is we're looking -- we're seeking input from individuals that may be -- may feel -- or be impacted by what's proposed. And maybe -- because you folks know the area better and you could propose a different route. And that's why we have out back there folks that can print out kind of zoomed-in maps or however -- whatever scale you'd like. And our thoughts were, you can go ahead and maybe draw --

MR. OERTER: Okay.

MR. EK: -- on that map and submit that as

a comment to us so we can take a look at that, and that's considered an alternative. And there are plenty of examples in the past to where a proposed line has ended up changing from what you see today to the final permit stage, should -- if it was permitted, and that's because of alternatives that were submitted by the public. So -- and this will be just the first opportunity of a few more through this whole-year process.

MR. OERTER: So we have ten months left of head scratching here?

MR. EK: Yes. Unfortunately, you do.

MR. OERTER: All right. And I'm asking one more question, then. Do you use the local newspapers for notification of these meetings?

MR. EK: Yes, we do. Offhand, I don't know all of them, but I believe off the top -- I'm just thinking of the list and there has to be at least 20 to 25 different newspapers along the length of the line. I do have that information -- I do have that information back at my office saved somewhere. I don't have it here, but I know there was a very extensive list. And we actually went out of our way, we went beyond what we needed to do for notice in newspapers.

Does that answer your question?

MR. OERTER: Yeah, kind of.

MR. EK: All right. Any other questions? Yes, sir.

MR. SKAAR: Earl Skaar, S-K-A-A-R. Do you have a copy of the -- like, the chart or the little mailer you had back in August that you sent out to our homes?

MR. POORKER: For the open houses, that's what you mean, right?

MR. SKAAR: The last one.

MR. POORKER: The open house?

MR. SKAAR: Yeah.

MR. POORKER: We do have a copy of one, it is in our permit application. We have a couple copies out there.

MR. SKAAR: Okay. I remember receiving one, but I -- you said there was two or three routes that you -- and I only recall one route being suggested in this area.

MR. POORKER: Ah.

MR. SKAAR: And we're drastically different from that route, you know. So originally, you know, where I live it wasn't, you know -- or so I thought, it's not in my backyard. But, you know,

I was a little concerned because you were -- they're, you know, further away now and all of a sudden you are in my backyard. And I was wondering how we got from that point to this point, when you said you had two or three routes and those were never indicated on -- I mean, it's within the corridor, granted, I understand you guys can, you know, go anywhere in the corridor, but you had one that's not even a suggested route and I'm just wondering how that ended up getting changed so much?

MR. POORKER: Yeah. And that's what we tried to convey at the open house, that we weren't sure, we're still getting input at that those open houses.

MR. SKAAR: And so then, I guess, here's the process, you're going to go -- say you're going to go over here where we have all these people pissed off by it, but we really wanted to go here and we're kind of backdooring this thing?

MR. POORKER: Yeah. I do have the mailer here, that's something we can definitely look at. But I mean, exactly why we chose one over the other, I'm not 100 percent sure.

MR. SKAAR: It wasn't even -- or this northern route wasn't even -- I mean, it's one mile

in your original 12-mile thing, that wasn't even on the radar that you were looking to go at that time, you know, that far in the corridor before.

MR. POORKER: Okay. But, again, we analyze through the whole process.

MR. SKAAR: Right. But you said you had -- originally said you had come back last August with two or three different routes, and on that mailer there was no such thing as this route.

MR. POORKER: Okay. Okay. We did have at least two because we -- by state law we have to have two, so -- and in some areas we had as many as three or four.

MR. SKAAR: I'd like to see that and discuss that in further detail.

MR. POORKER: Yeah. But a lot of times the reason that we make changes here and there is not necessarily because somebody said I don't want it by my place. There has to be a reason that we -- and we analyzed a number of homes or how close homes were to the route and we looked over like --

MR. SKAAR: And then your -- what's your ordinance from existing houses, as far as how close you can come to an existing house?

MR. POORKER: Yeah. Well, there's the

National Electric Safety Code, which we're well beyond that because we're --

MR. SKAAR: Or what is it in feet?

MR. POORKER: That's only, like, 25 feet or so.

MR. SKAAR: Yeah.

MR. POORKER: So we're certainly well outside of that. But we made a point to be sure, wherever our route went, that there would be no homes within our right-of-way. And preferably, further away than that, of course. We're much further than that, so --

MR. SKAAR: So I'm on the route -- the -- not over the extent of my house, it was a long ways from where it actually is. And it's kind of -- I was wondering, if the tower tips over, it would be within -- if the tower tips over, you'll be outside of your right-of-way?

MR. POORKER: If it tips over, but that's very, very unlikely to happen.

MR. SKAAR: Right. Right.

MR. POORKER: But that's a different subject, but -- because there is a chance they could fail. But if a pole like this fails, it's built so that it doesn't tip over. There's a 30-foot

concrete base it's built on in the ground, so it kind of makes it hard for it to tip over. But if it does fail, it might go -- or something like that, it will fail on the first possible -- it will just tip over and so it's pretty self -- it's very -- if these towers go down, you've got bigger problems out there.

MR. SKAAR: It's going by my house, too.

MR. POORKER: Yeah. Exactly. So let's take a look at that after the meeting and we can -- and there are charts. We have examples in those, we have charts of how far away the homes are, how many homes there are, and so we'll definitely take a look at that.

MR. EK: Any other questions, comments? Now's a real good opportunity to get your concerns on the record to be included in the scope.

Yes, sir.

MR. HAFNER: Hi, my name is John Hafner, H-A-F-N-E-R. I'm the project manager of CPV Diamond Lake Renewable Energy Company. It's a potential energy project of up to 400 megawatts in the Lincoln County area.

And I just had a few thoughts on the alternate versus the preferred transmission line.

First, CPV is very strong -- strongly supports the CapX project and the company feels that it's absolutely mandatory or essential for CapX to exist for Minnesota to meet several renewable energy goals. That's -- Buffalo Ridge is by far the most -- the best wind resource region in Minnesota.

With regards to the preferred versus alternate routes in the Brookings County substation to Lyon County substation area in particular, the two things that I have noticed is that the -- one is that the preferred route is fairly further away from the Brookings County substation than the alternative route is, so -- at least within the South Dakota portion of the project. You may be seeing somewhere between four and six extra miles of transmission, which it looks like some level of extra cost to the project.

So on that -- from that perspective, I think there would be preference for the alternate route. More so in the more southerly areas, as you head down from Hendricks, heading down toward the Lake Benton area, Buffalo Ridge itself lines that. So for any project there that wanted to interconnect directly to the larger line, there would be more options for projects that were on top of Buffalo

Ridge on the wider section, the southerly section.

So those are my two comments, in that there may be greater potential benefits for renewable energy and that there's a larger resource covered by the southerly line and it may require less cost to construct.

MR. EK: Thanks for your comments.

Any other comments, concerns, alternatives you'd like to be suggested?

Yes, sir.

MR. DOWNING: Dan Downing, D-O-W-N-I-N-G.

I was just wondering what the -- what kind of energy, is it coming from windmills or what actually is the source of energy out in South Dakota that they're routing it to?

MR. EK: Well, yeah, part of the project is for wind transmission.

MR. DOWNING: Okay.

MR. EK: And maybe Craig can speak more of what -- about the operation of the transmission line structures in Minnesota we're going to see these put on. But yes, wind is a big part of this project.

Craig, I don't know if you'd like to speak a little more on this.

MR. POORKER: Yeah, maybe just a little bit more on this. It's going to serve, certainly, a lot of wind capacity, but not only wind. I think there are people out there that would like to see sort of wind and wind only. But transmission line systems or energy systems work so that there's all kind of generation -- generated electricity on there. So there could be -- at any time, you don't know where the generation is actually coming from. If the wind isn't blowing or if there's a big draw, yeah, there could be some other generation. It could be coal, it could be biomass, it could be anything else that may come along in the future, as well, so it doesn't discriminate in regards to what kind of generation there may be. But in this wind-rich area, it could mean you are looking at wind energy.

MR. DOWNING: There's nothing in Brookings that actually is linking Brookings to --

MR. POORKER: I think in reference to Brookings County substation, that's where a lot of feeder lines are going into, is into that substation right there, that's kind of why we're looking right there. As far as other generation in the future, I -- and I expect that there will be some along this

transmission line, all the way to Twin Cities. And that's why we have -- we're building substations every 25 miles, 35, 50 miles or so between them, those are going to be some of those onramps for new generation or an offramp for cities that are growing pretty well. Like Marshall, for instance, has been growing a lot, a lot of ethanol plants coming on line. Those take a lot of energy that we might have to drop off as we go by.

MR. DOWNING: Okay.

MR. EK: Thank you. Any other questions, comments?

Yes, sir.

MR. OERTER: After that discussion, another point of clarification, the poles are going to carry one line, but are designed for two?

MR. EK: Correct.

MR. POORKER: Yes.

MR. OERTER: Not six?

MR. EK: Well, sir, there are three lines that make a circuit.

MR. OERTER: Oh.

MR. EK: So there would be --

MR. OERTER: So they'll carry six lines?

MR. EK: Yeah. If you want to call it

that way, there will be six wires, yes.

MR. POORKER: I might add that there are two more up on top for what we call shield wires. So actually two more on top.

MR. OERTER: So actually -- the poles actually support eight lines, then?

MR. POORKER: Eight wires.

MR. OERTER: Eight wires.

MR. POORKER: There's two circuits and then two --

MR. OERTER: Okay.

MR. POORKER: -- lightning protection shield wires.

MR. SKAAR: So this -- so from 345, it will -- the wire could actually be doubled to 700 -- or 690?

MR. POORKER: No. No. It will be two separate transmission lines, each 345 kV.

MR. SKAAR: That's what I said, two separate 345s?

MR. POORKER: Yes. You can't add it together and get 690, that's not the way --

MR. SKAAR: Right. But I mean, you still are -- so right now, it's built with one circuit of 345 with the potential of adding another circuit of

345?

MR. POORKER: Right.

MR. SKAAR: Right. That's -- and I don't know, but it's potentially double the power going on the system?

MR. POORKER: Yes, that would be along the route right now. So yeah, from Brookings County substation up to Lyon County, and we're going to build it initially to carry one -- one line on there. But it could be built that -- so you can add another one in the future a little easier without disrupting all the fields and whatever --

MR. SKAAR: But I mean, the potential exists, essentially, to double the capacity of the system?

MR. POORKER: Yes. And that is if that's what we're told to do as part of that certificate of need that's coming up here in the next month or two.

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

MR. SKAAR: And then as far as -- you know, you talked about your substations or whatever, and that's the only way to add wind -- additional wind power into the system is -- so basically, you've got it out here in Brookings and then the

next one would be Marshall, so basically anyplace in between would have to build new -- if there was a new project, you would have build lines to either one of those substations?

MR. POORKER: Yeah. I'm not exactly sure if we'd have to go right into that substation, you can --

Pam, can you go into distribution substations, can they go in there to get on --

MS. RASMUSSEN: Pam Rasmussen with Xcel Energy.

There's other substations on our system, on the lower voltage 115 kV system, for example, there's a substation just south of here. So additional wind projects and growth in the area would tie into the existing 115 kV substation, depending on the proximity of that project. It doesn't have to be these specific substations.

MR. SKAAR: Right. But you don't have those listed -- those transmission -- or those smaller substations listed on here (indicating)?

MS. RASMUSSEN: Not on that (indicating), but we've got some substations that isn't shown on that, but we do have maps if you're interested in seeing those.

MR. SKAAR: (Nods head.)

MR. EK: Any other questions, comments?

All right. Well, I urge you, then, to -- we'll all be around after this meeting for any questions, comments you may have informally. I urge you to grab a comment form in the back, submit a comment that way if you'd like. And also, take a look at the option of printing out of a map of your area and submitting a comment or alternative for us that you would like us to see on one of those map. You can hand them in tonight, send them in through the mail or e-mail.

But thank you all for attending.

(Public comment concluded.)