

PUBLIC COMMENTS

WEDNESDAY, JULY 29, 2009

6:00 p.m.

In the Matter of the Nashwauk Public Utilities  
Commission/Minnesota Power High Voltage Transmission Line  
Route Permit Application, Essar Steel Transmission Line  
Project

PUC Docket Number: E-280/TL-09-512

Taconite Community Center  
26 Haynes Street  
Taconite, Minnesota

I N D E X

	SPEAKER	PAGE
1		
2	Terri Mjolsness	3
	Kenneth Hurlbut	5
3	Walter Zerepko	8
	Dr. Lynda Griffith	11
4	Bryan Adams	15
	Lisa Koprivech	19
5	Arnold Yuhala	25
	Dennis Lockard	28
6	Dave Van House	33
	Terri Mjolsness	42
7	Mike McDonald	44
	Leann Norgord	45
8	Terri Mjolsness	47
	Kurt Hautala	47
9	Dave Van House	48

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

1 MR. STORM: What I'm going to do is open  
2 up the public portion. The court reporter will  
3 start recording. What I'll do is, I'll call on  
4 you -- I'll use the cards, I'll call on you. Come  
5 up to the mic, state your name, spell it for the  
6 court reporter, ask your question or your comment.

7 If it's a question for the utility, I ask  
8 that when the utility answers it, that they state  
9 their name and spell their name before they give  
10 their answer.

11 And just be courteous to everybody, and  
12 we'll begin.

13 I've been up here on several occasions  
14 and you guys' names kill me sometimes. I'm terrible  
15 at linguistics. Terri Molosness (phonetic).

16 MS. MJOLSNESS: Yeah. It's  
17 Terri Mjolsness, and it's M-J-O-L-S-N-E-S-S.

18 And my questions have a lot to do with  
19 the health impacts of the power line. I have two  
20 daughters that have been diagnosed with cancer and  
21 have lived on the power line their whole lives, on  
22 the 115 kV power line, so naturally I'm a little  
23 concerned about the 230 kV.

24 What, if anything, will Essar Steel do  
25 for our community, and how we can find out that

1 information? That would be my first question.

2 Is there any proof that power lines don't  
3 cause cancer? That's another one of my questions.  
4 Let's see. I'd like to know, if there's no proof of  
5 power lines causing cancer, why did my doctor ask me  
6 immediately if I live on a power line?

7 And I'd also like to know what sprays  
8 have been used to keep the growth down on the power  
9 lines for the past 30 years, and is that documented  
10 and where we could find that out?

11 Is there any interference with cell  
12 phones, satellites? That's not that important, but  
13 I thought I'd bring it up.

14 And what the -- just basically what the  
15 health impact is so far on the 115 and what was  
16 projected as for what they think it could be with  
17 the 230?

18 MR. STORM: Okay.

19 MS. MJOLSNESS: One more quick one, is --  
20 the alternative routes, are they also involving  
21 homes? And if not, why would they go by homes if  
22 there's an alternative route that does not go by  
23 homes?

24 MR. STORM: Okay. Thanks, Terri. What I  
25 can let you know, I guess, for now is that, if you

1 look in the draft scoping document, health concerns,  
2 EMF, in particular, is one issue that will  
3 definitely be covered in the environmental document.

4 I can certainly cover in the  
5 environmental document what herbicides and  
6 pesticides are used along the right-of-ways, both  
7 past and present.

8 I can't really address what Essar Steel  
9 is going to do for the community. That's sort of  
10 the down side of this. That might be a pertinent  
11 question for you to bring up during the hearing when  
12 the judge can then ask the applicant to expand on  
13 that answer. That's really not an environmental  
14 document answer.

15 But -- so I will cover the concerns you  
16 mentioned in the environmental document, and I  
17 appreciate your comment.

18 Kenneth Hurlbut.

19 MR. HURLBUT: Good evening. My name's  
20 Kenneth Hurlbut, H-U-R-L-B-U-T. I'm a property  
21 owner on your preferred route. I believe there's  
22 probably only two private property owners on there  
23 and the rest is public land.

24 I'm a hunter, so I know the land around  
25 there and all the public land pretty well. And the

1 route you have on your map right now cuts right  
2 through a cedar swamp. I'm thinking that 65 feet of  
3 those cedars would be mine if you follow that route.

4 So my question is, do you value the  
5 timber or a rare thing like cedar any more than you  
6 value common timber?

7 And speaking to the lady over here  
8 (indicating) earlier on that route, she figured  
9 you'd probably -- because of the environmental  
10 status of it and because of the cedars and the bog  
11 status, that you would probably not use that.

12 And I know that to the west it stays  
13 cedar right up to the river's edge, almost, which  
14 means that you would probably move to the east,  
15 which would be further into my land. Which I  
16 wouldn't blame you for wanting to do that because  
17 you want higher ground.

18 But my question is, how do you determine  
19 the value of a private owner's land when you do this  
20 type of thing? Thanks.

21 MR. STORM: Okay. What we'll do in the  
22 environmental document is we will certainly look at  
23 features such as cedar stands, the same thing as  
24 with like a fen. We look at a route that contains  
25 that feature versus a route that does not. That

1 will be one of the comparison points.

2 As -- we usually do end up building  
3 matrixes, and that might be one of the rows of the  
4 matrix that's comparing the alternative route, the  
5 same way as house counts are and the same way as  
6 acres of new right-of-way compared to acres of  
7 combining right-of-way are.

8 And so what we do in the environmental  
9 document would be we build matrices that take the  
10 environmental and human health issues and compare  
11 them for all the routes.

12 Now, your issue as far as payment, if a  
13 route -- if a route is selected that crosses your  
14 property that requires you to lose timber and how  
15 that timber's valued, that evaluation is not done in  
16 our process. That evaluation is done after the  
17 permit is issued, if it is issued -- it is -- if  
18 that route is selected and it impacts trees on your  
19 property, the value of that easement is done  
20 post-permit. And if you can't work out an agreement  
21 with the utility, then it goes to eminent domain  
22 court. And that's a separate process and we don't  
23 really have anything to do with that process.

24 But one of the points you mentioned is  
25 that a cedar stand relative to a stand of poplar,

1           you know, we would weight them differently in the  
2           environmental document.

3                        So, thank you for your comment.

4                        Walter Zerepok (phonetic).

5                        MR. ZEREPKO: Walter Zerepok,  
6           Z-E-R-E-P-K-O. You botched that one.

7                        A question for Kelly. She said that they  
8           tried to pick a route on 328 with not many  
9           dwellings. This route has one, two, three, four --  
10          five family dwellings on that route. It takes up  
11          probably a third of my cattle ranch. The line would  
12          be over -- most of the year, over 350 head of  
13          animals. What impact does this do to livestock?  
14          The animals are raised for the food chain, also.

15                        County Road 328 is closed all but of 140,  
16          so it's a private road. And what does that do to  
17          our value to -- you know, she's saying it's an  
18          existing -- flat, not many dwellings. I don't think  
19          they know about the livestock issue.

20                        MR. STORM: Okay. The EIS will  
21          certainly, in response to your commenting, look at  
22          any known animal welfare or human health impacts on  
23          transmission lines in association with cattle. I  
24          mean, we can certainly cover that.

25                        MR. ZEREPKO: Is there studies that --

1 MR. STORM: Well, we will see what's out  
2 there. I mean, I'm sure I can go -- it's usually  
3 associated with stray voltage with cattle. I don't  
4 believe there's anything out there that shows that  
5 EMF is going to be a problem with cattle. But we  
6 will flesh that out and discuss it in the  
7 environmental document.

8 MR. ZEREPKO: What does -- when they go  
9 to the value of your land, if it does have something  
10 with cattle, how do we get paid back for what we  
11 can't do anymore?

12 MR. STORM: Okay. As far as I  
13 understand --

14 MR. ZEREPKO: I don't work at Essar Steel  
15 and I don't plan on it, either. So --

16 MR. STORM: Like I said, the payment for  
17 an easement to a landowner is not dealt in our  
18 process. It's dealt with in a process that occurs  
19 after the applicant gets a permit or not.

20 And then it follows the eminent domain  
21 rules, which I'm not an expert on, by any means, of  
22 how they -- what goes into the evaluation of -- if  
23 you're saying that you're crossing my land with an  
24 easement so I'm losing not only the land, so you're  
25 going to pay me for the easement of the land, but

1           it's impacting my operation somehow. That's an  
2           issue for the landowner to work out with the utility  
3           or, if they can't, for them to work out through the  
4           eminent domain process.

5                     MR. ZEREPKO: Now, isn't that too late?  
6           They already have the permit so they can pay us  
7           whatever, we lose?

8                     MR. STORM: Again, I'm not an expert on  
9           it, but I don't know if I could characterize it as  
10          they could pay me whatever. It's a process that I'm  
11          not involved with, so I'm at a disadvantage trying  
12          to explain it or rationalize it.

13                    But it's -- when we look at -- when the  
14          Commission looks at route A versus route B, they  
15          will look at what impacts does route A have on the  
16          environment, on humans, on land development, on  
17          activities, the same way they'll look at what impact  
18          does route B have on those same things. They'll  
19          build a matrix, and then they'll usually make a  
20          determination of -- going with the lesser impact,  
21          you know. So --

22                    MR. ZEREPKO: So just for your  
23          information, there is a few cattle operations in  
24          this, Steve Merhar is one, and myself.

25                    MR. STORM: Okay. We will certainly

1 include in the environmental section on  
2 agriculture -- there's a section on agriculture, on  
3 your specific cattle operations and --

4 MR. ZEREPKO: There's probably more, but  
5 I'm just looking at the short map that I have here.

6 MR. STORM: We can dig that information  
7 up for the EIS and incorporate, along any of the  
8 routes, what the agricultural impacts are -- what  
9 the impacts to agriculture may actually be.

10 MR. ZEREPKO: Thank you.

11 MR. STORM: So that the Commission can  
12 judge them accordingly.

13 Okay. That's all the cards I've got.  
14 Oh, I'll do a show of hands after this, so don't  
15 feel like you have to give me a card.

16 Dr. Lynda Griffith.

17 DR. GRIFFITH: Thank you. That's Lynda,  
18 L-Y-N-D-A, Griffith, G-R-I-F-F-I-T-H. I live right  
19 across the river from Wally Zerepko, the gentlemen  
20 who just spoke. So we're on route 2A.

21 I would like to see the impact statement  
22 include a meta-analysis of all health hazards based  
23 on an international scale. It's my understanding,  
24 after the research that I've done, that here in the  
25 United States the power companies have suppressed

1 information regarding the health hazards with EMF  
2 and ELF.

3 And I'd like to see the meta-analyses  
4 include international studies, because it's my  
5 understanding that in Europe and England they have  
6 forbidden these types of power structures going  
7 anywhere near people. And they've indeed made some  
8 of these go underground to lessen the impact of the  
9 frequencies. So I'd like to ask that.

10 I'd like to ask the gentleman that spoke  
11 from Nashwauk, when he was talking about millions  
12 and -- millions of dollars here and billions of  
13 dollars there, who's going to pay for all that? Is  
14 it our taxes in Itasca County, or is this something  
15 that Essar picks up? I don't know where all that  
16 money's going to come from.

17 MR. STORM: Okay. Let me deal with the  
18 first issue.

19 DR. GRIFFITH: Sure.

20 MR. STORM: The EIS will certainly look  
21 at the health impacts from high voltage transmission  
22 lines on --

23 DR. GRIFFITH: On a meta-analysis --

24 MR. STORM: The EIS will certainly look  
25 at health impacts of EMF, and we will certainly

1 broaden that out to include international studies.

2 DR. GRIFFITH: On a meta-analysis basis?

3 MR. STORM: We will look into -- I'm not  
4 exactly sure what the meta-analysis basis --

5 DR. GRIFFITH: There are --

6 MR. STORM: -- but we can certainly look  
7 into that.

8 DR. GRIFFITH: Basically, there are  
9 levels of evidence in research. And the lowest  
10 level is personal experience, for a clinician, a  
11 doctor, or whatever in their clinic. And the  
12 highest level takes hundreds of studies and gleans  
13 from those studies the power of each one of them  
14 into another study that's called a meta-analysis.  
15 So it's not just one study, it takes hundreds of  
16 them and comes up with a conclusion based on what  
17 all of those studies do.

18 So the power of that kind of a study, for  
19 the lady who was asking about cancer for her  
20 daughters, becomes much more powerful than if it's  
21 just a study here or a study there or a study there.  
22 It takes all of them into consideration.

23 So the very highest level of evidence is  
24 a meta-analysis study, and that's what I'm  
25 requesting.

1 MR. STORM: Okay. Let me look into --

2 DR. GRIFFITH: Thank you.

3 MR. STORM: -- what that would  
4 incorporate. What that would mean for us to do that  
5 level of work. And it's -- one of the foundations  
6 of the Environmental Policy Act rules for an EIS is,  
7 you work with readily available data. You don't do  
8 your own basic research. You pull research that's  
9 already out there in the community. The time  
10 line --

11 DR. GRIFFITH: These -- right. These  
12 studies --

13 MR. STORM: As I said, I will look into  
14 the meta-based data studies. And if we can do it  
15 with the resources and the time that we have, and it  
16 sounds like we can, we will do that.

17 DR. GRIFFITH: Okay.

18 MR. STORM: And to your issue -- you had  
19 a question to Nashwauk Public Utilities about who  
20 pays for those lines, is that what I'm getting at?

21 DR. GRIFFITH: Well, who pays for the  
22 millions that he talked about? Something cost  
23 millions of dollars and something else cost billions  
24 of dollars, and I would like to know where all that  
25 money's coming from.

1 MR. STORM: Okay. Let me give him an  
2 opportunity to respond to that, if he chooses, and  
3 then we'll pick up again on your next -- Bryan.

4 MR. ADAMS: Bryan Adams, B-R-Y-A-N.

5 With a large project like this, there's a  
6 lot of economic benefit to the local area. The  
7 State of Minnesota has made available a grant to  
8 help this project along. They're paying -- they're  
9 putting in \$65 million into the project to build the  
10 public infrastructure, the railroads, some of the  
11 roads, some of the transmission lines and  
12 substations. Everything else, Essar's picking up on  
13 their tab.

14 MR. STORM: Okay. If you'd like to  
15 continue talking.

16 DR. GRIFFITH: Yes, please. I would like  
17 for you to include as well as noise problems,  
18 vibrational noises -- or vibrational problems.  
19 Because it's obvious that with these big pieces of  
20 equipment that go through there or with the EMF or  
21 with, you know, all those kinds of things.

22 You're just dealing with the power,  
23 you're not dealing with the railroad impacts, you're  
24 not dealing with the machinery impacts, those kinds  
25 of things of the project itself?

1 MR. STORM: Okay. If I may comment, when  
2 you're -- one is, we will certainly cover noise that  
3 emanates from the substations and the transmission  
4 lines. We will certainly -- I can certainly look at  
5 low or extremely low frequencies that emanate from  
6 the substations or the transmission line. I can  
7 certainly look at the impact of the vibrations from  
8 the construction equipment used to build the  
9 substations or -- and transmission lines, but  
10 impacts associated with the plant were done in a  
11 separate EIS that was done by the DNR. And I can  
12 certainly, in my EIS, refer the reader to that  
13 document, but I will not be covering those issues.

14 DR. GRIFFITH: Okay. Thank you. And  
15 what I'd like to clarify is what I asked you briefly  
16 earlier. At the end of this process, either the  
17 process goes ahead, goes forward or, without the  
18 permits, the process stops.

19 So in other words, you made it sound  
20 like, no matter what, these processes will proceed.  
21 And we were just talking about, why are we here if  
22 we don't have any say-so or we don't have any input  
23 into this to indeed stop the process? Can you  
24 address that, please.

25 MR. STORM: Sure. The process is

1 designed so that the public can have -- so the  
2 public can inform the record on the -- one thing,  
3 the issues that the public wants addressed in the  
4 environmental impact statement.

5 Two, separate from the environmental  
6 impact statement -- and this comes out in public  
7 hearings, when the public gets to speak to an ALJ.  
8 The public gets to act -- put testimony, evidence,  
9 and their own comments into the record about any  
10 aspect of the project. You don't like -- why I  
11 don't like the project or why I think the project is  
12 bad or why I prefer one route over another route.

13 At the end, the decision before the PUC  
14 is basically, one, to grant or not grant the permit.  
15 If they grant the permit, they have to determine  
16 what conditions should be on that permit and what  
17 routes they could use.

18 Now, permit conditions could be things  
19 like you need to put walls around your substations  
20 to drop the noise down. If the record and  
21 environmental document -- or the record as a whole,  
22 if the record as a whole shows that the public or  
23 the agency believes that noise emanating from a  
24 substation is unacceptable, the PUC could, as a  
25 condition of the permit, say you're going to have to

1 mitigate that noise, and you mitigate it by putting  
2 walls up or some kind of burrier that deflects the  
3 sound a little bit.

4 That's just an example of what a  
5 condition may be. Another condition may be, if they  
6 select a route and the routes -- as you've seen, the  
7 routes are from 500 to 3,000 feet wide, while the  
8 easement is only 130. Okay. The PUC, based on the  
9 environmental document and based on the record --  
10 and this may be from a citizen coming to the public  
11 hearing who says you're crossing my property -- and  
12 you know, I might not like it, but you're crossing  
13 my property. If you must cross my property, can you  
14 move the alignment, the actual right-of-way, this  
15 many feet to the east so you don't cut my down apple  
16 trees?

17 And that could be a permit condition,  
18 where the PUC says we're giving you your preferred  
19 route, but when you cross the Smith residence, your  
20 line will be this. And they can spell it out  
21 exactly. They can cut down that flexibility down to  
22 here's where you're going to put the alignment  
23 because of the concern that the landowner has. You  
24 know, so there are conditions that the PUC can  
25 attach to a permit that are like that.

1 Does that help?

2 DR. GRIFFITH: Yes. Thank you.

3 MR. STORM: Okay. I really apologize for  
4 what I do to your names up here. Lisa Covetch  
5 (phonetic).

6 MS. KOPRIVECH: Koprivech.

7 Lisa Koprivech, K-O-P-R-I-V-E-C-H. And Jim and  
8 myself -- my husband and I own land up north of  
9 Nashwauk. It looks like your line is going to be  
10 right on our boundary so you might cut through our  
11 field.

12 Actually, the last lady that was up here,  
13 you had asked a lot of my questions. I was going to  
14 ask, who's paying for all this? Especially when I'm  
15 reading in here (indicating) about Essar Steel.  
16 And, you know, if they bring jobs in, I'm all for  
17 it. I mean, don't get me wrong.

18 But when I read comments that their  
19 investment is minimal at this point and our  
20 investment is overwhelming, like, you know, the  
21 state of Minnesota. I mean, how much are we  
22 investing compared to how much they have invested in  
23 this project?

24 Is their credit rating junk status right  
25 now? I mean, did they turn around in West Virginia

1 and, you know, did some kind of flip of a steel mill  
2 in West Virginia arranged in such a way that Essar  
3 Steel made 45 million with no investment?

4 I have concerns that Minnesota -- you  
5 know, you guys are pushing to get this power line  
6 through without them making their own push to get  
7 their business going. And what if it -- after we  
8 get this power line in and all of our land is  
9 affected and all of our land is downgraded in value  
10 because of this power line, then they don't open the  
11 plant? They just -- okay, sorry, it's all done, we  
12 decided we're not going to do it.

13 I mean, that's my concern. Especially  
14 when I own land up there. I have horses. I don't  
15 have cattle, but I have horses. I don't want my  
16 horses affected. I bale that field. You know, if  
17 you put a power line in, that's taking away my  
18 haying fields. You know, and there's other ones,  
19 but this is my land that you're talking about.

20 And everybody here, you know, that owns  
21 land on that route is concerned about that. And we  
22 definitely want to make sure that if it's going to  
23 be Minnesota putting all this money out, we want  
24 some return on our investment, too.

25 And health is a big thing. I'm a nurse.

1 And there is more cancer up here than there is in  
2 other places, whether that's the iron ore or what.  
3 But when I was prior-authorizing things, insurance  
4 companies would say, what is going on up there on  
5 the Iron Range? There's so much cancer. What is  
6 that? What is that from?

7 So that's -- do you have any answers as  
8 far as Essar Steel and their investment in this?

9 MR. STORM: I can certainly, in the  
10 environmental document, talk a bit about how much  
11 the line costs and who's paying for the line and  
12 some of that stuff. But it's outside the scope of  
13 the environmental review to critique the owners of  
14 the steel mill at this point.

15 That may be an issue -- that may be a  
16 valid issue for the public hearing, where you can  
17 bring it up in the public hearing.

18 MS. KOPRIVECH: And that's where I'm  
19 concerned about your tunnel vision that you have  
20 here. You're just focusing on putting that power  
21 line in. Let's put it in, put it in. And you're  
22 not focusing on the main -- why it's going in.

23 MR. STORM: I guess to clarify, and I'm  
24 not here to debate the point, it's not my power  
25 line. I'm neutral on this.

1 MS. KOPRIVECH: But you are the one  
2 pushing to get it in.

3 MR. STORM: I don't have a dog in this  
4 fight. I don't care if they build a line or not.

5 MS. KOPRIVECH: I've got land here.

6 MR. STORM: But I'm here to administer --  
7 my job is to make sure that the record is complete  
8 so that the decision-makers can make the right --  
9 can make a decision.

10 I'm not associated with Minnesota Power.  
11 I'm not associated with Nashwauk Public Utilities.  
12 I'm from the Department of Commerce who aids the  
13 Minnesota PUC, who is the decision-maker on whether  
14 this line goes in or not.

15 The line is the applicant's line. The  
16 applicant is coming to the Commission, the Public  
17 Utilities Commission, as statute allows them to for  
18 a permit for a high voltage transmission line route.  
19 One of my tasks is to develop -- prepare an  
20 environmental impact statement that provides  
21 information to the decision-makers about the  
22 potential impacts of the various alternatives that  
23 are available to them.

24 And they may very well -- they could --  
25 it's in their authority to, at the end, not issue a

1 permit because they feel that the environmental  
2 impact is too high.

3 But the issues of the economic status of  
4 Essar Steel are certainly outside the scope of my  
5 environment document. I would encourage you to  
6 bring the issue up again in front of the judge.  
7 Because the judge's breadth is wider than mine of  
8 what he's looking at, and it may be something he  
9 might want to consider. I don't want to speak for  
10 the judge.

11 MS. KOPRIVECH: Well, especially with the  
12 steel industry down as far as it is right now. I  
13 mean, now we're -- you know, there's a lot of  
14 layoffs out there, and the steel industry isn't  
15 there. I mean, Hibbing Taconite, I think they're  
16 running off of one line. Hibbing -- or Keewatin Tac  
17 is slowly shutting down.

18 And yet we're pushing to get a power line  
19 into -- you know, into a steelmaking place. You  
20 know, it's just -- in my book, it doesn't make  
21 sense, as just a normal person. You know, I just --  
22 I mean, maybe we should put this on hold to make  
23 sure Essar Steel is really committed, then push for  
24 the power line to go through.

25 I mean, because we're already getting

1 road construction out there, how many millions is  
2 that costing us? And is that necessary if it  
3 doesn't go through?

4 I mean, that's all and I'll bring it up  
5 to the judge.

6 MR. STORM: An issue you might want to  
7 bring up to the judge is -- and when we get to the  
8 public hearing stage, when we're at the judge, the  
9 public has the right to ask the applicant and the  
10 applicant's consultants questions. So you could  
11 pose that question.

12 When we get to the public hearing, the  
13 applicant will put witnesses on the stand for their  
14 case. You know, you, as members of the public, get  
15 to ask them questions. And one of the questions you  
16 may want to ask them is, what's your time line in  
17 building this thing relative to the time line of the  
18 plant being up and operational? You know, what's  
19 the guarantee that the plant's going to be there  
20 when you build the line? Which is coming first?

21 That's all stuff that may be valid for  
22 you to flesh out in front of the ALJ. You know,  
23 because, like I said, the environmental report is  
24 just a portion of the entire record, and the PUC  
25 will be making their decision based on the entire

1 record.

2 MS. KOPRIVECH: Thank you.

3 MR. STORM: Arnold Yuhala.

4 MR. YUHALA: Arnold Yuhala, Y-U-H-A-L-A.

5 Off the record, I hope the rest of the  
6 people would speak into the mic because it's hard  
7 hearing for some people here.

8 Question one: What will it do to the  
9 value of our homes? I have my home, my son's home,  
10 and grandson's home there, right next to these  
11 lines.

12 MR. STORM: We can certainly include in  
13 the scope an analysis of the impact of transmission  
14 lines on home values, on real estate. We can  
15 certainly have a discussion of that in the  
16 environmental document.

17 MR. YUHALA: Okay. I'm on line 1. I  
18 prefer to -- hope that you consider line 1A, as  
19 there is a lot less residents in that area, as far  
20 as I think, anyway.

21 And then, what -- how am I going to sit  
22 in my front yard in the morning and evening and  
23 listen to my quiet birds and things with that line  
24 humming?

25 MR. STORM: The environmental document

1 will certainly provide information on the types and  
2 the level of noise that this transmission line will  
3 make -- will have, if any.

4 And it will -- the environmental document  
5 can model that out to certain distances. So we  
6 could say, you know, at the edge of the right-of-way  
7 this is what the dBA, the sound level, of the line  
8 is expected to be. Move 75 feet further, move 75  
9 feet further. And we can certainly do an analysis  
10 of that in the environment document.

11 MR. YUHALA: In our particular case, it  
12 ain't going to help because my son and I just live a  
13 quarter mile apart between my son, my grandson. And  
14 the line's going to be within a quarter mile, in  
15 sight.

16 Also, when I go out deer hunting, it's  
17 going to go right through our deer property. Do I  
18 have to listen to power lines buzzing in the wet  
19 weather? I know what they do, they're buzzing in  
20 the wet weather. That's my peace and quiet, is  
21 hunting out there. And you know, it's not very good  
22 hunting in that -- with sitting under the power  
23 lines or whatever. And you can't grow trees  
24 because, you know, you've got to grow wide open. I  
25 also lose my privacy of hunting.

1 MR. STORM: Okay. Again, the EIS will  
2 certainly look at and provide information on what  
3 noise -- wet-weather noise is certainly -- we  
4 certainly are used to covering wet-weather noise  
5 versus dry-weather noise of transmission lines. We  
6 will certainly lay that out as what can be expected  
7 to occur from this line.

8 We will also -- there's also a -- if you  
9 look in my table of contents, there's also an  
10 aesthetics category, and we can certainly discuss  
11 the fact that you'll be able to see it.

12 And where -- and describe when they're  
13 comparing the alternatives, A to alternative 1,  
14 perhaps as listed, we'll certainly compare the  
15 preferred and the alternatives with the viewsheds,  
16 you know, of how people see them.

17 MR. YUHALA: And, again, like Mr. Zerepko  
18 said, loss of income off our property, if we can't  
19 grow trees on it, if you're cutting the field,  
20 you've got to go around the power poles and such,  
21 and that's a loss of income to us. Plus the extra  
22 work of going around the power poles instead of  
23 cutting the field right straight.

24 I guess some of my other questions have  
25 been answered here. But I guess I'm concerned about

1 my quietness, that's why we live in the country.

2 And I recommend alternative route 1A. I think

3 there's less people over there. Thank you.

4 MR. STORM: Thank you.

5 Dennis Lockard.

6 MR. LOCKARD: Was that a little easier to

7 pronounce this time?

8 MR. STORM: That one wasn't too bad.

9 MR. LOCKARD: Okay. Dennis Lockard,  
10 L-O-C-K-A-R-D.

11 Bill, I appreciate you bringing out some  
12 of these issues. The doctor brought out some really  
13 good points, and Mr. Yuhala did as well.

14 MR. STORM: Get closer to it.

15 MR. LOCKARD: All right. A lot of  
16 questions were brought up and given some answers on  
17 already, and one of them I just want to reiterate  
18 with you. I heard you say that -- I understand that  
19 the permits have been issued already. The question  
20 is, as these meetings go on -- and I believe the  
21 answer is yes, and you can reiterate that if you  
22 would, please. Say that the public overturns or  
23 objects to the proposed route as well as the  
24 alternative route, what happens next?

25 MR. STORM: Part of what I'm doing

1           tonight is soliciting your input on the impacts of  
2           the proposed and alternate route.

3                         But you certainly -- and the rules  
4           certainly allow for you to bring forth your own  
5           alternatives. And they could be full alternatives.  
6           You can say, okay, I'm looking at route 1 and 1A. I  
7           don't like either of them. I'm proposing that you  
8           look at route 1B, and you send me a map of a drawing  
9           that has route 1B on it and I can look at and I can  
10          see if it makes sense to include that in my  
11          environmental document.

12                        You can also -- you also don't have to go  
13          a full route. You can say, okay, Bill, I see route  
14          1 and 1A. Okay, 1A is acceptable to me, but if you  
15          change mile one to mile two and shift it to the  
16          west, we call that an alterative route segment.

17                        So you can either recommend alternative  
18          routes or alternative route segments. And you can  
19          do that by sending me a map with a drawing on it and  
20          describing it to me.

21                        But I guess what I would encourage you to  
22          do most is, we have a task force formed, and the  
23          task force is formed with local government. Many of  
24          them -- I do that so that I try to capture -- so  
25          everybody sort of has some voted-in member on that

1 task force that's representing them. I encourage  
2 you to seek your -- and you've got a list of who the  
3 people are, seek them out independently or come to  
4 the task force meetings.

5 And the task force meetings are set up --  
6 they'll be set up here with a square table with the  
7 task force around it, audience in the back. The  
8 audience is not allowed to participate in the  
9 discussion. But when we break, you are certainly  
10 allowed to pull your representative aside and say I  
11 want you to push an alternative segment here. You  
12 know, ask them, can we move it that way? And at the  
13 task force meetings, we will have Shawn with the GIS  
14 information so we can look at the various  
15 alternatives that may come forth.

16 And if you put forth an alternative  
17 route, make sure you tell me why you're putting that  
18 route forward. It's not -- you're not going to gain  
19 much traction if you're just pushing the route onto  
20 your neighbor because you don't want it on your  
21 land.

22 MR. LOCKARD: Can I interject right  
23 there? I mean, the reason I'm asking is based on  
24 information -- that's a good point you brought up  
25 there. I mean, when you asked -- you know, when

1 you're asking us, if we would object, you know, the  
2 reasons why. I mean, obviously, you know, we're  
3 talking about cedars, we're talking about, you know,  
4 people losing their opportunity to raise cattle in  
5 those areas.

6 I mean, are those objectives that you  
7 want to hear that way? I mean, we're not going to  
8 be able to come back and say, you know, just  
9 because, you know, we want to do this. And because  
10 of the environmental impact study you've done has  
11 made it, you know, more convenient over there  
12 versus, you know, say 65 feet of timber, you know,  
13 of poplar versus, you know, cedar. I mean, it's  
14 going to be pretty much a generic answer coming back  
15 to you because we won't have, like, a study to come  
16 back with.

17 MR. STORM: It's my job to get that study  
18 done for you. One thing I want to make -- you have  
19 to have this to me by the 14th. So I'm not  
20 saying -- maybe I was a little too cavalier about  
21 it. Spell out your reason, but I don't want your  
22 reason to be it's burdening -- it's just that I  
23 don't want it.

24 I want your reason to be, I have a cattle  
25 operation and this will really be detrimental to my

1 cattle operation. Whereas, if you move it over to  
2 my neighbor who has a 40 that he doesn't have  
3 activity on, you know, that might make it more valid  
4 to go over there when you're weighing the burden.

5 If the transmission line goes through,  
6 chances are somebody's going to carry a burden.  
7 What the ultimate decision-maker -- what I try to do  
8 is I try to build a record so it's complete enough  
9 so the decision-maker can make a decision that we  
10 minimize that burden as much possible, if they do  
11 decide to route the transmission line.

12 MR. LOCKARD: Perfect. Thanks, Bill.  
13 Second question -- and I don't know if this goes to  
14 Dave or Bryan. But on this process that we talked  
15 about, the 45 million, the 65 million, the --  
16 whatever the total cost may be, okay. Somebody's  
17 going to incur the balance of it, I guess, is a term  
18 I'm going to use.

19 Minnesota Power, say they -- you know,  
20 they -- it's 45 million they have to put in these  
21 power lines. I mean, what is going to be the  
22 increase to the residents up here? I mean, they've  
23 got to make a -- they've got to get a return on  
24 investment, is a term I'm looking at. You know, say  
25 a person's paying \$60, are they going to go to \$100

1 a month for electric because of these transmission  
2 lines?

3 MR. STORM: Okay. I just want to  
4 rephrase what you're asking and see if anybody wants  
5 to take it. You're basically asking what impact  
6 will the cost of these transmission lines have on  
7 ratepayers in the area?

8 MR. LOCKARD: Thank you.

9 MR. STORM: Any one of you want to take  
10 that on now? I mean, you're not obligated. I mean,  
11 but it's certainly something that can be fleshed out  
12 in the hearing. I mean, in the hearing I won't give  
13 you the latitude to back off. In the hearing, it's  
14 going to be, you know --

15 MR. VAN HOUSE: I can answer what we know  
16 right now, which is -- Dave Van House for Minnesota  
17 Power. Minnesota Power and Nashwauk Public  
18 Utilities are in discussions over who's going to own  
19 these transmission lines. So at this point it's not  
20 known who's going to own it or how -- who's going to  
21 pay, ultimately, on the bills for the transmission  
22 line.

23 That will be known, hopefully, by the  
24 time the permits are done. We're working on that  
25 right now. We hope to have a decision soon.

1           Bryan, I don't know if you can answer  
2           that. Because I'm not part of the negotiations, I'm  
3           an engineer. I just know that we are evaluating  
4           that between the two of us, who's going to own it.

5           MR. STORM: Okay. If I may just take  
6           that a little further, I will certainly in the EIS  
7           talk about -- I will certainly in the EIS talk about  
8           what the costs of the transmission line's going to  
9           be. And I think it's a valid issue to bring up at  
10          the public hearing of how will this impact  
11          ratepayers.

12          MR. LOCKARD: Next -- excuse me. The  
13          next one here is, I'm in Nashwauk as well, and I've  
14          noticed, you know, what's going on on County Road 58  
15          there and Highway 65. As this project -- if it gets  
16          off the ground, or when it gets off the ground,  
17          obviously there's going to be some type of  
18          deterioration to the roads.

19          You know, I mean, obviously you know what  
20          happens with the loggers, you know, driving up and  
21          down Highway 65, 169. With this process going on, I  
22          mean, there's going to be further deterioration.  
23          Who's going to be responsible for that cost of  
24          repairing, say, the roads like, Highway 169, Highway  
25          65, 328, 58?

1 I mean, I understand 58, that they're  
2 going to own that, the cemetery there. But who's  
3 ultimately going to be responsible for repairs  
4 after -- do you understand what I'm saying? The  
5 construction comes in. They have to bring it in,  
6 whether it be through rail, you know, through the  
7 use of highway. Who's going to be responsible for  
8 that cost?

9 MR. STORM: If I may, it's a pretty  
10 standard provision of either site permits for  
11 building a power plant or route permits. It's a  
12 standard condition that the utility is responsible  
13 for any damage they do to roadways in the area based  
14 on their construction, bringing their equipment in,  
15 their heavy hauling equipment in.

16 MR. LOCKARD: Then when you say repair,  
17 you know, when these lines go in, when they go down,  
18 say, whatever, a preferred or an alternative route,  
19 is it the responsibility of Minnesota Power or  
20 Nashwauk Utilities to reset that area to as close to  
21 original as possible?

22 I mean, I've been through there. I've  
23 seen what's happened over where Essar's going in  
24 there. I mean, it's a disgrace of what the -- the  
25 way they stripped the land away, the way it looks

1 right now. I mean, but I'm assuming that they feel  
2 that that's okay.

3 But, I mean, these alternative and  
4 proposed routes, here, Bill, I mean, you know, these  
5 are running along major highways, you know, roads.  
6 I mean, what are they going to leave them after  
7 they're done putting those poles in or these H-poles  
8 or --

9 MR. STORM: Again, it's a standard  
10 condition of the permits for routes that they must  
11 repair any damage that they do to public roads. And  
12 there's a complaint form that's part of the permit  
13 so if a local community government or a citizen has  
14 an issue, they can file a complaint form.

15 As far as lay-down areas outside the  
16 right-of-way, they will, as a condition of the  
17 permit, restore them to as like-condition as they  
18 can. I mean, if they end up taking a 20-foot tree  
19 down, you're not going to get a 20-foot tree. You  
20 might get, you know, whatever you, the landowner,  
21 work out with them as replacements for that.

22 And then the maintenance of the  
23 right-of-way itself, you know, what herbicides they  
24 use, what mechanical instruments they use, that will  
25 all be described in the environmental report.

1 MR. LOCKARD: Okay. And then there was a  
2 question brought up about the value of property  
3 regarding this project.

4 I understand that, you know, there's a  
5 permit put in place and you have these processes.  
6 And I think what the people want to hear here  
7 is that, is there going to be a study done on what  
8 the value of their home is today? And is there  
9 going to be a study done on what the value of their  
10 home is going to be, say, when the project's  
11 complete in the year 2014?

12 MR. STORM: The EIS will certainly look  
13 at information in a generic sense of the impact on  
14 transmission lines on property values. You know, it  
15 will not delve into the proper compensation for an  
16 easement, that's a post-permit issue. That's dealt  
17 with either through the land grant person at the  
18 utility and the landowner, or it gets pushed to the  
19 eminent domain court.

20 MR. LOCKARD: Could I stop you right  
21 there, sir? When you use the term generic, I mean,  
22 when you're taking a value of a land, are you going  
23 to be using -- I mean, I just want to break it right  
24 out right now, are you going to be just using the  
25 market analysis that was done at the county, or are

1           you bringing in, you know, say an appraiser to  
2           value? I mean, you talk about a gentleman back here  
3           who has a herd of cattle along -- you know, he  
4           herds. You know, his crop is basically his cows.  
5           You know, you've got other people, I mean, that have  
6           property, you know, for horses.

7                        I mean, are you doing -- I know you used  
8           the term -- I've done real estate for 30 years. You  
9           used the term generic, which is something that you  
10          shouldn't use in this facet here. I mean, are you  
11          using a market analysis to value these properties,  
12          or are you using, you know, a true value, you know,  
13          an appraised value of what that property's going to  
14          be worth?

15                       MR. STORM: We will be using market  
16          value. We'll be looking at it generically. We will  
17          not be looking at individual appraisals for every  
18          individual parcel that it will cross.

19                       The easement and the payment for that  
20          easement, that needs to capture the values -- or the  
21          perceived values between the landowner and the  
22          permittee, the person getting the permit. And  
23          that's an issue, again, for the eminent domain  
24          court.

25                       We will not -- but we will talk about how

1 power lines affect property values in general, but  
2 we won't be doing it at an individual parcel level.

3 MR. LOCKARD: And then the last thing, I  
4 just want to bring this back to fruition one more  
5 time. We talked, I asked about the electrical costs  
6 with Bryan and Dave here. When will we know when  
7 there's going to be a marriage or who's going to be  
8 in charge so we can understand and find out what --  
9 obviously the hike is going to be on our -- or the  
10 rate increase -- or what the rate is going to be on  
11 our electrical costs?

12 Because obviously in this process here,  
13 Essar isn't going to want to bear the price of what  
14 the electrical cost is going to be, it's going to be  
15 on the consumer. When will we have that? I mean,  
16 is it going to be, you know, August 14th? Is it  
17 going to be meeting five? When will we know who's  
18 going to be in charge of that? Because that's going  
19 to be something that's very important to the  
20 consumer here.

21 Because, say if they're paying \$50 a  
22 month for power -- or electric, let's use the term  
23 electric, and all of sudden, you know, 30 days from  
24 there, they're going to find out that their bill is  
25 going to be 125 on the proposal.

1 MR. STORM: Okay.

2 MR. LOCKARD: Yes, sir.

3 MR. STORM: That's probably a discussion  
4 better suited for the hearing, the public hearing in  
5 front of a judge to flesh that information out. I  
6 will say that in a lot of big transmission line  
7 projects that we deal with, there is normally a  
8 certificate of need docket that runs parallel to our  
9 docket. And in that need docket, a utility would  
10 have to prove to the Commission that the project is  
11 in the best interest of the ratepayers. In that  
12 kind of a docket, we'd have all of this information  
13 in it.

14 The situation here, though, is there is  
15 an exemption to that rule, and because they are  
16 stating that they are supplying a single customer at  
17 a single site, that they're exempt from proving need  
18 to the Commission.

19 Now, so that's -- what that means in my  
20 mind is that those issues that would automatically  
21 be on the table and fully fleshed out, those  
22 ratepayer-related issues --

23 MR. LOCKARD: Go away?

24 MR. STORM: -- are not automatically  
25 fleshed out in the record. That does not mean that

1 during the public hearing you can't, through the  
2 judge, press to get that information, you know.

3 MR. LOCKARD: Or we can't press to have  
4 it your documentation?

5 MR. STORM: The hearing comes after my  
6 documentation. The EIS does not deal with money.  
7 The EIS basically looks at the environmental impacts  
8 and what -- and how they can be mitigated, you know,  
9 of all the options.

10 The economics of -- I mean, the EIS will  
11 touch a little bit on -- a little bit of the  
12 economics, like how much the project costs and how  
13 much taxes will be generated from the project. But  
14 it will not go into the details that a certificate  
15 of need would go into.

16 That doesn't mean it's off the table for  
17 you to bring it up in front of the judge. Now, I  
18 can't speak for a judge, how the judge would  
19 interpret this docket relative to the fact that they  
20 don't need a certificate of need and how much of  
21 that comes in. But it does seem like a valid  
22 question to ask during the public hearing.

23 MR. LOCKARD: Bill, will you be able to  
24 answer who's going to own the power line?

25 MR. STORM: Okay. Right now we have a

1 joint application in front of the PUC. It's an  
2 application from Northern States Power and Minnesota  
3 Power. It's not uncommon for the process to run  
4 through and the permit be issued to Nashwauk Public  
5 Utilities and then transferred to Minnesota Power.  
6 They can transfer -- permits can be transferred to  
7 other entities post issuing of the permit.

8 MR. LOCKARD: Thank you. That's all I  
9 got. Thank you.

10 MR. STORM: Okay. That's all the cards  
11 that I have. Anybody who wants to speak who didn't  
12 fill out a card, I'm going to ask that you raise  
13 your hand and step to the mic. Anybody?

14 Okay. Somebody who's filled out a card  
15 and wants to speak again?

16 Yes. Please step to the mic, restate and  
17 spell your name, please, for the court reporter.

18 MS. MJOLSNESS: I'm Terri Mjolsness,  
19 M-J-O-L-S-N-E-S-S. And just a couple little quick  
20 things about what I talked before and after hearing  
21 everybody else. On the health issues that you  
22 discuss in your impact study, you will be doing  
23 studies on more than just cancer. There's been a  
24 lot of heart disease, Lou Gehrig's disease, blood  
25 diseases, also associated in our neighborhood.

1 MR. STORM: We will not be looking at --  
2 we will be looking at the health effects of high  
3 voltage transmission lines. We will not be looking  
4 at how this community's health is in general and  
5 trying to assess what may or may not be the cause  
6 of -- or whether or not you even have a  
7 statistically abnormal level of something.

8 We're only going to be looking at the  
9 impact of high voltage transmission lines on human  
10 health. And cancer, childhood leukemia, those type  
11 of things are certainly typical things that we look  
12 at and we constantly update what we have as research  
13 for that.

14 MS. MJOLSNESS: Okay. And then you  
15 talked about, as far as environmental impacts, the  
16 construction emissions, things like that. Does that  
17 go in that impact statement as well?

18 MR. STORM: We will certainly talk about  
19 the air pollution, the noise pollution that may  
20 occur during construction activities.

21 MS. MJOLSNESS: And then the last thing  
22 would be the cattle issue, do you discuss the health  
23 risks of people eating cattle that are associated  
24 with power lines?

25 MR. STORM: We'll -- as a response to

1           your comment, I will look to see what, if any,  
2           information is out there on the health effects of  
3           high voltage transmission lines on cattle and the  
4           health effects of -- the health effects on people  
5           who eat cattle who are subject to high voltage  
6           transmission lines. I don't know if there's  
7           anything out there like that, but I'll certainly  
8           look.

9                        MS. MJOLSNESS: Not just from the power  
10           lines, but as well as the pesticides and things that  
11           are used to keep the growth down that the cattle  
12           could be eating. That can also be transferred in  
13           and how it relates to the cancers.

14                       MR. STORM: We will certainly look at the  
15           impact of the method that the utility plans on using  
16           for keeping the right-of-way clear, whether it's  
17           mechanical or herbicide/pesticide. And we can  
18           certainly expand that to the potential for that to  
19           impact animals that may be consumed.

20                       MS. MJOLSNESS: Thank you.

21                       MR. STORM: Okay. Somebody else?

22                       Okay. Would you please step to up mic,  
23           and state and spell your name for the court  
24           reporter.

25                       MR. McDONALD: Mike McDonald,

1 M-C-D-O-N-A-L-D. Regarding the people questioning  
2 about the herbicides and things like that, you  
3 people own your property. You have a right to say  
4 you can and cannot use herbicides. You make them  
5 come in and hand-cut these power lines.

6 That property's yours, that isn't the  
7 power line company's. You can make them come in and  
8 hand-cut that. So don't worry about the sprays.  
9 Just tell them no, you don't want that stuff.

10 That's my comment. Thank you.

11 MR. STORM: Thank you very much.

12 Okay. The lady here in the green  
13 (indicating), if you'd step up and please state and  
14 spell your name.

15 MS. NORGORD: My name is Leann Norgord,  
16 N-O-R-G-O-R-D. The question I have is, is the power  
17 lines -- or are the power lines going to be going  
18 over gas lines? If so, what are the adverse effects  
19 of that?

20 MR. STORM: I do believe some of the  
21 routes do follow the gas lines. I don't know if  
22 they actually cross over them or not, they may.  
23 It's pretty common that they do.

24 And it is pretty common for us to include  
25 in the EIS the potential impact of high voltage

1 transmission lines on the gas pipeline, if the  
2 situation is where it's going to cross. So we'll  
3 certainly discuss that.

4 MS. NORGDOR: Is there any danger of  
5 explosion?

6 MR. STORM: We will certainly evaluate  
7 that in the EIS, whether there's the danger of  
8 explosion. And we'll look at the built-in  
9 safeguards that they use and we'll look at the  
10 potential for stray voltage to affect the pipeline.  
11 We can certainly assess that in the environmental  
12 document.

13 Okay. Anybody else have a question or  
14 comment they'd like to put on the record?

15 Okay. Please remember to get your  
16 comments to me by August 14th. Your comments are  
17 things that you're concerned about that you want me  
18 to include in the environmental document. Routes,  
19 route alternatives, alternative route segments that  
20 you would like me to consider in the environmental  
21 document.

22 And also remember, Shawn is in the  
23 background if you want to talk about a specific  
24 piece of property. I think you're going to be here  
25 until people are done. So if you want to look at

1 the aerial photographs relative to your property,  
2 please take advantage of Shawn in the back.

3 If you have any questions about the  
4 process, how you get involved, how best to write  
5 your letter, if you have an alternative route or  
6 route segment that you want to discuss with me, call  
7 me up at my office. My business card is there and I  
8 can walk you through how best to present the  
9 information for consideration.

10 MS. MJOLSNESS: Do we need to reiterate  
11 what we discussed here?

12 MR. STORM: No, you do not. The court  
13 reporter is taking down what we're saying and it  
14 will be part of the official record. And I will  
15 also extract comments out of it as I build my  
16 recommendation for the scope for the draft.

17 Are you sure, nobody else wants to?

18 Well, I really appreciate you coming  
19 out -- oh, here we go.

20 Again, please state and spell your name.

21 MR. HAUTALA: Kurt Hautala,  
22 H-A-U-T-A-L-A. I have land on both the east side  
23 and west side of 65. How long after the permitting  
24 process is done do we see a dotted line where the  
25 line is going to run in this 3,500-foot corridor?

1 MR. STORM: I think -- I don't know when  
2 you -- say the permit is issued in June -- if the  
3 permit is issued and I don't want to presume it is.  
4 But if the permit is issued in June, when do you  
5 think you guys will be out there surveying?

6 MR. VAN HOUSE: Due to what Essar Power  
7 has told of us when they want the power, which is  
8 February 2011, we will be starting working as soon  
9 as we get the permit, provided we get permits from  
10 the state. We will start surveying the line right  
11 away and working with landowners for easements.

12 We're anticipating having all our  
13 permits -- not only permits here for the routes, we  
14 have other local permits, federal permits we need to  
15 get, and we're expecting that process to be complete  
16 by fall of 2010. And so that's when we'll start the  
17 surveys.

18 MR. HAUTALA: Okay. Thank you.

19 MR. STORM: I'll give you one more  
20 opportunity. Going once.

21 Okay. Again, thank you. Remember the  
22 comment period. Remember you can call me anytime.  
23 I can certainly walk you through our website, too.  
24 If you call me at my desk, I can walk you through  
25 the website.

1 I appreciate you guys coming out. Thank  
2 you.

3 (Public comment concluded.)  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25