

PUBLIC COMMENTS

THURSDAY, JULY 2, 2009

2:00 p.m.

In the Matter of the Application by Xcel Energy and Great River Energy for a Route Permit for the Monticello to St. Cloud 345 kV Transmission Line Project

PUC Docket Number: E002,ET2/TL-09-246

Clearwater Township Hall
15015 State Highway 24
Clearwater, Minnesota

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1 MR. BIRKHOLZ: My name is David Birkholz.
2 I'm with the Office of Energy Security within the
3 Minnesota Department of Commerce. One of the things
4 we do in that office is when an application comes
5 into the Public Utilities Commission for a route, as
6 has happened in this case -- we'll talk much more
7 about that as we go -- it comes to us to engage the
8 public in participating in how that -- how that
9 project is reviewed and how it affects you. And so
10 we stage a number of opportunities for public
11 participation into making comments. And at this
12 stage it's comments especially about an EIS, or an
13 environmental impact statement. And we'll talk
14 about that some more too.

15 This part of the presentation initially,
16 the first two pieces I'm going to try to cover
17 completely enough so that you understand it. But I
18 want to get through it fairly quickly because the
19 important part of these three things is the final
20 one.

21 So the way it's going to work today is
22 I'm going to -- I'm going to allow -- after we get
23 introductions and things, I'm going to allow the
24 Company to do a quick review of what the project
25 actually is, what they're proposing, and what

1 they've put before the Public Utilities Commission.
2 That will be a chance -- they will just give some
3 direction about that. It does make sense for fairly
4 technical issues to address them -- if you can ask a
5 straightforward question, to address them about the
6 projects, and we can answer a straightforward
7 question at that time but, otherwise, not to get
8 into a lot of details that we'll be talking about
9 later.

10 So if we can get that so that everybody
11 understands what it is that's being proposed and if
12 we're all on the same page, then I'll take just a
13 few minutes to talk about the process, again, why
14 we're here from the Office of Energy Security, what
15 we're doing for environmental review, and how this
16 whole process is going to work over the next year
17 before a permit is issued from the Public Utilities
18 Commission.

19 And after that what we will do is we will
20 open up to your comments and your questions. And
21 I'll explain how those get incorporated into the
22 process a little later on.

23 I'll introduce Ray Kirsch in the back.
24 He's been named the public advisor on this project.
25 A good person to talk to. He's been handing out

1 materials.

2 Let me just quickly say what is back
3 there. This -- what is this, chartreuse?

4 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Lime green.

5 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Lime green. We'll go with
6 that, these registry cards -- we aren't asking
7 everybody to fill out a sign-in sheet; but if you
8 want to, fill in this sheet. And on the bottom
9 there are two check marks, and one is that you want
10 to speak today. It says speak tonight, but we're
11 also having a meeting tonight. But if you want to
12 speak today, drop those off to Ray, and he'll get
13 them to me, and we will give people a chance to
14 talk, make comments, ask questions in order. The
15 other thing you really want to do is fill out one of
16 these cards to make sure you're on our mailing list.
17 If you got the notice, you may be. But a lot of
18 people may have got the notice because they're on
19 the Company's mailing list. So this is a separate
20 thing. And, again, I'll talk about it in the
21 process. So make sure you get one of those and
22 think about what you want to do with that. Ray has
23 them. And if you raise your hand or something, he
24 can come and hand them out to you if you want.

25 The other thing that I'll point out later

1 again is the public comment -- or this is one way to
2 make public comment. Tonight at the meeting is one
3 way. You don't need to use this sheet. This is
4 just a form to give you assistance. It has our
5 address. We will take e-mail comments, we will take
6 fax comments, however that goes, whatever works for
7 you to communicate.

8 I will also be talking about this
9 (indicating) sheet later on in the process. This is
10 a fact sheet. Make sure, if you didn't get one of
11 these, grab one of these on the way. You're going
12 to want to have this close by to know where we are
13 in the process at any given time.

14 And, lastly -- and I'll go over this a
15 little more later too, but this is the draft
16 environmental scoping document. This is what we are
17 going to review in an environmental impact statement
18 about this line. So I will address later again how
19 you can input into this document, how it's going to
20 look, and what's going to be covered. So you don't
21 need to ask questions about those right now, because
22 I'll fill those in a little bit more later.

23 Right now we can also introduce -- I've
24 already introduced Raymond Kirsch. His contact
25 information is in the notice. The PUC has also got

1 a staff person here.

2 Tricia, you want to stand up?

3 MS. DEBLEECKERE: Hi, I'm Tricia
4 DeBleeckere. I'm with the Commission. I'm staff on
5 this project. So if you have any questions about
6 the relationship here or how the -- what the
7 Commissioners use to make a final decision, I can
8 assist you with that.

9 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Again, I assume you'll be
10 here all day?

11 MS. DEBLEECKERE: Bob Cupit will...

12 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Tonight?

13 MS. DEBLEECKERE: Yeah.

14 MR. BIRKHOLZ: All right. All right.
15 And the other people here, Darren Lahr from Xcel
16 Energy is in charge of the project from the
17 Applicant's side. Darren is in the back of the
18 room.

19 And, Darren, if you want to introduce
20 yourself or anybody else with you that you want to
21 introduce.

22 MR. LAHR: You bet. Again, my name is
23 Darren Lahr. I'm the routing lead for the project.

24 (Inaudible.)

25 COURT REPORTER: I didn't hear any of

1 that.

2 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Okay. We also have here
3 with us Angie -- Angie, I don't remember your last
4 name.

5 COURT REPORTER: Threlkeld.

6 MR. BIRKHOLZ: And she's a court
7 reporter. She'll be here for the main reason of
8 taking down your comments and making sure that they
9 get put into the record and making sure that we
10 have -- we have not misunderstood your comments or
11 we have not missed them and they've been left off.
12 So they will be into our record and into our review
13 process, which so when we get to the public
14 participation part for your comments and questions,
15 that's why we're going to ask you or at least most
16 of you to come and walk up here and stand at the
17 mic, if you will. Otherwise, Angie will not be able
18 to hear you and get down your comments.

19 MR. LIEDER: Just a short comment. Why
20 does it say '08 for coming up here instead of '09?

21 MR. BIRKHOLZ: That, sir, would be a
22 typographical error.

23 MR. LIEDER: Okay. I thought maybe I was
24 screwed up. Thank you.

25 MR. BIRKHOLZ: I felt pretty sure we

1 didn't need to send out an additional notice,
2 because I thought most people that got it on
3 June '09 would probably understand. But I apologize
4 for that little error there.

5 Okay. Darren's got first place on the
6 agenda here. I'm going to have him come up here and
7 just give you a brief introduction again of the
8 project. And, again, if you have real direct or
9 technical questions that we can answer real quickly,
10 that's fine. If you're going to talk about comments
11 and alternatives to the project, then let's save
12 those for the public comment and question period a
13 little later on.

14 MR. LAHR: Thank you, David. Again, my
15 name is Darren Lahr. I am with Xcel Energy and am
16 the routing lead for this particular project.

17 Just a little bit of background. We're
18 coming up on two years since we had our first
19 announcement of this project. It was back in late
20 summer, early fall of '07 when we first started
21 talking about the fact that we needed a transmission
22 line. And we've held three open houses, and we've
23 sat down in small working groups. Had three routing
24 work group meetings over the past couple of years
25 and really tried to refine the route and understand

1 what the criteria are that we should be looking at.
2 And that's what brings us here today in the state
3 process.

4 A little bit of background on the
5 process. First of all, I want to talk about the
6 structures themselves. The structures that we're
7 talking about are single pole structures. So
8 they're not the two pole wood structures with the
9 cross-bit. This is a single steel pole that will
10 carry the wires. The base of that pole is somewhere
11 in the neighborhood of six to eight feet around.
12 It's a concrete pier foundation, and this pole is
13 bolted to the top of it.

14 Through the certificate of need process
15 it was determined that this line should carry one
16 circuit today, so one transmission circuit today,
17 and be built capable of carrying a second circuit in
18 the future should that be needed, should the state
19 say that's needed. So this line is a single circuit
20 now, built to be able to carry a future second
21 circuit. These poles are somewhere in the
22 neighborhood of 120 to 170 feet tall. It depends
23 upon the type of terrain we're going through. If we
24 have to maintain -- if we've got a hill or something
25 between that's between the span, we would have to

1 raise those poles up in order to be able to clear
2 that. So it's very driven by the terrain we're
3 going over. The poles are either kind of a rusty
4 brown color or they're galvanized. Depends upon
5 what the Public Utilities Commission tells us to do.

6 How many are there? The spans between
7 poles are about a thousand feet in length. Now, if
8 we have to make corners or, again, if we run into
9 terrain issues, that span link can shorten up. But
10 our goal is to have approximately five poles to the
11 mile. So that's a little bit about the structures
12 themselves and what it is.

13 What are we trying to accomplish with
14 these structures? What are we trying to do? We
15 need to connect a new circuit from the Monticello
16 generating plant up into St. Cloud. And there's a
17 second part -- second project that will go from
18 St. Cloud up to Alexandria and then on up into
19 Fargo. And the purpose of this line is sort of
20 threefold. One is to get a high-voltage footprint
21 in for the wind resources that are developing in the
22 state. The state has mandated that 25 percent of
23 our energy should be renewable. And in order to do
24 that, we need to tap the wind resources. So we need
25 to get a high-voltage footprint out into the western

1 areas where the wind is developing. That's part of
2 the need.

3 Another part of the need is reliability.
4 We have an issue with reliability in the St. Cloud
5 region, and we need to provide a second source into
6 that area to be able to help bolster that region.

7 And the third reason is customer growth.
8 You know, we haven't built a major transmission line
9 in about 30 years, and it's at a time where, you
10 know, steady growth has started to catch up with us,
11 and these projects take a long time. And so we're
12 in a situation where we're trying to get ahead of
13 the curve to get this thing built. So the need is
14 threefold.

15 I mentioned it connects at the Monticello
16 nuclear plant, at the substation there. It
17 terminates at what we're calling the Quarry
18 Substation, which is a new substation that will be
19 placed on an existing transmission loop that goes
20 around the St. Cloud region. I mentioned that part
21 of this is reliability of the St. Cloud area. Most
22 of St. Cloud is currently fed from the east side.
23 If we lose those transmission on the east side --
24 those transmission lines on the east side or the
25 generating sources that they come from, we have a

1 very difficult time keeping the voltage high enough
2 in St. Cloud to keep the system running. So we're
3 looking at placing a new substation on the southwest
4 side of this loop. It's a little tough to see, but
5 after the presentation, come and take a peek.

6 There's a red line that kind of bounds this whole
7 area. That's the existing loop -- transmission loop
8 that goes around the St. Cloud area. And we need to
9 attach to that loop, and that's what drives our
10 substation siting decisions. Rather than building
11 the substation over here (indicating) somewhere
12 where we have to run more transmission to it, we'll
13 move the substation right to where the transmission
14 lines are. So that's the rationale for these sites.

15 For those of you that are familiar with
16 this area, this is Highway 23 and I-94. We have one
17 substation possible siting area on the north side of
18 23. There is a railroad track and sort of a gravel
19 mining operation in that area. That's one
20 potential. And on the south side of 23 there's an
21 agricultural field that is also a potential. We do
22 not know at this point which site is going to serve
23 the project best. So that's the substation areas.

24 As you've looked at the maps, the routes
25 that you're looking at, the green is the preferred

1 route. The state requires that we have at least two
2 route alternatives, and the state requires that we
3 select a preferred. So whether we have a preferred
4 or not is irrelevant. We're required to select
5 preferred. The green is the preferred route, which
6 generally follows the interstate. This blue hash
7 route that you see along here (indicating) is
8 alternate A, partially on the freeway, partially
9 through the countryside. We also included a
10 complete noninterstate route, and that's this purple
11 route that you see here (indicating). There has
12 been some concern that if for whatever reason
13 through the routing process that it's determined
14 that we cannot follow I-94, we needed to have
15 something in play on the map in this state routing
16 process to be able -- to default to that was away
17 from the interstate. So that's the three route
18 alternatives that we're looking at.

19 When you look at these lines on the map,
20 they're a thousand feet wide. What we really need
21 for the easements for the transmission line is
22 150 feet. So don't be misled by the width of that
23 line. When it comes right down to it, it's a much
24 narrower corridor that's actually required to put
25 the transmission line on. The state will generally

1 grant us a wider route, and then it's up to us to
2 figure out where within that route the line actually
3 goes, and that is determined in part by working with
4 the local landowners on what's acceptable within
5 that route and how we can make that work.

6 I think that's sort of a general broad
7 overview of the project.

8 David, do you want to do questions now or
9 later?

10 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: What's that green blob?
11 I mean, how --

12 MR. LAHR: What's the green blob?

13 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Yeah.

14 MR. LAHR: The question is what's that
15 green blob right there. Well, the story behind the
16 green blob is we're allowed by the state this -- the
17 route, which is wide, as I just mentioned; it's a
18 thousand feet wide. Well, what's important to the
19 landowners and important to the utility is where is
20 the line really in that route, where is that pole
21 base going to be on the ground. And so when we're
22 looking at our interstate route, we did a couple of
23 things. Normally when we site transmission lines,
24 utilities, we place them as close to the road as we
25 can. So we generally just go a little bit outside

1 of the edge of the right-of-way, five feet.

2 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Freeway or 75?

3 MR. LAHR: We normally go outside of any
4 road when we try to site these things. Now, there
5 has been some concerns expressed by MnDOT about how
6 close this line would be to I-94. So what we did is
7 we laid out a five-foot-off-the-interstate route and
8 said, okay, can we get it through, what are the
9 environmental impacts of a five foot off ground?
10 And then we stepped one back and said, okay, well,
11 what if we were 25 feet away, can we still get
12 through here on the interstate and use it. And in
13 some instance -- let me digress. Without having to
14 remove somebody from their home, without running
15 over somebody's property to the extent that we would
16 have to relocate them. The way we designed the
17 routes, we don't want to have to displace anybody.
18 But in this instance, if we can't be within five
19 feet of the freeway, in the Clearwater area we have
20 to go around. So this blob is a route option that
21 gives us -- protects us, if you will, in the future
22 so that when we get to the actual permitting part
23 with MnDOT or whoever the other agencies are that
24 are going to be a part of this are that we know
25 we've got a place to go. If five feet can't be made

1 to work right here and we're pushed to something
2 further, 25, 75 feet off that fence, something like
3 that, then we would have to go around. And that's
4 what all these little notches you see are, are areas
5 where we can't work five feet off.

6 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Are you looking at --

7 COURT REPORTER: Hold on just a second.

8 Ma'am, hold on just a second.

9 David, do you want people -- do you want
10 their names or --

11 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Let's go when we have the
12 questions and we'll ask Darren -- Darren will be up
13 here again when we have questions, and he can answer
14 them. For now we'll leave it at that. When we get
15 to the question period, we'll allow a chance,
16 because what we want to really make sure is that
17 everybody's questions get heard and everybody's
18 answers get heard. So I'll leave Darren's bit for
19 now. We'll get back to it. Please save the
20 question. We want to hear it. And I'll get to that
21 piece as soon as possible, but I do want to explain
22 why we're here and what we're doing at this point.

23 By this point in time many of you -- and
24 I even recognize several faces from the number of
25 times I've been out here -- many of you have been to

1 a lot of meetings about this power line. As Darren
2 said, the Company has been out for a couple of
3 years. Last year we were out, the whole process
4 that the PUC would go through for a Public Utilities
5 Commission certificate of need. Now we're actually
6 at the point where where are we going to put the
7 transmission line, that is, where will the Public
8 Utilities Commission put the transmission line, or
9 tell the Company where to put the transmission line
10 to be even more precise. This is where this handy
11 fact sheet comes in, if you have this (indicating).
12 Again, if you don't have it, grab it on the way out.
13 It talks all the statutes and rules that we go by.
14 We have a very strict process in place in Minnesota
15 statute of how to address this and to make sure and
16 guarantee that each and every one of you have your
17 opportunity to have your say in the process and have
18 it be considered in a meaningful way.

19 In this fact sheet we've included a
20 replica of this, because obviously you're not going
21 to be able to read it from there, everybody. But
22 you do have an exact copy of it in here
23 (indicating). An asterisk on this schema are places
24 you can look forward to where you're going to be
25 able to have your input, where you're going to --

1 tonight is the public meeting, EIS scoping. The
2 application has just recently been accepted. So we
3 are very early in a one-year process. So your
4 comments are coming in on the ground floor of this
5 full review transmission route permit process.

6 You'll notice on the side here we also
7 have an advisory task force, which is listed as
8 discretionary. In many cases, especially depending
9 on the complexity of a case, we may or may not
10 engage an advisory task force. In this case we have
11 for a number of reasons. But the task force
12 comprises all the local governments along this
13 route. And we have several of the members here now
14 tonight. And I also have them listed on the
15 website, on our website, which I'll give you later
16 so you can look up who's your -- who's representing
17 you from your particular township or city. We have
18 the towns represented. We have the townships
19 represented. We have all the cities represented
20 along this line. This group is coming together, and
21 they're also working with us, with the Company, with
22 MnDOT, and with the Federal Highway Administration
23 to work out some of these details that Darren's been
24 talking about. If it's going to go along 94, like
25 the Company has expressed and like we've got a lot

1 of comments from people that they would like that to
2 happen, how can that happen, what environmental
3 review needs to be done, and can we really do that.
4 So that process is underway. It's ongoing for the
5 next couple of months. So if you want to contact
6 them or contact us, feel free. But that process is
7 ongoing in a parallel status to this.

8 This meeting is your place to begin to
9 comment. You can make your comments here at this
10 meeting. Again, we're accepting comments, written
11 comments, and those comments will be accepted
12 through the 24th of July. I'll repeat that. But
13 let me tell you why we're meeting this. One of the
14 main things that the Department of Commerce, Office
15 of Energy Security, Energy Facility Permitting crew
16 does is that we create in a case like this an
17 environmental impact statement. We're going to look
18 at all the factors that we can to determine what's
19 going to be the least environmentally harmful or the
20 least impact route possible, because nobody in this
21 room, including us or including the Company, is
22 going to pretend that you put up a 345 kV
23 transmission line and there aren't impacts. There
24 are impacts. There are visual impacts. There are
25 land use impacts. There are a lot of things. So

1 we're going to look at those issues for the routes,
2 for the proposed routes, for the alternatives that
3 the Company has come up with and also, perhaps, if
4 we get input from you about alternatives that you've
5 thought about, not maybe an entire route, but maybe
6 for a small segment of that, if you can come up with
7 an alternative that makes sense, then we can talk
8 about that, you can make comment on that, we can
9 review that, and we can see if that gets included in
10 the environmental impact statement for the full
11 review. There are some cases of environmental
12 impact statements on our website for different
13 projects so you can get a sign of what that looks
14 like. But each case is slightly different. So --
15 but that's really why we're here. That's your step
16 tonight. That's what we're going to do.

17 Eventually what will come out of that
18 down the line -- and these, by the way, the numbers
19 on the side of the schema are really estimates
20 essentially. But what we'll be working towards is a
21 draft EIS. When we have a draft EIS, the next thing
22 we'll do is come out here again and hold another
23 public meeting.

24 So here's the game plan so far. They
25 filed an application. The Public Utilities

1 Commission accepted it on May 13th, they accepted
2 the application. That doesn't mean anything except
3 that the Company has fulfilled what Minnesota rules
4 and statutes say needs to be in an application for
5 review. That's what triggers this whole process.
6 So that's where we are. That's underway. In any
7 case like this with a large transmission line, it
8 needs a certificate of need, a separate process.
9 That process took place over the last year. That
10 process is complete and an order was issued by the
11 Public Utilities Commission that said, yes, we need
12 this project, yes, this is the area we need the
13 project in, we need it to be 345. In fact, the
14 Public Utilities Commission added that it should
15 also be built so that if another line needs to be
16 built in the future, it should be built so it can be
17 double circuited. So the project here is a single
18 three-phase transmission line, but they're going to
19 be built on big enough poles so that sometime down
20 the line, instead of going through a whole 'nother
21 swath of property, lines can be slapped on the other
22 side of that transmission line. So they would be a
23 little bigger than they would normally otherwise,
24 but -- so that's been done. So the decision should
25 we or shouldn't we, should we do something else,

1 should we do energy, should we do alternatives,
2 should we do anything else except this transmission
3 line, that discussion has already taken place. That
4 order's been presented.

5 So now we're at the place we're putting
6 it on the ground, and that's where we're all
7 combined together. I talked about the advisory task
8 force, tonight's information. The thing that will
9 come out of this and essentially in August is a
10 scoping decision. The director of the Office of
11 Energy Security makes that scoping decision. I gave
12 you a copy of a draft for this project. This is --
13 this is not full blown, but this is an example that
14 you can use to see what it is that we're going to
15 look at, the types of things we're going to look at
16 to help you understand what's there, what's not
17 there, but also to tell you if you've got ideas and
18 they aren't covered here, then we need to hear them.
19 If you've got something you know about this
20 particular route that we don't know about, it's not
21 covered in here, we need to know about that. If
22 we're going to do the right job to analyze and make
23 an environmental review of this big project, then we
24 need to know from people who live along this project
25 what you think the impacts are going to be. That's

1 very helpful to the process. Otherwise, we're not
2 just doing it in a vacuum and making assumptions
3 about places on the ground. So it's going to be
4 your comments of what you think is not covered.
5 It's going to be your comments of, look, they put
6 the route here, but if they would have just gone
7 here and done this, this would have solved a lot of
8 problems, this wouldn't have cut off this piece of
9 land, this wouldn't have affected this wetland, this
10 wouldn't have done such and such. So those are the
11 kinds of things that you need to -- if you have
12 those comments in mind, they need to be made now in
13 the process, because what gets covered in that
14 environmental impact statement is what goes on to
15 the next phase of the project, which is an actual
16 contested case hearing. There will be an
17 administrative law judge when this process has taken
18 place, we've done -- we've created an environmental
19 impact statement in draft, we've come out and talked
20 to you about it and you've commented where you think
21 it should be expanded or where you think we didn't
22 answer your questions or respond to your comments.
23 Then it all moves into the contested case hearing.

24 A similar type of hearing took place out
25 here for the certificate of need. Many of you were

1 here in this room or in other places along the line.
2 That's the type of meeting that will take place. A
3 judge will get your comments. A judge is going to
4 eventually write up a report for the Public
5 Utilities Commission that makes a recommendation
6 based on the environmental impact statement, based
7 on the record, based on your comments, they're going
8 to make a comment to the Public Utilities Commission
9 about where this route should actually go.

10 Then, finally, again, essentially
11 probably one year from now the Public Utilities
12 Commission will meet and make a final decision. So,
13 again, if you look at that chart you have in your
14 paperwork, the asterisks are made alongside each of
15 the places where you can input yourself into the
16 system. We're going to be sending out notices. If
17 you fill out that card, get on our list, we're going
18 to be sending out notices. But you need to be aware
19 these are the real places where you can insert
20 yourself that you have to be proactive about. So
21 keep those in mind. This public meeting, the whole
22 scoping process, which will be open for a while, the
23 draft EIS meeting, which will probably be out in one
24 of these -- certainly at least one meeting certainly
25 out in this area, not downtown St. Paul. The same

1 with the hearing, it will be out here. And then
2 eventually the Public Utilities Commission meeting,
3 which will be, of course, downtown.

4 I'm out here asking for comments. I'm
5 out here asking for route alternative suggestions.
6 Here's one reference in the Minnesota rules about
7 offering a route alternative and your asking the
8 director of the Office of Energy Security to accept
9 that in the environmental impact statement. It says
10 here's what you should provide: An explanation of
11 why the site or route should be included in the
12 environmental impact statement and any other
13 supporting information. So one thing you might want
14 to do, if you have an area that's in question, you
15 might want to hit the people in the back of the room
16 and say print me out a map so I can draw out and lay
17 out. And then when you make comments to me, make
18 comments what's wrong with the route that's been
19 proposed and why is this route segment better. I'm
20 going to need as much information as you can. I'm
21 not trying to put a hardship on people, but as much
22 information as you can it's going to make it a lot
23 more sensible for the Office to make a review of
24 those alternatives. So keep that in mind as you go.

25 I've also included comment sheets in the

1 back. Again we addressed that. Comment sheets,
2 they can come in the mail, they can come in fax,
3 they can come in an e-mail. One thing that's not
4 listed on there is they can come in online. We've
5 set up -- if you've been to our website, that's our
6 base website. There will be a place on there where
7 it says make comments. You can go down there.
8 There are projects open that have comment periods
9 open. They will be available on that front page,
10 and you can click on there, select the project you
11 want -- and it is up now -- and click on Monticello
12 to St. Cloud line, and then you can make it right
13 online, type in your comments, press send, and
14 you're ready to go. So we're trying to make it as
15 convenient as possible. So whatever works for you.
16 Whatever layer of technology, you know, gets you
17 into the system, that's what we're trying to
18 provide. So if there's something else we're
19 missing, work with us, but we're trying to make
20 everything possible.

21 If you don't have any paperwork, the last
22 thing you absolutely need to do is imprint that date
23 on your mind. That's when the comment period for
24 this part ends. There will be other pieces down the
25 line, but this environmental impact statement, I

1 can't stress enough, is a key piece of the puzzle.
2 And so getting your comments into that process is
3 important. And that's the drop-dead date for when
4 we need to have them, July 24th. And it is 2009,
5 yes, not 2008.

6 So, again, your opportunities to
7 participate. The best thing to do is be on our
8 project list, make sure you are. The Company may or
9 may not be sending notices of everything from this,
10 but this is not the Company's process at this point.
11 This is our process. So sign up on our list. All
12 you do is you sign up on our list. You can sign up
13 for other lists, but we won't sign you up for other
14 lists. You're just signing up for this list.
15 You'll get all our notices. You'll be noticed when
16 the PUC is holding meetings, et cetera. So I
17 don't -- all you need to do is go to our website and
18 look for the Monticello project. Or my card is back
19 there or Raymond's card is back there. Send me an
20 e-mail, write me a letter, say, my name, address,
21 contact information, sign me up. We can do that.
22 Not a problem.

23 Write down those numbers quick if you
24 want to call. Otherwise, it's just our names for
25 contacting us by e-mail. I like e-mail. That's the

1 first thing I check. I can check that, you know, in
2 the car and at home or wherever. So I can always --
3 I always get e-mail. I'm not always in the office.
4 It's a little harder to get the voicemail. So
5 that's good. Anybody need to write that down before
6 I move this slide?

7 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: It's on the website;
8 right?

9 MR. BIRKHOLZ: You bet.

10 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: CapX.

11 MR. BIRKHOLZ: It's not on the CapX
12 website. It's on our website. On the public --
13 energyfacilitiespermitting@puc.mn.us.

14 You also probably have Darren's contacts.
15 Jerry's is not here. Darren's the man. So he's
16 really the person you want to contact if you have
17 direct company projects you want to talk about,
18 what's going to happen down the line with -- with
19 contracts for land and easements and you want to
20 talk about where on your property -- if this route
21 goes in, where on your property or where would that
22 work. Those are the kind of questions you want to
23 talk to Darren about.

24 Everybody have that number?

25 Let me explain how I would like this to

1 go. I think this will work for your benefit. I
2 would like people to, if you've got those cards --
3 and, Raymond, have you collected those cards?

4 MR. KIRSCH: We only have one person.

5 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Anybody else fill out the
6 card?

7 MR. KIRSCH: Two people.

8 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Well, what I'm going to
9 have you do is come up here and make your comments
10 and questions. You can also make your comments or
11 questions of Darren, and he can come up and answer
12 them quick. But one of the things that we're going
13 to try to do is try to answer technical questions or
14 Darren's questions concisely in a manner. But
15 that's not entirely what we're about. I mean, if we
16 can answer some of your simple questions today,
17 we're going to do that. But the real thing we're
18 trying to do is get your questions in where we're
19 going to need to go back and do some more work. In
20 other words, you're going to make a comment, you're
21 going to make a question of me. I may not have the
22 answer tonight. But that's the point. The point is
23 you have a question where we need to go back and do
24 some more research about this, do we need to look at
25 this issue in an environmental impact statement. So

1 we may not have very many answers now. Hopefully
2 we'll have more down the road in the process. But
3 the whole idea of tonight is to bring those to bear,
4 bring the questions up, get them on the record. And
5 also you can make any other type of question or
6 comment that you want to be on the record. But I'm
7 going to need people to come up here to the mic,
8 especially for Angie, to make sure we get your
9 comments correctly and so everybody in the room can
10 understand and hear as well. And, yes, by all
11 means, feel free to refresh yourselves as we go
12 along.

13 So I'll just start from this card. As
14 people are speaking, go ahead and fill out your
15 cards, give them to Raymond or me, and we'll keep
16 this process going.

17 Let's start with Paul Schwinghammer.

18 MR. SCHWINGHAMMER: Hi. I'm Paul
19 Schwinghammer of St. Cloud, Minnesota. And the
20 power line will go through our property
21 approximately in this area (indicating). I've got
22 some real concerns with that. But I wanted to first
23 express my concerns about MnDOT. I know MnDOT
24 carries a big stick around the state. But in this
25 case I think safety, which I'm sure they're going to

1 play on, is a red herring.

2 If you look at that topographical around
3 the I-94, that interstate was cut low, cut through
4 as it goes west through here (indicating). That is
5 cut low. Those posts would be way up on a hill.
6 The chances of a truck or something going up those
7 hills, knock the poles down I think is very, very
8 remote.

9 The other thing is St. Cloud came in a
10 few years back and claimed all of this property
11 (indicating), and I think that instead of the city
12 of St. Augusta being cut in half by a very large
13 power line to feed the city of St. Cloud, it should
14 be on the city of St. Cloud's property, if you will,
15 or within the city. I think that's only right
16 rather than cutting up all the city of St. Augusta.

17 The other comment is when you get to the
18 environmental part, I have an environmental company,
19 and so when I looked at this, in this area here
20 (indicating) where you make this jog, it crosses
21 Neda (phonetic) Creek, a state-designated trout
22 stream, no less than three times within one mile.
23 And that -- and on top of that, it crosses a feeder
24 stream in that area also. So -- and that seems
25 ridiculous to me to keep going across those wetlands

1 and trout streams.

2 The other thing is -- and I don't know
3 how this got missed, but this sharp turn here
4 (indicating) goes past Joe Kenning's property twice,
5 and Joe Kenning was the guy who basically brought
6 stray voltage to the forefront of the public's
7 attention. And when I saw that, I thought what are
8 they trying to do, give the man a heart attack?

9 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: He's already had one.

10 MR. SCHWINGHAMMER: Yeah. So that's just
11 really crazy that they'd do that. I see no reason
12 that if we were to do a secondary route, which I
13 certainly don't want, it would certainly make sense
14 to straighten it out and go along 136 for a distance
15 there and give the man a break.

16 The other thing is that property here
17 (indicating) that we own is in the development
18 process right now. And the website is up. It's
19 chapelhillmn.com, and it's -- we were trying to
20 bring the historic value of the area up, make it
21 more well-known. It's a historic chapel, a
22 grasshopper chapel from the 1800s. And then you
23 have the historic St. Augusta Trail there. And this
24 would just kill that project if it goes its current
25 route.

1 So that's all I've got to say right now.

2 So thank you.

3 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Thank you. If you could
4 or if you get a chance, if you've got a map of that
5 area or something --

6 MR. SCHWINGHAMMER: I do.

7 MR. BIRKHOLZ: -- that you can write on
8 and turn in and explain, you know, about that --
9 those crossings or whatnot --

10 MR. SCHWINGHAMMER: Sure.

11 MR. BIRKHOLZ: -- that would be very
12 helpful.

13 Todd Purves (sic).

14 MR. TODD: I would rather wait until the
15 end. I want people to get the questions out,
16 because I'm just going to discuss why I'm in favor
17 of this line, and I want the other side to get their
18 say in here first.

19 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Well, we're a little short
20 of cards. But we will have -- we do have Leon and
21 Helen Lieder. If you could come up, that would be
22 great, and spell your name for --

23 MR. LIEDER: I'm not very good at this,
24 but I'll try.

25 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Give and spell your name

1 for Angie, if you would.

2 MR. LIEDER: Leon Lieder, L-I-E-D-E-R.
3 L-E-O-N. With all this jogging going along here
4 (indicating) which they can do, why can't you go
5 along the freeway and do the same thing and keep the
6 people happy around there if there's a problem? And
7 you can do most of the work along the freeway, if
8 need be, to get onto the -- to where it has to be
9 done. So I -- I am down here by Clearwater, Rice
10 Lake. I can't find it here. Anyhow, I bought this
11 piece of property 30 years ago with my children and
12 my brother-in-law and sister-in-law and whatever.
13 And I also bought the railroad property figuring I
14 would develop it and -- when Clearwater would
15 expand. And already Rice -- Wright County, there's
16 already just stolen \$10,000 from me because I went
17 to build a road in the middle of my property, they
18 made me get a surveyor, which I did not need. So
19 it's already cost me money for nothing. And I was
20 trying to develop this. It's only 20 acres. It
21 was -- it was 23. I give it to my daughter so they
22 could live out here (indicating) on part of it.

23 So I just don't understand why, like I
24 said, you can't go along the freeway and jog back
25 and forth. If you can do that here, you can do it

1 along the freeway and have better access; right? Am
2 I right?

3 Thank you.

4 MR. BIRKHOLZ: No, thank you. Well,
5 we're going to try to see what's right. It may well
6 be right.

7 MR. BRUNSELL: Do you take any more
8 questions?

9 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Well, since I didn't get
10 the enthusiastic participation on the green card
11 concept, I don't want to preclude you from having
12 comments anyway. So, yeah. But you will need to
13 come up here and again spell your name, please, for
14 Angie.

15 MR. BRUNSELL: Marv Brunsell. M-A-R-V.
16 B-R-U-N-S-E-L-L. I have property on 140th Street.
17 I think that Long Lake would be right here
18 (indicating) is where it would be. And I agree with
19 the other gentleman. Why have all these jogs here?
20 It's got to cost a lot more money, and there's a lot
21 more maintenance and everything else to have all
22 those jogs rather than run it down here
23 (indicating). You can imagine the guy wires they've
24 got to put in the ground and all that every time
25 there's a corner like that. It just doesn't make

1 sense.

2 And the other question I had is if you
3 abandon the preferred route, when is that going to
4 happen and when are we -- when will we know about it
5 and so on? So that's all I had to say.

6 And, well, one more thing. If you -- you
7 put this line here (indicating), and I own some
8 property on the south side here (indicating), you
9 know, it isn't just the easement that you're taking.
10 That's going to affect the vacant land that someday
11 would be houses otherwise. That's going to affect
12 the value of that a lot. And I would hope that they
13 realize that just if they take 150 feet, you're
14 talking a lot more value than just losing 150 feet.
15 You're talking how it will affect the value some
16 distance back if it's property that would or could
17 or probably should be developed for residential.

18 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Thank you. I do have just
19 a quick answer about when will we know that. We'll
20 know it in different stages along the way. When we
21 release the environmental impact statement, we'll
22 try to make it as clear as possible what are the
23 real impacts of one versus the other and try to
24 evaluate them; are there different property value
25 impacts that might make a difference, are there

1 different value aesthetic impacts that make a
2 difference in helping to choose between one route or
3 another. So that -- we can have that discussion
4 again when we come back with the draft EIS, if
5 that's really addressing your question.

6 The other thing, of course, we won't know
7 which route is finally picked until the very end at
8 the PUC meeting a year from now.

9 Sir?

10 I'll let this guy go first.

11 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Oh, I'm sorry.

12 MR. BIRKHOLZ: As much as I want to
13 encourage the green cards --

14 MR. ZABINSKI: I filled out a green card
15 and marked it, but it must have got lost.

16 MR. KIRSCH: Oh, I may have missed it.

17 MR. ZABINSKI: Jerry Zabinski,
18 Z-A-B-I-N-S-K-I. We live on the Quarry substation
19 end. We're on the preferred route. My only comment
20 would be, when considering the substation -- or the
21 final route, we would encourage staying south on the
22 south part of the freeway, because there's no -- no
23 residence or homes near that area. As soon as they
24 go on the north side of the freeway, they're cutting
25 directly behind a farm site. And if they take out

1 the alternative route, they're going to be going
2 back over houses. So we are encouraging the
3 preferred route, but we are also encouraging to stay
4 south of the freeway because, although it is wetland
5 area, it would affect much less -- we think many
6 less people and would be a lot less impact on -- as
7 the earlier gentleman stated, if you go across a
8 piece of land, you're only using 150 feet, but the
9 impact from that land goes a lot further than that
10 as far as building or developing anything under it.

11 So my only comment is in the substation
12 area we prefer the south side of the freeway because
13 of the less homes or less people. That's about it.

14 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Good. Thank you.

15 Marianne Kleffner.

16 MS. KLEFFNER: Right. We live --

17 MR. BIRKHOLZ: You want to spell your
18 name for Angie? Oh, I've got the card. I'll show
19 it to her.

20 MS. KLEFFNER: We live right here
21 (indicating) where possibly going to turn in here
22 (indicating). I'm wondering why --

23 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Excuse me, Marianne. Can
24 you use the mic, please?

25 MS. KLEFFNER: Okay. I'm wondering why

1 you're considering coming out in this and not
2 staying along this (indicating). There's nobody
3 living, there are no businesses or anything on this
4 side of the road. You go along here (indicating)
5 anywhere, you've got houses, you've got many of
6 them. We're right here on the corner where you've
7 got to turn. I assume there's going to be a post
8 there. I assume it's going to be in our front yard
9 along that route. Are there guy posts to hold those
10 up? Is that going to be in our flower bed?

11 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Darren can answer that
12 question. Again, Darren talked about it, but I'll
13 let Darren answer the post questions to -- typically
14 these are steel posts put into -- put into --

15 MS. KLEFFNER: But as they turn --

16 MR. BIRKHOLZ: -- concrete base. So they
17 don't normally have guy wire. But Darren will
18 explain. Is there any other comment you want to
19 make first before I give the mic to Darren?

20 MS. KLEFFNER: No.

21 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Okay.

22 MR. LAHR: Thank you. The poles do not
23 have guy wires. So there would be no guy wires
24 anywhere on this project. They are all completely
25 self-supporting steel structures. Yes, we

1 absolutely are looking going straight through this
2 area where this bubble is (indicating). It is
3 definitely part of what we're looking at. And as I
4 alluded to earlier, depending on how close we can
5 get to the interstate right in Clearwater determines
6 whether or not we're able to continue to just stay
7 or if we would have to do something alternate like
8 this.

9 Yes?

10 MS. KLEFFNER: There also is a bike
11 trail, walking trail coming along 75 there. So, you
12 know, that would be a lot of people along that area
13 besides all the houses.

14 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: But why is that jog in
15 there? What is the purpose of that?

16 MR. LAHR: The jog isn't to follow and go
17 there. What it is to do is, if we can't get through
18 this south side, if we cannot get through the south
19 piece here --

20 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: What is that little
21 lake -- the reason why is that?

22 MR. LAHR: No. The alignment that we
23 would take along the interstate in this area would
24 come on the south side of Clearwater, and it would
25 go in front of that row of businesses. So there's

1 the Mathieson Motors and that whole row -- you've
2 got about a half a dozen businesses right there.

3 MS. KLEFFNER: It would be on the south
4 side?

5 MR. LAHR: On the south side. Okay. If
6 we were to try to do that, we're going to need to be
7 within five feet of that freeway fence. We don't
8 know at this point whether or not MnDOT's going to
9 allow that. Okay? So preferably that's where we
10 would go. If we can't, if we can't go within five
11 feet of that freeway, we have to figure out another
12 way to get through here (indicating). And that's
13 what this area bubbles out for.

14 MS. KLEFFNER: What would be wrong going
15 across the interstate? There's no buildings on that
16 side, north side.

17 MR. LAHR: We would go across the
18 interstate, but we as soon as we do go across the
19 interstate, as soon as you get over, there's a rest
20 area. This is right up the edge (indicating). As
21 you head east from where you're talking, you've got
22 the big MnDOT rest area on one side. You've got a
23 county park on the other side of the freeway. So
24 that's why what we've done -- don't think of it so
25 much as following out and around as it is somewhere

1 within this area (indicating). Somewhere within
2 this blob, if you will, we need to get through if we
3 can't get close enough to the interstate or if we
4 can't cross the rest area.

5 MS. KLEFFNER: Why can't you cross the
6 rest area?

7 MR. LAHR: In discussions with MnDOT,
8 they have concerns about us crossing the rest area.

9 MS. KLEFFNER: It's okay to go over
10 houses but not a rest area?

11 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Yeah, what is their
12 concerns? What is it going to hurt a rest area?

13 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Well, in the first
14 place -- in the first place, I'm perfectly willing
15 to accept that question. I'd rather it come on the
16 mic so that it can get on the record if you want to
17 make sure. The question is why can't they go -- and
18 we do not have someone here from MnDOT. But if
19 that's a concern, which I assume it is, it should be
20 on the record of something we should be looking at.
21 So...

22 Your name and spelling.

23 MS. SCHABEL: Debbie Schabel,
24 S-C-H-A-B-E-L. I have a concern about a body of
25 water that this power line will be crossing if it

1 runs down Interstate 94. It will come right through
2 Fish Lake, Fish Creek Basin, and the state wild and
3 scenic backwaters of the Mississippi River. The
4 Mississippi River is the largest body of water this
5 power line will be following, and us people who live
6 around Fish Lake are very concerned about the impact
7 that is going to have around Fish Lake, Fish Creek
8 Basin, and the Mississippi River.

9 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Is that worse than --

10 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Sir, we're actually making
11 comments on the record or questions on the record.
12 So it would be good -- a legitimate question. It's
13 just -- let's just make it on the record.

14 MS. LAUDENBACH: My name is Julie
15 Laudenbach, L-A-U-D-E-N-B-A-C-H. And we're property
16 owners on County Road 115 and 33rd Avenue. And if
17 it would take this route (indicating), it could come
18 right in the middle of our farm. So naturally we
19 are against it. We'd just as soon be farming for a
20 while yet.

21 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Okay. Oh, Leon.

22 MR. LIEDER: I'm not quite clear on --

23 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Speak into the mic,
24 please.

25 MR. LIEDER: I'm not quite clear on where

1 my property is along there. Oh, all right. There's
2 Rice Lake. Sorry, I was a little late in getting
3 here. I didn't know where it was. Is that right?

4 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Do you have a comment?

5 MR. LIEDER: How -- speaking of
6 environmental, how close are you going to come to a
7 lake?

8 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Thank you. There are some
9 DNR issues, but I don't think there's an automatic
10 magic number that says how close you can come to a
11 lake. But, yes, anything that's coming by a lake,
12 we'll take a look at what kind of impact that will
13 be.

14 If you check the application, there are
15 copies of the application online on our site.
16 They've got -- as you notice, there's a copy in the
17 back there. They've got lots and lots of maps and
18 very detailed maps about very specific areas along
19 the way here so you can tell exactly where it comes.

20 Now, what is in the application, again,
21 is this route. It doesn't necessarily say where the
22 line would go in that thousand feet. But if it goes
23 over a lake, it may not -- the line may not be
24 really going over a lake. It may be going, you
25 know, several hundred feet. But, again, yeah, the

1 question of exactly how close it could come, that's
2 an interesting question. But, anyway, if you have
3 questions about that or if you actually want copies,
4 there is an application at several public libraries
5 in the area, including in Clearwater. So that's a
6 good place to check. Otherwise, electronic copy's
7 online on our website.

8 Ma'am.

9 MS. TOLLEFSON: I'm Judy Tollefson,
10 T-O-L-L-E-F-S-O-N. We live on 150th Street. It's a
11 two-and-a-half mile stretch that goes from like the
12 Hasty Truck Stop west. And my question is there's
13 15 homes in that two-and-a-half mile stretch, half
14 of them on the north, half of them are on the south.
15 There's bodies of water, ponds, small lakes, water
16 areas. How do you decide? Do you cross -- how many
17 times do you cross a road or do you just go on the
18 south side or just on the north side? You know,
19 that would be, like you said, five per mile or five
20 in two miles, five poles?

21 MR. BIRKHOLZ: About five poles.

22 MS. TOLLEFSON: Per mile?

23 MR. BIRKHOLZ: I think that's right.

24 MS. TOLLEFSON: So that --

25 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Basically a thousand foot

1 span.

2 MS. TOLLEFSON: So that could possibly be
3 11, 12, 13 along that. You know, how would that be
4 decided, you know, whether it's on the north or
5 whether it's on the south or does it crisscross?
6 Can they crisscross the road?

7 MR. BIRKHOLZ: The question is does it
8 crisscross. Yes, it can. It can -- again, we're
9 talking about a thousand-foot route. So the permit
10 doesn't necessarily say it goes on -- like there's a
11 road in there, it goes on the south side or the
12 north side or the east side or the west side. It
13 doesn't necessarily say where or when they can
14 cross. It might. There have been some issues or
15 permits issued that have special conditions that
16 say, in this particular place, you need to go on the
17 north side of the road in particular to avoid such
18 and such an impact. It can get that specific, but
19 generally not. So, again, the Company can negotiate
20 with the local landowners to determine what's the
21 best route -- or alignment of them -- of those
22 transmission lines to take within that thousand-foot
23 route. So...

24 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: But they can cross back
25 and forth on the road?

1 MR. BIRKHOLZ: They can cross back and
2 forth on the road.

3 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: I have a question.

4 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Please come up.

5 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: If I make a comment, do
6 I have to make another comment?

7 MR. BIRKHOLZ: The question is if I
8 already sent an e-mail or a comment do I have to
9 make a comment now or send another comment. It's up
10 to you. Anything that is sent to me is on the
11 record.

12 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Okay.

13 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Yes. Yes. The official
14 comment period for this is the 15th of June to the
15 24th of July. But I have kept all the comments that
16 have come in to me so far. If you wanted to resend
17 it to make sure that I didn't lose it somewhere
18 along the line, that's probably a good idea. But
19 just send an e-mail. You don't need to address it
20 tonight, unless you want other people to think about
21 it.

22 Are we all satisfied that we know what
23 stage we're at and what we need to do to keep
24 involved in the process?

25 MR. TODD: I'm Purves Todd. P-U-R-V-E-S.

1 T-O-D-D. And I'm from St. Cloud. Basically today
2 I'm here to just talk about what has to happen
3 somewhere in this area. I'm not involved -- my home
4 isn't along this route, but there was a very
5 interesting article in the June 22nd, 2009 St. Cloud
6 Times. And what it says is, Old systems stall power
7 progress. And I think what this kind of indicates
8 is lines that weren't put up too long ago down
9 further by Minneapolis in there are now outdated
10 already, where the power is growing so fast and
11 everybody wants to get wind power into these cities
12 because, well, there is a mandate that there has to
13 be 20 percent of the power from wind, and then it's
14 going to go up, I guess, for Xcel to as much as
15 30 percent, which kind of tells you that they're
16 going to have to pull wind power all the way out
17 from the Dakotas. They aren't going to be able to
18 generate all that in Minnesota because we just don't
19 have that much wind power available.

20 But the whole thing is is when we look at
21 something like this and we say, well, how much is it
22 going to cost, well, it's going to be very
23 expensive. There's no doubt about that. And people
24 might as well look at it that your rates are going
25 to go up in these areas. In fact, I was at a

1 meeting about a month ago in St. Cloud where Xcel
2 has asked to increase the rates by 6 percent. And I
3 say, well, if I can get something like this power
4 line put in up there with that 6 percent, then,
5 fine, we're getting a benefit because, as was
6 explained earlier, St. Cloud does not have a
7 reliable electrical supply to it. This will give us
8 the -- well, probably way into the future, because
9 originally what I had asked for was a single
10 500-kilovolt line and thinking that we're going to
11 need that kind of power passing through that area.
12 It may not all be used in St. Cloud, but these lines
13 will have to adjust that. And wind power is very
14 unreliable because, when it's blowing too hard, the
15 system that they're on now can't handle it and, if
16 it's too light, it can't handle it. So it means
17 that you have to have a backup system for all of
18 this wind power that goes into that system. Well,
19 we've been very fortunate in right here at
20 Monticello we have a very good nuclear plant there,
21 and they've been able to uprate that, and that will
22 be completed probably in 2011, I believe is what
23 that's going to be. Well, as soon as that's ready,
24 we want to see this line then be the next project
25 for them to put that in because, if we don't get

1 this line, it just means we're going to fall further
2 and further behind.

3 Now, there's something that probably is
4 developing a little bit with the federal government,
5 and I'm not sure I exactly like that, but they're
6 going to come through Minnesota somewhere with a big
7 765-kilovolt line. But it probably would be further
8 south, but we don't know there either where it's
9 going to go. But it's just something that we have
10 to think about because the line is going to pass
11 through Minnesota because they have to get out into
12 the Dakotas and those areas in order to get that
13 wind and take it -- it will bypass Minnesota. It
14 will go right down to Chicago, I guess is where
15 they're intending to have that power go, because
16 that city is getting -- and they can't build nuclear
17 generators fast enough in the Illinois area. And I
18 was kind of surprised. We used to have a company
19 here, it was NRG Energy Company, which was part of
20 Northern States Power. But during the expansion,
21 when everybody was trying to develop an area, they
22 over -- over bought utilities, and they went
23 bankrupt. Well, now, they've started up again after
24 bankruptcy. They're putting two nuclear generators
25 down in Texas. Well, they can't put them in

1 Minnesota because we have a moratorium here for no
2 nuclear power at this time. But for maybe the first
3 ten years of the moratorium, it didn't make any
4 difference because nobody wanted to build a nuclear
5 power plant in Minnesota anyway.

6 But I think we're coming now to where
7 we're seeing that we're going to need this power,
8 and it's either going to be put into Minnesota
9 directly or it's going to have to be located
10 somewhere else and transported in here. And that
11 means if it's transported in here, during the
12 summertime when we're at peak power, we're going to
13 have to pay some pretty high utility rates.

14 The other side I want to talk about a
15 little bit is this thing is probably fairly good for
16 someone, because it's kind of -- an article from the
17 Minneapolis paper. It says green bucks, which means
18 that they're already lining up to see how they can
19 get into alternative energy systems to satisfy this
20 need. And, well, somebody has to do it. And I
21 guess if they're willing to put up the money, then
22 we have to get the transmission lines in order for
23 that power to be delivered where it's needed.

24 Thank you.

25 MR. BIRKHOLZ: All right. Are there any

1 more comments or questions on the scoping of the
2 environmental impact statement or anything else you
3 feel like would be useful to know before you go home
4 today and start writing your comments?

5 I'd actually like to really thank you for
6 coming out. It is, in actuality, very useful for us
7 to have your input into this process. So I
8 appreciate it, and we'll keep in touch as we go
9 along.

10 Thank you.

11 (Meeting concluded at 3:09 p.m.)

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PUBLIC COMMENTS

THURSDAY, JULY 2, 2009

6:00 p.m.

In the Matter of the Application by Xcel Energy and Great River Energy for a Route Permit for the Monticello to St. Cloud 345 kV Transmission Line Project

PUC Docket Number: E002,ET2/TL-09-246

Clearwater Township Hall
15015 State Highway 24
Clearwater, Minnesota

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1 MR. BIRKHOLZ: And we will start with
2 Rick Phipps. And just state your name and spell it
3 and then go ahead.

4 MR. PHIPPS: Hi, my name is Richard
5 Phipps. And that's P-H-I-P-P-S. And I live along
6 the County 75 corridor. And the comment that I
7 wanted to make is nowhere in the documentation is
8 there any considerations for the Benton County
9 transmission line where they already have a 230-volt
10 power line that runs parallel to Highway 10 all the
11 way up to St. Cloud. And I believe there's an
12 80-foot corridor there that allows for that
13 transmission line to go through. And I would like
14 to make sure that that is a possibility of an
15 alternate route to be considered because they'd only
16 need to clear another 70 feet to run that 345 line
17 alongside that 230-volt line.

18 Okay. Thank you.

19 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Absolutely. Thank you.

20 And I have -- I have Joe. Who is named
21 Joe that starts with a K? Okay. Kenning. Okay.

22 MR. KENNING: I'm Joe Kenning from --

23 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Can you spell your name
24 for Angie, please?

25 MR. KENNING: K-E-N-N-I-N-G. And we live

1 by a 150,000-volt transmission line put in in 1950.
2 And when they put it in, I didn't realize what the
3 damages were. But we went through them. One thing
4 is my mother raised chickens, hatching eggs before
5 that line went through. And when that line went
6 through, it only took a year or so that we were all
7 done with chickens. They died. You can't do
8 nothing with them. We put chickens underneath that
9 transmission line in a nice alfalfa field. My
10 mother threw them chickens away. All the intestines
11 were twisted up, and she didn't know what was wrong.

12 Our cows, we had an off flavor in the
13 milk. We cleaned, we disinfected, and we couldn't
14 get it cleaned up. We were at least 2- to 300 feet
15 way from that transmission line, but the radiation.
16 I went through eight years of school. I never had a
17 bloody nose. But when that line was put through, I
18 used to get as high as 20 bloody noses a day, and I
19 didn't realize it. And this is the problem we
20 went -- and our pigs too. We used to put hogs under
21 there from birth to market. And actually in the
22 late '70s it would have taken us 14 to 16 months to
23 put these damn hogs on the market, and we didn't
24 know why. But we did clean up on a bunch of the
25 current. We took them -- in our old system, we took

1 it out of the ground and balanced and everything.
2 We did drop it back to five months when we took it.
3 When they moved that transmission line, we got a
4 \$300 one-time payment. But to get that transmission
5 line, I ended up over \$40,000 to move that line.
6 That was the best move we ever made, at least -- I
7 don't know, 1,500 feet, 2,000 feet away from the
8 building.

9 But my father -- the harder they used a
10 lot of line, the worse the problem gets. But in
11 1980s dad was in such bad shape, he was in the house
12 two-and-a-half years. They x-rayed his knees. It
13 was bone on bone. They said you got to have new
14 knee joints put in. So I pulled that transmission
15 line out of there. He never got them joints put in.
16 But we pulled the line out of there. It took 30
17 days, and dad hung up his cane and his knees
18 rehealed right back. And he never had -- he lived
19 till he was 90 years old. He got killed on getting
20 the mail. But, otherwise, he'd still be here to
21 turn around what happened.

22 They needed clearance between that
23 transmission line. What it is, it ain't the
24 voltage, it's the changing of the direction of the
25 magnetic field, the cycling of it. When you look at

1 magnetic field, the earth -- the DC magnetic field
2 that holds that down here, and they're throwing
3 alternating magnetic field. It moves. All you do
4 in a microwave oven is speed up the cycle. It moves
5 the molecules. The friction heats them up. At 60
6 cycles, it gets it soaring. That's why my nose
7 always bled.

8 Like our cows too, we had -- we lost a
9 lot of quarters on a cow. They were bloody
10 quarters. They wouldn't heal. What I did on the
11 milk line, I floated the milk line. So we took
12 the -- so there was no current to that milk line one
13 milking. The next milking it was healed. The
14 magnetic field, it just couldn't heal. I can go on
15 and on with this here. I worked on this in '79.

16 We need clearance between there. Now we
17 got ground currents, and I'm monitoring them. I got
18 to put ground stakes, they're 1,000 to 2,000 feet
19 apart. You can pick up the ground current. They
20 always talk of voltage. Voltage does not affect
21 you. It's actually the ampage what affects you.
22 That's why I turn the meters to read ampage. Right
23 now I'm picking up over 200 miliamps between ground
24 space and the ground, and 2 miliamps on 110 is too
25 much. This here is over 7,000 volts. Maybe it's

1 115,000 volts that this ampage is there. We sold
2 our dairy herd now for the third time because we
3 just can't keep going this way. I got pictures of a
4 calf here from that transmission line (indicating).
5 That's the way it was, and we didn't know what that
6 was. We took them and got them out of that field
7 and threw them up in the hay barn. It all cleared
8 up. No drugs. No nothing. We took cows with real
9 hard quarters, we got them off the ground, at least
10 five feet off the ground. And 12 hours without a
11 drug, that whole swelling was gone. And like
12 twisted stomachs, we threw them up there, we pulled
13 them out of it. I can go on and on with this here.
14 I worked on this since '79, and we need help. We
15 need electricity, but we can't be doing what we have
16 been.

17 And like them poles there too, like a
18 neighbor over there, he's got a -- when he puts an
19 electric fence by that 115,000-volt line, he says, I
20 don't have to the hook an electric fence in, the
21 induction off that line was enough induction to keep
22 the electric fence. And here's three times stronger
23 line. And I'm on life support. My heart stopped at
24 my place over 50 times. I got to actually carry a
25 magnet in my pocket to live. I got an \$87,000

1 machine. Now listen. Do you hear it? That's
2 control. St. Cloud Hospital give me this. And they
3 told me too that I should never go by a line 115,000
4 or above. This line here I think is going to be too
5 close for me to live.

6 We need help. And the ground current's
7 got to stop. Xcel was out there, but they haven't
8 come back. We got to get rid of these ground
9 currents. Are they coming from the transmission
10 line? Are they going to be more than when this big
11 line goes through here? And I look at them poles
12 too. They should be insulated halfway up because
13 the induction into that heavy field pole will induce
14 them fields, enter the ground, and then you got
15 ground current. And the substation should never be
16 set on a ground. The induction of the magnetic
17 field into the ground, they should be off the ground
18 for that induction. I know this because we had an
19 arc welder in the shop that was setting on a
20 concrete floor. That's the transformer, you know.
21 My boy got a bad ankle. He can walk outside; he
22 said, dad, you got that arc welder on? He can feel
23 it in the ground. In order to correct that, I went
24 to work and put a plastic underneath that
25 transformer, that arc welder, so the transformer was

1 not sitting on the ground. That fixed it. So you
2 cannot make contact with the ground with these
3 fields.

4 I could go on for hours. Xcel was out
5 there for three hours, and I demonstrated. We got a
6 big platform scale at home, 20,000-pound scale, and
7 it always went off. So I left it at one setting,
8 and I went out there and wrote down. And that
9 scale, one day it changed 120 pounds in 12 hours.
10 That's the magnetic pull in the ground that changed
11 in that. Grain loads, we can load off the scale
12 when they come out. But livestock, you go from one
13 scale -- you can do it yourself. Take livestock and
14 go from one scale to another, you'll find a
15 different weight. And like the iron work, they go
16 to work and they measure their iron because the
17 iron -- it's also bad to weigh. They measure to get
18 the weight. And you take a scale for your own body
19 weight and take it from one place to another, and
20 you find out you weigh a different weight on it.
21 But grain it does not change.

22 And I got to -- if you want to see all
23 the documents I got at home that I put together on
24 this issue. And it all can be fixed if they just go
25 to work and take common sense and look. But we

1 can't live by that line as close as they're going to
2 put it to my house. We need help. And anybody
3 wants to come out, I can give you a demonstration, I
4 can show you it. Them wires I got in the barn,
5 they're hooked to them ground stakes. You can hear
6 them. They just howl. That's the magnetic field
7 moving molecules, and that's in the ground. And I
8 found out now just lately -- I don't feel very good,
9 and you can't sit down and eat very good. I put
10 gloves on so you don't make contact with steel --
11 that current goes through your body -- and you feel
12 a lot better. And I'm wearing PVC boots in order to
13 stop the flow. My father, he was in the barn too
14 standing on the concrete, and he lost -- they
15 amputated one of his legs because -- that was in
16 1992 there. And I went in there after that and
17 watched these cows, and I got sore feet. I couldn't
18 take it. Finally, I found out -- I took two inches
19 of Styrofoam, put it on the wet concrete, and that
20 helped. Then you could walk again. But when the
21 concrete is wet, that carries cycling of the
22 magnetic field. And it's time we look at this. We
23 need electricity, but why are we grounding it to
24 earth? You see an airplane grounded to earth or
25 ship? You don't have to. And back in 1936 they

1 tell me they voted on the issue if they should have
2 it grounded to earth or not grounded to earth. To
3 ground it to earth won by vote. Not because it was
4 better, but by vote. The state electrical inspector
5 told me -- he teaches all state inspectors. He told
6 me, he said, I would never build a swimming pool by
7 my house and go in it. He said, The code's got to
8 be changed. I said, Why don't you do it? He said
9 I'll -- his job is on the line, you keep your mouth
10 shut. These people do know, but we need a change.
11 And you have to get out to our legislators. You
12 have to get taken care right now in legislation to
13 get a ground current assessment. The state of
14 California changed it in '94. They went and passed
15 a law to not use the earth to return. 60 percent of
16 all the current generated passes through the ground
17 with this here type of system. That's 7,200 volt.
18 This has got to stop.

19 I got an article in Hogs Today where they
20 can take that liquid manure that smells so bad, they
21 pump it through a plastic pipe. The section in that
22 plastic pipe, they put the alternating field. All
23 it takes is like running an electric toaster. They
24 can pump 1,600 gallons a minute through there and
25 kill all the bacteria. Somebody told me that that's

1 the way our city -- they'll use an alternating
2 magnetic field to kill the bacteria, and then it's
3 safe to dump in the river the sewage. And they've
4 claimed hogs will live in that manure after they
5 treat it with electrical field. I said, If this is
6 the case, I said, what are they doing out in our
7 fields? Is this why we have to use so much
8 commercial fertilizer? It's a very good question.

9 And I could go on more with this here,
10 but maybe I should let somebody else speak. Thanks
11 for listening.

12 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Keep going. Keep
13 going. Good job.

14 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Thank you.

15 Lydia Guill.

16 MS. GUILL: I actually just have some
17 questions.

18 COURT REPORTER: Could you spell your
19 name, please?

20 MS. GUILL: Guill, G-U-I-L-L. And then
21 Lydia, L-Y-D-I-A. Our house is located across from
22 Warner Lake on County Road 134 adjacent to I-94.
23 And this is my question: How will it be determined
24 which side the poles will be placed?

25 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Okay. You want to do that

1 or do you want to ask another question?

2 MS. GUILL: And then the other question
3 was how can I influence where the pole is set which
4 will run past my house?

5 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Those are good.

6 And, Darren, do you actually want to
7 explain that from your angle? But, again, just as a
8 setup -- thank you, Lydia. As a setup, what the
9 permit includes from the Public Utilities Commission
10 is a route. As Darren explained, the route is a
11 thousand feet. From that thousand feet, they'll
12 pick 150 feet within that. If that route goes by
13 your house, you will have input with the Company
14 where you want to do that.

15 And maybe you could explain that.

16 MR. LAHR: Yeah, I think Dave is exactly
17 right. What we will do is there will be a route
18 that's approved by the Public Utilities Commission
19 at the end of this process. That route may be a
20 thousand feet wide. It may be wider. It may be
21 narrower. Within that route there will be a
22 150-foot right-of-way, and we will work with the
23 landowners, once we understand where it is, to look
24 at alignments, look at pole placements on particular
25 properties, things like that. That's part of the

1 purpose of having a wider route so that, as we
2 understand nuances on the ground from local
3 landowners, we have the flexibility to be able to
4 move within that route. If they just granted a
5 150-foot right-of-way, there would be no room. It
6 would be within that right-of-way, and that's it.
7 So local landowners play a part of that process.

8 As far as what side of the road that is
9 on right now, we can look in the route application
10 maybe after this is over and see what's the
11 alignment.

12 MS. GUILL: Thank you.

13 MR. BIRKHOLZ: And, again, if that route,
14 a thousand feet goes over a road, then there's some
15 leeway on which side of the road that would go on as
16 well.

17 I don't have any more green cards, but
18 there might still be -- okay.

19 MS. ONNEN: Do we have to fill out a card
20 just to ask a question?

21 MR. BIRKHOLZ: No. No.

22 MS. ONNEN: Is that what you're wanting?

23 MR. BIRKHOLZ: To help organize the whole
24 process and everything. But I'm -- you know, I'm
25 not going to say, no, you -- no, after we get this

1 taken care of, if you have a question.

2 Karen Onnen?

3 MS. ONNEN: Right. Karen. O-N-N-E-N.

4 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Okay.

5 MS. ONNEN: We have property in Silver
6 Creek Township. And I'm wondering, there's an
7 abandoned railroad track there, why hasn't that been
8 considered as a route for the line?

9 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Good point.

10 MS. ONNEN: Apparently there's no houses
11 in the way because it's a railroad track.

12 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: You don't know what
13 you're talking. Apparently somebody bought that
14 land back from the railroad, and maybe you should
15 look at it a little farther.

16 MR. BIRKHOLZ: We're kind of restricting
17 comments to the microphone if you can, please, and
18 politely, if you would, please.

19 MS. ONNEN: Obviously I don't know. But
20 it was just a question.

21 MR. BIRKHOLZ: No, it's okay. Thank you.
22 Did you have anything else to add?

23 MS. ONNEN: Oh, and I did have another
24 question.

25 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Okay. Go ahead.

1 MS. ONNEN: One of the things you
2 mentioned was how do -- or if the state will let us
3 use the right-of-way, the interstate. I don't quite
4 understand what do you mean if they let us use it?
5 How would you use it?

6 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Okay. I can explain that.
7 The Company needs 150 feet of right-of-way. If they
8 build right up close to the fence like on 94, then
9 they can use part of that DOT right-of-way that's
10 like 75 feet, and then they only have to purchase
11 75 feet from a landowner. So they don't have to get
12 150-foot easement from the landowner. They would
13 only need half of that. So that's how they could
14 share. Now, we're going to be working out with
15 them. They have -- MnDOT has concerns about
16 anything built too close to the right-of-way that,
17 for instance, maybe the -- when the lines would blow
18 over into their right-of-way. So they have concerns
19 about maintenance or construction or safety issues.
20 And hopefully we're going to address them and work
21 them out and see if that can actually be a workable
22 option. But it certainly well may be. That's a
23 good question.

24 Do you want to come up and ask a
25 question?

1 MS. O'NEIL: My name is Terra O'Neil.
2 T-E-R-R-A. O'Neil, O-N-E-I-L. My question is -- I
3 live very close to both of the alternate spots for
4 the substations, and -- so we're at the very end of
5 this. But my main question is, if I'm trying to
6 decide for my better judgment which alternative site
7 is best, one thing that I would like to also know
8 is, after those substations, where is it going to go
9 out? Okay? For instance, if I want to choose this
10 one (indicating), is it going to go out this way
11 (indicating)? If so, that might be better for me.
12 If it's this one (indicating), is it going to go out
13 this way (indicating)? That's my major question
14 about the substations. I'm at the very end of it.

15 And I guess the other question is, after
16 listening to this gentleman about his examples and
17 all of his experience with the magnetic fields and
18 stuff, I don't really know a lot about the
19 substations, but, you know, what's a good limit as
20 far as being away from a substation?

21 One more question is the one -- I believe
22 it's the alternate area two you were talking about
23 being in a gravel pit. I know that gravel pit is
24 not completely done. All that property is not mined
25 and stuff. Are you in contact with the Hardgrass

1 (phonetic) Company as far as buying the property or
2 easements from them?

3 MR. BIRKHOLZ: I think we got all these
4 three. The one is terminus and continuation. The
5 second one would be the field impacts within a
6 radius of the substation. And then of course the --

7 MR. LAHR: Sure. Sort of in reverse
8 order. We have not made direct contact with the
9 landowners to talk about the purchase of either one
10 of the substation sites. We're doing more sort of
11 fact-finding from a system standpoint to see which
12 one would serve better for -- one of the things that
13 is really your first question, where would we exit.
14 This project does continue on. And we're going to
15 have a meeting the last week in July. There will be
16 a series of open house meetings the last week of
17 July where we will be presenting to the public what
18 we think are the routes for the balance of this
19 project. And what I can tell you is that we are
20 looking at continuing north as an option, and
21 there's also an option that continues to the south.
22 So there are sort of two areas that we would exit
23 out of there. For those of you with an interstate
24 mind-set, Avon Hills is a very
25 environmentally-sensitive area. The freeway goes

1 right through a difficult spot around Spunk Lake
2 where literally you have water, a house, somebody's
3 yard, a road, and the freeway. There is no room for
4 us to get through there with a transmission line on
5 either side of the road. So the freeway becomes not
6 workable for a section of this project. So we're
7 looking at a couple of options. One of them go up
8 the top and one go out the bottom of that substation
9 side. That's what we're looking at.

10 And then as far as electric fields around
11 that substation, I'm not an electrical engineer. I
12 can't answer that question. The kind of property
13 that we'd be looking to purchase for a substation, a
14 345 substation like this, is about seven acres for
15 the initial setup. Full build-out would probably go
16 to 15 acres. And a lot of times we'll buy buffer
17 acreage around it. It's not so much it has anything
18 to do with EMF as it does these facilities are
19 industrial electrical facilities and having a buffer
20 around them is good. The same reason we have
21 buffers around power plants and things like that.
22 So we would be buying buffer property around that
23 site.

24 MS. O'NEIL: Thank you.

25 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Actually as to field

1 strength, the application has some tables in
2 reference to what actual field strengths are and
3 electric fields and magnetic fields outside of the
4 lines and substations. So there's some reference in
5 the application. And we will be addressing that in
6 the EIS as well, just to put down if it's here, what
7 are the parameters and what's the -- what is the
8 level of magnetism or whatever.

9 This is obviously not your only chance to
10 comment because you've got paperwork to send in.
11 But I would be happy to hear more comments tonight
12 since you've gathered here. Let's put them on the
13 record.

14 Rose.

15 MS. THELEN: I think that coming up front
16 is kind of intimidating. Is there any chance we
17 could have people talk from the audience so they
18 didn't have to come up and --

19 MR. BIRKHOLZ: We don't have a wireless
20 mic.

21 MS. THELEN: I'm Rose Thelen,
22 T-H-E-L-E-N, and I'm in support of investigating the
23 Benton County line as well. I've been in touch with
24 a number of people from Fish Lake. I'm also on the
25 advisory committee, so I know my comments come in

1 through that venue as well. But I've got a couple
2 of questions. One of them may be just that I'm
3 purely ignorant about some of this stuff. But the
4 power is coming from North Dakota; right? Is that
5 right? South Dakota power is not coming from --
6 this is pretty basic. Where is the power coming
7 from?

8 MR. LAHR: This is a network connection.

9 MS. THELEN: Okay.

10 MR. LAHR: So this electricity flows --
11 this electricity flows in any direction that it's
12 needed. So we're trying to increase reliability to
13 the St. Cloud area so it moves towards where the
14 load is. If we lose the transmission source
15 somewhere else, it flows to where that hole is,
16 where that is. This is a general network line.
17 Now, overall in Minnesota the normal flow of
18 electricity is from the west to the east. But that
19 is by no means a constant. It all depends upon the
20 way the system is configured and what's going in at
21 the time. So it's not a one-way pipe at all.

22 MS. THELEN: Okay. I need to do my
23 homework on that. But when you were doing the CapX
24 stuff, it sounded like you were bringing energy from
25 the west down through Minnesota, and there was

1 discussion about whether it was coal or whether it
2 was wind; is that accurate?

3 MR. LAHR: Whether it was coal or wind is
4 probably Carol Overland you may have talked to about
5 this project. But, no, I mean, what we're trying to
6 do is get a high-voltage footprint into an area
7 that's going to develop wind resources. We're
8 trying to deal with reliability in St. Cloud and
9 Alexandria, and we're trying to keep up with the
10 slow but steady growth that we've seen in our
11 electric system. Like I said, the normal flow is
12 from a west-to-east situation. But, again, it is
13 not a static situation where it's constantly doing
14 that. This is very unlike a DC line like the one
15 that was done in the '70s, which is literally a pipe
16 where you've got an in, it travels through it, it
17 doesn't interconnect with anything, and you've got
18 an out. This is interconnecting in Monticello,
19 St. Cloud, Alexandria, Fargo to help support those
20 local networks.

21 MS. THELEN: Okay. I'll probably have to
22 go get a power line document for scoping or
23 something. But the other thing is how likely is the
24 DNR going to be to approve us going down that route?

25 MR. LAHR: What route?

1 MS. THELEN: I mean, down the 94 route.

2 MR. LAHR: The DNR or MnDOT?

3 MS. THELEN: Sorry. MnDOT, yeah. The
4 Federal Highway Transportation System.

5 MR. LAHR: I have no way to put a gauge
6 on what MnDOT will or will not allow. What I can
7 tell you is that MnDOT only has permit authority if
8 we encroach on their right-of-way. Okay? If we're
9 75 feet off of that freeway path, we have no
10 encroachment on the freeway, so they have no permit
11 to issue. So, therefore, in that instance there
12 would be no argument with them.

13 MS. THELEN: Okay. And my final question
14 is, if you're not grounding to earth, what are you
15 grounding to? Am I -- if you're not grounding to
16 earth like you were saying, where else do you
17 ground?

18 MR. KENNING: I'm Joe Kenning again,
19 K-E-N-N-I-N-G. You don't have to -- have you ever
20 see an airplane grounded to earth? They got a
21 generator. A ship. And the city of Melrose does
22 not ground to earth. They run their system in the
23 30. If you drive down the line that goes to --
24 across the interstate there to -- I forget the name
25 of the town, there's only three wires up there.

1 They run a phase-to-phase system. You can run a
2 phase to phase. But if you want to run a Y system
3 like they have got up there, you run a separate
4 ground for safety only. The other one is a current
5 carrying ground -- right now it's a current carrying
6 grounding system. You separate the current carrying
7 grounding system with the grounding for safety.
8 There's a way of doing this. And that's what I got
9 after them for many years and asked them to do is
10 try and pull it completely out of the ground. And
11 I'm running my farm over 20 years this way. There
12 is no current on the farm after you retransform.
13 These are different molecules. You can do this.
14 The grounding system is all in there for safety, but
15 there is no current in the grounding system.
16 Everybody else's that's a live wire really -- a
17 current carrying wire -- I shouldn't say live --
18 current carrying wire that they're grounding to
19 earth. But my system, that's been there 20 years.
20 And all the hospitals run the same type of system.
21 They can't have these occurrences. So there is
22 ways. And it's safer ungrounded -- I mean, to pull
23 that off and use the grounding system for grounding
24 only for safety, it's a lot safer than what this
25 system is. Thank you.

1 MR. BIRKHOZ: Yes, come on up.

2 MR. JOHNSON: Mike Johnson,
3 J-O-H-N-S-O-N. Sitting here listening to this, I
4 haven't done a whole lot of research on this, but
5 there's only two conclusions that I see. Either
6 this gentleman is nuts or he's correct. I believe
7 he's correct. I'm not sure your name in the back
8 representing the Company.

9 MR. LAHR: Darren.

10 MR. JOHNSON: You have children?

11 MR. LAHR: Yep.

12 MR. JOHNSON: You want this power line in
13 your backyard? You want your kids to play under
14 this?

15 MR. LAHR: It wouldn't bother me the
16 least bit.

17 MR. JOHNSON: Then let's put it in your
18 backyard instead of mine.

19 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Amen.

20 MR. JOHNSON: The 150-foot right-of-way
21 makes my home unlivable. I will not have my kids
22 nor my grandkids living in that home. So why don't
23 you buy it? Why don't you live there with your wife
24 and your kids? Because I won't. I don't believe
25 this guy is crazy. I believe he's right. So I'll

1 give you my phone number. My house is for sale.
2 It's all yours.

3 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Anybody else have a
4 comment or a question, an issue you'd like looked
5 at? Questions about routes or alternatives?
6 Something -- go ahead.

7 MR. ONNEN: Okay. My name is Marvin
8 Onnen, O-N-N-E-N. I got -- really got a couple of
9 questions. One is is like you talked about
10 easements that you get -- the Company will get an
11 easement for the -- to run the power line through
12 your property. Is the easement good for 99 years or
13 how long?

14 MR. LAHR: Yeah.

15 MR. ONNEN: 99 years? Okay. Then you
16 set on this line. You're going to put two -- the
17 potential is you can put two sources on that line or
18 two 345 kV lines on that -- on that route. When you
19 come back to put that second route on there, do you
20 redo the easement?

21 MR. LAHR: I don't know. I don't have an
22 answer to that question. I don't know.

23 MR. ONNEN: The compensation, if you do
24 go through someone's property, do you pay per pole
25 setting or the amount of property you cover with the

1 line?

2 MR. LAHR: It's based on the size of the
3 easement. So it's not per pole at all. It's the
4 total square footage or acreage that is consumed by
5 the easement. So whatever the width is times
6 whatever the length is.

7 The only thing I would add -- I don't
8 know the answer to the double circuit question. I
9 do know that when we have gone through an upgrade of
10 other lines in the past that we have increased the
11 easement payments.

12 MR. ONNEN: Okay. Then another -- okay.
13 The concern here, like this gentleman here, is with
14 the AC power. Okay. You guys put a power line
15 through over by Litchfield. It's a DC line. Have
16 they ever thought to get rid of the 60-cycle AC to
17 make -- if it is, make it a DC line, and then just
18 have -- put your inverters and rectifiers in certain
19 locations?

20 MR. LAHR: DC is in the -- the project
21 line and what we're trying to accomplish, which is
22 to get power into the St. Cloud area --

23 MR. ONNEN: Right.

24 MR. LAHR: -- from an alternate source,
25 get power into Alexandria with an alternate source

1 to improve reliability there, and up into the Red
2 River Valley, as well as tap into those wind
3 resources, all of that system is an AC system.
4 So --

5 MR. ONNEN: Right.

6 MR. LAHR: -- to put inverters -- three
7 or four different inverters into that route is
8 extremely cost prohibitive. DC lines are generally
9 sort of a long-distance, one-way type of a situation
10 because of the fact that you have to drop inverters
11 along the line that are quite expensive.

12 MR. ONNEN: But get rid of the 60-cycle
13 AC.

14 MR. LAHR: Well --

15 MR. ONNEN: A lot of the concern would go
16 away for the people that live real close to the
17 line. Then the magnetic field just stays constant
18 on the DC line. You don't get the 60-cycle hump I
19 guess you could call it; right?

20 MR. LAHR: I don't know. Again, I'm not
21 an electrical engineer. I wouldn't be able to
22 appropriately answer that question.

23 MR. ONNEN: That's the idea.

24 MR. LAHR: If you want to include it in
25 the EIS --

1 MR. ONNEN: Right. That's an idea --

2 MR. LAHR: -- I mean, you can --

3 MR. ONNEN: -- you know, maybe put
4 it on --

5 MR. LAHR: As part of the EIS?

6 MR. ONNEN: Right. Put it on as a
7 question. Okay? Thank you.

8 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Thank you.

9 The other thing about the Commission's
10 decision to have them build for the possibility of
11 expanding in the future, that doesn't give any
12 finality about any future project. In other words,
13 if at some point down the road the Company comes
14 back and says we need another 345 line, we go
15 through the whole process over again. That might
16 tilt the final decision somewhere way down the line
17 that we have this, it's going to be less
18 environmentally impactful than another route. But
19 there would still be a need question. There would
20 still be a routing process. So just because they're
21 building it to double circuit capable does not mean
22 that the Company would have freedom to put another
23 circuit on there. They would have to go through
24 another permitting process.

25 MS. O'NEIL: If it falls within the line,

1 when is all this going to be done, visible?

2 MR. BIRKHOLZ: The question is -- I'll
3 repeat this for everybody -- when is this a done
4 deal as far as construction finality and powered up.

5 MS. O'NEIL: And visible. Not
6 necessarily powered up, but visible and going on to
7 the next leg.

8 MR. BIRKHOLZ: That's -- I think the
9 bottom line is 2012?

10 MR. LAHR: Correct. 2012 is when -- we
11 would start construction January 1st of 2011.

12 MS. O'NEIL: Thank you.

13 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Would you come up?

14 MS. WAGNER: My name is Dorothy Wagner,
15 W-A-G-N-E-R. My question's about, once the route is
16 decided and it's determined that one of these poles
17 is going to be on your property, how does that work
18 with the owners? Do you get compensated for the
19 effect to your property value, the trees you're
20 removing, that kind of thing?

21 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Thank you. And I'll try
22 to make sure nobody's permanently injured from the
23 cording here as well.

24 Yeah, that is a question Darren could
25 answer. And I recommend that you talk to them

1 afterwards as well. But, yes, an easement is a
2 concept that they're using this land; it's in many
3 ways still available to the owner to use. For
4 instance, if it were out in the field, you could
5 still farm around the poles or whatever. The
6 concept is, yes, the compensation in an easement
7 payment would include the concept if there were
8 property value loss estimated or those type of
9 things, that's exactly what would be addressed in an
10 easement between the owner and the Company.

11 Yes.

12 MS. RICHERT: Lynn Richert. L-Y-N-N,
13 R-I-C-H-E-R-T. My question was -- Dennis?

14 MR. LAHR: Darren.

15 MS. RICHERT: Darren. Sorry. You know,
16 I was just wondering what Joe has said about the
17 option of the grounding. And I don't know about
18 electricity at all, but is that something that Xcel
19 is considering a different method of grounding that,
20 other than going into the ground like he had said?

21 MR. LAHR: Not that I'm aware of, no.
22 Generally all the wiring codes across the country,
23 everybody's set up pretty much the same way. Joe
24 had mentioned something about California. I don't
25 have any firsthand knowledge of that. But, no, all

1 the utilities are required to wire in the same
2 situation.

3 MS. RICHERT: Thanks.

4 MR. BIRKHOLZ: And the permit itself will
5 require Xcel to build to the NESC code. These are
6 national codes as far as electric facilities are
7 concerned. So the permit from the PUC will require
8 adherence to the code. So...

9 MS. BERGERON: My name is Mary Bergeron,
10 B-E-R-G-E-R-O-N. And I'm just wondering what
11 independent research does the NESC -- I mean, those
12 codes, what are they based on and where could I
13 familiarize myself with the independent research
14 that would -- that guides how electricity is routed?
15 And that would enable, you know, individuals to
16 understand maybe Joe's position or make a decision.
17 Thank you.

18 MR. BIRKHOLZ: The question is where can
19 I find out more information about the code and what
20 goes into making that code.

21 MS. BERGERON: I would like to know
22 what -- what research has been done.

23 MR. BIRKHOLZ: The code can be accessed
24 on the web. It's fairly technical. I'm not -- I'm
25 not personally either an electrical engineer as

1 well -- or I'm not one either. So some of those
2 questions get left to the engineers, except for the
3 fact that we require adherence to that. But we --
4 it's an interesting thing. We should -- we can do
5 some more exposition about that in the EIS. That's
6 not a bad idea at all. So we can carry that forward
7 and talk about that in the EIS and where that comes
8 from and how it's done. That's good.

9 MR. PHIPPS: My name is Richard Phipps,
10 P-H-I-P-P-S. I didn't ask you, Darren, do you know
11 why the Benton County line was not considered as one
12 of the routes?

13 MR. LAHR: The Benton County line -- this
14 is probably a longer story than you want. The fix
15 for the project compared a lot of different
16 alternatives to how we increased the system
17 capacity, how long that lasts, things like that.
18 The optimal fix was to go from Monticello to a new
19 substation on a different location within St. Cloud.
20 An alternative fix was to go from Sherburn County up
21 to Benton County or to the Quarry Substation. Now,
22 we have to follow NERC rules, National Electric
23 Reliability Council, as far as looking at the loss
24 of different lines. And by having all sources come
25 from one location, Sherburn County, you wind up with

1 a reliability situation that we're not supposed to
2 build ourselves into.

3 So, number one, it doesn't solve the
4 reliability problem we're trying to fix. If we did
5 it that way, it doesn't provide as long a relief as
6 what the alternative does. So sort of this whole
7 Sherburn County idea was sort of a needs question;
8 what's the need, what's the right project that we
9 need to build. And that was reviewed and rejected
10 through the whole Commission process. So first
11 there's sort of the need issue. That was a review
12 of the need.

13 The second question is, well, why can't
14 we route it that way? Under the certificate of need
15 we need to connect Monticello to the new Quarry
16 Substation, which would require a river crossing,
17 following the 230 line, crossing through St. Cloud,
18 another Mississippi River crossing to get to the new
19 substation. So that's not viewed as being a viable
20 alternative in comparison to what is already
21 currently available.

22 MR. PHIPPS: You said that there was a
23 reliability issue. And what do you mean by a
24 reliability issue?

25 MR. LAHR: Transmission planners have to

1 study the transmission system. These wires don't
2 just exist in a vacuum. They're all part of a big
3 network system. They have to plan for the loss of
4 the major source of transmission into any given
5 area. If we -- and that's through the Benton
6 County -- in St. Cloud's case it's through the
7 Benton County sub. If we lose that line, what
8 happens to the voltage, what happens to the power in
9 the St. Cloud region? And if that happens under the
10 modeling, we lose the -- I don't even know what they
11 call themselves this day, the Champion Paper Mill --
12 used to be Champion Paper -- we lose that
13 automatically. The voltage in the area, depending
14 upon the load at the time -- a hot summer day is way
15 different than a cool fall day -- but we can't keep
16 the voltage in the area up. By building these
17 various things, the planners then look and say,
18 okay, if we lose that line, then what happens if we
19 have this line in place? And they can tell how long
20 it lasts for as a fix to the system.

21 They do the same thing with all these
22 various alternatives. In the route application
23 there's three or four different alternatives --
24 excuse me, not the route application. The
25 certificate of need process there were three or four

1 different alternatives studied to look at, okay,
2 what's the right fix for the area?

3 MR. PHIPPS: My understanding of the
4 Benton County line is they haven't had any power
5 outages on that line in over 50 years; is that
6 correct?

7 MR. LAHR: I wouldn't know off the top of
8 my head.

9 MR. PHIPPS: Do you know of any on the
10 Benton County line in your experience with Xcel?

11 MR. LAHR: I don't have any knowledge of
12 the history of the outages on the Benton 230 line.

13 MR. PHIPPS: Do you know if there was
14 any?

15 MR. LAHR: Would I know if there were
16 any?

17 MR. PHIPPS: Do you know of any right
18 now, any outages on the Benton County line? Have
19 they had any that you're aware of?

20 MR. LAHR: I don't have any that I'm
21 aware. I certainly can query the data. I mean,
22 it's something that would be available. I could
23 find out what the outage history is on that line, if
24 you would like to know.

25 MR. PHIPPS: Okay. My next question is,

1 on the 94 corridor, is there any of the freeway
2 easement or right-of-way that you can use, any of
3 the I-94 right-of-way?

4 MR. LAHR: Itself?

5 MR. PHIPPS: Well, you had mentioned
6 earlier before that you can't -- you can go up to
7 the fence or stay 75 feet away from that. Do need
8 an additional 75 feet then away, so 150 feet from
9 the fence?

10 MR. LAHR: Depending upon how the MnDOT
11 discussion settles out through this advisory task
12 force and this whole public process, we have looked
13 at sharing right-of-way starting from the fence
14 line. And we've looked at five feet off the fence.
15 So that means we're sharing about 75 feet and we're
16 using private of about 80 feet. We've looked at
17 moving that out 25 feet from the fence. Now you're
18 sharing somewhat less and you're encroaching on the
19 private landowners somewhat more. And we've looked
20 at 75 feet out, which I mentioned earlier wouldn't
21 require any permit. So now you're 75 feet off the
22 fence, you're a full 150 feet into the landowner
23 adjacent to that property.

24 MR. PHIPPS: Then my last question is,
25 since somebody brought up the running the second

1 circuit on there, the second 345, so putting it up
2 to almost 700 volts; is that correct?

3 MR. LAHR: They don't add like that.

4 MR. PHIPPS: So how would it add then?

5 MR. LAHR: You would have -- you would
6 have electric effects that you're measuring based on
7 the two circuits next to each other. I'm not sure
8 if you're getting electric magnetic effect --
9 actually, two circuits, if you look in the
10 application, because of the way the phasing works,
11 you wind up with less electrical effects on two
12 circuits than you do on one. So electric effects
13 studied on two circuits is something that's done and
14 is provided for in the application so you can look
15 and say, okay, if this thing is fully built out,
16 what's the electric effect that is created? It's in
17 the application now.

18 MR. PHIPPS: Okay. Now to Joe's comment,
19 he said that he was 2- to 300 feet away with a
20 115-volt line. Would it be safe to say 6- to
21 900 feet would be an issue from a 345 line?

22 MR. LAHR: I would have no basis for
23 that.

24 MR. PHIPPS: Thank you.

25 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Well, good. As Rose

1 suggested, if anybody is nervous, you can see
2 nobody's got hurt yet coming up here, so come on up.

3 MS. MARTIE: My name is Laura Martie,
4 L-A-U-R-A. M-A-R-T-I-E. And I just had a possible
5 alternative I've heard of. In some European
6 countries they place these wires completely
7 underground in an insulated tunnel. And I'm
8 wondering if that has been looked at, considered at
9 all?

10 MR. LAHR: Undergrounding is something
11 that is always raised as an alternative or an option
12 as to how these facilities can be installed. They
13 can be undergrounded. It's technically feasible.
14 There's a couple of issues associated with it. One
15 is cost. It's about ten times the cost of an
16 overhead line. The other issue is reliability. In
17 order to get as reliable a system -- well,
18 reliability drives cost. In order to get as
19 reliable a system, you have to build it pretty
20 extravagantly so that you can get at it in any kind
21 of weather in Minnesota, frozen ground. There would
22 have to be duct lines and manholes and things like
23 that all along the way. And if it goes out, it is a
24 transmission line. It's not just a neighborhood
25 line. So we're talking about chunks at risk as

1 opposed to just a block. So can it be done? Yes.
2 Is it done very often? No. Most of the places that
3 undergrounding is done, they're like very, very
4 dense areas like Manhattan where there isn't
5 right-of-way. And, again, that's part of the --
6 well, I'll leave that Commission piece to you.

7 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Well, yeah, the Commission
8 can do that. Part of the cost is -- and it's not
9 off the table, but that's part of the idea of, when
10 we're talking about options, let's look at what some
11 of the real impacts would be. And the real impacts,
12 you're talking about an insulated line. So you --
13 so the two -- the upside would be aesthetics.
14 Upside would be any number of things. But downside
15 would be the cost, which would very likely run to
16 the five to seven times the cost of the other one.
17 So if we're talking about several hundred million
18 dollars, then we're talking about five times that.
19 So it's a real cost issue. Here's where the cost
20 issue comes into effect, because on any transmission
21 line or anything that's okayed by the Public
22 Utilities Commission, it isn't really the Company
23 that pays for that. In the end the issue comes back
24 to who's using electricity from this line. And that
25 would be all of Minnesota ratepayers. So the job of

1 the Public Utilities Commission is to look at all
2 these issues, in addition to in the end watching for
3 the interest of the Minnesota ratepayer. So I'm not
4 saying that that's something to look at or not look
5 at. I'm just saying this is how the process works
6 as far as how it goes, that that's a really
7 extensive mitigation like that.

8 MS. MARTIE: Just wondering maybe -- I
9 don't know if they're underground, maybe if the use
10 of the land would still -- like the residential
11 area, people would still have use of their land, so
12 maybe the easement cost would go down?

13 MR. BIRKHOLZ: That's possible. There
14 are mitigating issues. So it's possible. The field
15 issues aren't really changed much. I mean, you can
16 insulate against an electricity field, but you can't
17 insulate against a magnetic field. They don't
18 extend as far as side to side though.

19 The guy in the back.

20 MR. COX: My name's Don Cox. Now, my
21 concern is the parables that you guys speak. How
22 can we understand them? Do we need a Bible to --
23 you guys talk --

24 MR. BIRKHOLZ: If you speak more clearly
25 to me, I might be able to help you out.

1 MR. COX: Preferred route here. We've
2 got a 1,500-foot right-of-way from Down Avenue all
3 the way to Hastings. That's the preferred route
4 here.

5 MR. BIRKHOLZ: A thousand feet.

6 MR. COX: No, it's 1,500 feet because
7 there's a 500-foot here (indicating) that joins with
8 the thousand foot for like a three-mile stretch.
9 The preferred route is green all the way through
10 that whole 1,500 -- for three miles there. Half the
11 alternate route is in that same 1,500-foot
12 right-of-way, if you look here (indicating). I --
13 it's kind of a joke the way you guys -- you're like
14 politicians; you come and confuse everybody, and you
15 walk away. I've been going to meetings for two
16 years. Do you want to go down the railroad track?
17 Do you want to go on this side of the road, this
18 side of the road? What's your preferred route?
19 It's a half mile wide.

20 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Let me try to explain it
21 to you, if I can. And what I don't know we can put
22 aside for further discussion afterwards. Be happy
23 to do that. The green line is one route. Either of
24 the other lines are alternatives. They're not all
25 on the table. We're picking one of those. Each of

1 those lines would be a thousand feet. So there's
2 never anything more than a thousand feet under
3 consideration.

4 MR. COX: Yeah, but if you -- you see
5 you're trying to misunderstand. All right. This is
6 1,500 feet here (indicating). See where it's wider?
7 Now, your thousand feet could be here, here
8 (indicating). It's -- why don't you divide that and
9 have the thousand foot on this side as a preferred
10 route or a thousand on this side as a preferred
11 route (indicating)?

12 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Oh, maybe Darren's
13 understanding you better.

14 MR. LAHR: Can I answer? The situation
15 he's talking about is here and here (indicating).
16 It's the same kind of idea. How come the route's so
17 wide there?

18 MR. COX: Yeah.

19 MR. LAHR: Where is the line really going
20 to be? And the answer to that question is it
21 depends upon the final alignment that is able to be
22 achieved with MnDOT and the landowners and all the
23 other agencies. Now, in the route application that
24 we filed in April, we actually have laid out the
25 alignment that we would propose along each route

1 depending upon what we can do with regards to MnDOT.
2 So we've laid out where that power line would lie if
3 we can be five feet off the fence. We've laid out
4 where that power line would be if we're 25 feet off
5 the fence. We've laid out where that power line
6 would be if we're 75 feet off the fence. And that's
7 why this is wide. If we can do it at five feet,
8 we'd be on one side of the road. If we have to be
9 at 75 feet, then we would have to be on the other
10 side of the road.

11 MR. COX: See I didn't get my answers.

12 MR. LAHR: I can show you on a map of
13 your house that shows right where the route is
14 coming.

15 MR. COX: I can show you where my house
16 is, right here (indicating). Preferred route --
17 now, when you applied for the permit, are you
18 applying as it goes right here (indicating) and
19 jumping across? You know, why don't you make that
20 clear?

21 MR. LAHR: The MnDOT permit --

22 MR. COX: Yeah.

23 MR. LAHR: -- or the route permit?

24 MR. COX: Your preferred route. Why
25 don't you say, well, we'd prefer it here

1 (indicating), but within that we'll take it here
2 (indicating)? You know what I'm saying?

3 MR. LAHR: We have. It's in the
4 application. It's the application that's in the
5 back of the room that's been filed with the
6 Commission.

7 MR. COX: So, in other words, when you
8 approve this, then we'll have time to argue whether
9 we want it there or not or -- see, my comment
10 doesn't do any good -- I've made comments, and it
11 doesn't seem -- you don't -- I don't know. You look
12 at me like --

13 MR. LAHR: I'm not sure what you're
14 saying. I apologize.

15 MR. COX: What I'm saying is do you
16 prefer this side of 75 or this side of 75 or this
17 side of 94 or that side of 94 (indicating)?

18 MR. LAHR: I can show you on the map
19 which side we prefer on the preferred route, and
20 that will change depending upon what we're allowed
21 to do by MnDOT. Where that alignment lies on the
22 ground changes depending upon what MnDOT allows us
23 to do.

24 MR. COX: All right. Well, then you
25 should probably explain it to me from here.

1 MR. LAHR: You bet. Be happy to.

2 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Now we -- absolutely the
3 last thing we want to do is obfuscate the situation
4 further in a situation that's confusing. If you're
5 not getting what you need to understand, by all
6 means, press the point. That's great.

7 MS. ELLIS: My name is Ruth Ellis,
8 E-L-L-I-S. I have two questions. The poles that
9 you showed were single arm. What happens when it
10 turns a corner, when your line -- proposed line
11 turns a corner? Do you have to have a guidepost?
12 Are those posts sufficient to hold the tension of
13 the wires in the wind and what have you?

14 MR. LAHR: The line would have no guy
15 wires.

16 MS. ELLIS: What do you do when you come
17 to a corner?

18 MR. LAHR: Put in a larger foundation.
19 So your foundation might go from six feet to
20 eight feet in diameter. It might go from 15 feet to
21 40-foot deep.

22 MS. ELLIS: Okay. In the section I live
23 in on the alternate route there, I think it turns
24 four or five times. It seems a little strange. If
25 you're coming down county roads -- you're coming

1 160, you go down County Road 7 -- I'm not good with
2 distance, guys, it's not my thing -- probably a
3 thousand feet, and it veers it straight to the east
4 between two existing 15-acre lots, down to about the
5 fence line at the section, probably another up to
6 about three-quarters -- total three-quarters of a
7 mile, then it shoots east again through a
8 lake/swamp/crick, and then it veers again a little
9 bit to go down 150. It doesn't make any sense. I
10 always was taught the shortest distance between two
11 points is a straight line.

12 MR. LAHR: I wouldn't disagree with you,
13 and that's why our preferred route is the green
14 route that you see here. Trying to go in a
15 northwest direction in a world that's set up on a
16 north-south-east-west grid becomes very problematic.
17 I don't disagree with you.

18 MS. RICHERT: Lynn Richert,
19 R-I-C-H-E-R-T. I just had a question about the
20 substation location. Is there any reason why it's
21 there or is there other options as far as, you know,
22 like miles way from where it's located?

23 MR. LAHR: This substation needs to be on
24 this loop, this existing -- you can imagine the
25 St. Cloud region. There's a transmission ring that

1 goes around the whole thing. We need to attach to
2 that ring.

3 MS. RICHERT: So that's why that was
4 picked?

5 MR. LAHR: And that's the area where
6 right here (indicating), this line is running
7 east-west, it makes a bend and goes north-south,
8 this is one corner, if you will, of that ring. If
9 we move away from these points, now you have to
10 route more transmission. So you're increasing miles
11 to some other location to do that. So we look to
12 put it on the closest point.

13 MS. RICHERT: Is there anywhere else in
14 the state that has a substation similar to what
15 you'll build there?

16 MR. LAHR: Yes.

17 MS. RICHERT: Where is that?

18 MR. LAHR: There's lots of them in the
19 metro area. If you like, I can get your name and I
20 can provide you with pictures or a map or
21 something --

22 MS. RICHERT: Yep.

23 MR. LAHR: -- show you what a 345 looks
24 like.

25 MS. RICHERT: That's the same voltage?

1 MR. LAHR: Same voltage. Yeah, 345 to
2 115. This -- this line is not exotic. 345 is a
3 high-voltage standard transmission line. It's what
4 rings the Twin Cities metro area, double-circuit
5 line. You might be familiar with it in the Plymouth
6 area along 494. They used to build them on the
7 erector set towers, and that's what that is. That's
8 all built around. That's double circuit 345
9 transmission line that's been in place since the
10 1960s.

11 MS. RICHERT: Okay. Thank you.

12 MR. LAHR: Yeah.

13 MR. JOHNSON: Can I ask a quick question
14 from here? Mike Johnson again. Is there anything
15 to stop you from choosing the preferred route as
16 opposed to alternate A or B? Is there something you
17 really need to overcome to choose that first route?
18 Is there something you really need to overcome to
19 choose the second route? Is there something you
20 really need to overcome to choose the third route?
21 Or is it pretty much cut and dried choice A is
22 what's going to happen?

23 MR. BIRKHOLZ: No, that's a good
24 question. And that's not Darren's question anymore.
25 Once the application has come into the state, the

1 state said, We did all this research, we did all
2 this work, here's what we want to do, here's what we
3 think we can do, if it's not doable, now it's up to
4 the PUC. 490 -- 494 -- 94 it's kind of an
5 interesting case because actually the Company and
6 most of the comments from the citizens we've got are
7 actually on the same page, and that doesn't happen
8 everyday. I think Darren indicated before, we
9 talked about it when we talked about the advisory
10 task force, the Minnesota Department of
11 Transportation has a duty by their own rules and
12 statutes to protect their right-of-way and their
13 investment of the transportation system. So if
14 we're talking about melding a transmission system,
15 which is kind of like a super highway, and a
16 transportation system, which is a super highway,
17 where a lot of these depend on, there are going to
18 be some issues. And, again, we talked about some of
19 them are right-of-way issues, some are environmental
20 issues, some are reliability issues and safety
21 issues. So I don't think there's anything
22 insurmountable about that personally, but we're
23 early in the process, we're early in the
24 discussions. If -- the Company has said they want
25 that. If those negotiations can be settled out,

1 there's no reason why the PUC wouldn't say that's
2 doable. But it's not a final at this date. That's
3 what this whole process is about. Let's find out
4 what the real impacts are of each one of these three
5 or other alternatives that come up through this
6 process.

7 David.

8 MR. NELSON: Dave Nelson at Clearwater
9 Township here. I just had a question when you
10 brought up alternatives. I don't know if that's all
11 locked in at this point. My preference, of course,
12 would be the Benton County line, but we got such a
13 negative response from that direction. The person
14 representing the Minnesota Department of
15 Transportation said that she would prefer going
16 across river and coming down 10. Is the only reason
17 that isn't a consideration is cost, is you have to
18 cross the river twice, or is there a possibility
19 that they could look at another option in that
20 direction?

21 MR. BIRKHOLZ: A river crossing is a
22 big -- I'm not saying it's not on the table, and
23 we're still debating what would be an alternative,
24 and that would have to be determined if Xcel's
25 argument of why they didn't include this is a

1 reasonable one or should be brought forward for
2 discussion. That's still on the table. The other
3 reason -- it's not just a money issue -- crossing
4 the Mississippi River is a big deal environmentally
5 as well. And we're facing that same issue on the
6 southern CapX line. So it's an environmental issue,
7 it's a reliability issue, and a cost issue. So it's
8 not off the table. It's just it's not gaining
9 ground as an alternative at this point in time,
10 unless there's some, you know, sound arguments that
11 can be brought to the board. And we can discuss
12 that in the task force. Absolutely.

13 MR. NELSON: Thank you.

14 MR. BIRKHOLZ: David is the Clearwater
15 representative on the task force. And Rose, by the
16 way for full disclosure, is our Wright County
17 commissioner on the task force.

18 Well, I've been getting useful
19 information here tonight. So, by all means, get
20 what you need answered tonight. Ask what you need
21 tonight. But of course feel free to copy -- or to
22 comment as the process goes on.

23 Is there anybody still wanting to make a
24 comment or question tonight?

25 Well, the Company and we'll still be here

1 for some discussion off the floor, if you want.
2 We'll do that. Remember the 24th of July. It's
3 critical that those comments come in by then.

4 Thank you all very much.

5 (Meeting concluded at 7:45 p.m.)

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