

PUBLIC COMMENTS

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THURSDAY, MARCH 25, 2010

1:00 p.m.

In the Matter of the Xcel Energy Application for a 161 kV High Voltage Transmission Line Route Permit and a Certificate of Need for the Pleasant Valley to Byron Transmission Line Project in Dodge, Olmsted, and Mower Counties

PUC Docket Number: E002/TL-09-1315, CN-08-992

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1                   MR. LANGAN: We have a court reporter  
2 here today to take down any of your comments or  
3 questions. Don't think of that as the formality of  
4 this meeting, don't make it seem -- you know, we  
5 don't want to seem too formal here. But in terms of  
6 me listening to or responding to your questions, I  
7 can do that a lot better if I'm not also trying to  
8 take notes or trying to -- you know, inadvertently  
9 putting my own spin on what your questions or  
10 comments are. So Christine will take down your  
11 comments and questions as you go along.

12                   We'll ask that you state your name. And  
13 actually, we'll ask that you come up to the  
14 microphone here and state your name and then give  
15 your comments. I think it helps her out if you  
16 speak -- try not to speak too rapidly. It's magic  
17 what she does, but if you're able to speak clearly  
18 and evenly, I think that helps out a lot.

19                   What we'll do is, I've got a few names  
20 here for people that have signed up to speak. We'll  
21 call them up first. When we are through that  
22 list -- I think there are five people. When we're  
23 through that list then we'll just ask people to  
24 raise their hands and come up and speak.

25                   And the first person is Tom Tweite. I

1 apologize if I mangle last names in this.

2 MR. TWEITE: Tweite.

3 MR. LANGAN: Tweite.

4 MR. TWEITE: Do you want me up here, or I  
5 can just grab your mic. Does that work, is that all  
6 right?

7 MR. LANGAN: Yeah.

8 MR. TWEITE: Okay. Now, I didn't realize  
9 and I didn't come prepared today to really speak to  
10 any issues, but Chris encouraged me to present a few  
11 things.

12 First off, I'm not going to dwell on all  
13 the issues. But to share just a little bit, we  
14 happen to be located just outside of -- south of the  
15 highway here, and either one of these proposals will  
16 affect our property directly.

17 So where I'm coming from today is not  
18 from a property owner and we have our business  
19 there -- or a business owner, but I need to share  
20 just a little background. I have a concern with the  
21 preferred route over the second route because of the  
22 impacts on the roadway.

23 And to give you a little background of  
24 myself so you know that I'm not just blowing smoke  
25 here, I am a Kalmar Town Board supervisor of 13

1 years. I've been a member of the Olmsted County  
2 Roadway Task Force, which put together the 35-year  
3 plan for the county, and I have those maps in the  
4 car.

5 I am -- at the time I started the process  
6 communicating with Tom and some other people from  
7 Xcel is over two and a half years ago. At that time  
8 I was still an active member of the Olmsted County  
9 Planning Advisory Commission, which since my term  
10 has expired. Now I am a member of the  
11 Rochester/Olmsted County Council of Governments. In  
12 Olmsted here that's referred to ROCCOG, and it's the  
13 road people or the people that try to plan and make  
14 our best guess at where the roads may end up in the  
15 next 50 to 100 years.

16 And I mentioned the fact that I'm a  
17 landowner. I do appreciate the fact that I have  
18 electricity and I know that there's somebody  
19 somewhere sacrificing to have a line somewhere where  
20 they may not want it so I can have it. And with  
21 that being said, we've had -- between myself and my  
22 father, we've had four of the large poles setting on  
23 our property since I believe the mid '60s.

24 And as I stated earlier, either route I'm  
25 going to be impacted, so that's not an issue here.

1 The issue is, I believe that at some point in time  
2 if you were to use the preferred route, it may  
3 impact the opportunities for an interchange on  
4 Highway 14.

5 The City of Byron has done much more than  
6 adopt official maps in regard to that happening  
7 someday. Whether it's ten, 20, 50, 100 years now,  
8 that's immaterial. But they've made an investment  
9 in their own infrastructure by producing the  
10 industrial park as it's laid out and accommodating  
11 for an interchange.

12 And my fear of a transmission line coming  
13 through there is that with the vastness that an  
14 interchange would take in regards to the offramps,  
15 the onramps and all that, there may be an impact  
16 there if the line is too close and not allowing for  
17 that to happen.

18 And where that goes a little further,  
19 then, if you take the road going south and it must  
20 go all the way down to the next blacktop because  
21 certainly if an interchange was ever to happen, it  
22 would not dump onto a township road, which only has  
23 a 66-foot right-of-way.

24 And the way I'm kind of looking at the  
25 maps is you're having poles alternating, missing

1 houses and things, so you really limit the  
2 opportunities for the expansion of that road  
3 right-of-way in that particular situation.

4 I do -- it appears there's a lot less  
5 impact to roads in the alternate route simply  
6 because you're going down roads that may not have  
7 the traffic for it to become more major roads in the  
8 future. It's clearly defined on the Olmsted County  
9 map and I think, if you really investigated, in  
10 Dodge County, you know, if things were to happen  
11 even in regards to an interchange not coming right  
12 here or further up the line, some of the roads one  
13 side or the other of Highway 14 will become very  
14 different than they are today just because of the  
15 increase of traffic and things.

16 And I have a whole lot more stuff, but  
17 I'll just send that all in a -- in a thing. But  
18 that's my intent here today and I was encouraged to  
19 speak by Chris. I wasn't planning on doing that.  
20 So here you go (indicating).

21 MR. LANGAN: Thanks very much,  
22 Mr. Tweite. That's just the kind of comment that  
23 we're looking for. If there are other routes out  
24 there that might address some of those concerns that  
25 are available, I'd encourage you to include those in

1 any comments. And you as well, in the crowd  
2 tonight, you know, if you think of other routes that  
3 are -- that could work out there and address some of  
4 your concerns, we're happy to evaluate whether those  
5 can go in the scope for the EIS. But I appreciate  
6 the comments. Thank you.

7 Howard Snyder; is that right?

8 UNIDENTIFIED: He's over here.

9 MR. LANGAN: Okay.

10 MR. JARED SYNDER: My question is on your  
11 preferred route there. My father owns land on --  
12 Jared Snyder, I'm Howard's son. And my dad's  
13 property is on the corner of 675th and 15. He's the  
14 corner lot and I understand that the line jets to  
15 the other side of the street, so it's not  
16 technically going through his line -- or through his  
17 lot there.

18 My question is, how safe is that to have?  
19 Because I know you can't around them, you said you  
20 can't build around the lines, you've got to have so  
21 much room on both sides. How safe is that for  
22 people to be around and what's the safe distance  
23 that -- you know, that's a lot of juice you're  
24 running through there.

25 I mean, I'm planning on building out

1           there at some point and I'd like to know if there's  
2           going to be some sort of impact. I notice nobody  
3           lives around the substations, so there's got to be  
4           something to it.

5                       MR. LANGAN: Thanks, Jared. I appreciate  
6           the question. That is -- and maybe Tom might want  
7           to talk about their right-of-way for the line  
8           itself. But that very thing is something that we're  
9           going to evaluate in the EIS, human health impacts,  
10          if any.

11                       I can tell you that there have -- there's  
12          been a lot of study about whether transmission lines  
13          at various voltages -- you know, this is a 161 line,  
14          we're seeing 345 kilovolt lines being built in the  
15          state, but there's a lot of information out there in  
16          terms of whether there are health impacts or not  
17          associated with this line.

18                       And with a transmission line, the World  
19          Health Organization, the Minnesota Department of  
20          Health have studied this, other states have studied  
21          it in the region, and that's the type of information  
22          that we're going to put in the environmental impact  
23          statement.

24                       I think from what I'm hearing from you, I  
25          think it's reasonably -- it will be reasonably

1 covered in our scope. If you get a chance to look  
2 at that scoping document and you see how we propose  
3 it, if there's something more specific that you want  
4 us to study, we'll do that.

5 But -- and I guess, you know, the draft  
6 EIS will be published some months down the line.  
7 There is actually some information about any human  
8 health effects in the route permit application  
9 that's at the back table back there, so you can  
10 certainly take a look at that. And it's  
11 available -- we have that on our website and it's  
12 available there.

13 So that's a start of a place for you to  
14 look, but it's something that we're going to look  
15 into. And anything out there that's available,  
16 we'll include and evaluate in the draft EIS. So I  
17 think those questions will be answered for you in  
18 that document.

19 Mr. Snyder.

20 MR. HOWARD SYNDER: Yeah. I wanted to  
21 know specifically, is it going to be run on the east  
22 side of the road or the west side of the road, the  
23 line?

24 MR. LANGAN: Thank you for that question,  
25 and it brings up a -- even a larger point that I'd

1           like to make. When the Public Utilities  
2 Commission -- you know, they'll be asked to grant a  
3 route for this project. And a route is a specific  
4 term, it's got a definition in state rule. A route  
5 has a specific width to it. It can actually be up  
6 to a mile and a quarter. In this case, I believe  
7 it's a 400-foot -- the applicant requests that  
8 width, and here it's a 400-foot-wide route that the  
9 applicant has asked us to ask the Public Utilities  
10 Commission to grant.

11                         What that does is -- well, okay. So  
12 let's say a 400-foot route is granted toward the  
13 end, and the ultimate right-of-way once a line is  
14 constructed is much less than 400 feet in width,  
15 80 feet for this one. 80 feet -- an 80-foot  
16 right-of-way is going to be required. What a  
17 400-foot route -- if a 400-foot route is granted,  
18 that 80-foot right-of-way can go anywhere within  
19 that 400 feet of width.

20                         Now, the reason that there's a specific  
21 width to the route is that while, yes, this is the  
22 overall state permit that gets issued here, there  
23 are many other permits that get issued along the  
24 way. And some are township permits, some are  
25 county, some are city permits, some are state

1 government permits given, you know, depending on the  
2 project.

3 That 400-foot route width allows the  
4 applicant -- if granted, the applicant to work with  
5 the landowners in that area to where best to place  
6 that 80-foot right-of-way. Okay? And so it allows  
7 for flexibility within that route to work with --  
8 you know, for the applicant to work with the  
9 landowner or permitting agencies, local governments  
10 as to where best that ultimate right-of-way would be  
11 placed.

12 So to get directly to your question, at  
13 this point it has not been determined if it would go  
14 on the west or the east side of the road. There is  
15 an opportunity in our process to widen that route  
16 width in some locations where, well, there might be  
17 a couple different good options, a couple good  
18 alignments to evaluate, and it's in the public  
19 interest to give the applicant that option.

20 And in some cases, you can give us  
21 comments that that route width should be narrowed,  
22 so we say, you know, there aren't a whole lot of  
23 good options here, we think that it should be an  
24 alignment. So that's something that we'll consider  
25 as well. But at this point what's been proposed is

1 a 400-foot wide route in both cases, in both the  
2 preferred and the alternative.

3 Yes, sir.

4 MR. TVEDT: I've got a comment regarding  
5 the feasibility of putting housing underneath those  
6 high voltage lines. There's precedent in that in  
7 between Savage -- on the line between Savage and  
8 Shakopee south of 101, there's a high voltage line  
9 that's -- the last time I was there 15 years ago,  
10 there must be 30, 40 houses within 150 feet of the  
11 line. Gary Tvedt.

12 MR. LANGAN: Don, do you want to address  
13 that?

14 MR. HILLSTROM: Sure. Before I answer  
15 your question, I want to go back to the previous one  
16 first. The maps that we show do have that 400-foot  
17 route on there, but there also is line that  
18 represents an alignment that we use to study the  
19 impacts. And that line is our preliminary intention  
20 about where we build the line, so that should give  
21 you a pretty good comfort on which side of the road  
22 that we intend to be on. I will say that this does  
23 not represent final engineering and sometimes there  
24 are utilities buried under the ground that we don't  
25 know about. So in those kind of situations we may

1 change some of that alignment from final  
2 engineering.

3 But in this area we -- there are  
4 scattered houses along the routes, oftentimes with a  
5 shelter belt of trees around the house. And we  
6 understand from the meetings that we've had with the  
7 folks is that people want to preserve those shelter  
8 belts.

9 And so we propose in almost every case to  
10 be on the other side of the road from a house and  
11 those trees and we intend to build the line like  
12 that on whichever route is approved.

13 Now to get to the question that Mr. Tvedt  
14 asked, the right-of-way -- the easements that we buy  
15 are designed to keep structures and tall-growing  
16 trees away from the power line because that --  
17 specific clearances are needed for safety and we  
18 can't allow somebody to built a structure underneath  
19 the lines or even within 40 feet of the center line  
20 of the line for this particular line. So that would  
21 be the restriction.

22 We'd buy an easement that would say the  
23 utility has the right to build and maintain our line  
24 here and the landowner does not have the right to  
25 build a structure or to allow tall-growing trees in

1           that easement strip. So beyond that easement strip,  
2           beyond 40 feet away, the landowner still has every  
3           right that they had previously.

4                     Does that answer your question?

5                     MR. TVEDT: (Nodding.)

6                     MR. LANGAN: Okay. Margaret Kirchner.

7                     MS. KIRCHNER: Right here.

8                     MR. LANGAN: Okay.

9                     MS. KIRCHNER: Well, I too am wondering  
10           why you have -- why you took 680th for your  
11           preferred route, because I feel the same as the  
12           people that have talked so far. I think the other  
13           one looks like it's more of a direct route and if  
14           you go on ours there's a lot more people living on  
15           our area close together, so why take them?

16                     If you go on either side of the road,  
17           you've got a big pipeline on one side, on our side,  
18           you've got -- well, either side you've got trees and  
19           there are some that are 100 years old and they're  
20           oaks and they cost a lot of money and it takes a lot  
21           of years to get them there.

22                     And I also want -- I've got other  
23           questions, and Tom, I wrote a couple letters to you,  
24           I never got any response at all. And I think in  
25           some letter you said that I have not heard from

1 anybody. The only one I got a response from was the  
2 Department of Natural Resources.

3 And on our route, I have lots of birds  
4 where I live and we have the loggerhead shrike,  
5 which is -- that you know the natural resources are  
6 concerned about. And also there are Indian  
7 artifacts in the woods back of us.

8 And I'm wondering how can you take --  
9 now, there's Freeborn Mower Co-op Services services  
10 us, we have electricity from them. Then the RES is  
11 talking about putting in the line and then you're  
12 talking about this. Now, how are you going to have  
13 three different -- how is that going to work  
14 together? I have a lot questions, let's hear your  
15 answers.

16 MR. LANGAN: Okay. First of all, you had  
17 said that you had some natural resource concerns  
18 with your property. Are you along the alternate,  
19 the green route here (indicating)?

20 MS. KIRCHNER: No.

21 MR. LANGAN: You're along the red route,  
22 the preferred route?

23 MS. KIRCHNER: Yes.

24 MR. LANGAN: Okay. I just wanted to get  
25 that down -- so we have that note.

1           Secondly, you had mentioned other power  
2 lines that are being proposed. This review process  
3 is only looking at these transmission lines.  
4 However, if there are other transmission lines that  
5 are being proposed, they would -- they -- depending  
6 on the capacity, if it's 100 kilovolts or greater  
7 and greater than 1,500 feet in length, so a quarter  
8 mile, they also will need to go through this  
9 process.

10           MS. KIRCHNER: Well, Freeborn Mower is  
11 already servicing us, they're already on that road.

12           MR. LANGAN: Yeah. And maybe I can get  
13 some help from Xcel in terms of the need for this.

14           MS. KIRCHNER: It's not People's on that  
15 road, the People's is over another mile on the  
16 alternate route. This is Freeborn Mower.

17           MR. LANGAN: Okay. Yeah.

18           MR. HILLSTROM: This may not be what  
19 you're talking about, but I do know of another  
20 proposal to build a transmission line on the very  
21 southern part of our preferred route, is that the  
22 area that you're speaking of?

23           MS. KIRCHNER: Well, yes. And with --  
24 Freeborn Mower is already on there, what are you  
25 going to do with the lines that are already there?

1           MR. HILLSTROM: Well, usually -- are you  
2 talking about the smaller lines, the distribution  
3 lines that feed houses?

4           MS. KIRCHNER: Yes.

5           MR. HILLSTROM: Well, these can be dealt  
6 with in a couple of ways. They can either be  
7 attached to the poles at a lower level, they can be  
8 left where they are on the other side of the street,  
9 or they can be buried. We have not determined that  
10 in all of these cases yet, that's a detail that  
11 would be determined in final engineering.

12           I did want to mention one thing about --  
13 we did hear of a wind development that's going in in  
14 this area west of our preferred route in Dodge  
15 County, and they do have a proposal to build a  
16 transmission line that their proposed route will  
17 share a portion of our preferred route.

18           And they approached us and they have a --  
19 either they have now or they will have a permit in  
20 to Dodge County to permit that line. And if they  
21 propose that route and their wind development goes  
22 forward and our process selects the preferred route,  
23 then there is that opportunity for the two lines to  
24 share that common segment for about a mile and a  
25 half on the southern portion of our route. But

1           there's a lot of ifs in that statement, and that  
2           would be something that Matt would consider in his  
3           process, too. Maybe he's got the preferred route --

4                       MS. KIRCHNER: Okay. Now, the Freeborn  
5           Mower, now, they may vary, but right now it isn't.  
6           And so the actual -- and Great River -- the actual  
7           pipeline runs across the road, so if -- how -- you  
8           know, if they bury that, you're going to have  
9           Freeborn Mower lines buried, you're going to have to  
10          put in those big transmission poles along here by  
11          that pipeline, how are you going to do it?

12                      MR. HILLSTROM: That's a good question,  
13          and that's one of the reasons why we don't commit to  
14          a specific alignment. In some cases we need more  
15          room. We do know about the buried natural gas line  
16          that feeds the power plant down there at Pleasant  
17          Valley, and we've met with those folks. There is  
18          enough room in there to bury, you know, the gas  
19          lines and electric lines and for our overhead line  
20          to go through as well.

21                      MS. KIRCHNER: On the same side of the  
22          road?

23                      MR. HILLSTROM: That's to be determined,  
24          but we think so, yeah. Like I said, we have not  
25          done the final engineering yet, but we know what's

1 out there. We may not know everything that's out  
2 there, but we know about the gas pipeline. And it  
3 is kind of a short segment, I think it's less than a  
4 mile where they actually -- our route and the  
5 pipeline actually parallel. And we know about the  
6 wind transmission line proposal and we know about  
7 the existing smaller wires, and we're confident we  
8 can deal with all of those.

9 MS. KIRCHNER: Okay.

10 MR. LANGAN: Did you have more questions?

11 MS. KIRCHNER: And also I do have a list  
12 of the risks here about leukemia in children,  
13 Alzheimer's, and other health concerns such as  
14 depression, miscarriages, headaches, from people  
15 that live near these power lines. So there is a  
16 danger for health reasons.

17 MR. LANGAN: Did you want to submit that  
18 today?

19 MS. KIRCHNER: I can. I have an extra  
20 one.

21 MR. LANGAN: Do you have an extra copy?

22 MS. KIRCHNER: Yes.

23 MR. LANGAN: Okay. Thank you.

24 MS. KIRCHNER: And I also have served on  
25 the Mower County Planning and Zoning for seven

1 years, so I'm familiar with a lot of this. So don't  
2 try to get anything over on us, because I'm watching  
3 you.

4 MR. LANGAN: Okay. Thank you.

5 Randall Gronseth.

6 MR. RANDY GRONSETH: I'm Randy Gronseth  
7 from -- I'm in Sargeant Township, I'm also a  
8 Sargeant Township supervisor. G-R-O-N-S-E-T-H.

9 And my concern is transmission lines.  
10 Sargeant Township is just a half mile off the power  
11 station, the township line, and what's happening  
12 with the development of all the wind energy, all  
13 these transmission lines are coming into the power  
14 station.

15 And what I'm witnessing is companies  
16 expect the landowners to work with them, but I'm not  
17 seeing the different companies working together.  
18 For instance, on the RES that's coming in with their  
19 wind energy now and on 680th Avenue to the south,  
20 there will be two transmission lines on each side of  
21 the road coming up. And I don't see why they  
22 can't -- the two companies can't work together and  
23 get it on one pole. I mean, I've witnessed this  
24 other places.

25 And so my concern is on 680th Avenue to

1 the north, which Margaret's brought up, RES is  
2 bringing their preferred line up that route, their  
3 transmission. The northern project of the RES wind  
4 project will be coming -- their main transmission  
5 line to the power station will be coming on 680th  
6 Avenue.

7 What I don't want to see is two sets of  
8 big transmission lines being built. I don't -- and  
9 from what I'm hearing, I don't hear the two  
10 companies are working together right now, and I  
11 would like to see them working together.

12 MR. LANGAN: Thank you.

13 Tom, anything that you'd like to say  
14 about --

15 MR. HILLSTROM: No. That's the same area  
16 that I talked about, where the -- I believe that's  
17 what you're talking about, where the RES comes down  
18 on the same route as our preferred alternative?

19 MR. RANDY GRONSETH: Yeah.

20 MR. LANGAN: Okay. Well, that's the list  
21 that has signed up to speak. Just raise your hand  
22 if you'd also like to speak.

23 MR. JAMES GRONSETH: I'm on the same  
24 subject.

25 MR. LANGAN: Okay.

1                   MR. JAMES GRONSETH: I live a mile and a  
2 quarter north of the Pleasant Valley line -- or  
3 substation on 680th Avenue. And I've been  
4 approached by RES when they've given me the map, and  
5 that line is going to come by our place along with  
6 the Xcel, they've given me a map that they've got.

7                   And the two together come to 299  
8 kilowatts. And then Freeborn Mower has got their  
9 line there, too, that supplies us. So about 45,  
10 50 years ago, Northern States put up that big line  
11 that you mentioned. And they put it on the back end  
12 of everybody's farm, so pretty near everybody's a  
13 good half mile away from it.

14                   Now we're expected to have that same  
15 power go by our place. I think it's just too much  
16 power. James Gronseth, G-R-O-N-S-E-T-H.

17                   MR. LANGAN: Thank you for the comment.  
18 To let you know, when we talked about that  
19 certificate of need approval through the Public  
20 Utilities Commission, that is something that the  
21 applicant has to prove, that that power -- that  
22 power line is needed, that there's a demand and that  
23 there is a reliability issue there. And so that's  
24 some of what that process gets to.

25                   MR. JAMES GRONSETH: I have one more

1           thing.

2                       MR. LANGAN:    Sure.

3                       MR. JAMES GRONSETH:  When I signed up  
4           with RES, we didn't -- in the contract it reads that  
5           I've got to give them a transmission -- a place for  
6           the transmission line.  But they didn't state how  
7           much -- how big a line it would be.  And Xcel, of  
8           course, has got the main, so we wouldn't have no  
9           chance to stop that.  I guess we wouldn't have a  
10          chance to stop either one of them.

11                      MS. KIRCHNER:  Could I add something on  
12          that?  How about this eminent domain bill that's in  
13          front of the House now, what have you got to say  
14          about that?  Because this one says -- and I just got  
15          it in the mail today, it says that this bill is  
16          going to be different, it's going to take -- it's  
17          giving the landowners more from, you know -- so if  
18          they have to go to court that you're going to pay  
19          the attorney fees if the offer is 40 percent less  
20          than the final judgement, and you must be aware of  
21          that.

22                      MR. LANGAN:  Certainly our office keeps  
23          track of the legislature and the legislative  
24          session.  I am not a legislator and I don't have  
25          a -- not even a great deal, I don't any influence on

1           their process, and we'll see what comes out of the  
2           session on that bill. The time line of this project  
3           certainly, you know, will go past the legislative  
4           session and if new legislation is enacted then that  
5           would -- if new legislation was enacted this  
6           session, that would precede the construction and  
7           operation of this project. So whatever legislation  
8           would come out of that would obviously apply to this  
9           project.

10                   MS. KIRCHNER: Does that answer -- Jim,  
11           does that answer your question, or did you still not  
12           get the answer you wanted?

13                   MR. LANGAN: And in terms of -- I  
14           apologize. It's -- I'm not the project manager for  
15           the RES wind project. And in terms of the  
16           agreements that they have with their landowners, I  
17           apologize, I'm unable to speak about that. I'm not  
18           aware of what arrangements they've made. That is a  
19           separate -- that would be a separate permitting  
20           process. It would actually be through our office.  
21           It would have a different project manager than me,  
22           but they would have public meetings, public  
23           involvement there, and you could certainly ask  
24           questions when they hold those.

25                   Tom.

1 MR. HILLSTROM: I'll go back to that RES  
2 comment. Grant Stevenson, our project manager, just  
3 informed me -- or reminded me that he has had a  
4 couple meeting with the folks that are running that  
5 RES project, and that if indeed our preferred route  
6 is approved and that RES project comes forward, it  
7 really does make sense for our transmission line to  
8 share the same alignment and the same structures as  
9 that RES transmission line.

10 So what that would mean is that for  
11 that -- I don't know, it's maybe a mile and a half  
12 of a segment where the RES transmission line route  
13 shares our preferred route, that --

14 MR. JAMES GRONSETH: It starts at 325th,  
15 or it goes to the south.

16 MR. HILLSTROM: Yeah. It's the very  
17 south part of our preferred alternative. Both the  
18 RES line and our line are aiming for the same  
19 endpoint at that Pleasant Valley substation, so it's  
20 right -- it's basically this part (indicating).

21 MR. JAMES GRONSETH: It's at 325th  
22 Avenue, it don't show it there.

23 MR. HILLSTROM: No. It doesn't have the  
24 street number on there, but it does on our maps.  
25 And I know this is true because we've met with the

1 RES folks. And, really, the bottom line here is if  
2 both RES and our route end up on that same street,  
3 that it makes a lot of sense for both of those lines  
4 to be mounted on the same structure.

5 So you wouldn't have two lines on one  
6 street, you'd have one set of poles with RES lines  
7 and Xcel's lines on the same structure, we call that  
8 a double-circuit line. And, you know, if that's the  
9 way the routes work out, that's the way that we  
10 would build that so you wouldn't have to have a line  
11 on both sides of the road. And that would mean we  
12 would have to buy an easement from you on top of the  
13 one that RES already owns if it does go on your  
14 land.

15 MR. LANGAN: Yes, sir.

16 MR. ORNING: I'm Kurt Orning, Vernon  
17 Township, Section 14. O-R-N-I-N-G. Call me naive,  
18 if you wish, maybe a skeptic, but I would like to  
19 ask the Xcel people to tell me why they believe that  
20 the 345 kilovolt line is not adequate, is it a  
21 matter of capacity, is that basically what you're  
22 saying?

23 And if that's the case, then we would  
24 have increased capacity through this new proposed  
25 route, right? And apparently -- what I'd be

1 interested in is that, would that new proposed route  
2 take care of the new wind projects that appear to be  
3 coming online or would there be even another line  
4 needed in the future once RES gets done with what  
5 they're going to do? And High Country seems to  
6 be -- you know, have their momentum going on this  
7 too, now. So, you know, can you just fill me in a  
8 little bit on the details?

9 MR. LEHMAN: Sure. Those are very good  
10 questions. I'll go back to why we've asked to build  
11 this new line. And what we're looking for is  
12 additional capacity in the transmission system when  
13 the existing 345 kV line, the big line, is not in  
14 service.

15 MR. ORNING: What do you mean by not in  
16 service, does that mean it's full or is it --

17 MR. LEHMAN: No. It has an outage of  
18 some type. For example, a conductor failure, a  
19 structure failure, something on the line has gone  
20 wrong which doesn't permit it to carry its power  
21 anymore.

22 MR. ORNING: So you need an alternate  
23 route. But then if -- how often does out of service  
24 happen in a typical year, let's say?

25 MR. LEHMAN: Well, it depends. You know,

1           the standard which we attempt to design to is not to  
2           have it happen any more often than once in every ten  
3           years. That's the national standard that the  
4           National Electric Reliability Corporation has set  
5           for the standard for electric service, is not to  
6           have a loss of customer load any more often than  
7           once every ten years. So we have to build to that  
8           standard.

9                       MR. ORNING: So you're saying, then, that  
10           your ideal to meet that standard -- say you do meet  
11           that standard, are you saying, then, that a new  
12           line in order to meet this one-in-ten-year situation  
13           is a really desirable thing to do given the impact  
14           it would have on other property owners through  
15           the -- where that line is?

16                      MR. LEHMAN: Yeah. It's like any other  
17           reliability standard. We're required to build to  
18           that, whether it's National Electric Safety Code,  
19           whether it's the National Electric Reliability  
20           Corporation, we don't have a choice in designing to  
21           those safety standards. So we can't say no, we're  
22           not going to do that, or we can't say that there's a  
23           different reason why we would do that. Now --

24                      MR. ORNING: But do you have a choice in  
25           whether or not to put through another line in order

1 to take care of that problem?

2 MR. LEHMAN: Yeah. We do have a choice.  
3 By that, I mean we have looked at what are the  
4 alternatives to doing this new line. And the  
5 alternative to this new line that -- well, let me  
6 back up and say there are not a lot of alternatives  
7 because what we're looking at is a loss of an  
8 existing line, we have to find a way to replace that  
9 loss of that existing line.

10 What happens when that line is lost and  
11 there's a large amount of usage -- in this case,  
12 it's the wind farms trying to produce their power  
13 and get it to market, all of the underlying electric  
14 system overloads, or a significant portion of it  
15 overloads. So those lines are at risk of being  
16 damaged because of the high loading on them.

17 So in order to fix that, we would have to  
18 go to, I believe it was seven different lines and  
19 several different transformers.

20 I'm trying to avoid the interference  
21 here, I'm going to change my location.

22 We would have to then go out and go on  
23 those corridors, those right-of-ways -- something,  
24 electricity in the air.

25 We would have to on those corridors, in

1           those locations, impact those landowners and in some  
2           cases take the lines down and put up new lines that  
3           are higher capacity, in some cases take down the  
4           conductors and put on bigger conductors. So we  
5           would have to rebuild those lines to higher  
6           capacity. So there's a significant amount of cost  
7           there and a significant amount of impact on existing  
8           corridors.

9                         Now, I think you asked the question about  
10           what's next, beyond that. When we build this new  
11           line, it's going to provide the capacity to bring  
12           about 350 megawatts of power from wind farms to the  
13           south and west of the Pleasant Valley area to  
14           market. Right now, there's 200 megawatts that are  
15           in the Grand Meadow area. So there's a little bit  
16           of extra room that could be utilized to take some  
17           more wind power to market.

18                        Beyond that, if that 350 megawatts were  
19           to be used up by additional wind farms, then we'd be  
20           looking at building another 161 kilovolt line out of  
21           this area or through this area as well. About a  
22           year and a half or, you know, year and a half, two  
23           years ago we were in the area talking to landowners  
24           about another line from Pleasant Valley to the  
25           eastern side of Rochester up around Willow Creek.

1           So that's a potential next line beyond  
2           that, but right now we're not talking about that  
3           line yet. The additional wind farms would have to  
4           come forward and seek the connection of their wind  
5           farms to the system to be able to get their power to  
6           market as well. So right now the line would take  
7           care of the two wind farms that are up and operating  
8           down around Grand Meadow and have a little bit of  
9           cushion room for the next 150 megawatts.

10           MR. ORNING: But you can't anticipate,  
11           given the mandate, I suppose, by state  
12           legislative -- I guess, whatever the -- what the  
13           requirement is, so much alternative energy. So wind  
14           will increase, more than likely, and you will have  
15           another power line some day coming out, do you  
16           think?

17           MR. LEHMAN: I would say that's a good  
18           expectation, that more wind will develop in  
19           southeastern Minnesota, southwestern Minnesota,  
20           North Dakota, South Dakota. They are very rich wind  
21           areas and there will be more wind that's developed.  
22           There's a lot of projects that are being proposed,  
23           some that we've been mentioning as potential in the  
24           area as well.

25           MR. ORNING: How far away -- does anybody

1 know the setbacks from these lines? I mean, I hear  
2 it's 400 feet, and then what if some property owners  
3 are trying to put windmills up, would that almost  
4 take them out of the running because they have to be  
5 set back from the power line quite a ways, I would  
6 imagine.

7 MR. LEHMAN: And I think Tom has  
8 mentioned this. I'll let him speak to it again  
9 because he's the expert.

10 MR. HILLSTROM: Well, I'm not an expert  
11 on how far wind turbines have to be set back from  
12 power lines or anything, but I do know enough to  
13 know that they have a significant setback from  
14 roads, and our routes generally follow roads. And I  
15 know that the setback from roads is far greater than  
16 what we require for our power lines, so I don't  
17 think we'll have a lot of effect on wind  
18 development.

19 MR. ORNING: I'll quit, and let somebody  
20 else talk.

21 MR. LANGAN: Thanks for those questions.  
22 Anyone else?

23 MR. HOWARD SYNDER: Thank you very much.

24 Am I on?

25 MR. LANGAN: Yeah.

1                   MR. HOWARD SYNDER: One thing I want to  
2 ask the power company is, it's kind a dumb question,  
3 but many years ago I was in the military and I was  
4 living in England. And everything, all the power  
5 lines over in England at that time, 1954, were run  
6 underground. Why is it that we have to put them up  
7 on poles to run them across? Can anybody tell me  
8 that?

9                   MR. LANGAN: Sure.

10                  MR. HOWARD SNYDER: Is there a big  
11 expense difference or what seems to be the problem?

12                  MR. HILLSTROM: Yeah, I could answer  
13 that. I said earlier that some of the smaller lines  
14 can be buried if they're in our path, and that is  
15 true. The smaller lines that feed electricity to  
16 your house can be buried pretty cheaply. These  
17 large lines with the higher voltages, they can't be  
18 buried very cheaply. They require -- in order for  
19 them to be put underground they require very  
20 specialized conductors that have very thick and  
21 special insulation on them.

22                  And the bottom line is if we want to bury  
23 a transmission line of this voltage, the cost gets  
24 increased of five to ten percent, so that's five or  
25 ten times more expensive to bury it than to build it



1           thank you.

2                       MR. JARED SNYDER:   Isn't it safer,  
3           though, and wouldn't you use up less land from the  
4           landowner's side if you buried it, though?  You  
5           wouldn't need -- the fact that you need 40 feet from  
6           the center out, then?

7                       MR. HILLSTROM:  We still would need  
8           right-of-way.  It very well may be not as much  
9           right-of-way, but that right-of-way would need to be  
10          maintained free of trees.  And the intrusion on the  
11          land is oftentimes greater because it would require  
12          a trench to be dug across the property.  And we  
13          don't do pipelines, but we understand from pipeline  
14          projects that there are -- there usually is some  
15          controversy with trenching through farmland with the  
16          impact that has on soil.  So it's not like an  
17          underground installation doesn't have its own  
18          impacts.

19                      In addition to that, there are big  
20          transition structures where the line goes from  
21          aboveground to underground.  In some cases, the  
22          conductor -- the underground conductor can be made  
23          out of very thick plastic installation and other  
24          times it's an oil-filled conduit that has to -- that  
25          requires pumping stations every now and then.  So

1           it's not by any means an installation that frees up  
2           all kind of impacts, it does have a lot intrusion on  
3           the land, it does have its own impact.

4                        But really the bottom line is the cost,  
5           it costs very much more money. And in the end it's  
6           the PUC that will determine, you know, aboveground  
7           or underground. And like I said, in the past it's  
8           been very specialized locations where they've agreed  
9           to pay the extra money and have that extra money go  
10          to the ratepayers because it's sort of like a tax,  
11          all the ratepayers end up paying for this expense.  
12          So it's the PUC that decides the most cost-effective  
13          route and the most cost-effective configuration and  
14          that, like I said, in the vast majority of cases  
15          it's aboveground.

16                       MR. JARED SNYDER: Jared Snyder. With  
17          the line that you propose, you said you're not  
18          taking up a lot of area, you're running it right  
19          down the road so you're taking like the ditch on  
20          both sides. I mean, I can understand if you're  
21          running it right through somebody's field or  
22          something like that, but with your preferred line,  
23          like you guys said, it's running the roads. The  
24          land that you would be using would belong to the  
25          city or whatnot, but it would be a lot less -- I

1 mean, it sounds like it would be a lot less land  
2 loss to owners.

3 MR. HILLSTROM: That's right. And  
4 that's -- you know, when I started off in my talk, I  
5 said if we follow existing linear features that  
6 minimize the impact of land use. And you're exactly  
7 right in your observation that where we propose to  
8 go parallel with roads, the actual pole would go  
9 very close to the property boundary.

10 And that means that half of that 80-foot  
11 easement would be on private property, but about a  
12 little less than half would have the road  
13 right-of-way, too. So you're exactly right, by us  
14 following and sharing the right-of-way with the road  
15 we do minimize the impact on the farmland and other  
16 types of land use.

17 MR. SCHARBERG: Hi. My name is Arlan,  
18 A-R-L-A-N, Scharberg, S-C-H-A-R-B-E-R-G.

19 I've got kind of a dumb question, but in  
20 the planning and the way engineering is going  
21 nowadays, any reason why the electric current  
22 couldn't be shot up to a satellite and then shot  
23 back down to the Byron station? I mean, in the next  
24 50 years, how do you know?

25 I mean, you've got anything -- military's

1           doing everything else. Just a thought. We wouldn't  
2           have to have no lines.

3                     MS. KIRCHNER: Well, we'll have that  
4           Bloom Box in the five years and then we won't have  
5           to worry about the windmill.

6                     MR. LANGAN: I think I'd need a couple  
7           Ph.D.s to answer your questions. Yeah. I'm not  
8           sure how to answer that one.

9                     MR. SCHARBERG: I'm sure it will come.

10                    MS. KIRCHNER: I'm sure it will, too.

11                    MR. CHRISTIE: Yeah. My name is Dana  
12           Christie. I just -- you were mentioning upgrading  
13           current lines a little bit ago, and my two  
14           questions, maybe, one is what is the current  
15           condition of those lines, and is there some kind of  
16           a replacement scheduled anyway?

17                    MR. LEHMAN: I can't speak to the  
18           condition of the lines in totality. I do know that  
19           some of them are newer than others in terms of their  
20           status and their condition. They're not all owned  
21           by Xcel Energy, so we don't have as much knowledge  
22           on those lines.

23                    But I do know that the current capacity  
24           of those lines would not be sufficient to replace  
25           this line and take care of the conditions of the 345

1 kV line being out of service. So the age or the  
2 condition of those lines, even if they are newer,  
3 they were designed for a lesser capability based on  
4 what their intention was and so they wouldn't be  
5 suitable to do the job.

6 And so, again, if we were to attempt to  
7 solve the problem without building a new line, the  
8 existing line -- and, again, if my memory is  
9 correct, there were seven different lines and/or  
10 transformers, those devices that change the voltage  
11 from one level to the next, that would have to be  
12 upgraded. And the cost of doing that was  
13 significantly greater than the cost of building this  
14 new line.

15 MR. JARED SNYDER: So you're still going  
16 to run, then, the substandard lines, then, is what  
17 you're saying?

18 MR. LEHMAN: No. There's no substandard  
19 line. The lines that are there are designed for a  
20 specific purpose and they're meeting that purpose.

21 MR. JARED SYNDER: Oh, I misunderstood.  
22 I thought you said that they weren't meeting  
23 their --

24 MR. LEHMAN: They weren't intended to try  
25 and replace the 345 kV line. Their function is to

1 do delivery of power from point to point at their  
2 level. So they're doing their job, they're meeting  
3 their job, but they were not designed to be the  
4 replacement for 345 kV lines.

5 MR. JARED SNYDER: So they're located for  
6 what you need now, is what you're saying?

7 MR. LEHMAN: They're not doing what's --  
8 they're doing exactly as they were designed, but  
9 they weren't designed to carry power from wind farms  
10 to the south and west to the load centers to the  
11 north and east. So now that's what's needed with  
12 new line.

13 MR. JARED SNYDER: Would they be at some  
14 point upgraded so they could use those more, still  
15 utilize that line?

16 MR. LEHMAN: Again, the next step beyond  
17 this line, if you were to look to more wind farms  
18 being developed, would be to build another 161  
19 kilovolt line from the Pleasant Valley area to the  
20 east side of Rochester. Beyond that, we haven't  
21 looked as to what would be the next step after that,  
22 whether then it makes sense to find another new line  
23 or to look at changing those 161 kilovolt lines to  
24 some other voltage level. You know, that, we're  
25 talking quite a bit further out in the future, the

1 solutions haven't been developed yet.

2 MR. LANGAN: Would you pull that curtain  
3 back there? Thank you.

4 MR. RANDY GRONSETH: Randy Gronseth.  
5 Just a curiosity question. These lines, are they  
6 just servicing Rochester, or -- I know the big 345  
7 line goes from St. Paul to St. Louis and it's part  
8 of the grid. Are these 161s going to be part of the  
9 grid too or are they just servicing Rochester?

10 MR. LEHMAN: If I understood the question  
11 is, is what's the -- what is this line serving, is  
12 it just serving the Rochester area, or is it a  
13 broader area?

14 MR. RANDY GRONSETH: Or is it part of a  
15 big grid?

16 MR. LEHMAN: In the broadest sense, all  
17 of the lines are part of the entire grid, the Upper  
18 Midwest grid. They all interconnect with each other  
19 and they work as a system of lines. Parts of the  
20 system have more localized -- more localized  
21 purposes and less regional purposes.

22 I'm trying to get away from the static.

23 The higher the voltage, the greater  
24 tendency that it carries power greater distances;  
25 the lower the voltage, the greater the tendency is

1           that it's more localized in nature. This line, the  
2           one we're proposing, is intended to be able to get  
3           power from the south and west of Pleasant Valley,  
4           specifically from those two wind farms, to the loads  
5           that are -- in one case, Xcel Energy customers, in  
6           another case the Southern Minnesota Municipal Power  
7           Agency's customers, so in both cases it's a more  
8           regional result where that power's supposed to go  
9           to.

10                       MS. KIRCHNER: Say, what about this Bloom  
11           Box, what have you heard about this Bloom Box?  
12           These things will be for nothing if we get that  
13           Bloom Box. Did you hear about that on 60 Minutes?

14                       MR. LANGAN: No, I didn't.

15                       MS. KIRCHNER: Well, it's made of sand,  
16           and it's turned into thin ceramic squares, it's  
17           about this big (indicating), you get 64 of them.  
18           One of those little things is about like a slice of  
19           cheese, you get a stack of 64 of them that's big  
20           enough to power a Starbucks and that Starbucks  
21           already have one going, so does Wal-Mart.

22                       They say within five years we'll be able  
23           to get them at a cost of \$3,000, everyone can have  
24           one, and it will run any electricity that you need.  
25           It's this big (indicating).

1                   MR. LEWIS: I've got a question. My name  
2                   is Dwayne Lewis. You talked about needing these new  
3                   lines to back up one or the other should they go  
4                   down. They're not that far apart. In a weather  
5                   event, tornado, wind, whatever, ice, they're both  
6                   going to go anyway. So why are they so close  
7                   together if you can't -- I was just wondering why  
8                   they're so close in proximity and can't be strung on  
9                   the same line.

10                  MR. LEHMAN: And I'll go back to the  
11                  standards that are set by the agency that I referred  
12                  to as the North American Electric Reliability  
13                  Corporation.

14                  MR. LEWIS: Right.

15                  MR. LEHMAN: They set the standards of  
16                  how far apart these have to be, and the possibility  
17                  of a storm or a tornado coming through and taking  
18                  out multiple lines along -- that are separated by  
19                  more than the fall distance of a transmission line  
20                  become smaller.

21                  So they've set the standards that said  
22                  they're okay to parallel each other as long as  
23                  they're not on the same right-of-way. Now, again,  
24                  you're right. It's not impossible for a storm to  
25                  take out more than one line that run parallel to

1 each other that might be as far as a mile apart.  
2 But they've put the probability of that being so  
3 small that it is acceptable to parallel each other  
4 as long as they're not on the same corridor.

5 MR. LANGAN: Other questions or comments?

6 MR. MADERY: I've got a question. My  
7 name is Mike Madery, M-A-D-E-R-Y. I live two and a  
8 half miles south on Dodge 15.

9 A couple questions. I guess one question  
10 I have is what steps are Xcel Energy doing to ensure  
11 that our health will not be affected by this high  
12 voltage or the stray voltage effects to us and our  
13 cattle.

14 And my next question is, you know, the  
15 windmills are in our area, we are affected by them.  
16 And now the power lines are coming right through our  
17 properties carrying the power from the windmills.  
18 And we are supplied with poor service by People's  
19 Cooperative Service by a single-phase power down our  
20 line and it's never been upgraded and we have  
21 multiple outages a year, multiple.

22 And so if we're affected by -- you know,  
23 we have to have in our close proximity the windmills  
24 and the power lines and our power comes from  
25 Dairyland Cooperative in Wisconsin, why can't we

1           have the effects of the -- or the benefits of  
2           renewable energy being used for ourselves and have  
3           more reliable service if we have to have that in our  
4           neighborhood, in our backyard?

5                     MS. KIRCHNER: That's what everybody's  
6           asking, so let's hear the answer to that.

7                     MR. LANGAN: Well, I think that you had  
8           asked your question to Xcel. I think I can answer  
9           part of that and you were asking about any effects  
10          for you or cattle in the area, and that is  
11          something, again, that we will -- we propose to  
12          include in our environmental impact statement.

13                    We'll have information, we'll cite  
14          studies that will include excerpts from within our  
15          environmental impact statement and give you  
16          resources to go out and take a look. We'll have  
17          sort of a bibliography that you can go out and read  
18          some of those studies for yourself, if you'd like.

19                    So those are things that we intend to  
20          study with this. Again, in terms of where this is  
21          routed, if you or others have additional routes  
22          that, for one reason or another, you feel are better  
23          than what's proposed here, I encourage you to get  
24          those in to us, send those comments in. Be specific  
25          about the routes, if you would. If it's a street,

1 if it's a section line or whatever it might be, be  
2 specific about what those routes might be. And  
3 remember to give the reasons behind why you feel  
4 those would be a better route to the two that are  
5 proposed here -- one of the two that are proposed  
6 here.

7 So that's that. And part of your  
8 question was to Xcel. You know, again, some of it  
9 is -- some of the question is about wind farms and  
10 that's not a subject of this docket here. So it's a  
11 different permitting process, so I don't know that  
12 I'm able to answer them.

13 Tom, I don't know if you have anything to  
14 add?

15 MR. HILLSTROM: I don't have a lot to  
16 add. You're right about the wind farms, we don't  
17 have a lot of involvement in those. And as Xcel  
18 Energy, we also don't have a lot of involvement in  
19 your local electric provider, whatever the co-op is.

20 The system that we're working on is the  
21 transmission system and that -- you probably know  
22 this, but that's the higher voltage bulk electric  
23 transmission movement. And how that gets  
24 distributed on the smaller scale, you know, in those  
25 smaller substations and in these smaller

1 distribution lines, that may be your local co-op and  
2 we are not affiliated with them. So I'm sorry, I  
3 can't answer the question or shed any light on your  
4 level of service either.

5 MS. KIRCHNER: Tom, I don't buy that.  
6 That -- you know, that's in the letters that we got  
7 from you, that's why you're putting up these poles,  
8 is to take the electricity that's furnished from the  
9 turbines to get it to Rochester. Now, what do you  
10 mean you don't have anything to do with that? Sure  
11 you do.

12 MR. HILLSTROM: The local co-ops that  
13 provide -- that get the electricity from the  
14 substations to your house are a different company  
15 from us.

16 MS. KIRCHNER: Sure. But you say you  
17 know nothing about these turbines. That's why  
18 you're putting them up, to carry the electricity  
19 that these turbines are going to be furnishing.

20 MR. HILLSTROM: That's right. We  
21 provide --

22 MS. KIRCHNER: Then why are you denying  
23 it?

24 MR. HILLSTROM: Well, we provide the  
25 transmission system for those wind developers to get

1 their power to the market.

2 MS. KIRCHNER: Yes.

3 MR. HILLSTROM: We are not the same  
4 companies that they are. They go about developing  
5 their project --

6 MS. KIRCHNER: But you're working with  
7 them, that's why --

8 MR. HILLSTROM: So they develop their  
9 projects completely separate from what we're doing,  
10 and we do not have any affiliation with these  
11 companies. They are private companies, they do  
12 their own project development. That's what we're  
13 saying, is that they -- we don't know what they're  
14 up to. We don't know how they're signing their  
15 easements, that's not -- maybe Paul knows more than  
16 I do.

17 But personally, when I hear -- when I go  
18 to these meetings, I learn just as much from other  
19 people about wind development -- that's where I've  
20 learned most of the stuff that I know about wind  
21 development, from people like you who have these  
22 developers approach them.

23 And maybe Paul knows more than I do.

24 MR. LEHMAN: Let me just expand on that  
25 so to maybe add a little more clarity to the process

1           that takes place. A wind developer will do their  
2           process of evaluating where they want to develop a  
3           wind farm. Once they have done so, they have to go  
4           through a few steps to get to a point where they --

5                       MS. KIRCHNER: I know that.

6                       MR. LEHMAN: -- can in fact request the  
7           transmission provider -- in this case, Xcel  
8           Energy -- to provide them interconnection service.  
9           And that's what we've been talking about here, the  
10          two wind farms around Grand Meadow did. They  
11          sited -- or they went through the process of  
12          determining a good site for developing a wind farm,  
13          they went through the permitting process with the  
14          state to get permission to build their wind farm in  
15          that location, and they went through the process of  
16          requesting those wind farms to get interconnected to  
17          the transmission system.

18                      So while we may have some knowledge about  
19          what's going on in the marketplace simply because we  
20          keep our eyes and ears open, until they make a  
21          request to connect that wind farm to the system --  
22          it's a formal process that they have to go through  
23          that says I have a project, I want it to be  
24          interconnected to the transmission system, I want it  
25          to be studied as to how the system can handle my

1 wind farm and whether there are improvements that  
2 need to be made to allow me to get my wind power to  
3 my market.

4 So that's what happened with the Grand  
5 Meadow projects, that's what will happen with any  
6 next wind farm that is to be built. Right now  
7 they're getting to the process where they have yet  
8 to come to Xcel Energy or another transmission  
9 provider in the area and say I want you to connect  
10 my wind farm to the system and I want you to study  
11 the specific facilities that need to be built in  
12 order for me to connect my wind farm to the system.

13 When that happens, then we will in turn  
14 turn around and decide what facilities need to be  
15 built for that wind farm. So Tom is absolutely  
16 correct in that, you know, we're not in the business  
17 of building wind farms so we're not planning the  
18 wind farms themselves. But once they make the  
19 decision and they submit their request to be  
20 connected to the system, that sets in motion our  
21 need to study what facilities have to be built to  
22 allow them to connect the wind farm to the system.

23 MR. TVEDT: I've just got a couple  
24 questions. Gary Tvedt. How many acres of wind  
25 farms are required to supply a 160 kV line? And --

1 I forgot the other question. How many acres does it  
2 take to supply a 160-kilovolt line?

3 MS. KIRCHNER: Well, it takes an acre for  
4 each one.

5 MR. LEHMAN: Yeah. I think it is  
6 working, but it does create some static from time to  
7 time.

8 I don't know the answer. I'm not sure of  
9 the acreage required for the 100 megawatt wind farm.  
10 You know, I just don't know that.

11 MR. TVEDT: How many days on the average  
12 do these things even supply to the net?

13 MR. LEHMAN: Well, depending on their  
14 location, a typical wind farm in Minnesota -- I've  
15 seen analyses that show in Minnesota that what they  
16 call the capacity factor, which is a measure of what  
17 you're getting to, is how often do they actually  
18 run. In Minnesota, I believe it's somewhere around  
19 20 to 30 percent of the time they produce power as  
20 compared to what they could have produced if they  
21 were running all the time.

22 In North and South Dakota, that number's  
23 higher; if you go to Iowa or Illinois that number is  
24 a little bit lower. But even within Minnesota there  
25 are regions or areas where it's higher and where



1 get all of the adverse effects from it, whether it's  
2 just the poles standing next to the place we live  
3 and so on or if there's concerns with the power or  
4 whatever it may be. And, you know, this is not the  
5 first thing that somebody's tried to put through the  
6 country and then gone, oh, but we get no benefit  
7 from it, we just have all the adverse impacts from  
8 it.

9 So one of the things, I think, that the  
10 state needs to do -- and whatever body that is, I  
11 don't know -- but needs to look at the full impact  
12 of these things and not the individual pieces so we  
13 have a full picture of what's happening and how we  
14 make it work.

15 MR. LANGAN: Thank you for that comment.  
16 You know, that is something that we're doing our  
17 best to look at the whole picture. Certainly all of  
18 this is interrelated and we understand that. Very  
19 frankly, the way that the system is set up right now  
20 is to look at individual projects, and there are  
21 different processes to look at different projects.  
22 The wind farm siting process is different than the  
23 transmission line routing process.

24 MS. ROLFS: It needs to come together in  
25 some -- so we have a wholistic look at this whole

1 thing.

2 MR. LANGAN: And I appreciate that, thank  
3 you for that comment. That is -- you know, it's --  
4 what we're doing here tonight, obviously there's a  
5 lot of interest in wind farms here tonight and more  
6 to your comment that how it's all interrelated.

7 You know, there will be a review process  
8 set up for the wind farm. Our group will be back  
9 out to talk about that wind farm. I encourage you  
10 to bring these same questions there when the company  
11 that's proposing the wind farm is here to talk about  
12 that, when our project manager for that project  
13 would be back here to talk about that.

14 I'm in a little bit of a tough spot  
15 because I'm not the project manager for that and we  
16 don't have that company here. You know, this  
17 transmission line is really what we're talking about  
18 here today. But I do really appreciate your  
19 comment. It's a tough one to get at in terms of how  
20 we review these projects, how the rules and statutes  
21 are set up. They're not necessarily set up to look  
22 at a system-wide --

23 MS. ROLFS: And that's what you need, is  
24 a system-wide.

25 MR. LANGAN: Okay. Thank you.

1 MR. HANSON: I don't think I need that.

2 MR. LANGAN: Okay.

3 MR. HANSON: My name is Larry Hanson. I  
4 live right over here (indicating). I go out at  
5 night and the horizon to the south is lit up.  
6 It's -- I can see the Grand Meadow windmills. I go  
7 a quarter mile up the road, all the way to the west  
8 it's lit up, red lights all the way across.

9 And this power line has one use, right?  
10 It transfers power from the Prairie -- you know, to  
11 Byron, right? Is a lot of this windmill -- that we  
12 talked a lot about windmills tonight, and you're  
13 talking in another two years we're going to have to  
14 have another line going somewhere for all the  
15 additional power that's coming out.

16 Because it's not going to stop, you know  
17 what I mean. This is a one-use line that's going to  
18 cause -- you know, it's going right to the north of  
19 my place. You know, I don't get no benefit out of  
20 it. And I think is there any room for upping the  
21 voltage, hooking into it with these other lines or,  
22 you know, they're proposing one right through our  
23 place.

24 MR. LANGAN: Well, I think -- if I  
25 understand your comment, I guess I would go back to

1           what was shared earlier, you know, that the proposed  
2           transmission lines, there are two possible routes  
3           here, they'd connect the Pleasant Valley substation  
4           with the Byron substation.

5                     MR. HANSON:  Yeah.

6                     MR. LANGAN:  They would -- they're on a  
7           different route than the existing 345 line.

8                     MR. HANSON:  Yeah.

9                     MR. LANGAN:  And they're meant to  
10          stabilize or increase that power transmission  
11          reliability of the system in the area.

12                    I don't know if that completely answered  
13          your question, but I just wanted to recap what we  
14          had shared today.

15                    MR. HANSON:  Just I think it should be  
16          for a multiple purpose.  Like she said, this stuff  
17          has to come together sometime.  That's a one-use  
18          line, you know, to make sure that the people in  
19          St. Louis keep their power, or wherever it goes, you  
20          know, the 300-plus one.  And I don't -- I think it  
21          should be more multi-use, a little bit to our  
22          advantage.

23                    MR. LANGAN:  Okay.  I guess I appreciate  
24          your comment.  I know that you have questions about  
25          that.  If I could, for those still in the room, what

1 I -- the types of comments that I need, and  
2 questions, like I say, are just fine. But the types  
3 of comments that we're looking for are about what  
4 are the impacts -- the potential impacts associated  
5 with this line that you'd like our office to  
6 investigate. And along with those impacts, are  
7 there ways to mitigate or avoid those impacts?  
8 That's something that we'll study in the  
9 environmental impact statement.

10 Also, are there other routes above and  
11 beyond the two as they're proposed here that would  
12 be better choices as routes? And if so, what would  
13 be the reasons behind why would those -- why would  
14 those be better choices.

15 And I guess those are the comments that  
16 we'd be looking for today or certainly by April 8th  
17 when the comment period is closed.

18 MS. RUD: My name is Carie, C-A-R-I-E,  
19 R-U-D, as in dog. Okay. I live out here on the  
20 alternative route. And according to the map it's  
21 going to run right through my big shed, which I  
22 don't appreciate. And north of my property is a  
23 very large cliff, which I find it very hard that  
24 they would ever be able to go up over that unless  
25 they do get a satellite out there, but that be would

1 all right.

2 I live in a very windy spot and if all  
3 this would go through on my property, what does it  
4 do to the value of my property?

5 MR. LANGAN: Thank you. Thank you for  
6 that question. That's a subject that hadn't been  
7 brought up yet tonight, so I appreciate that. It is  
8 something that we will study in the environmental  
9 impact statement.

10 There are quite a few studies out there,  
11 again, that have looked at that question. They've  
12 looked at it from a variety of different angles.  
13 And in fact, there was just a recent one done by the  
14 University of California at Berkeley that just came  
15 out and talked about property values when a  
16 transmission line is either -- either exists in that  
17 area or is proposed to be built.

18 It talks about not only the property  
19 value, but the resaleability of that property. They  
20 took test cases of people who were either selling  
21 their home or were interested in purchasing a home,  
22 they asked whether the people that did purchase a  
23 home nearby a transmission line, did they know the  
24 line was there, did they notice it when they went to  
25 look at the property, did -- or in the case where it

1           wasn't existing but it was planned to happen, did  
2           they -- were they aware that a transmission line  
3           would come in. So it's a real informative study, I  
4           think it's real well put together, and it was  
5           released quite recently, actually, so it's very  
6           up-to-date information.

7                           That's something that we're going to tap  
8           into with our environmental impact statement and  
9           that information will be available. And then also,  
10          again, we'll have a bibliography with that -- you  
11          know, with that document so you can go and look at  
12          that for yourself.

13                           But beyond that recent one just done by  
14          Berkeley, there are other documents done in other  
15          parts of the nation as well that we'll draw from for  
16          our information.

17                           MS. RUD: Thank you.

18                           MR. JARED SNYDER: Wouldn't common sense  
19          tell you that your land is -- wouldn't common sense  
20          tell you that your land value, being if you put the  
21          high line wires through it, you're losing so much  
22          land. So I mean, what you just said, it sounds just  
23          like a polite way of saying the property value's  
24          going to be in the toilet because you're losing  
25          land. I mean, resale value -- I mean, just common

1 sense tells you that you're going to lose value of  
2 your property because you're losing some of your  
3 property.

4 MR. LANGAN: Well, you'd be surprised at  
5 what the study says, but I understand what you're  
6 saying, the common sense end.

7 But I think Chris would like to say  
8 something.

9 MR. ROGERS: I'm Chris Rogers with Xcel,  
10 I'm part of the siting and land rights department.  
11 I'll be one of the agents that will managing  
12 acquisitions, so we'll probably be talking to a lot  
13 of you and have talked with some of you already.

14 When we look at acquiring property,  
15 obviously part of my job is to step into the  
16 landowner's shoes and say, if this was my house, if  
17 this was my situation -- and Tom touched on this  
18 briefly before, but the compensation that we look at  
19 is we look at the before value of your property and  
20 the after value, what is the difference, basically.  
21 And basically our compensation should make you, the  
22 landowner, whole. In other words, what did we,  
23 quote/unquote, take away and what's left, basically.

24 When we talk about taking the land, and  
25 it's important -- I'm assuming you're in a farm type

1 situation -- and basically if we're looking at that  
2 80-foot right-of-way, we're getting an easement for  
3 that. So in other words, we're not taking title to  
4 land, you still own the title, you still make the  
5 tax payments or whatnot.

6 One of the caveats of doing that with  
7 farmland is we're really not taking all 80 feet, and  
8 you'll see that you're still going to be able to  
9 farm in that area. For example, if the poles were  
10 set, let's say, five foot off the road right-of-way,  
11 you have an overhang of probably close to 40 feet  
12 over that, that's area you can still farm.

13 So I know, for farmers, a lot of time the  
14 concern is impact, how much am I going to lose or  
15 how much productivity am I going to lose? And one  
16 of the nice things about that, yes, you can't build  
17 there, you can't plant trees, but in your business,  
18 farming, for the most part you can still farm it.

19 MR. JARED SNYDER: See, I don't farm.

20 MR. ROGERS: Okay.

21 MR. JARED SNYDER: But I'm still  
22 concerned with the same thing.

23 MR. ROGERS: Right.

24 MR. JARED SNYDER: Because where the  
25 line's going to go is going to impact my father's

1 land, where I plan on building.

2 MR. ROGERS: Correct, correct. And I did  
3 want to address that from earlier, too. When we  
4 parallel roads, you know, typically the transmission  
5 structures are set at or very close to that  
6 right-of-way line. Part of it overhangs the public  
7 street, the other part overhangs and is on a private  
8 property. I imagining you live on probably a  
9 township or a county road?

10 MR. JARED SNYDER: Right on 15, we're the  
11 corner lot.

12 MR. ROGERS: Okay. So you probably have  
13 a building setback and the county probably says you  
14 can't be any closer than probably 75 feet, is what  
15 I'm guessing --

16 MR. JARED SNYDER: Correct.

17 MR. ROGERS: -- to the right-of-way line.  
18 So basically the area that we take for the  
19 right-of-way for the transmission line is less than  
20 that. So any land that we take that you can't build  
21 or plants trees near is going to be well within the  
22 building setback, basically.

23 So, in other words, unless you're able to  
24 get a variance from the county, you're not going to  
25 be able to put a building that close anyway. But I

1 do understand your concern, and Xcel as a company  
2 does as well, is what's the impact on your property,  
3 bottom line. If you've got to go sell your house  
4 tomorrow, next year, whatnot, are we going to make  
5 you whole.

6 I'm not prepared to discuss any specific  
7 compensation and how we do that, but we'll do a very  
8 in-depth study as to what are the property values,  
9 what are the different types of properties, how are  
10 we affecting those. And our compensation will be  
11 based on that, what we feel is the taking of your  
12 property or what are we taking away from your value.

13 I'll be honest with you, we incentivize  
14 it. In other words, you know, if it's at X amount  
15 per dollar, our compensation is usually going to  
16 exceed that. Our goal is to settle with the  
17 landowner, build the transmission, and not to go to  
18 court, and it's also to be fair as well.

19 So as we go along in the acquisition  
20 process, those particular compensation schedules  
21 obviously will be shared with you and in great  
22 detail. And it's something that you should get time  
23 to think about and not just, here, you've got to  
24 sign this right now.

25 So it's something that -- that's part of

1 my job, is to make sure the landowners understand  
2 everything that they're getting into and have all  
3 the information they can have to make the decision.

4 MS. BUNGUM: I have a question. Michelle  
5 Bungum, B-U-N-G-U-M.

6 In the compensation that they're going to  
7 give a landowner, will this be a one-time deal? And  
8 what I'm looking at is, this is on the land forever.  
9 And, you know, the dollar amount might sound good  
10 today, but you take that ten, 15 years down the  
11 road, or is it a compensation that could be maybe a  
12 yearly or like a rent, is that a negotiable part of  
13 this?

14 MR. ROGERS: That's a very good question.  
15 Xcel would be obtaining a perpetual easement, a  
16 permanent easement. We typically do a one-time or a  
17 lump-sum payment. When you get into annual  
18 payments, it's more of a lease type of situation.  
19 This is a perpetual easement so we would be looking  
20 at a one-time payment.

21 Not to get off on a tangent, but somebody  
22 has the problem that they're making too much money  
23 and they need to defer taxes or something like that,  
24 we can spread those payments out. In other words,  
25 if the landowner didn't want to be paid that lump

1           sum at one time, it could be spread out and I want  
2           to say it's up to seven or eight years. But it  
3           would be a one-time payment for the perpetual  
4           easement that we would be looking at.

5                     MR. QUIMBY: I have a question. My name  
6           is Don Quimby.

7                     The transmission line you're putting is  
8           161 kV. 20 years from now, will you be able to add  
9           another 161 on that same structure?

10                    MR. HILLSTROM: No. The line that we  
11           would be designing and building would be for the  
12           single-circuit 161. The poles would not be designed  
13           to hold a larger voltage or another circuit.

14                    MR. ROGERS: And if we did, we'd need to  
15           come back, we'd have to buy more right-of-way from  
16           you to make that work.

17                    MR. QUIMBY: Because, I mean, obviously  
18           the 365 that's there now, that didn't start out all  
19           at 365 voltage; am I right?

20                    MR. LEHMAN: It did.

21                    MR. QUIMBY: It did?

22                    MS. RUD: Yeah. What attracts them to  
23           this area? I've already got big poles going across  
24           the west end of the land, now they want to come  
25           right next to my house. What's this area? It's

1 important.

2 MR. LEHMAN: The one attraction is the  
3 wind, so that's clearly what's bringing the wind  
4 farms. Once the wind farms are here, the need is to  
5 build a transmission that allows that wind to be  
6 able to get to the market where the load, where the  
7 customers are.

8 Quite honestly, because there are  
9 existing transmission lines, that's where -- it's  
10 likely that you need to add new transmission lines  
11 or additional transmission lines. A brand-new  
12 corridor, brand-new right-of-way completely remote  
13 from everything else, that's also possible.

14 But right now, this is the area where the  
15 wind is being developed. The load is to the north  
16 and to the east of where this wind is being  
17 developed, so it's coming right back through this  
18 same area.

19 MS. RUD: That's why we live in a windy  
20 area. Hey, maybe we could get old McNeilus out  
21 there and put us up some of those wind turbines.  
22 He'll make a lot of money. He's taking over.

23 MR. LANGAN: Other comments and  
24 questions? There isn't one, but there should be a  
25 fairness in court reporters act in terms of how long

1           they have to keep up with us. So I would ask if  
2           there are just a couple more comments or questions  
3           that we can get in before we take a break. Or if  
4           that wraps up the meeting, that's fine too. But  
5           just a couple more, if you would.

6                     MS. MADERY: What if you don't want the  
7           line on your land, period? I don't have a name.  
8           Anita Madery.

9                     MR. LANGAN: Well, for our process at the  
10          state when we're looking at what's proposed, you can  
11          propose a different alignment that doesn't go on  
12          your land and include reasons why another route  
13          would be a better choice.

14                    MS. MADERY: Right now, it's two feet  
15          from my front door of my house. That's quite a  
16          proposal.

17                    MR. LANGAN: That's a --

18                    MS. MADERY: That's quite a plan.

19                    MR. LANGAN: And that is one reason why  
20          either, A, you might be in support of the other  
21          alternative. Are you along the red or the green  
22          line?

23                    MS. MADERY: Red.

24                    MR. LANGAN: Okay. Later -- this kind of  
25          gets into later in the process when we have the

1 administrative law judge, but one of the things you  
2 can do when we get to those public hearings is say I  
3 think that the impacts are greater along one of the  
4 alternatives versus the other. And you can talk  
5 about which one has less impact, including it goes  
6 close to my home -- it goes close to my home.

7 MS. MADERY: Two feet.

8 MR. LANGAN: It goes two feet from your  
9 home.

10 MS. MADERY: Two feet from the door.

11 MR. EBERSOLD: Here's the map right, I'd  
12 like to have you comment on what she's talking about  
13 right here. There's our farmstead (indicating).

14 MR. LANGAN: Sure. But, again, if there  
15 is a different route that you want to propose, I'm  
16 just letting you know that you can propose a  
17 different route and give a reason that you're  
18 concerned that it's close to your home.

19 Okay. And they've submitted a map, an  
20 aerial view of the route along 270th Avenue.

21 MR. EBERSOLD: How would you even propose  
22 a line there?

23 MR. LANGAN: I'd have to see where the  
24 center line goes.

25 MR. EBERSOLD: John Ebersold.

1                   MR. ROGERS: Ma'am, we can look on the  
2 computer later, too, if you'd like.

3                   MR. LANGAN: Okay. Maybe we can do that,  
4 if you don't mind, if you have a moment to stay back  
5 and we can take a look at their precise routing maps  
6 and they can show where they would intend to put a  
7 line in that location. Okay, thanks.

8                   One more question or comment, anyone?

9                   MS. MADERY: You can live on your  
10 property for how many years and plant your trees and  
11 they can come and rip everything out, and you have  
12 no say.

13                   MR. LANGAN: Well, no, I don't think  
14 that's what I'm saying here. We -- there are two  
15 proposed routes.

16                   MS. MADERY: Yeah.

17                   MR. LANGAN: Okay. We can -- other  
18 routes can be proposed.

19                   MR. QUIMBY: I've got a question, Don  
20 Quimby again. CRP land, if it goes straight through  
21 CRP land, does that affect how the government looks  
22 at your property? Does take it out of CRP or does  
23 it keep it in CRP?

24                   MR. ROGERS: Maybe you can chime in, too,  
25 Grant, but I do know that the local USDA office I

1 believe will be involved. They look at the amount  
2 of impacts, in other words, what are we  
3 disturbing -- and I'm going to have a draw a blank  
4 here, but they do get involved in that process and  
5 they want to know how much we're actually going to  
6 disturb, because it could affect the payment that  
7 you're going to get for that, too.

8 So that is one of the, if you call local  
9 government contacts that we make to take a look at  
10 that and see what the additional impacts would be.  
11 So that would be figured into our analysis, too.

12 MR. STEVENSON: I can fill in the blanks,  
13 too.

14 MR. ROGERS: Yeah.

15 MR. STEVENSON: I'm Grant Stevenson with  
16 Xcel Energy, I'm project manager. We've had to  
17 address this in previous projects, and as long as we  
18 work with the local farm service office and keep  
19 them involved from the front end and step them  
20 through, in almost every case that will mean that  
21 there won't be any effect to your payments, because  
22 they understand that our construction is temporary.

23 As long as we get them involved at the  
24 head end and walk them through the process, it seems  
25 to work basically every time. Otherwise, what Chris



PUBLIC COMMENTS

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THURSDAY, MARCH 25, 2010

6:00 p.m.

In the Matter of the Xcel Energy Application for a 161 kV High Voltage Transmission Line Route Permit and a Certificate of Need for the Pleasant Valley to Byron Transmission Line Project in Dodge, Olmsted, and Mower Counties

PUC Docket Number: E002/TL-09-1315, CN-08-992

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Kendall Boyum

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1           MR. LANGAN: I didn't have anyone sign up  
2 to speak. So what we're going to do is we'll open  
3 it up, I'll just ask folks to raise hands and one by  
4 one we'll get you the microphone.

5           Let's see, a couple of things. We have a  
6 court reporter here. And I said this this  
7 afternoon, too, and I want to say it tonight, I  
8 don't want anyone to feel like that makes things  
9 really formal all of a sudden that we have a court  
10 reporter. It's simply that we're able to listen to  
11 your questions and answer them without also having  
12 to, you know, sort of scribble down what your  
13 questions are.

14           This is a much more accurate way for us  
15 to field your comments and questions. I can go back  
16 and read the transcript and make sure that I got  
17 things verbatim rather than my chicken-scratch  
18 shorthand. So it's a big help to us to have a court  
19 reporter.

20           What we ask is that you just state your  
21 name before you ask a question or provide a comment,  
22 and speak clearly and not too fast, if possible, so  
23 we can keep up. Anything else I'm forgetting? If  
24 you would, in some cases -- the last name, yeah,  
25 please spell your name.

1 MR. STEVENSON: I'll walk the microphone  
2 around.

3 MR. LANGAN: Oh, thanks. That would be  
4 great, Grant.

5 Okay. So does anyone have a comment or a  
6 question?

7 Yes, sir.

8 UNIDENTIFIED: What line are you going to  
9 take, which line?

10 MR. LANGAN: Which line are we going to  
11 pick?

12 UNIDENTIFIED: Yeah.

13 MR. LANGAN: We don't know that yet.  
14 First of all, it's -- the Public Utilities  
15 Commission will permit one of the lines. And that  
16 could be, in the end, the preferred route, it could  
17 be the alternate route, or it could be a different  
18 route that might get suggested through our scoping  
19 process.

20 The reason that we have not picked a  
21 route yet is that we haven't -- our office has not  
22 conducted the review and developed the record and  
23 brought it through the public review process yet.  
24 And so it would be way too premature to select a  
25 route at this point.

1           It's only until after we have conducted  
2 what we feel is sufficient public input and public  
3 review of the project, gathered our own information,  
4 verified the information that Xcel has submitted,  
5 and weighed all of that information before the  
6 Public Utilities Commission ultimately makes that  
7 determination.

8           And on that time line that I put up on  
9 the screen, that final determination will happen  
10 sometime within the next 12 months, more than  
11 likely -- likely, say, next January. Next January  
12 or February is when that determination will be made.

13           Thank you.

14           MR. STROBEL: Dan Strobel, S-T-R-O-B-E-L.  
15 How many can I ask? I just have a comment and a  
16 question. As for the route, when you guys said, you  
17 know, the 320 volt line (sic) that goes north/south  
18 there, when that goes down -- I've lived out there  
19 quite a few years and I've only seen it come down  
20 one time. And, I mean, if you mean, pow (phonetic),  
21 down, you know, that was the big ice storm in '99 or  
22 whatever it was. Or do you mean shut off? I guess  
23 that is a question I have.

24           The other one is, you had said the  
25 400 feet range back and forth. If you live -- the

1 question I have is if, you know, you're proposed on  
2 the north side of the road, if you guys change your  
3 mind can you move it 400 feet to the south side of  
4 the road? That's my question I have.

5 MR. HILLSTROM: Do you want me to take  
6 that question?

7 MR. LANGAN: I can probably take the  
8 route question.

9 MR. HILLSTROM: Okay. The 400 foot route  
10 width, I guess technically the answer to your  
11 question would be yes, but we would have to have an  
12 awfully good reason to change the line like that.

13 What we show with those lines is where we  
14 would intend to build it and then the PUC would give  
15 us a permit that would be within that 400-foot route  
16 width. And what they require is that before we  
17 start construction, we show them where we're going  
18 to build it, specifically where the alignment is.

19 And if we did do something like that,  
20 they would have the authority to say, well, what's  
21 going on here, why did you do that, and we'd have to  
22 have an awfully good reason. So it's very unlikely  
23 that we would change it like you suggested.

24 MR. STROBEL: Okay. That was just a --  
25 it's just a -- that's a large area to kind of go,

1 well, north, you know. That's a big area.

2 MR. HILLSTROM: And I'll have Paul take  
3 the first one.

4 MR. LEHMAN: And I'll apologize for being  
5 a little bit sloppy with my terminology. What I  
6 mean is if the line is not capable of carrying its  
7 power. And it could be that it's literally laying  
8 on the ground, but as you say, that's not a real  
9 common occurrence for that size of a line. But it  
10 could be any number or combination of events that  
11 might prevent it from carrying power. Some of the  
12 equipment at either end has failed, what we call a  
13 breaker failure, it could be something such as an  
14 insulator fails and the line has to trip out because  
15 there's no longer an insulated path or insulation  
16 for it.

17 So there could be a number of different  
18 events that would cause it to be unable to carry  
19 power.

20 MR. COTES: Mike Cotes, C-O-T-E-S. My  
21 question -- well, I've got a number of questions,  
22 but, again, the one that I'd like to address first  
23 is, it was suggested that to use the existing  
24 corridor because of economics that you have  
25 abandoned that idea.

1           With in mind buying easements, building  
2 structures, clearing land and impacting everybody  
3 that sits in this room one way or another, why  
4 hasn't that been explored more and what are we  
5 talking, economics compared to, again, the other  
6 suggestion that I made?

7           MR. LEHMAN: The issue of using the  
8 existing corridor is not an economics issue. The  
9 issue is a reliability of the system.

10          MR. COTES: Economics came up as far as  
11 increasing the size of the lines. I believe you  
12 said we could use the existing corridor but we would  
13 have to increase the size of the lines.

14          MR. STEVENSON: He's talking about the  
15 seven other lines.

16          MR. LEHMAN: Okay. Then the alternative  
17 of not using any corridor, existing or new, and  
18 upgrading, and that is the tradeoff. I mean, it's  
19 not with -- out of the realm of possibility that in  
20 the review process the Commission could look at all  
21 of the facts before it and say that their preference  
22 would be for us to go down that path, upgrading all  
23 the existing facilities.

24                 If there's a no-build decision, it could  
25 come out of it if the Commission weighed all the

1 evidence and said that it's prohibitive to develop a  
2 new right-of-way, a new corridor in this area. So  
3 that's a possibility, but it is not an insignificant  
4 amount of dollars involved in either case.

5 MR. STEVENSON: Paul, could you pull the  
6 microphone a little -- we've had some issues with  
7 not being able to --

8 MR. LEHMAN: There we go, just a little  
9 bit close.

10 Just to recap, it is a possibility that  
11 if the ultimate decision of this request before the  
12 Commission would be to take that alternative -- you  
13 know, the information will be presented or they have  
14 made available that, if the Commission chooses, they  
15 could say we don't want you to build anything in  
16 this area, that it's -- there's nothing that we can  
17 approve that is acceptable.

18 We would hope that wouldn't be the case,  
19 but that could be the case, and they would then  
20 order us to go down the path of rebuilding all of  
21 these facilities that I mentioned. So that's a  
22 possibility.

23 MS. SMITH: Melinda Smith. I currently  
24 live along the preferred route, and my house is  
25 quite a ways back from the road, it's about 400 feet

1 back from the road. But right along the road is a  
2 very nice tree line. And what drove me to purchase  
3 that property is that the fact that I'm 100 percent  
4 surrounded by woods, you can't see the road from my  
5 house, and I don't see a way that we wouldn't lose  
6 that tree line along the road.

7 And my past experience in dealing with  
8 the state is that they came in and condemned my  
9 property along Highway 52, and they didn't find it  
10 nearly as valuable as I found it. So those are some  
11 of my concerns.

12 MR. LANGAN: Thank you. Just let me ask,  
13 are you along the preferred or the alternate route?

14 MS. SMITH: Preferred.

15 MR. LANGAN: You're along the preferred,  
16 thank you.

17 Yes, sir.

18 MR. POSTIER: Hello. Thank you. This is  
19 Jim Postier, P-O-S-T-I-E-R. In regards to -- two  
20 questions ago we were talking about building up some  
21 of the existing eight regions (sic). Now, are there  
22 any -- the question I have is are there any other  
23 wind farms that are in the planning stages that we  
24 may have to do something like in a couple of years  
25 so we might want to, you know, think of the future?

1                   MR. LANGAN: You know, our office, the  
2 Office of Energy Security, actually does the review  
3 for wind farm projects as well. And I think the  
4 wind farms that are existing or coming up are the  
5 Grand Meadow wind farm, and then there's another  
6 project, is it the Pleasant Valley project? Is that  
7 the name of it? It's a RES project that's planned.

8                   I can tell you that our office is seeing  
9 a substantial growth in proposals for wind farms.  
10 That is all across the state, not just necessarily  
11 in this area. And in terms of what we have in our  
12 office as proposed right now, I think it's just the  
13 RES project.

14                   I don't know if you know of others that  
15 are --

16                   MR. LEHMAN: I'm not really aware of too  
17 many others, but let me just help get you, I think,  
18 maybe to what your question is. The two projects --  
19 the two wind farms to the south, as I mentioned,  
20 they're 100 megawatts each, so that's a total of  
21 200 megawatts of wind farms that we are specifically  
22 trying to make sure they can get their power into  
23 the system adequately.

24                   The project we're proposing, this line,  
25 this 161 kilovolt line, it's going to allow about

1           350 megawatts of capacity. So we're going to be  
2           having enough capacity for about another  
3           150 megawatts of wind farms. So just by putting  
4           this line in we'll have already, shall we say,  
5           leaped ahead a little bit from the demand that's  
6           right there. Now, whether that's going to be enough  
7           to handle this one that looks like it might happen  
8           near Pleasant Valley or not, I can't tell you for  
9           sure.

10                        If there's more wind that develops beyond  
11           that, some of you may recall that we had been  
12           talking at one time of another 161 kilovolt line  
13           that would come out of Pleasant Valley and go to the  
14           east side of Rochester up towards the Willow Creek  
15           area. That line -- if more wind develops beyond the  
16           150 that we've got -- of capability that we'll have  
17           left in this project we're talking about right now,  
18           that next line would add another 300 to 350  
19           megawatts of capability to connect wind to the  
20           system.

21                        So there are some plans that could  
22           develop next beyond this one if, in fact, wind  
23           develops. But beyond what we just talked about, the  
24           two that are in place and operating and this one  
25           that's near Pleasant Valley, I'm not really sure if

1           there are any that are getting to that more likely  
2           stage yet.

3                         MR. POSTIER: Thank you very much. And a  
4           couple of quick ones, the first one is you mentioned  
5           that part of the 80 feet might be -- well, you might  
6           be able to add the road area to that, how close to  
7           the road you would -- as a general rule, how close  
8           do you like these lines to be to the road?

9                         MR. HILLSTROM: Well, the whole idea of  
10          following the road is that the pole itself would go  
11          right close to the property boundary and that way  
12          the pole doesn't end up in a farm field. So a  
13          normal rule of thumb for us is to stay five feet off  
14          that property boundary, that allows construction to  
15          occur and it gives enough space to build the line,  
16          it keeps it close enough to the fence line to not  
17          have an undue impact on the land use.

18                        MR. POSTIER: Okay. Thanks. And the  
19          last question is, we have until April 8th at  
20          4:30 p.m.; is there any counter-comment time in the  
21          future in 2010 or 2011?

22                        MR. LANGAN: The counter-comment,  
23          meaning --

24                        MR. POSTIER: Like, for example, we have  
25          13 days to formulate our comments, and then that

1 will be reviewed for several months. Perhaps we  
2 left something out, there was some -- you know,  
3 something that could have been filled in a little  
4 bit better.

5 Is there any way that -- would there be  
6 another meeting where all the comments are taken  
7 into consideration and then there's a little -- you  
8 know, an additional comment time like a general  
9 court of law?

10 MR. LANGAN: Okay. I understand. First  
11 of all, in terms of the comment period, that did  
12 begin the -- for our purposes, that begins the day  
13 that the notice goes out. And so I just want to  
14 make sure everyone knows that, that we -- it's from  
15 the day that the notice went out, we'd be accepting  
16 comments. And we try and hold a public meeting  
17 somewhere in the middle of that comment period to  
18 make sure that we're out here providing information.

19 In terms of a counter-comment time or  
20 another comment time, really by April 8th we want  
21 your suggestions about what gets included in that  
22 EIS for our purposes, and then we set out to  
23 evaluate that. And as you saw on the schedule, it's  
24 a couple months at least, two, three, four months to  
25 put that together. So what we hear during this

1           scoping period is what's going to go in that  
2           document.

3                         Now, when it comes time for the  
4           administrative law judge hearings, those -- you can  
5           make comments there, you can provide comments on the  
6           various routes that get submitted and evaluated, you  
7           can make comments about impacts that may be of  
8           concern to you. And that information can go into a  
9           report and recommendation by the administrative law  
10          judge.

11                        But in order for you to get, you know,  
12          any concerns addressed or route alternatives  
13          addressed in our environmental impact statement,  
14          yeah, we're looking for them by the 8th of April.

15                        MR. TOM TWEITE: Tom Tweite, T-W-E-I-T-E.  
16          I'm not going to repeat myself from this morning --  
17          or this afternoon, but in looking at the maps again  
18          as I went home -- and I've been in communication  
19          with Tom for close to two and a half years, so if  
20          you don't have an answer for this, you can certainly  
21          contact me.

22                        But in looking at the map -- and for  
23          everybody that's in the room here, I'm one of the  
24          individuals that regardless of which route is chosen  
25          my property happens to sit so it will impact me on

1           either route. So what I'm looking for here is the  
2           least amount of impact to the existing roads and  
3           potential growth for our communities, including the  
4           community of Byron.

5                         Looking at the map that was sent to us a  
6           while back, when you come out of Dodge County and  
7           come over to the county line, you're less than a  
8           half mile if you go straight across where you make  
9           that first corner at 10th Street -- go up to the top  
10          of the map, yeah, right there (indicating). And if  
11          you go to the existing line, which you're less than  
12          a half mile away, you're already running down the  
13          existing line.

14                        I guess my question to Xcel is, would it  
15          be possible as the two lines -- either proposed  
16          route is less than a half mile away from the  
17          existing line and at about three-quarters of a mile  
18          they combine, it appears to me in looking at this  
19          map and how many houses are involved and roads that  
20          are involved, which is zero, why -- if it's possible  
21          to alter that by going straight across at  
22          10th Street for a half mile and going up the  
23          existing line. That would alleviate a lot of issues  
24          with the interchanges and a lot of concerns that  
25          Byron has expressed to you.

1                   Anyway, by looking at this map, it's only  
2                   indicated that there's one house on the corner and  
3                   that house is going to have to look at a pole and  
4                   have those kinds of things right across the corner  
5                   from them anyway. Not to downplay that at all if  
6                   that individual happens to be here, but what I'm  
7                   looking at is potential for all the items that I  
8                   addressed today, and I have many more but I didn't  
9                   want to kill time.

10                   So do you understand what I'm saying,  
11                   Tom? And you can get back with me on that if you'd  
12                   like, you don't need to explain anything tonight.

13                   MR. HILLSTROM: Well, I will anyway, Tom.

14                   MR. TOM TWEITE: All right.

15                   MR. HILLSTROM: You know, we come up with  
16                   these routes very humbly. You know, we do our best  
17                   and we put a lot of work into these, but at the same  
18                   time we don't have the familiarity, as the local  
19                   people like you do, with the land use around here.

20                   So as Matt said, part of the reason for  
21                   tonight's meeting is to hear the comments exactly  
22                   like you said, and you suggesting a different take  
23                   on something that we propose is absolutely the  
24                   reason that we're having this meeting tonight. So,  
25                   I mean, that is a good comment. And I would have to

1 look at the maps and data tables and things like  
2 that to really evaluate them, but that's what Matt  
3 in his process is going to do.

4 MR. TOM TWEITE: Do you need that in a  
5 formal written -- or do you understand it enough  
6 that I do not need to do that?

7 MR. HILLSTROM: I'll let Matt answer that  
8 one.

9 MR. TOM TWEITE: Okay.

10 MR. LANGAN: I'm certain that we've got  
11 it down and that's been recorded, so I think that  
12 will be sufficient.

13 MR. BREKKE: Just a follow-up question.  
14 Bob Brekke, B-R-E-K-K-E. I'm in the same position  
15 as Tom in that, the preferred line or the alternate  
16 line, I'm affected either way. But the question I  
17 have is, specifically, we've seen in the Byron paper  
18 about the fact that the City of Byron has concerns  
19 about the location of the crossing of the line at  
20 the Dodge-Olmsted County line because of a potential  
21 future overpass.

22 The question I have is how that is  
23 currently considered in the project, is that  
24 something that's just -- that will be looked at  
25 seriously, and that if that's looked at seriously

1           then it could clearly create the possibility of a  
2           third -- another route, and how that comes together  
3           for us.

4                       MR. LANGAN: Thank you. We did receive a  
5           letter from the City of Byron already to that effect  
6           on that potential expansion. One of the parts of  
7           our process, certainly we want to hear from  
8           landowners, but when we go out for public input that  
9           includes city governments, township governments,  
10          state agencies, federal agencies in some cases,  
11          counties.

12                      And so we intend to -- we intend to keep  
13          working with the City of Byron to learn about those  
14          expansion plans or overpass plans and understand  
15          where they are, what the timing is, how these routes  
16          might affect that.

17                      And if necessary, we can investigate an  
18          alternative route. I think you said a third route,  
19          but in some cases it can be a route segment, you  
20          know, just a small portion of the route that  
21          could -- where it would be a mutually-agreeable  
22          situation between the applicant and any future  
23          development plans that are out there.

24                      So the City of Byron is engaged in the  
25          process at this point, and I anticipate -- I spoke

1 with someone today from the city and they intend to  
2 continue to follow along with our process.

3 Did that answer your question?

4 MR. BREKKE: Partially.

5 MR. LANGAN: Okay.

6 MR. BREKKE: An unknown, yet to be  
7 determined, right?

8 MR. LANGAN: It is. And I guess what I'd  
9 like you to take away from that is that we'll  
10 continue to work with the city on what the solution  
11 is for that area. But they are obviously aware of  
12 that future development plan and have submitted that  
13 information to us to let us know about that, and so  
14 that will be part of our review process.

15 MR. CARLSON: Cory Carlson,  
16 C-A-R-L-S-O-N. I have a follow-on to Jim's comment  
17 about future wind farms. I had read in the local  
18 paper that they're thinking about a wind farm south  
19 of Kasson and another one down by Hayfield, which is  
20 further west. So my questions would be, since you  
21 hadn't heard of those, I assume they're not in the  
22 process of getting approved; is part of your EIS to  
23 look at possibilities of these types of wind farms,  
24 or do you only look at ones that are in process  
25 already?

1                   And the other thing is, I mean, would  
2                   those even affect Xcel or are they -- is that a  
3                   different company.

4                   MR. LANGAN: Thanks for that question.  
5                   Yeah. I did mention our office reviews wind farm  
6                   projects, we do review them separately of the  
7                   transmission line projects. In some cases, if the  
8                   wind project and the transmission line are the  
9                   same -- proposed by the same company, there are  
10                  vehicles to look at those two together.

11                  My guess is that the development plans  
12                  that you're talking about, they probably have not  
13                  reached our permitting phase. With that said, there  
14                  is a -- once they do reach that phase, they do have  
15                  to go through a permitting process with us. That  
16                  includes environmental review, it includes public  
17                  input, and it's usually not too long before they're  
18                  ready to submit a permit application with us that we  
19                  might learn of those projects.

20                  There are plenty of steps that wind farms  
21                  need to go through before they get to our office,  
22                  and to my knowledge, those are not at our office for  
23                  permitting yet. Once they do, however, and assuming  
24                  that these projects are of sufficient capacity and  
25                  not just a couple-turbine type of projects but

1 larger projects, they would have to go through our  
2 permitting process.

3 MR. CARLSON: But would one affect the  
4 other, so you could like piggyback on the same line  
5 as opposed to creating two lines?

6 MR. LANGAN: I don't know if I can answer  
7 that question. It's -- I think we talked about the  
8 capacity that may be out there, you know, what type  
9 of capacity this line could handle. It would depend  
10 on the size and capacity of those wind farms,  
11 whether or not -- whether that would generate the  
12 need for new transmission or not.

13 I'm doing my best to answer your  
14 question. Without knowing the specifics of those  
15 wind farms, it's a hard question to answer.

16 MR. CARLSON: One more follow-up. So he  
17 was asking about the counter-comments, so after  
18 April 8th, you know, as these things start to firm  
19 up, if they do have a wind farm in development, are  
20 those things being forwarded on to you so you --  
21 will it have any effect if you know about them?

22 MR. LANGAN: They can certainly be -- you  
23 know, we can be made aware of new developments along  
24 the way as we're conducting the environmental  
25 review, and we do have that exhaustive list of

1 things we're looking at. Basically, if it's  
2 available information at the time that we're putting  
3 those documents together, we can use that  
4 information in our review.

5 MR. HORVEI: I'm Tim Horvei, and I'm on  
6 the preferred route on the very southern end.  
7 Excuse me. And all my questions pertain to that,  
8 that route, which I was at a meeting about a month  
9 ago in Dexter concerning the Pleasant Valley wind  
10 project that RES is proposing.

11 Now, they don't have eminent domain to  
12 put their transmission lines in, but they have a  
13 proposed 130 kilovolt line, which is exactly the  
14 same as the preferred route for the first short mile  
15 and a half, as they put it, but it goes right by my  
16 place.

17 So I asked the same question at that  
18 meeting and I was told that it was looking at that  
19 they're going to share the poles. So my question  
20 is, does your office handle that permitting process  
21 too and is this just a formality and the route has  
22 already been decided? Because the route is exactly  
23 the same. In fact, where it hops across the road is  
24 exactly the same as I looked at in Dexter a month  
25 ago.

1           Although no one has contacted me as a  
2           landowner, but after the meeting the RES person, you  
3           know, wants to talk to me. But, you know, my  
4           suspicion is that the -- you know, Xcel will get the  
5           permit, put the poles up, then they'll let RES put  
6           their 131 lines on the same poles for the first mile  
7           and a half.

8           You know, I can't really see any other  
9           scenario happening. So, you know, my question is,  
10          is that a reality and are we all being truthful here  
11          and upfront, or are we just going through  
12          formalities and trying to appease the public?

13          MR. STEVENSON: I'm Grant Stevenson. I  
14          work for Xcel Energy and I'm the project manager for  
15          this project.

16          A gentleman from RES Americas contacted  
17          me about a month ago and pointed out that the route  
18          maps that we sent out, our preferred route shares a  
19          mile and a half with their preferred route, same  
20          area you're talking about.

21          And he suggested that maybe it would be a  
22          better land use, less impact overall to people if we  
23          combine them together. So this is what I think may  
24          happen in that proceeding, RES is going to approach  
25          the county for a permit and it sounds like they will

1 propose that segment of road that you're talking  
2 about for their power line, and we'll see how that  
3 gets permitted.

4 If the county permits that, then it's  
5 quite possible that if the state reviews all our  
6 data and decides that the preferred route or that  
7 segment of the preferred route would be -- should be  
8 the route for this line, we are open to combining  
9 the two lines together so that there's only one row  
10 of poles.

11 When this process gets further down the  
12 line, there's -- I would say certainly by the time  
13 the judge assigned to this is taking testimony, we  
14 should know what RES plans are and it can be more  
15 specifically addressed in that situation.

16 But that does answer your question?  
17 We've been asked, if that becomes their route and  
18 the state says that should be Xcel's route, could  
19 they put -- the two lines be combined on one set of  
20 poles so it's less impact to the people, and we told  
21 them that we're open to that consideration.

22 MR. HORVEI: So the answer to my question  
23 is yes?

24 MR. STEVENSON: Well, we'll --

25 MR. HORVEI: It's in the works already?

1 MR. STEVENSON: No, it's not  
2 predetermined. RES and Xcel have talked and agreed  
3 that if both the county and the state decide that  
4 those are the routes for two lines, rather than  
5 string one line on either side of the road we'd  
6 combine them. And I would expect that we'd --  
7 there's probably little reason that we wouldn't  
8 combine them.

9 It may be that the county picks a  
10 different route, it may be that the state picks a  
11 different route, and that determination is still far  
12 from being determined.

13 MR. HORVEI: I have another question,  
14 too.

15 MR. LANGAN: Okay. Let me just address  
16 your first one before you ask the second one. Where  
17 the RES line goes is not going to determine which  
18 route is selected here. If they're -- we're going  
19 to evaluate the two routes as they're proposed here.  
20 If one is -- clearly reduces impacts, reduces costs  
21 over another, that one would be selected. Where the  
22 RES lines goes is not a determination factor within  
23 the PUC guidelines.

24 So we're developing -- we're analyzing  
25 this project on its own. I think what Grant is

1 getting at is if this preferred route gets granted  
2 and if RES is able to secure their permit through  
3 the county, they may have an opportunity to have one  
4 row of poles as opposed to two.

5 Anyway, you had a second question.

6 MR. HORVEI: Yeah. There's also -- the  
7 route that we're talking about, the short mile and a  
8 half, a portion of that there's a high-pressure gas  
9 line already on that same side of the road, 14-inch  
10 high-pressure gas line.

11 So how does that factor into determining  
12 the route and, you know, not so much -- you know,  
13 the maintenance, construction, and all those things  
14 factor into the -- increase the chances of getting  
15 that nicked or an explosion, is that factored into  
16 it, too?

17 I mean, I certainly wouldn't want a truck  
18 or, you know, an auger truck or whatever they do --  
19 you know, they say they locate, but I'm in  
20 construction and I know locates are approximate.  
21 You know, lines get hit all the time. They have  
22 safety -- pipeline safety seminars every year and  
23 there are still lines getting nicked and cut and  
24 hit.

25 And so even though you say, well, we'll

1           locate the line and we'll dig next to it, that's my  
2           house that's going to blow up if you nick it.  
3           Because a 14-inch high-pressure gas line, you're not  
4           putting it out. You know, my place is toast.

5                        So, you know, how much, you know, for the  
6           good of the public do we as small landowners have to  
7           bear?

8                        MR. LANGAN: Sure. Okay. And I think  
9           that the gas line that you're talking about is part  
10          of -- Xcel Energy located that line and has worked  
11          with representatives from the pipeline company, and  
12          that was factored in in their selection of the route  
13          they proposed.

14                      And Grant, or Tom, I don't know if you're  
15          able to say a word about the gas line in that area  
16          and how that route was selected.

17                      MR. STEVENSON: I think you covered most  
18          of it. We've -- our surveyors have already met the  
19          locators in the field so that we can determine  
20          several things. One of the things is the pipeline  
21          wants to know what, if any, effects we may have on  
22          its pipeline, similar to what you had stated, so we  
23          started that.

24                      And I understand what you say about  
25          locates and those things, we work around utilities

1 all the time. I don't know specifically yet the  
2 outcome of that. I couldn't tell you how far the  
3 line is from the edge of the road at this time, we  
4 just haven't gotten into that data yet.

5 MR. HORVEI: Well, if you met me at my  
6 place, I could pretty much show you. Because the  
7 proposed route of the transmission line and the gas  
8 line are right on top of each other for a short  
9 stretch.

10 MR. STEVENSON: Well, we won't put a  
11 power line on top of a gas line, it would have to be  
12 offset from the gas line.

13 MR. HORVEI: By how much?

14 MR. STEVENSON: There is no magic formula  
15 for what it needs to be.

16 Ready for another one?

17 MR. LANGAN: (Nods head.)

18 MR. GROTELUSH: Dave Grotelush from  
19 Hayfield here, G-R-O-T-E-L-U-S-H-E-N. I just --  
20 quick refresh my memory on the capacity of the line.  
21 You said it was going to be 161, but there was a  
22 capacity limit of how much? You're building it for  
23 161, but the actual capacity could be up to how  
24 much?

25 MR. LEHMAN: We're talking two

1 parameters, one is the voltage level that it  
2 operates at, and that's when we talk about  
3 161 kilovolts. So think in terms of your house  
4 wiring, you have 115 volt service -- 120 volt  
5 service to your house. The second number that we've  
6 been talking is how much power it's capable of  
7 carrying on it.

8 So, again, putting that in terms of your  
9 household wiring, you have ten amp circuits, 20 amp  
10 circuits, or 30 amp circuits, you have different  
11 capability of those circuits. They all operate at  
12 the same voltage level, or at 220.

13 So that's what we're talking about here,  
14 is we've got a 161 kilovolt line, that's the voltage  
15 it operates at. Then what we've been talking about  
16 is how much power can we expect to carry, or more  
17 specifically, how much wind power can we add to the  
18 system as a result of putting this line, this 161  
19 kilovolt line, into the system, and that we've  
20 determined to be about 350 megawatts. So while it  
21 operates at 161 kilovolts, that's just the voltage  
22 it operates at. Its capability of allowing wind  
23 power to connect to it, that's the second number  
24 we've been talking about, the 350 megawatts.

25 Does that answer your question?

1                   MR. GROTELUSH: So are you going to build  
2                   in a possibility for expansion, then? Because you  
3                   seem to not really know how many wind farms are  
4                   going up around here, rather than building another  
5                   line ten years from now, are you going to build in  
6                   some excess capacity?

7                   MR. LEHMAN: Well, the system, as I  
8                   mentioned, will have 350 megawatts of capability.  
9                   We've got 200 megawatts of that reserved or set  
10                  aside for the two wind farms that have been built.  
11                  So yes, this line, after it's connected to the  
12                  system, will have about 150 megawatts of additional  
13                  capacity in wind that could be connected to the  
14                  system. So if that's what you mean by built-in  
15                  reserve capacity, yes, there will be some.

16                  MR. BOYUM: But you could take and  
17                  piggyback. Obviously you're not -- you're going to  
18                  piggyback a mile and a half, you'd be willing to  
19                  piggyback any other wind farm along the way all the  
20                  way to Byron.

21                  MR. LEHMAN: I'm not sure I --

22                  MR. BOYUM: You're piggybacking this mile  
23                  and a -- Kendall Boium, B-O-Y-U-M. I've got a cold,  
24                  otherwise I'd be talking more. Okay. All this talk  
25                  about RES for a mile and a half -- you already

1 admitted and you didn't tell us a mile and a half  
2 that you already talked about with RES but you  
3 didn't tell us about that at all.

4 So how many more projects do you have in  
5 wind for piggybacking more all the way? There's a  
6 project going in right out there in Kasson, you  
7 talked about, High Energy's (sic) got one or two.  
8 So if you can piggyback that first mile and a half,  
9 how many more are you going to piggyback all the way  
10 up? Are we being honest here? We don't trust our  
11 government, we don't trust anybody anymore. I don't  
12 believe a thing you say.

13 MR. STEVENSON: Well, that's fair. You  
14 know, I'll make one comment. It's very difficult  
15 for any of us to know how many wind farms are going  
16 to be built. Because if you look -- there's a  
17 place, a website, you can go look at for a  
18 geographic area of how many wind farms are in the  
19 queue. A very small percentage of those get built.  
20 There are people that are testing the waters. RES  
21 Americas, for example, I know looks like there  
22 are -- they have two 150 megawatt wind farms in the  
23 queue, but one comment I heard from one of those  
24 developers is that they're trying to find out --  
25 they have one wind farm and they're thinking about

1 two different ways to connect it to the grid.

2 So that's just one example of why it's so  
3 difficult for us to know how many of these wind  
4 farms are real and how many of them aren't. So  
5 we -- the wind farms -- or if someone -- if you and  
6 your friends had enough money to throw together and  
7 build a nuclear plant or any other kind of plant,  
8 you apply to connect to the electric grid just like  
9 the wind developers do. And they get studied, and  
10 then whatever study -- whatever makes it through  
11 that study comes to us and then we determine how to  
12 build it.

13 So we just -- we're not hiding anything,  
14 and I appreciate your comment, you don't trust us,  
15 you don't know us. You never saw us, probably,  
16 until tonight. One wind developer has contacted us  
17 about sharing a mile and a half, and that's the only  
18 wind developer that's contacted any of us about  
19 sharing a part of this route. That's the one we  
20 know about.

21 MR. HORVEI: I just have one more, and it  
22 would be -- Tim Horvei, again, H-O-R-V-E-I, and it's  
23 a simple engineering question.

24 The poles you're proposing to put in, are  
25 they going to have the capacity -- right, there's

1 guard wire on top and three transmission lines, are  
2 the poles capable of supporting additional  
3 transmission lines; yes or no?

4 MR. LEHMAN: No. A simple yes/no.

5 MR. HORVEI: Thank you.

6 MR. LEHMAN: The design that we have  
7 right now is for single circuit. If you look out  
8 along 14 here you'll see poles that are designed to  
9 be capable of handling a second circuit, they're  
10 bigger, they're stronger, they've got the room for  
11 the second set of arms on them.

12 But the line we're proposing right now is  
13 to have just a single-circuit capability. Unless,  
14 as was talked about, there's that mile and a half  
15 where it might need to be a double circuit because  
16 of this second potential 138 kV line, or something  
17 to that effect. But we're proposing a  
18 single-circuit design to construct the line.

19 MR. HORVEI: And that's part of the  
20 permit?

21 MR. LEHMAN: Correct.

22 MR. STEVENSON: We've got a comment over  
23 here, Matt (indicating).

24 MS. SMITH: Melinda Smith. Concerning  
25 the purchase of the land, you know, when our land

1 was purchased in Oronoco the state told us  
2 specifically that they don't take into consideration  
3 the property value of the remaining land and they  
4 wouldn't take into consideration any of the impact  
5 of taking that land had in their purchasing of the  
6 land. They came in and purchased it as if they were  
7 walking in off the street and purchasing it.

8 So I see that in the environmental study  
9 you're taking into consideration property values,  
10 but is that also taken into consideration in  
11 purchasing the 80 feet of land? Like, you know,  
12 specifically in my case, cutting down the treeline,  
13 is that taken into consideration, or are they simply  
14 saying we're going to figure out the land value of  
15 80 feet of land and buy it and end of story?

16 MR. LANGAN: I can take part of that, and  
17 then I'll turn it over to Xcel for the other part.

18 The first part, yes, we'll evaluate the  
19 transmission line impacts on property values. There  
20 are some studies that have been conducted, actually  
21 very recently, and actually going back years and  
22 years there have been studies that have been put  
23 together on this.

24 But the University of California just put  
25 together a study six months ago, maybe, that

1 provides a lot information, generally, on property  
2 values and resaleability values associated with a  
3 transmission line on a property.

4 So that is -- we will evaluate that in  
5 ours, but I think your question may get a little bit  
6 more towards the easement acquisition process, and  
7 for that I'd turn the comment over to Xcel.

8 MR. HILLSTROM: The answer to your  
9 question is -- I can answer it in a basic form.  
10 Earlier today we had one our agents here and he's  
11 not here anymore, unfortunately. But if you want  
12 more details, I can give you his number and you can  
13 call him.

14 But the basic answer is that the payment  
15 for the easement does take into account any effect  
16 that the line would have on the land value. That  
17 would include trees, it would include whether  
18 that -- the presence of that line affects your  
19 development of that land, it takes into account any  
20 way this line can have -- can affect the value of  
21 your land. And, in the end, the payment is designed  
22 to keep the landowner whole so that any kind of  
23 impact on that land is paid for.

24 MR. POSTIER: I'm sorry. I've got one  
25 specific little technical physical structure.

1 Jim Postier, P-O-S-T-I-E-R.

2 I hope this isn't too specific, but I  
3 think it's with the people that plan the lines.  
4 Along our route, you know how roads are often carved  
5 into the limestone and so you'll -- like as you're  
6 getting up to a bridge you'll get a progressively  
7 tall cliff of limestone.

8 Let's say we have -- about 15 to 20 feet  
9 away from the road we have a limestone wall,  
10 and I -- which would be about my property line. And  
11 then my property line, I think it really starts a  
12 few feet beyond the edge of the cliff, where would  
13 the line go?

14 Let's say we have 15 to 20 feet, then you  
15 have limestone cliff and then property line. I'm  
16 assuming that it would be -- have to be -- from what  
17 I hear from the road distance, it would be up on top  
18 of the cliff. Do you think so? And then the  
19 question is, how far do you need for the converting  
20 of the land?

21 MR. HILLSTROM: We've -- the line would  
22 go on the other side of the road.

23 MR. POSTIER: Oh, okay.

24 MR. HILLSTROM: I think I know where  
25 you're talking about, is it where the preferred

1 route crosses the river?

2 MR. POSTIER: Well, actually, I don't  
3 know. It's the both the same -- the same sides have  
4 the same cliff. And I think we have a little more  
5 of it, but it's the same issue.

6 MR. HILLSTROM: And really if there is a  
7 better terrain on the other side of the road, that's  
8 probably what we would do. And I think in that area  
9 we're proposing to cross the river on the west side  
10 of the road, and more than likely the pole would go  
11 up on top. Because if you put it down on the bottom  
12 you don't get the kind of clearance that you need  
13 from the top of that cliff.

14 MR. POSTIER: Okay. Thanks.

15 MS. YOUNGER: Hi, my name is Kim Younger,  
16 Y-O-U-N-G-E-R. We're on the alternate route, or  
17 near it, and it looks to me like the first maybe  
18 half mile or so is on the existing line, is that  
19 correct, would you put up another set of arms on the  
20 existing large poles that are out there?

21 MR. LANGAN: Okay. And is it on the  
22 north side that you're talking about?

23 MS. YOUNGER: Yes.

24 MR. LANGAN: Okay.

25 MS. YOUNGER: On the north side of

1 Highway 14. There's a dashed line, I think is the  
2 existing line, and the green and the dash overlay  
3 each other, don't they?

4 MR. LANGAN: I think, Tom --

5 MS. YOUNGER: At the very top of the  
6 substation going down.

7 MR. HILLSTROM: You're right. And the  
8 alternate route is designed to go parallel with the  
9 existing transmission line for that short segment.

10 MS. YOUNGER: But is it on the same poles  
11 or is there another set of poles being built?

12 MR. HILLSTROM: It would be built  
13 adjacent to those existing poles.

14 MS. YOUNGER: Adjacent.

15 MR. HILLSTROM: Yeah.

16 MS. YOUNGER: So there would be another  
17 set of poles?

18 MR. HILLSTROM: Exactly right.

19 MS. YOUNGER: Okay. Within the same  
20 right-of-way as the large lines that are there now  
21 or within a new path?

22 MR. HILLSTROM: Well, it would be  
23 parallel to and adjacent to, so more than likely  
24 we'd need to buy more right-of-way.

25 MS. YOUNGER: More right-of-way, okay.

1           That's my question.

2                       MR. CARLSON: Cory Carlson. Both of  
3 these routes have quite a bit of homes involved and  
4 I was wondering, in looking at the line that's  
5 similar right out here (indicating), it's gone  
6 across the road and then back, I guess, further  
7 east.

8                       And I was just wondering, there's lots of  
9 impacts to the homes. We've already talked about  
10 the property values and aesthetics, but I'm mostly  
11 concerned about safety. Has there been studies on a  
12 line of this size being so close to so many homes  
13 over an extended period of time? And how close they  
14 are, you know, what's the maximum size line that's  
15 allowed to be so near homes, things like that?

16                      MR. LANGAN: Thank you. Well, we're  
17 seeing development of -- just to put this into  
18 context, we're seeing development of 345 kilovolt  
19 lines across the state and lines of greater capacity  
20 and length across the state as that energy  
21 infrastructure is sort of being built back up.

22                      For your question about 161 lines or  
23 lines that are greater than that, there has been  
24 quite a bit of study on any health effects related  
25 to that or any effects where they would be coming

1 near homes, and that includes property values and  
2 things like that.

3 But I'm sensing that you're asking about  
4 the health impacts, and back -- there were studies  
5 done back in the '70s, it's sort of the last time  
6 that there was a lot of energy infrastructure  
7 planned and developed and built. And as we're  
8 seeing that -- another wave of that coming through,  
9 there are current studies that we draw from when we  
10 do our environmental impact statement.

11 The World Health Organization has done  
12 quite a bit of work this decade on -- I guess it's  
13 2010, but in this last decade on any potential  
14 health effects. The Minnesota Department of Health  
15 also has reports and information on that. The  
16 states in the surrounding region have studied the  
17 issue as well. That's the information we're going  
18 to draw from and include in our environmental impact  
19 statement to talk about what the -- what, if any,  
20 potential health effects there are.

21 We'll also include in our environmental  
22 impact statement a bibliography. So while we're --  
23 you know, we don't intend to place these entire  
24 studies in that document, we'll have a list of the  
25 studies that we'll draw from and the current

1 information -- the most current information that's  
2 available. And you'll be able to reference those  
3 and look up and read those reports for yourself if  
4 you'd like.

5 But it's definitely something that we  
6 study, it's part of the scope of our environmental  
7 document.

8 Yes, sir.

9 MR. SMITH: Darrel Smith. I was curious,  
10 on the old lines that come through, when that ice  
11 storm hit them and they went down, where does that  
12 power go and who did it affect and how long -- like,  
13 if something did happen to the old lines, if they're  
14 all combined is there a backup or anything, another  
15 line that -- you know, is it the end of the world?

16 I know it's going to cost you money to  
17 fix it or whatever and it's harder to get to with no  
18 roads there, but --

19 MR. LANGAN: Well, I think that's part of  
20 what this project is intended to do, should  
21 something occur to that line that there's some  
22 reliability built in.

23 But I'll allow the Xcel Energy folks --

24 MR. LEHMAN: The electricity still has to  
25 go somewhere. So when the line was out or is out of

1 service, the electricity finds another path. As  
2 long as the wind is blowing, as long as the  
3 generation is operating, the electricity has to find  
4 another path.

5 And so what it does, in particular, if  
6 that line, that 345 kilovolt line, is out of service  
7 between Pleasant Valley and Byron, the power that  
8 was on that line goes through the substation at  
9 Pleasant Valley through the transformers.

10 So that's the first issue you have to be  
11 prepared for, is, do the transformers have enough  
12 capability to take all that power that was on the  
13 line and step it down to a lower voltage? And then  
14 that power does try to go out on the lower voltage  
15 system, the rest of the 161 kilovolt lines emanating  
16 from that Pleasant Valley line.

17 In addition, some of the power doesn't  
18 even continue up the 345 kV line to Pleasant Valley  
19 anymore, it emanates from other lower voltage  
20 substations south of Pleasant Valley. So the system  
21 has to send the power somewhere, so it goes -- you  
22 know, the term used in industry is it finds the path  
23 of least resistance. It reconfigures itself and  
24 flows on the rest of the system searching for  
25 another path to get where the load is.

1 MR. ROBERT TWEITE: Robert Tweite,  
2 T-W-E-I-T-E. How much less voltage is on the new  
3 line compared to the old one?

4 MR. LEHMAN: The current line that's  
5 going from Pleasant Valley to Byron is 345,000  
6 volts, 345 kilovolts. The new line we're proposing  
7 is 161.

8 MR. ROBERT TWEITE: It's quite a bit  
9 less.

10 MR. LEHMAN: Yes. It's a smaller line,  
11 it's a less --

12 MR. ROBERT TWEITE: This one out here is  
13 hot (indicating). You get up on the high ground in  
14 the summertime, you can feel it. On a baler, your  
15 tractor, you can feel it. No kidding. And they  
16 broke a line, it was zig, zig, zig back and forth.

17 MR. STEVENSON: Do you have another  
18 battery?

19 MR. HORVEI: I just have a question on  
20 the comparison of the two routes. You said at the  
21 beginning that they're both pretty much the same  
22 with just a few minor differences. If where the --  
23 you know, on the proposed route the path or the  
24 right-of-way or whatever you want to call it is the  
25 same as the existing lines for a portion thereof,



1 over adjacent to our property instead of going up  
2 the route that's already there. You know, when I  
3 bought my place I was, you know, a half mile from  
4 the 345s, and that's all right. Now, I'm going to  
5 get, you know, these 161s, I'm going to be right  
6 between them, you know. And I know I'm not going to  
7 get compensated for it.

8 So, you know, my question would be, why  
9 can't they go up the exact line? And, you know, be  
10 honest with us, is it an economic factor? You know,  
11 because that's what -- you know, my common sense is  
12 telling me, and usually I'm right.

13 UNIDENTIFIED: I think he's right, too.

14 MR. STEVENSON: While Paul's getting the  
15 microphone -- he's probably going to address the  
16 reliability item. It's really not an economic  
17 factor. The other two routes are longer. So I see  
18 your point about reduced right-of-way costs because  
19 it shares the road, but the reason we look at roads  
20 is because that's state law. State law suggests  
21 that we should go where existing power lines are or  
22 roads or other linear features.

23 MR. HORVEI: Okay.

24 MR. STEVENSON: So you could -- there  
25 will be potentially less right-of-way acquired along

1 a road, but if you are adjacent to the transmission  
2 line, we don't need the full 80 feet either, we can  
3 share some of that as well. But the other two  
4 routes are also longer.

5 And go ahead, Paul.

6 MR. LEHMAN: Okay. Let's talk about the  
7 reliability. You point out a very important and  
8 correct statement, which is eventually lines do have  
9 to come together at the substations. So if you look  
10 at the Pleasant Valley substation, the Byron  
11 substation, a catastrophic event at either one of  
12 those substations is going to take out multiple  
13 lines.

14 Now, you can't protect against every  
15 single possibility, every single event that could  
16 happen. The organization that's charged by the  
17 federal government with evaluating the reliability  
18 of the transmission system has developed criteria.  
19 And the criteria they have set is that in order to  
20 maintain, so that we don't have some of those events  
21 that have happened in the past history where we have  
22 blackouts on the system, they've developed a  
23 reliability criteria. And the reliability criteria  
24 is that you have to maintain separation of critical  
25 infrastructure that's serving similar functions.

1           So in this case, the existing line and  
2           the new line are going to serve a similar function,  
3           and that is to transport the power from the vicinity  
4           of Pleasant Valley to the vicinity of Byron.

5           Unfortunately, you know, there's no way  
6           to prevent them from not coming to the same point,  
7           Pleasant Valley and Byron. So even if there wasn't  
8           that mile and a half of segment where it looks like  
9           they're going to -- on one alternative look like  
10          they're going to almost be on top of each other,  
11          they still would, when they get at the substation,  
12          be next to each other. The reliability criteria  
13          recognizes that.

14          But now what you're talking about is an  
15          event happening at a point as opposed to along  
16          18-plus miles. The reliability is better to protect  
17          against a point event as opposed to an 18-mile  
18          event.

19          So, you know, I hear what you're saying  
20          and you're absolutely right that there is not going  
21          to be a perfect separation of the two lines. But in  
22          order to maintain the level of reliability that is  
23          needed, they need to be separated or maintain as  
24          much separation for as much of the length as  
25          possible, accepting that at points where they have

1 to come together at the substation that separation  
2 will evaporate.

3 Now, I don't know if that gets --  
4 fully satisfies you, but that it is in fact the  
5 truth.

6 MS. SMITH: I just have a follow-up  
7 question to that.

8 Does that criteria specify how much of a  
9 distance needs to be between the two lines? Because  
10 the odds are any of the catastrophic events you're  
11 talking about would still take out both lines. A  
12 tornado that's, you know, going by is -- you know,  
13 in a mile and a half is going to take out both  
14 lines, straight-line winds are going to take out  
15 both lines. So what is the criteria for how far  
16 apart those lines should be?

17 MR. LEHMAN: Well, the most simple,  
18 straightforward criteria is that they have to be on  
19 separate right-of-way. And if you think in terms of  
20 what we've been describing about the right-of-way is  
21 that you have to be outside of the fall area, if one  
22 of the structures were to fall.

23 But let's back up and talk about the  
24 lines themselves. Those lines are designed to  
25 withstand some pretty significant storms. Now, they

1 wouldn't survive everything, but we have documented  
2 evidence where the type of lines we're proposing to  
3 build have in fact survived tornadoes passing right  
4 through them. And I don't know if you've got those  
5 pictures still around, Tom.

6 But we've got pictures of a path of a  
7 tornado that went right through one of our 115  
8 kilovolt lines, similar to what we're planning to  
9 build here. And so we're designing these lines to  
10 sustain that type of storm damage or storm damage  
11 potential.

12 You're absolutely right that you can  
13 never say never and you can never say that there  
14 isn't going to be some event that will come along  
15 that will span a half mile or a mile separation  
16 between the two. So it goes back to the same thing  
17 I was saying about the lines have to come together  
18 at some point in time when they reach the  
19 terminations at Pleasant Valley and Byron.

20 It's impossible to prevent that from  
21 happening. It's impossible to say that if there's  
22 some type of catastrophic event this would take out  
23 the entire substation or to span a mile or a half  
24 mile of distance that could in fact take out both  
25 those lines.

1                   But it gets down to setting up a  
2                   reliability criteria that says if we follow this set  
3                   of reliability criteria, we have a level of  
4                   reliability in the transmission system that is a  
5                   high level of reliability.

6                   MR. STEVENSON: And it's not just the  
7                   catastrophic events, it's the weather events that  
8                   happen much more frequently -- lightning strikes.  
9                   Lightning strikes have been known -- even with the  
10                  shielding that we put on them, have been known to  
11                  take out adjacent lines. Or flying branches or tree  
12                  limbs, those are much more common weather events  
13                  than a tornado or a straight-line wind.

14                 MR. CARLSON: Cory Carlson. Just a quick  
15                 question. This doesn't affect distribution lines in  
16                 any way, right? The lines that currently exist for  
17                 distribution will continue to be right where they're  
18                 at?

19                 MR. LANGAN: I think we had that question  
20                 earlier today and I forget the portion of the route  
21                 where there are distribution lines. I apologize, I  
22                 could be mixing this up with a meeting that I had  
23                 last night, so I apologize about getting that wrong.  
24                 Is there an existing distribution line along either  
25                 the proposed or alternate route?

1                   MR. STEVENSON: There are some existing  
2 distribution lines, and if they -- our transmission  
3 line and distribution shares the same alignment, we  
4 have to accommodate that either by attaching it our  
5 poles, potentially bury the distribution line, those  
6 sorts of things.

7                   UNIDENTIFIED: So you wouldn't have lines  
8 on both sides on the road?

9                   MR. STEVENSON: It's possible there would  
10 be lines on both sides of the road as well.

11                  MR. LANGAN: Other questions or comments?

12                  MR. BOYUM: Kendall Boyum. You know, all  
13 of these people in here, why don't you take the  
14 transmission line and run it 80 feet or whatever --  
15 I wouldn't mind near as much giving you a  
16 right-of-way across my land if you don't put it on  
17 the frontage.

18                         You put them lines out on the front of my  
19 property, you really devalue it, because if  
20 they're to the back going through to the 40, the 80,  
21 the 120, whatever, and the impact -- you keep  
22 talking about the impact on people, get it the heck  
23 away from the roads, put it out in the field.

24                         But you're going to say farmers don't  
25 like that. I'm a farmer, I'd much rather have it

1 out in the field than out the front of my driveway.  
2 You know, it's aesthetics, everything, you drive  
3 down the road, the poles, and from the standpoint of  
4 valuation, your valuation, to me, it's just got to  
5 go in the toilet when you've got these damn big  
6 poles sitting out in front of your place.

7 And there's also -- Kurt's not here  
8 tonight, but he told me that there's a European  
9 study that there is several health effects within --  
10 if you've got lines within a half a mile of a home.  
11 So, you know, get it out in the fields. I think  
12 you'll have a lot less problems than going down the  
13 road.

14 I say you guys are putting it down the  
15 road because it's much easier to go down the road to  
16 inspect it, to service it, and to maintain it, it's  
17 the cheaper route. But I think there's much better  
18 routes, to put it out in the fields away from  
19 people, put it on the fence lines, whatever it may  
20 be.

21 MR. LANGAN: Thank you for that comment,  
22 and we do have that comment recorded. If there's  
23 something specific for a route that you'd like to  
24 propose in writing to us, I'd sure welcome that and  
25 we can consider that in our evaluation.

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Any other questions or comments?

Okay. Seeing that there are none,  
thanks, everyone, for coming here tonight. We'll  
stay around if anybody has any follow-up questions.  
Again, April 8th comments are due. Thank you.

(Public comment concluded.)