From: Matthew Hendricks
To: Storm, Bill (COMM);
Subject: Hiawatha project DEIS comments
Date: Wednesday, March 10, 2010 3:00:37 PM

Dear Mr. Storm,
The Midtown Greenway is an asset that is difficult to quantify, a treasure whose value can't easily be translated into numbers. It is the City's most pleasant highway. It is our newest major park, and already one of the most popular trails in the country. It is a safe place for people in motorized wheelchairs to get outside and enjoy some fresh air. A place for kids to bike for blocks without stopping. A place for tentative bike commuters to get comfortable with a new way of getting to work. A place for dogwalkers, joggers, walkers, rollerbladers and parents pulling toddlers in wagons and trailers. A place where every mile travelled improves the health of our community rather than diminishing it. A place to meet friends and neighbors. During the first warm days of Spring, the Midtown Greenway is a place where smiling is absolutely contagious.

In 2009, my family purchased a new home just 4 blocks from the Midtown Greenway, and I need both hands to count the friends who moved closer to the Greenway before we did. In addition to individual homeowners, the Greenway has attracted major development. Over 1,000 new apartments and condos have been constructed adjacent to the Midtown Greenway over the past six years, representing at least $150,000,000 in new investment in Minneapolis neighborhoods. The Midtown Greenway ranks with the Mississippi River, the Hiawatha Light Rail Line, and the new Twins Ballpark as a significant catalyst for new development.

Based on my own professional experience in housing development, I take issue with the assessment made in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement that the project would not have a direct impact on development. The assertion appears several places, for example on page 191: "Planned and proposed development would not be limited or prevented as a result of this Project. However, individuals may choose to alter their development plans based on the visual intrusion and negative perception associated with the presence of transmission lines and substations." I understand that the DEIS must attempt to take a balanced, analytical approach. However, in this particular case, the document seems to lose touch with reality. High voltage power lines would have a direct and devastating impact on the ability of adjacent sites to attract investment of any kind, and any hope of attracting the kinds of high-quality housing that has been typical along the Greenway would be lost. To say that "individuals may choose to alter their development plans" is an understatement, to the point of being inaccurate. The DEIS should be revised to describe and quantify the impacts that would almost certainly result if overhead high voltage lines were installed along the Greenway.

I would also like to see a stronger review of alternative options like conservation, co-generation, local energy production, and so forth. If combined, would all of these tools together allow us to avoid the new lines altogether? To what extent is the proposed new line needed to deal with the immediate concerns, and to what extent is new capacity being added in anticipation of new demand that may or may not materialize, given ongoing efforts to improve efficiency (some of which are supported directly by Xcel)?

Thank you for considering my comments.

Regards,
Matthew Hendricks

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