PUBLIC COMMENTS

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1, 2009

5:00 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

Redwood Area Community Center
901 Cook Street
Redwood Falls, Minnesota

1 I N D E X

2 COMMENTS PAGE

3 John Kiecker 3
Terry Weilage 4
4 Wade Blotz 6
Charlie Chmelar 8
5 Rose Kiecker 11
John Kiecker 13
6 Greg Debbaut 14
Randy Schroeder 16
7 Gail Hoffmann 18
Bailey Boerboom 22
8 Jan Basballe 24
Janean McKay 26
9 Ron Danielson 27
Kevin Roiger 31
10 Ron Danielson 34
Greg Debbaut 36
11 Richard Scheffler 37
Terry Weilage 42
12 Joyce McKay 43
Charlie Chmelar 44
13 Richard Scheffler 46
Mark Tjosaas 48
14 Dale Schmidt 48

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

MR. EK: So now we'll open it up to questions, comments, concerns, alternatives that you'd like to have addressed in the environmental impact statement.

Yes, sir. If I could have you state your name and spell it for the court reporter, please.

MR. KIECKER: John Kiecker, K-I-E-C-K-E-R. How wide, on the preferred route, is the corridor?

MR. EK: On the preferred route, you saw that -- are you talking about the -- kind of the light yellow-shaded line there? Well, the preferred route -- okay. There's a preferred line -- anyhow, the applicants request a 1,000-foot route width. Now -- and what the PUC, the Public Utilities Commission, permits is a route width. So they would permit that 1,000 feet -- or may, I should say, that's what's being requested. Now, within that 1,000-foot width would be the right-of-way and that is 150 feet, 75 feet on each side of the pole or the line that comes across.

So does that answer your question?

MR. KIECKER: Yes.

MR. EK: Okay. Thank you. Maybe I'll turn up the volume on this other one here, just give

me a moment.

Now we've got it. All right. Any other questions or comments, concerns you'd like me to hear?

Yes, sir. If you could -- yeah, it works. If you could state your name and spell it for the court reporter.

MR. WEILAGE: It's Terry Weilage, W-E-I-L-A-G-E.

Scott, you had talked about on the internet, and I've got a son that's got epilepsy -- I'm sorry. Can you hear now? I've got a son that's epileptic and he needs a nerve stimulator to control his epilepsy, it's an electrical impulse sent to the brain. The alternative route will run across my driveway, which will be about 100 yards from the lawn. Is there any danger to him on the off-feed of the wires?

MR. EK: Very good question and I did get your e-mail. And the thing is, that was something new that I don't think we've studied before when it comes to something as specific as that. So just for the record -- and I have your comment, it's already in a comment file. So that will be something we are going to take a look at. I can't give you an answer

because it's something new and I don't think we've looked at something like that in the past. But that certainly is very valid and a very good question, and it's something we will look at in the EIS. Just to let you know, I did get your e-mail and it's in the correct folder. So -- all right.

And then, you did mention you were the preferred, is it?

MR. WEILAGE: On the alternate.

MR. EK: You're on the alternate, so if you -- I guess, if you had a choice, you would rather see the preferred permitted. But I was going to say, if you had -- if you wanted to suggest an alternative now, if you had a preference.

MR. WEILAGE: Until I get that answer, I guess I don't have a preference if there's no health problems. I have a line running there already, but it's not as heavy of a line.

MR. EK: Okay.

MR. WEILAGE: But it's certainly closer, so --

MR. EK: Okay. I just wanted to clarify, thank you.

Any other comments, questions?

Yes, sir. If you could talk close into

the mic and spell your name.

MR. BLOTZ: Wade Blotz, B-L-O-T-Z.

With the alternate route, we're looking at -- we own property in Section 26 in Delhi. I don't think the guy I talked to earlier realized there were two wetlands in this property, plus there is a high-pressure natural gas line. You can't do anything with it in the corner of the property.

MR. EK: So you're suggesting us to take a look at that section. I guess, would you be suggesting an alternative route to that area or --

MR. BLOTZ: Well, I think it's something that you just need to be aware of, that it's going to be something that you're going to have to work around, you know, because it is a high-pressure gas line, dealing with some of the agriculture services, with that being RIM acres, I don't know how that has much effect on what can and cannot be done on that property.

MR. EK: Okay. Well, that is an item that we do consider, you know, other utilities within the area, within proximity to the proposed project. And I know the applicants have -- when they were going through designing this line or deciding on the alternate proposed route that you

see now. But, however, now that we know about this area and we've heard about it, it's something that we can certainly take a look at in the environmental impact statement.

MR. BLOTZ: And I guess my other concern would be with aerial spraying, because there are weeds that need to be taken care of. It's so rough, the only way is to aerial spray it. Is that going to deter anybody from doing it?

MR. EK: Yeah. That actually came up a couple nights ago at another public meeting, and it's an answer -- it's a question relatively new that, I guess, I haven't had the opportunity to address in an EA on how -- what the impacts might be for crop dusting, is what you're saying. So it's been mentioned before, it's been mentioned now tonight, so it's definitely something we'll look at.

I don't have an answer on what a transmission line -- or what impacts it would have. I guess we'd have to find out, you know, how low you're flying, which direction you're flying, items like that. And that's what the EIS would have to go into and analyze items like that. But it has been brought up before, so you're not the first person to mention that. And I actually found it to be an

interesting one myself because I haven't come across that one yet. So --

MR. CHMELAR: My name's Charlie Chmelar, C-H-M-E-L-A-R.

I've actually got two questions for you. The first one concerns height restrictions from the airport runways out here, has anybody looked at that, because that would on top of that ridge for the alternate route?

MR. EK: Well, I believe the applicants would likely have worked with MnDOT and -- however, maybe -- where's Craig?

Craig, maybe you could answer his question a little better.

MR. POORKER: Thanks, Scott.

That was a question that came up a lot at our open houses and our work group meetings, and that's the kind of information that isn't always out there, it's not available all the time from the FAA or from MnDOT. So we counted on people that have -- that fly to let us know where they were. And most of the people around know who has an airstrip, who doesn't. So we did log those in.

Height restrictions, if we need to work on some of that, there are things that we can do

with our structures to lower them, different designs, and things like that. So we can take a lot of that into consideration when it comes to the design phase, too. But those are important things that we need to know when we're routing and designing as well.

MR. CHMELAR: Okay. My other question is more of a monetary standpoint. On your alternate route, which would put it about a mile south of my property, that would be the view from my house. I don't believe the county would consider my property worthless because that power line runs there, so they're going to tax me the same, but it still won't have the salability that it would have had without it being there. How do I get compensated?

MR. POORKER: Okay. When it comes to compensation, we compensate landowners for properties that we cross, from an easement standpoint. We have to buy an easement from the landowner and pay for damages and things like that. There's nothing that addresses compensation for people that look at it from a mile away or unfortunately, even across the road. But that is --

MR. CHMELAR: If you're buying a house, would you want to buy one that you look at a power

1 line?
2 MR. POORKER: I think a lot of us
3 probably do right now have to look at power line.
4 MR. CHMELAR: I don't think you're right
5 there.
6 MR. EK: Did that address your comment,
7 sir -- or your question?
8 MR. CHMELAR: Well, maybe. I --
9 MR. POORKER: But I think the important
10 thing is that it's in the record and that's
11 something that we do -- aesthetics are one of the
12 things that we do try --
13 MR. CHMELAR: You need to work with the
14 county entities because, to me, a lot of people
15 probably have that same concern, what are their
16 property values worth to somebody that's purchasing
17 their home if that's what they get to look at? I
18 see one head nodding behind you right now.
19 MR. POORKER: Yeah. That's a very
20 important issue, and aesthetics is one of those
21 criteria that we need to address when we're routing
22 a transmission line. And that's also a subject that
23 your county assessor should look at when they come
24 out to assess your property for tax reasons, they
25 need to take that into consideration as well and

address that.

MR. CHMELAR: You know, and we're not going to be getting an easement from those people -- or because it gets -- isn't going to be on our property, but we're still going to be taking a hit from it.

MR. EK: That is a good question and it kind of falls under a category that we do study. You know, I, of course, can't give you the values of your property and the future values, but we do address property values, socioeconomics, when it comes to projects like this. Unfortunately, tonight I can't give you an answer on, you know, ultimately what that would be, but it is something that we'll look at. Just to let you know that is part of the process and part of -- some of the topics that we do study as we go through.

Thank you for your comment.

Yes, ma'am.

MS. KIECKER: My name is Rose Kiecker, K-I-E-C-K-E-R.

And I have question, because we are on the proposed route. What are the restrictions of how close the wires or whatever can be -- how close can they be to a living dwelling or home or --

MR. EK: There's -- well, the restriction would be, is there's -- you have the 150-foot right-of-way, you can't have a structure within that 150-foot right-of-way. So I guess to answer your question, 75 feet. If you had a structure abutting that -- you know, that 75-foot side of the right-of-way, that would be probably the limit because you can't be within that right-of-way.

However, that's -- you know, that's being discouraged and it is discouraged. There are opportunities to go around and that's part of tonight, for you to -- that's why we provided people the printout maps so we could -- so you could find your area, so you could maybe point that out, and maybe that line could be crossed over to the other side of the road, if need be.

I'm not sure of your situation, but it can cross roads, cross back over roads, so as to avoid your residence as much as possible. You can also suggest different alternatives completely, and that's part of the process tonight. And so if we don't hear from you or if we don't receive a comment, we're not going to know. So it's really important that you do submit some so we can take that into consideration.

MR. KIECKER: John Kiecker, again.

If there's an existing line already on our side of the land, does that have any impact on the proposed new line?

MR. EK: I guess it depends on the area you're in, it would be hard for me to answer that right now.

Craig, I don't know, do you know the areas better?

I mean, is it a distribution line or is it -- it depends on --

MR. POORKER: A service line -- a distribution line, right?

MR. KIECKER: (Nods head.)

MR. POORKER: Yeah. Yeah. That's the one that the REA has going to people's homes and things like that. That doesn't have a lot of impact for us. However, if we're going to be on -- if we have to be on that same side of the road, we would have to work with the co-op to either vary it or put it on the other side of the road, it can't be in that same corridor. So that's something that we'd have to look at, too.

MR. EK: Other questions, comments, concerns?

Sir, if you could state your name and spell it.

MR. DEBBAUT: Greg Debbaut, D-E-B-B-A-U-T.

I'm on the preferred route, here. I've got a -- my daughter-in-law runs a daycare out of our home we own and I want to know -- I just want you to know that there's a business there. And what's the -- referring back to the question back there, you said 75 feet, was -- are you talking about the pole or the lines? You know, if you've got a pole standing here (indicating), are you talking about 75 feet with the wires or are you just talking about 75 feet from the poles?

MR. POORKER: Yeah. That 75 feet is the right-of-way and that is from the center line of the pole, 75 feet out. And we also tried -- we take the distance to homes into consideration when we're routing it, too. We looked at how close they are when we're routing these lines. So we'd much rather go by -- or go down the roadways where the homes are further out, rather than close up. Do we do it in every instance? It's pretty difficult, there are some locations along the 237-mile route where we're somewhat close, yes.

MR. DEBBAUT: Well, this preferred route, this house is 20 feet from the road. If you go on either side of the road, it's going to be within 75 feet of home.

MR. POORKER: And if it's --

MR. DEBBAUT: The poles.

MR. POORKER: And if it's 20 feet from the road right-of-way, we're not going to be going on that side of the road, that's for sure.

MR. DEBBAUT: I know, but if you go on the other side, you're still going to be within the 75 feet if there's a pole in front of the house.

MR. POORKER: Yeah. If we're on the opposite side of the road, I'm not sure what the right-of-way width of the road is, but our poles would have to be outside of the right-of-way. So it has to be within 100 feet, right?

MR. DEBBAUT: Yeah, it's going to be within 100 feet. But I guarantee you there will be no -- she'll be out of business, because there ain't going to be anybody that's going to bring their daycare kids to her place if there's a high-voltage power line going over there.

MR. POORKER: Yeah. And this is one of the things -- that's why the state's here and taking

these comments. I mean, that's a business. That's one of those land-based economy criteria that needs to be looked when they evaluate this in the environmental impact statement. So -- good place to make that comment.

MR. DEBBAUT: Okay.

MR. EK: May I suggest that you identify the township and area of the daycare so we can have that in the comments.

MR. DEBBAUT: It's Underwood Township, Section 27, that would be the southwest one-fourth of the southwest quarter of 27. The address of the place is 13029 290th Street.

MR. EK: Perfect. Thank you, sir.

Other comment? Yes. Let me see if I could get over there.

If you could state your name and spell it for the court reporter, please.

MR. SCHROEDER: Sure. Randy Schroeder, S-C-H-R-O-E-D-E-R.

And my question was partially answered by the last question, but where there is a place right adjacent to where the right-of-way -- where the proposed line would go or the preferred route and they need to be 75 feet away, then that would

essentially leave the road right-of-way and enter into a field in order to keep 75 feet away. Am I kind of interpreting that correctly? Because you can't put it over somebody's house, you can't put it just across the road from where somebody is adjacent to the road, so it would have to leave the road right-of-way, essentially, and go into the field, I take it.

MR. POORKER: Yeah. When we're going along a roadway, we're dealing with road authority -- township, whether it's a county or a city roadway or the state. They're going to request that we be outside the road right-of-way. So if the right-of-way on a county road is 50 feet, we're likely going to be five feet outside of that with the center line of the transmission line. So that we are hugging right up close to that road right-of-way so that we are not into a field any more than we have to be.

MR. SCHROEDER: Except it has to be put away 75 feet from a place, you would have to leave even further from the road right-of-way, I take it.

MR. POORKER: No, I don't think so. I mean, when you go 75 feet -- 75 feet either side of that center line, there won't be any homes in there.

If there's a home on the opposite side of the road that's within that 75 feet -- and I don't think there are many cases of that, that would be a house that's really close --

MR. SCHROEDER: There are. There are some.

MR. POORKER: -- to the road. And there are some. Yeah, there are some.

MR. SCHROEDER: There are some that are right next to the road ditch.

MR. POORKER: Sure. You know, and we're going to have to be outside of that. We're trying our best to balance that, not impacting ag and not impacting homes as well.

MR. SCHROEDER: That's going to be very difficult, though, if ya'll stayed in front of the homes.

MR. POORKER: It's a challenge for us, exactly. Yeah.

MR. SCHROEDER: All right. Thank you.

MR. EK: Thanks for your comment, sir.

Other comments?

Yes, ma'am. If you could state your name and spell it, please.

MS. HOFFMANN: Gail Hoffmann,

H-O-F-F-M-A-N-N.

You talk about compensation, okay, do you have any idea at this point what is compensation? Second of all, if you have -- do not have the pole actually on your land, but you're going to have to access that wire at any point in time, is there compensation for that land also or not?

MR. POORKER: Yes. We do have to acquire easements whether there's a pole on your property or not. So -- and the poles are going to be 1,000 feet apart, so we may go by some homes or properties where there may not even be a pole on your property. But we have that 75-foot right-of-way and it's kind of an imaginary line. It's not a line that we're going to draw out there, 75 feet and you can't do anything.

When we acquire these easements, we're acquiring the right to build this line, operate it, and maintain it, and that's it. So if you're farming it, you can still farm it. We still have to get an easement from you whether you have a pole on your property or not. So we have to pay for that acreage for an easement.

And the payment is based on land values, it's based on crop damage, we pay for that, soil

compaction, fence damage, landscaping damage, or impacts to property values. If we are impacting your property value, we need to compensate you for that as well. There's no reason that a landowner should have to suffer financially for this project, so we do pay for all of that. And those are things we negotiate with each and every landowner, as required by law.

MS. HOFFMANN: One other question, say these -- you guys go bankrupt, I don't know if this happens, I have no idea, who's going to take that puppy out?

MR. POORKER: Well, if we go bankrupt, or anybody goes bankrupt, somebody's going to be operating that transmission line, I would think. When we build something like this, there's -- a lot of work goes into, is it even needed, and that's going through the process right now.

In fact, we were here for the certificate of need scoping meetings, we were here for that on that other issue. And also there were hearings here in town before an Administrative Law Judge to find out if this line was even indeed needed, and that decision, I think, is coming out here in the next month or two.

1 So it's got to be -- first of all, it has
2 to be needed. If the company goes bankrupt,
3 somebody else is probably going to take over that
4 transmission line and operate it. If that
5 transmission is not being operated and it's sitting
6 there doing nothing, that could be part of the
7 permit. If it's not being operated or we take the
8 line out and it's not used anymore, we have to
9 release those easements back. We can't just hang on
10 to it and have it sitting there and not doing
11 anything and encroaching on private property. So we
12 would -- I would guess as part of the permit, we'd
13 have to do something with it if it's not being used.
14 MS. HOFFMANN: Okay. And you said just
15 an easement, and I'm not real savvy on a lot of
16 this, I would still own the land, you just have the
17 right to work on it?
18 MR. POORKER: Yes. Good point. You're
19 right, we -- we're only buying a few rights and that
20 is to build, maintain, and operate it, that's it.
21 It's still private property, people still farm it,
22 landscape it, fence it, use it for pasture or
23 whatever.
24 So it's still your private property and
25 nothing can be used on there again. If somebody

comes along and wants to put a bike path in or a gas line or a buried telephone line, they cannot do that on your private property just because we have an easement there. That company or entity needs to get an easement from you as well.

MR. EK: Thank you.

Other comments, concerns, alternatives?

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

MR. BOERBOOM: I'm going to state my first name, too, it's B-A-I-L-E-Y, and my last name's Boerboom, B-O-E-R-B-O-O-M.

And concern comes with, we have an electrical fence directly underneath your proposed power line if it goes on the south side of the road. And if you do go on the south side, you'd be eliminating a quarter of my growth. And do you see any stray voltage going onto that fence, is my question. There was a stray voltage question on voltage onto the fence line for livestock.

MR. POORKER: Okay. The question has to do with your electric fence, and if it's running and you're operating it, that's not an issue. It's when you shut your electric fence down that some of that induced current might be there. But a lot of times

what I've noticed is that farmers will ground their fence -- or that fence down into the ground so that doesn't happen, it just drains off into the ground.

But it can build up a little bit of charge if it's right underneath those wires and the conditions are right. So that is a chance, but grounding will fix that.

That's also addressed in the permit application in detail, there's a section there on that -- on stray voltage, and induced current is what that's called. So yes, we have addressed that and that's going to be a significant issue for us, too, because there's a lot of electric fences in cattle pastures out there, too.

MR. BOERBOOM: And when will we know which side of the road the power line's actually going to go on, if it's going to be the north or the south side?

MR. POORKER: Yeah. That's probably a question for Scott, but --

MR. EK: First of all, I was going to ask if you'd like to identify kind of where you're located because then, you know, we can -- or you can submit this form tonight and you can actually identify what side the road you'd like to see the

line on, and that's considered an alternative, and turn this in as a comment to us.

Or you can go ahead and, you know, state your address right here, right now, and it will be in the record as a comment as well.

MR. BOERBOOM: Our address is 29454 275th Street, Redwood Falls, and we prefer the route to be on the north side of the road.

MR. EK: And then you also had concerns about the stray voltage and to ensure that that's looked at in the environmental impact statement. And indeed, we do look at that and it is -- as Craig said, it is primarily a grounding issue. It's detailed in pretty much every permit we issue for a transmission line, for stray voltage, that it needs to be taken care of by the utility.

But very good question, good concern. And it is something we look at, we've heard a lot about it in the past couple of days. So thank you.

Additional questions, comments?

Yes, ma'am.

MS. BASBALLE: Jan Basballe, B-A-S-B-A-L-L-E.

Follow-up question about easements, is that just a one-time payment or is that an annual

payment? Because land does change hands.

MR. POORKER: Yeah, that's a good question. And people usually ask that when we're negotiating those easements. We do make -- it's based on a one-time payment. However, statute allows that if you want that payment spread out over a few years, we can do that for you. And that kind of lessens that tax hit, if you will, because you do have to pay capital gains taxes on that, unless it's for damages. So there is an option to spread that payment over, I think, up to ten years. But the easement is perpetual, it runs with the land. When you sell it that -- the buyer knows it's there and buys it as-is.

MS. BASBALLE: Then I have one other question, also. Does this line interfere with, like, your radio reception, you know, TV, things like that?

MR. POORKER: It may sometimes. But if it does, that's usually a problem with some hardware on the transmission line and we can usually fix that. We -- if something like that happens, we need to know about that and we can send a crew out there to fix something like that. Sometimes it's a loose -- it's loose hardware and it's vibrating and

that'll cause problems for TV and radio.

MR. EK: Thanks, Craig.

Craig answered that question very well. And that's also one of those items we automatically will study.

Something else that has come up that's similar to that is the GPS tracking for farming, and that's something else we'd look at, too. That's kind of new to this -- or new for me in this project. So yeah, that's something that we will also look at.

Yes, ma'am.

MS. JANEAN McKAY: Janean McKay, M-C, capital K, A-Y.

I was under the assumption that most of these routes would be on the half-mile line through the center of the section, and everything tonight has been discussed on the roadway. So I was wondering when that changed?

MR. EK: Craig.

MS. JANEAN McKAY: My map, it's on the half-mile line.

MR. POORKER: Okay. Yeah. We have -- we have some of each, certainly. There are some areas where we're following roadways where we can, that

makes it -- and we like that because it's easier to build, easier to maintain, easier to inspect. We can drive down the road and see that.

But not in all cases are we along the roadways. There are a few cases where we're going across the -- a half-section line. And we try to stick to a field line -- a field division line, a property line so that we're not impacting a farmer's field. So it's not always along the roadway, but there are some miles along those field lines, too. Right.

MS. JANEAN McKAY: So it's not one blanket way of doing it, you have a little pull?

MR. POORKER: Yeah. And there's some of each and there are a few short instances where we even are, unfortunately, going cross-country with a preferred or alternate route, should it go -- should it go that way. But we kept that to a pretty small percentage overall.

MR. EK: Thank you.

Additional, comments, questions, concerns, alternatives to be proposed?

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

MR. DANIELSON: Ron Danielson,

1 D-A-N-I-E-L-S-O-N.
2 I was wondering about these
3 electromagnetic fields, how far away from the power
4 lines they actually radiate out, and also, the noise
5 levels?
6 And getting back to the guy that his
7 daughter's (sic) got a daycare, isn't this kind of a
8 danger to the child -- children? I was just
9 glancing through this deal and they were talking
10 about childhood leukemia, so I mean, shouldn't you
11 stay as far away from the places as you can? This
12 stretch between Gibbon and Fairfax on the proposed
13 stretch where you guys are showing it, there's a lot
14 of farm places that are right on that road, you're
15 going to be skipping back and forth all the way
16 across.
17 MR. EK: Yes. We've done many studies in
18 the past on EMF, and the studies -- you know, the
19 literature we put together and look at -- has found
20 there to be little correlation between
21 electric/magnetic fields and leukemia.
22 However, saying that, they have not
23 completely ruled out the risk. The risk is little
24 and small. At the same time, we will continue, at
25 the State of Minnesota, looking at the data --

1 looking at the new data, especially in this project.
2 This is a great opportunity for us to look at new
3 data on EMF and its potential impacts, and what
4 they've found out, you know, since, you know,
5 30 years ago when they were doing these studies.
6 And it's something we will look at and update and
7 address in this EIS.
8 MR. DANIELSON: Approximately how far
9 from a power line does this EMF radiate? I mean, is
10 it 50 feet, 25 feet, is it 100 feet?
11 MR. EK: Well, what happens is -- EMF is
12 electric fields and magnetic fields, so you separate
13 them. And both, the further you get away from that
14 transmission line right-of-way, the -- I guess, what
15 do you want to call it? It decreases. So depending
16 on the voltage of the line, you're going to have,
17 you know, varying distances. You know, a line of
18 smaller kilovoltage, it's going to drop out quicker,
19 at a shorter distance. A line that's higher, of
20 course, it's going to take a little longer.
21 And that information is provided in the
22 route permit application outside. They have the
23 figures for, you know, what the magnetic field would
24 be right beneath the center line -- what is it? 37
25 and a half feet, at 100 feet, 200 feet, 350 feet,

and it shows you, you know, the gradations as you move away from that line for this particular line. So if you want to take a look at that, or after the presentation here, we can find that in the application, I can give you a look at that. But we're definitely going to take a look at that and address the subject because it's come up quite a bit and it's an important subject.

MR. DANIELSON: Okay. What about the noise level, what kind of noise do these lines put off?

MR. EK: Noise is a -- they call it corona and what happens -- usually they don't give off noise. However -- however -- and Craig, maybe you can answer to this, too, but they probably give off the most noise is when there's a light fog or a light mist out, and that's when you can hear it the best. Moisture is what's going to create that noise and that crackling.

If you have a heavy rain, you're not going to hear it because the rain's probably going to drown out that crackling noise. So it's only when you have that light fog or heavy mist in the air, or there are cracks or problems in the conductor itself, that can cause a corona.

1 And maybe, Craig, you might have a little
2 more information on --
3 MR. POORKER: No more, but I think you're
4 right, when the conditions -- when it's under, like,
5 say, full load, it's really hot outside, things are
6 sagging, so they might be closer to the ground, you
7 can hear them better just because they're closer.
8 High humidity conditions, sometimes it will crackle
9 right around that wire as well.
10 And Scott's right, it makes the most
11 noise when it's raining, but you don't get to hear
12 it just because you hear the rain instead. So it's
13 affected by moisture.
14 MR. ROIGER: Kevin Roiger, Fairfax,
15 R-O-I-G-E-R.
16 I'm on the preferred route between
17 Fairfax and -- well, Franklin, actually, and
18 Winthrop, in that corridor. And how did that become
19 the preferred corridor and what were some of the
20 determining factors, you know, versus the north
21 route or the south route? Some of the highlights, I
22 guess, that's what I was --
23 MR. POORKER: Sure. Yup. We analyzed
24 hundreds and hundreds of segments going east and
25 west and even some north/south connections where we

had to make some turns. And in the application itself, too, if you look at that online or on the disk or a hardcopy, we put all those routes in there that we rejected. And a lot of it has to do with house counts, what kind of right-of-way was available for it, whether it was along a roadway or a field line, proximity to homes, how close the homes were to the roadway or the proposed center line. All those things kind of added up to form a balance.

And there are some charts in there that show how many homes there are on a certain segment, how close those homes are, what type of right-of-way we're impacting, and things like that. And even the ones that we rejected, we analyzed those as well and put those into the permit application, too.

MR. ROIGER: Were they -- did they physically drive up and down those?

MR. POORKER: Yes, we did. We drove -- we gathered a lot of information and we actually hired a company to supply all new aerial photos so that they're a little bit clearer and high definition. And when we started analyzing the routes closely, we actually drove up and down all the routes to make sure that the information we had

gathered from those air photos -- for instance, whether the home was occupied, the distance from the roadway, and things like that. So we did field check a lot of that information, too.

MR. ROIGER: Was there a -- what were some of the major determining factors? I guess, can you specifically tell me anything about that?

MR. POORKER: Well, the major determining factors, of course, are the number of homes, how close the homes were, whether or not we could find someplace to put the line, whether along a road or a field line. We tried to stay away from going across the open ag land out in the middle of fields, rights-of-way, wetlands are an issue, lakes. A huge issue for us was the river crossings and approaching that, that was very much a challenge for us. Substation location, we need to get to a substation area eventually, also.

MR. ROIGER: I guess what I'm getting at is, there's that high-line corridor, the south one, which actually has a corridor that's through it already. I mean, there's power lines running down the south corridor, which has been there for 34 years, why would you go on the north side?

MR. POORKER: Oh, you mean on the north

side of the road or the north side of --

MR. ROIGER: The north side of 19.

MR. POORKER: Oh, the north side of 19, oh, you mean on the -- where the preferred route --

MR. ROIGER: Yes.

MR. POORKER: Right. Right. Yeah, when we analyzed the preferred route versus the alternate route, we probably looked at the number of homes, how close the homes were, and compared the two of them. And -- but I should say, too, that even our alternate route, we're fairly comfortable with that. Statute and the rules say we have to pick one -- name one as a preferred route. And we would have preferred just to have two routes, but we do have to name one the preferred versus alternate.

So we added up, you know, along that whole corridor, the number of homes and how close they were, types of right-of-way, river crossings, and things like that. It's a pretty big balancing act, really, in taking everything into consideration that we felt -- that we heard from the public that was important to them.

MR. DANIELSON: Ron Danielson, again.

I've got a question. You've got a 1,000-foot leeway to go with your route. Now, you

1 were talking before about going a half mile on some
2 spots, but that 1,000-foot wouldn't allow you to go
3 to the half mile because it's 2,640 feet to the half
4 mile.
5 MR. POORKER: Right. Right.
6 MR. DANIELSON: So, I mean, you've
7 limited your options on some of this stuff to get
8 around some of these places.
9 MR. POORKER: Yeah. Some of our proposed
10 routes are along the half-mile sections, some are
11 along the roads, but the total route width that we
12 applied for was 1,000 feet. And what that does is
13 it gives us some options when it comes to the design
14 phase, or perhaps the state will say you've got to
15 be on this side of the road or that side of the
16 road, and that gives us some option for design.
17 It also gives us opportunity to negotiate
18 with the landowner. Perhaps they have a farmstead
19 -- I've heard from a couple of farmstead owners that
20 say they'd rather have us go behind the farmstead
21 rather than along the road. So that's something
22 that we can work with when it comes to design and
23 easement acquisition with a landowner, it gives us a
24 little more room to do some work and negotiate.
25 MR. EK: And again, just to let you know,

this is your opportunity tonight for those areas you're talking about, section lines -- or you can suggest different areas than you see on the maps out there -- to go and submit to us. That's actually what I'm looking for from you folks tonight.

Yes, sir.

MR. DEBBAUT: I have a -- Greg Debbaut, again.

Was there ever any thought about -- you're trying to get from Brookings to Minneapolis, has there ever been any thought of following the interstate, follow 29 up, take 94? There aren't any homes along the interstate and it wouldn't be impacting anybody. I was just wondering if there was ever any thought of doing that. I know you're trying to get to some substations and stuff, but if you would go along the interstate, it wouldn't impact anybody, hardly.

MR. POORKER: Yeah. Good question. We had some comments on that at our open houses and work group meeting. And one that came up in this area, you know, I-90 was talked about, there's a transmission line there already. And a lot of this is for a lot of that wind generation in Buffalo Ridge, Xcel Energy just got done building one along

I-90.

There is another project that does go down I-94 coming out of Fargo and that's another one of the CapX projects. And there's -- I see a lot of new generation coming on line in the future in North Dakota, South Dakota, and there is a proposed line in that area, too, to get from Fargo to Monticello. So that is another one of the CapX projects. And the other one, of course, is going from Hampton down to La Crosse, Wisconsin. So it's a pretty -- it's a big project altogether.

But this route here, we did spend some time looking at Highway 19, that was a suggestion. Unfortunately, that's where all the cities are, too. There's a lot of small towns along there and we did not want to go through cities like that, through urban areas. So that kind of took a good part of 19 out of the equation, also.

MR. EK: Yes, sir.

MR. SCHEFFLER: My is Richard Scheffler, it's S-C-H-E-F-F-L-E-R. Section 15 of Beaver Falls Township is where I live.

Your alternate route, I see by the map tonight -- the ones you sent in the mail were pretty vague, but I see by the maps in the lobby tonight,

it goes just -- we're just north Mr. Weilage that spoke earlier and you enter our property at Section 14 of Beaver Falls Township. Now, this past winter, our local REA just removed power lines off of that same proposed line. The question there would be, were you aware of that?

And the next thing is, is that, as you look at that same area where Mr. Weilage's driveway is, there's an existing Xcel Energy line that just received new poles, wires, and everything this past year. For me to say one route would be not good, as you go two miles down the road and I've got land in the Birch Cooley Township that the Xcel line would be on. So I'll deal with you on either line, I don't have a problem with the lines. So that's one question.

The other thing that I want to know now after hearing tonight's comments and some of the things that have been discussed is, you have stated there is a for-sure line -- or the line you prefer and this is the line that's an alternate. I'm wondering, when do you decide that it's not the preferred line anymore and we become the preferred line? How do we know when you make that decision? You know, do we need to worry now on the alternate

side or should we just lay low and let this thing go along or should we look at this thing like we are the preferred line, too?

MR. POORKER: Let me address the first part of that about the REA land it came out of. I was not aware of that and we don't probably get too involved in those kind of details. But the other one -- your other question was -- what was your second question, again?

MR. SCHEFFLER: The second question is, when you -- you're saying right now your proposed line -- or your preferred line and that lays below us, which doesn't affect me at all with any properties. But what I was hearing just shortly ago is that all of a sudden you could change for whatever reason. If somebody down here doesn't like you for five miles and you head north and then, we're all of a sudden the preferred line.

MR. POORKER: Yeah. That's more of a -- more a question for the state now because it's in their process, then. But your comment about laying low, don't do that. I guess we've been telling people for two years, stay involved and pay attention. We send mailings out frequently to everybody, every few months we try to send out a

mailing. So don't lay low, stay involved.

And -- but Scott can answer the question about what -- where the routing goes because --

MR. SCHEFFLER: That list you suggested we sign up for is what we get these mailings from, correct -- tonight?

MR. EK: Correct. Correct. I was just going to get to that. Make sure, then -- make sure you have your name on that list.

MR. SCHEFFLER: It's already on there.

MR. EK: Great. Fantastic. Because what we'll do, then, you know, as things change, we'll be sure to let folks know that things are changing. So you would have opportunity to comment then on these changes, it's only fair. You know, what you see tonight, you go home, you think you're comfortable, all of a sudden something changes. Yeah, that isn't fair. So -- no.

Please get your name on the comment list. Again, call me, go online, internet, sign on the sheet out back there, and we'll be sure if -- when notices go out on any changes or any happenings, you'll be sure to get them, then.

MR. SCHEFFLER: One more question, this might be something other people are interested in.

I've noticed there are some maps more similar to what you've got in the lobby -- detailed, is that something that could be printed on computers on the side here tonight for us if we'd like them? It appears like they're much clearer and much more detailed than the stuff you sent us. So if there's concerns, would that be helpful?

MR. EK: Yeah. This is actually pretty great, I thought. What we have set up here is, they're similar to the maps out there, it's the GIS. So they zoom in -- zoom in, zoom out, however big you want it for your particular area and print you out a map. And they have -- even have it set up where it will print your name and address on the form, on the flip side is even an area of where you can comment. You can draw a line on that route, submit that sheet of paper as a comment to me tonight or --

MR. SCHEFFLER: Is there somebody sitting there that can do that?

MR. EK: Yup. There's two folks right there that will be happy to help you.

Any other comments we have tonight?

You might want to state your name again, just for record.

MR. WEILAGE: It's Terry Weilage. In one of Craig's answers, he had -- before the health hazard came up, he mentioned that there was a possibility of burying the cable. Is the buried cable an option? And if it's an option, does that reduce the amount of human factor, as far as health factors, in the line?

MR. POORKER: Yeah. My reference, Terry, to burying the line was in reference to the distribution line, and we bury that. But we --

MR. WEILAGE: So you guys don't bury yours?

MR. POORKER: No. And that's a question we get asked a lot. And this is a big enough line, it runs pretty hot, and the technology isn't quite there yet to do that for a long distance. It's also a big construction issue, it's a big trench. It's expensive to do it, of course, too.

But -- and also, it's really difficult for us to find faults when something goes wrong with the line. It's not like driving down the road and seeing a wire broken or something like that. We can't find where the fault is, and it takes a lot longer to fix it.

MR. WEILAGE: I'm sure you can track it,

I mean, if the gas lines are buried, they have a way of tracking that. I'm sure there's a way. I do realize the cost is way up, but thinking about health factors, is that an option that we can possibly get in there --

MR. POORKER: Yeah. Actually --

MR. WEILAGE: -- if it reduces it by being in the ground?

MR. POORKER: It does not. It reduces the electric field, but it does not reduce the magnetic field because magnetic fields can go through the soil or through concrete or whatever. And when you bury the line, it's only four or five feet down. Whereas when it's in the air, it's 40 feet or 50 feet above the ground.

MR. EK: Thank you.

Other comments, questions?

Yes, ma'am. If you could state your name and spell it, please.

MS. JOYCE McKAY: Joyce McKay, M-C, capital K, A-Y.

I understand that the electricity's going to run directly from Brookings to Hampton, is that going to not benefit any of the communities along the line, or is that what the substations are about?

MR. POORKER: You had the right -- you answered your own question. You're right. And I did not go into that detail and it does not run directly from Brookings to Hampton. There are a lot of -- there are four substations that we're proposing to expand and four new substations that we're proposing as well. And those are those -- like, if you compare it to a highway, those are the onramps and off ramps. We can unload some electricity there, like at Lyon County substation, for instance. Marshall's grown significantly in the last few years and there's a demand there. There's some voltage problems in the Franklin area and -- where we're proposing a new substation.

And also, it provides an onramp for new wind generation that may come on -- or any kind of generation that might come on in the area all along the transmission. So good question, thanks.

MR. EK: Thank you.

Yes, sir.

MR. CHMELAR: Charlie Chmelar, again.

From what I've been listening to, your comments sheets here, you'd really prefer those sent in and people stating whether they prefer the preferred route or the alternate route, correct?

MR. EK: However you'd like to do it. You can hand them in tonight or you can take them home, kind of think about them and send them in before April 30. You don't need to necessarily limit it to the preferred or the alternative. However, you know, it would be helpful if you did state that if that's what you believe, you know, one's better than the other.

You can also, we -- the whole point of printing out these maps is, if you wanted to get specific in your area of -- you know, where the route could go a different -- along a different road, along a different section, along -- so and so forth. So you're not limited to just the preferred, yes, or the alternative, yes or no, vice versa.

So does that answer your question?

MR. CHMELAR: Somewhat.

MR. EK: But no, we'd be happy to accept them through mail or tonight, either way. And that was the whole impetus for printing out these maps, to kind of help people identify -- or give them a more close-up view of their respective location with the proposed routes.

Any other questions, comments?

Yes, sir.

1 MR. SCHEFFLER: Richard Scheffler, again.
2 I'm still thinking a little about that
3 answer when he handed it off to you about if -- when
4 do you -- what's the criteria, when you do guys look
5 at this preferred route and what changes it that
6 makes it not preferred and you go someplace else or
7 that would become the -- is there something that
8 triggers that or -- because right now you're saying
9 that's the proposed route and that's what you're
10 going to do, correct? Are we understanding that
11 or --
12 MR. EK: No. No. It's merely -- what
13 you see up here is merely -- it's an application.
14 It's a proposal by the utility companies and they
15 proposed that preferred and they proposed that
16 alternative by law. Now, tonight and throughout
17 this scoping process, we're likely going to receive
18 comments -- I should say alternatives suggested by
19 public citizens on variations of those routes.
20 And what we'll do is, we'll take a look
21 at those and put them into a scoping decision and
22 examine those in an environmental impact statement.
23 And the way we examine them is impacts, you know,
24 does this alternative have greater or lesser impact
25 than this alternative versus the proposed or the

1 proposed alternative? So this one's going to get
2 quite complicated, I think.
3 But that will happen during that
4 environmental impact statement, that phase. And so
5 once that environmental impact statement's issued, I
6 believe there would be a better idea of what type of
7 alternatives are being suggested at that time. And
8 maybe people -- and that will give people an
9 opportunity, again, to comment on which of those new
10 alternatives -- or variations are better. And the
11 EIS will help to say which of those variations have
12 the least impacts for all those categories I
13 mentioned. So --
14 MR. SCHEFFLER: What we're looking at,
15 then, is we're actually looking at the lower portion
16 for a ways, and if there's resistance in some area,
17 you could actually jump to the north for a portion
18 and then jump back south or whatever? You could
19 connect -- it could change like that, or it's going
20 to accept one route or accept the other route?
21 MR. EK: Nope, you're correct. It could
22 change, there could be a variation. It could be
23 part of that preferred, part of that alternative, it
24 depends. That's what this process is about, to make
25 sure that the best route is -- if it is permitted,

it is the best route, and it's as commented by the people and suggested by the people and with the least amount of impacts.

Any other questions?

Sir, if you could state your name, spell it.

MR. TJOSAAS: My name is Mark Tjosass, T-J-O-S-A-A-S.

This -- everything we've heard tonight is still predicated on this certificate of need being issued, that is still before an Administrative Law Judge and that's expected when?

MR. EK: I believe April 15 or 16, during that week. I can't recall the day offhand. It is either the 15th or 16th, and that's when they'll have deliberations on whether, yes, indeed this project is needed or not needed.

MR. TJOSAAS: And that's not a guarantee?

MR. EK: Yeah. I can't tell you what their decision's going to be. But yeah, that decision hinges on what happens with this routing process.

Other questions?

MR. SCHMIDT: Dale Schmidt, S-C-H-M-I-D-T.

I have a question, why do the poles have to be five feet in from the roadway (sic), and how big a base does that pole have?

MR. POORKER: Good question. It's because of the base that we have to be, like, five feet outside of the road right-of-way because there's a diameter on that. That would -- it sits on a concrete pad. That could be six to eight feet in diameter, probably more like eight feet -- the concrete pad. Actually, it's a column that goes into the ground 30 to 40 feet, depending on what the soil conditions are. And so you have the center line and you go out to edge of that, we want to make sure that that structure is not on the road right-of-way. So that's the reason for that, it's eight to ten feet wide for the concrete structure and the pole sits on top of that, bolted to the top.

MR. SCHMIDT: Then I have a question, if when you measure out your exact 1,000 feet, what if there's a tile line there and that's your own tile line, do you adjust for that? I mean, can you go, like, 1,010 feet or 990 feet or how is that?

MR. POORKER: Yes. Absolutely, that's a good question. And that is something that we would work with in the design phase and the easement

1 acquisition phase. We would put a stake out there
2 and whoever was negotiating the easement with you
3 would come out and say, here's where we propose to
4 put the pole, how does that look? If there's
5 something there, we can move it on the spot.
6 So yes, we can adjust those spans, they
7 don't have to 1,000 feet. They can be 800, 900,
8 they can be a little over 1,000 if we have to. So
9 yes, we can adjust it certainly then for the tile
10 line.
11 MR. SCHMIDT: And then I have one other
12 question, at Farmfest I had talked to a young
13 gentleman and he had said what is going to change --
14 or what is going to decide which route is the DNR,
15 where you're going build across the Minnesota River,
16 is that -- is there any truth to that? I mean, is
17 that -- we're all talking that -- how we want this
18 or we don't like it, they're our concerns. But is
19 that really the point, is when the DNR says you can
20 go to the north route or the south route and that's
21 going to pretty well decide it?
22 MR. POORKER: What we try to do for the
23 river crossings, we'll get information from the DNR
24 and the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Corps of
25 Engineers ahead of time so that we're not surprised.

And we even took them out in the field and showed them what we had recommended for options for crossing to make sure they somewhat concur. They may prefer one over the other when it comes down to it, but we did not want to propose something that they would be absolutely opposed to, because then that would just probably take that out of the equation. So we try to cross at locations that are already disturbed, whether it's an existing transmission line or a roadway, at a bridge or something like that. So -- but the DNR will have some say in it, but more than anything, the Fish and Wildlife Service or even the Corps of Engineers.

MR. EK: And just to add to that, you know, the state agencies such as the DNR or the Board of Soil and Water Resources, and then you have the feds, the Corps of Engineers, Fish and Wildlife Service, they're required to work with us on this EIS. So they're going to feed us and help us, provide us with that information for those areas.

They're not going to, of course, define and tell us where to go, but they're going to give us information that will guide us on which would be the least -- or the best place with the least impacts when it comes to those river crossings.

Any other questions? I don't know if I saw hands up? I am missing something?

Well, with that, thank you all for coming. And what I want to say, again, the comment period ends April 30. And so it's very important that all of you, if you have concerns, issues, alternatives to suggest, that you get them in to us. It's very important. And you can do that tonight, you can take a form, take it home and think about it, mail it in, e-mail it in, come to our website. Give me a call and I can help direct you on how to do that as well. All the forms are out there, we'll be -- all of us will be around here for a while for any additional questions you might have.

So thank you all for coming.

(Public comment concluded.)