Birkholz, David (COMM)

From: Ken Schindele [kernl@mycitescape.com]
Sent: Thursday, January 28, 2010 12:26 PM
To: Birkholz, David (COMM); Eknes, Bret (PUC)
Cc: dgorman378@aol.com; Jaime Warnert; lwsch@mycitescape.com
Subject: TL-09-1056 (CapX 2020)
Attachments: CapX 2020 Comments.pdf

Dear Mr. Birkholz and Mr. Eknes,

On January 26, I FAXed and e-mailed 3 pages of comments to david.birkholz@state.mn.us and want to add one additional comment.

I recently learned about Minnesota's Policy on Non-proliferation: Minnesota Statute 216E.03 requires first consideration of potential routes that would use or parallel existing railroad & highway rights of way…such as the I-94 corridor. 42% of the North Route's approximately 39 miles creates new Rights of Way via private parcel lines, a clear departure from Minnesota's Policy on Non-proliferation. This policy clearly supports my earlier requests to use the I-94 right of way, or to use the right of way on Stearns County Road 4 between Stearns County Road 2 and Stearns County Road 133.

I am attaching a PDF file of my earlier comments so you may print and staple this e-mail to them.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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From: Ken Schindele
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26 January 2010

SubJ: TL-09-1056 (Fargo to St. Cloud 345 kV Transmission Line Project)

To: David Birkholz, Project Manager
Minnesota Office of Energy Security
Energy Facility Permitting
85 7th Place East, Suite 500
St. Paul, MN 55101-2198

Please consider the following comments and share them with the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission:

1. New transmission lines should be routed in existing corridors or along highway rights of way. Specific to this project, it should follow I-94 from Melrose to St. Cloud. If this is not possible, in the St Wendell Township, it should be routed with the existing transmission line along Stearns County Road 2 until it intersects with Stearns County Road 4. At that intersection, it should be routed Easterly along Stearns County Road 4 until it intersects the transmission line running South along 75th Avenue. At that intersection, it should turn Southerly with the existing transmission line. If that too is not possible, I have a suggestion for rerouting the preferred route that crosses West to East in Sections 23 and 24 in St. Wendell Township, Stearns County because that portion of the preferred route passes very close to several homes. If the new transmission line were to remain going farther South before turning East, there are several open areas where the new line would not impact as many homes.

2. Regardless of where the transmission line is routed, it should be installed underground. At a public meeting in Saint Joseph on January 21, we were told that the cost would be 7 to 10 times more for it to be underground. I question whether that is really accurate. The cost may be more for each mile, but I wonder how many fewer miles of line would be needed if installed in a more direct route made possible by going underground. Since cost of the transmission line will be paid by the users, I would like to know what the increased cost to the end user would be. Are we talking about 9 cents per kw as opposed to 8.5 cents? There would be less compensation to land owners because property values would be impacted less with an underground line. Certainly, some portions of the line could be placed underground.

3. I've heard a lot of talk about stray voltage and electromagnetic fields and am seriously concerned about both. A representative from Xcel Energy said stray voltage should not occur and should be repaired when it occurs, but electromagnetic fields will always be present. Because there are no regulated standards for electromagnetic fields, I am concerned that the power company will not be concerned with measuring, reducing, or eliminating this hazardous health risk to the public. I am attaching a recent article entitled "High voltage power lines like CapX2020 pose health risks," by David

O. Carpenter, MD, Director of the Institute for Health and the Environment University of Albany, State University of New York. At the meeting in Saint Joseph, we were told that electromagnetic fields dissipate more quickly with underground installations, so this is another reason to install this line underground.

4. The EIS Draft Scoping Document states "Although the proposed line will be built using double-circuit capable poles, only one circuit will be installed for this Project. The second position will be left available for a future additional circuit..." Does doubling the circuits double the health risks to humans or do they rise exponentially? How much more stray voltage can be expected? How much stronger and far reaching will be the electromagnetic fields? Some of the cost of this project should be allocated to the future circuit. So, when computing the "additional" cost for underground installation, it may be possible to significantly reduce the real cost of this specific project.

5. At the Saint Joseph meeting, we were also told that once a utility corridor for a transmission line is established, we could expect other utilities to use the same corridor. I do not want to set a precedent for my property to be used for natural gas, telephone, cable television, cell phone towers, wireless communications, and whatever other technologies may evolve.

6. When I inquired about how people are compensated, I was told that someone determines the present day reduced value to a property and the land owner is compensated with a one-time payment. That doesn't sound fair since it is the future value of the property that is more significantly impacted, especially in an area of anticipated residential development. The utility company will generate profits, and increase costs to end users in the future. I believe the land owner should be compensated for future value as well or the easement should be on a lease basis for a defined time period. The lease could include a clause for mandatory renewal with compensation to be determined on present day values. Other considerations for one-time payments include: as health officials more accurately assess health risks, it may be very difficult to sell existing homes; compensation received will be significantly reduced by federal, state, and local taxes based on income; and though the value of the land will decrease, I can imagine tax assessors increasing the assessed value because of "improvements."

7. I've heard that the utility easement cannot cross state-owned lands. I believe it makes good sense to use state-owned lands as much as possible for utility easements as they are to be used for the benefit of the general public. Using state-owned lands would significantly reduce the number of property owners impacted and the proximity to humans. This would reduce the health risks to the public.

8. I've walked under several high voltage transmission lines and have observed a constant humming noise. I live with a constant ringing in my ears known as tinnitus and would not like to live with an additional constant noise.

9. I am concerned about interference with our telephone, cell phone, internet, and satellite television reception. The utility company may say the line will not interfere, but our microwave interferes with our phone and cell phone, and that is a very small emitter in comparison to a transmission line.

I am opposed to an overhead transmission line crossing my property, especially when it is possible to route it along existing transmission corridors and highway rights of way. I am concerned about the health risks (especially when considering a second line), the reduced value of my property, the reduced ability to use all my property, the ability to sell my home in the future, the future impact of establishing a utility corridor, a one-time payment for reduced present value, taxes on that one-time payment, living with a constant overhead hum, interference with and future assessed value vs actual value.

Please keep me informed as the Public Utilities Commission addresses these concerns.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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High voltage power lines like CapX2020 pose health risks

David O. Carpenter, MD
Director of the Institute for Health and the Environment University of Albany, State University of New York

I'm writing to share knowledge accumulated through decades of studying the health effects of high-voltage power lines, like the CapX2020 power line proposed to come through or near to St. Joseph. As a medical doctor and director of the Institute for Health and the Environment at University at Albany, SUNY, I believe the health risks posed by long-term exposure to magnetic fields are serious, especially to children and to fetuses.

There is definitive scientific evidence that exposure to magnetic fields from power lines greater than four milligauss (a level significantly less than what is expected to occur near this proposed power line) is associated with an elevated risk of childhood leukemia. Some scientific research indicates an elevated risk at levels of two milligauss. A home not near a power line will usually have a level of less than 1 milligauss.

Scientific evidence also links magnetic field exposure to cancer in adults as well, particularly leukemia and brain cancer. There's strong evidence that lifetime exposure to magnetic fields above 2 milligauss is associated with an increased risk of neurodegenerative diseases in adults, including Alzheimer's disease and ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease).

With many aspects of human toxicology, there is uncertainty as to which mechanisms may be responsible for increased human disease with exposure to power line magnetic fields. However, there is a large body of evidence showing ways in which magnetic fields, including the frequencies from power lines, affect tissue at a cellular level.

Some persons may be unusually sensitive to exposure to magnetic fields. A recent study demonstrated children living within 100 meters of a power line who lacked a gene to repair DNA had a 400-percent greater chance of developing leukemia than other children with a similar exposure

Based on this scientific information, I would make these public health recommendations:

Information should be publicly available regarding the calculated magnetic field strength from a power line at various distances. In many locations along the route, magnetic fields from the CapX2020 power lines will exceed levels that create health risks, particularly over time as more electric power is used.

High-voltage power lines should be routed to prevent power-line magnetic fields in homes from exceeding four milliguass. Every effort should also be made to avoid long-term exposure to magnetic fields above two milligauss.

Public health precaution also suggests high-voltage lines be located as far as possible from homes, schools, playgrounds and child-care facilities. In areas of dense population where routing away from homes and other sensitive uses is not possible, power lines should be placed underground in such a way as to reduce human health impacts.