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PUBLIC COMMENTS - PINE ISLAND - 1:30 - MAY 5, 2010

In the Matter of the Application by Xcel Energy for a  
Route Permit for the Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse 345 kV  
Transmission Line Project

PUC Docket Number: E002/TL-09-1448

May 5, 2010

American Legion  
108 1st Avenue SE  
Pine Island, Minnesota

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1 MR. LANGAN: Okay. Now is the part of  
2 the meeting that we want to turn it over to you for  
3 your comments or your questions on the project.

4 A couple things. We'll ask that you come  
5 up to the microphone to ask your question, give your  
6 comment. If you're unable to come up to the mic,  
7 just let us know and we can bring back a cordless,  
8 but we'd like you to come up.

9 We do have a court reporter here today  
10 and something that I like to mention at these  
11 meetings is that some people feel, when they hear a  
12 court reporter, it makes it seem real formal and  
13 that's not the image we want to portray. It just --  
14 it makes it easier for me to answer your question  
15 without trying to also scribble down notes about  
16 what your presentation was and Janet can accurately  
17 get your comments down so that it's not my  
18 interpretation of what your question or comment was.  
19 And it helps us in the scoping process, again, you  
20 know, getting an accurate read of what your question  
21 or your comment was and so we can consider that in  
22 the scope.

23 With that, we ask that you state and  
24 spell your name when you come up for your question  
25 or comment. We do ask that one person speaks at a

1 time so the court reporter can accurately get your  
2 comments or questions down, and it is a real help to  
3 come up and walk to the mic, walk up to the mic for  
4 Janet. Thanks.

5 Okay. Chuck Dewitz.

6 MR. CHARLES DEWITZ: That's me.

7 MR. LANGAN: Yes, sir. Please.

8 MR. CHARLES DEWITZ: My name is Charles,  
9 C-H-A-R-L-E-S, Dewitz, D-E-W-I-T-Z. I live at 57161  
10 351st Avenue in Rochester, 55906.

11 And I know I've had Tom and I think Grant  
12 both that came out and looked at my property, so I  
13 think they know where I'm at, but I'm on the  
14 alternative route, the alternate route, I'm not on  
15 the preferred route, I guess is how it came out.

16 And I just have a few questions or I  
17 guess a few concerns. I don't know when this all  
18 started, you know, I just built a new house and I  
19 spent close to a year trying to find a perfect spot,  
20 and now I have a route that is an alternate route  
21 but it comes right across the back of my place  
22 across my driveway. I've got 400-some acres, so it  
23 doesn't go on our property line, it just goes pretty  
24 much willy nilly across the middle of my property.  
25 I would rather it go on a property line. I realize

1           it's going to go through someplace, I don't want to  
2           just shove it off on a neighbor, I just want to see  
3           it put in in the correct spot, the right spot.

4                       And I have the concerns of where it's  
5           going now, with being in the middle of the property,  
6           it cuts across some of my ag fields, it comes across  
7           my pasture right behind my house, right over the top  
8           of the pond, it crosses a trout stream, the Hammond  
9           Creek trout stream, it's a designated trout stream  
10          right off of County Road 11 right out of Hammond. I  
11          don't know if that's ever been looked at before by  
12          the DNR.

13                      I guess I'd just really like to see it at  
14          least put on a property line if it's going to be a  
15          routed on my property, you know. I couldn't tell  
16          you where I'd like it to go, I don't want to say it  
17          should go this way or that way, I guess. I don't  
18          know. So that's about it.

19                      MR. LANGAN: Thank you. Thank you for  
20          that comment. And it did bring to mind one thing,  
21          so I appreciate that.

22                      We talk about the public review of this  
23          project, and in that review it's not only just  
24          individual landowners that we're asking for  
25          questions, it is public wide, it is federal

1 agencies, it's state agencies, county governments,  
2 and we work very closely with our other state  
3 agencies, including the Department of Natural  
4 Resources, MnDOT, the Pollution Control Agency, and  
5 they all participate very closely in this. So  
6 they're in the scoping process as well and we  
7 anticipate getting their comments on issues such as  
8 trout streams and the like. So I just wanted to  
9 clarify that, that we do -- it is sort of a public  
10 wide scoping process, a public wide review process,  
11 and those agencies and governments do participate in  
12 the review of these projects. Thank you for your  
13 comments.

14 That was the only speaker that  
15 registered, but we will make sure that we get to  
16 everyone today. What I'll ask, and we'll see how  
17 this goes, but what I'll ask is that you just raise  
18 your hand and we'll call you up to the microphone if  
19 you have a question or comment.

20 So I've got to taker right back there.  
21 Please, sir.

22 MR. ERNIE BAKKE: I'm Ernie Bakke,  
23 B-A-K-K-E. I live at 3694 White Bridge Road  
24 Northwest in Oronoco.

25 Our home is in Section 9 in the southeast

1 corridor and we're right along County Road 12. And  
2 the preferred route at this time comes around, it  
3 zigzags around and comes from the north and it goes  
4 right down the east side of the property line, the  
5 full length of the property line. Now, the property  
6 is only 40 rods wide, which is 660 feet. And it  
7 ends up, then, that it'll only be a couple hundred  
8 feet from my buildings, the home and buildings.

9 And the question is, when you consider  
10 homes, what is the distance that you've set back  
11 from the line, for a 345 kV line? Because I  
12 personally don't know what the number is, but it  
13 certainly seems like it's way too close to my  
14 property. And I certainly am concerned because of  
15 the adverse effect on the resale and the value. And  
16 that's really my comments.

17 MR. LANGAN: Okay. Thank you. And I  
18 detected there were a couple questions in there,  
19 too.

20 MR. ERNIE BAKKE: The one question was  
21 when, you know, you zigzag the routes around, what  
22 distance do you try to keep from homes? And there  
23 must be an impact that's both environmental wise and  
24 property value wise, depending on the distance. And  
25 I've never heard of a distance.

1                   MR. LANGAN: Okay. I'll answer the  
2                   portion about property values to begin with and  
3                   then, Tom, if you want to talk about the  
4                   right-of-way and the distance from homes.

5                   Property values is something that we will  
6                   look at in our environmental document. There are  
7                   some studies out there that have been conducted, a  
8                   recent one by the University of California at  
9                   Berkley that we use, but a host of others that we  
10                  use to look at the effects on property value, of a  
11                  transmission line being routed through.

12                 And that most recent study that I talked  
13                 about looks at it from a variety of angles. It's  
14                 the value of the property, it's the resale ability  
15                 of the property, you know, whether the line was  
16                 existing when someone bought a house or whether it  
17                 was planned when somebody was considering buying a  
18                 house.

19                 And so that's one key study amongst many  
20                 of them that we take a look at to assess that in our  
21                 environmental document. Some from our office's --  
22                 for our work, we will look at that in the  
23                 environmental document and provide information for  
24                 you to review in that draft document.

25                 And, again, when that draft document

1 comes out, if there's more information you're  
2 looking for, you can provide us comments and we can  
3 try to do some more digging if there's more you'd  
4 like to know about that issue. And in terms of the  
5 proximity to homes and the right-of-way required for  
6 this, I'll turn it over to Tom to answer that  
7 question.

8 MR. HILLSTROM: Yeah, I can answer the  
9 question directly, as far as the minimum distance  
10 that the line can be adjacent to a home. And that's  
11 75 feet. And that's the distance that we need for  
12 safety clearances from the electric wires. And our  
13 345 line needs a 150-foot corridor and we buy that  
14 easement that covers that 150-foot width. And that  
15 easement requires a removal of any tall-growing  
16 trees and it also can't have any structures in  
17 there, just to maintain that electrical clearance.  
18 So that's the minimum distance.

19 But when we developed these routes, we  
20 really did our best to minimize the number of homes  
21 that we go by and to maximize the distance between  
22 the homes and the lines. And it was a very  
23 important criteria for us as we developed these  
24 routes. In fact, if you look in the permit  
25 application, the tables that we used to show the

1 data that's associated with each one of these  
2 routes, there's a column in each of those tables  
3 that shows the number of homes adjacent to each  
4 route for the various couple of different distance  
5 intervals. So it's an important criteria and we did  
6 our best when we developed these routes to minimize  
7 the number of homes that are near the routes.

8 MR. LANGAN: And I'll just add to that,  
9 too. From the Public Utilities Commission  
10 standpoint, that is one of the factors they consider  
11 when they're approving a particular route, is the  
12 distance, the distance to homes and the number of  
13 homes within various distances of the line. So that  
14 is an important consideration in determining which  
15 route gets selected at the end of the review  
16 process.

17 Okay. Other -- yes, please.

18 MS. MARLENE DEBOEF: Marlene Deboef,  
19 D-E-B-O-E-F. I live in Roscoe Township, Section 16.  
20 We're probably a mile and a half from any of the  
21 proposed route or the alternate route. But I have a  
22 couple general questions.

23 One is, what is it going to look like?  
24 Some of the ones, like the one that crosses County  
25 Road 11 now, is a very big structure that, you know,

1           it's like almost a U-shape. There's this picture on  
2           your mailing. So I would like to know what it's  
3           going to look like.

4                     MR. LANGAN: Would you like me to answer  
5           that and then you can ask your other questions?

6                     MS. MARLENE DEBOEF: Yes.

7                     MR. LANGAN: I'll take a crack at it, and  
8           if there's anything Tom wants to add to it. But it  
9           is the picture that you see there, and the picture  
10          she's holding up is of a single pole tower. You've  
11          probably seen multiple configurations on the  
12          landscape of transmission lines and some have an H  
13          frame with wooden poles to it, others look like an  
14          erector set type, almost a lattice type of a tower.  
15          In this case it's single pole and so that picture  
16          you have there is accurate, a single pole. And for  
17          the 345 line, the height, the maximum height would  
18          be 170 feet tall, for the 161 line the maximum  
19          height is 110 feet tall.

20                    MR. HILLSTROM: Yeah, with an average of  
21          about 80 feet tall.

22                    MR. LANGAN: But more on average of an  
23          80-foot tall pole. And those, again, would be the  
24          single pole structure.

25                    MR. HILLSTROM: That's right.

1 MS. MARLENE DEBOEF: The other question I  
2 had is about wetlands. You know, I assume you work  
3 with the DNR if there are wetlands that need to be  
4 crossed or poles put in?

5 MR. LANGAN: We do. And there are, in  
6 addition to DNR, there's the Board of Water and Soil  
7 Resources, there's the local county governments that  
8 review those, and the Army Corps of Engineers as  
9 well.

10 So based on the type of wetland, a  
11 certain body may have -- a certain agency may have  
12 jurisdiction over approval authority for any effects  
13 or any crossings of those wetlands.

14 For the DNR specifically, if it's a  
15 public water wetland, they have permitting authority  
16 over anything that would cross that water or  
17 basically affect the basin of that water. I know in  
18 this application, and typically utilities try to  
19 span wetland complexes, or individual wetland so  
20 that the poles are not placed within the wetland.  
21 In some cases it is necessary to put a pole in the  
22 wetland and there is certain procedures to reduce  
23 the impact there. But a utility would need a permit  
24 from DNR in this case, if we use that example, they  
25 would need a permit even to cross that public water.

1                   Part of the review by other state  
2 agencies that work with us on this overall review is  
3 to state whether or not a project is permitable.  
4 And so part of that information that we put together  
5 in the environmental document helps them understand  
6 the project and see whether that's a permitable  
7 project for their own individual permits, rather  
8 than just the overall route permit, they each have  
9 their own approval authorities, and so wetlands is  
10 something that we look at very closely in our  
11 document.

12                   MS. MARLENE DEBOEF: One more question.  
13 There's a preferred route and an alternate route and  
14 you said that they had to present two. But is the  
15 preferred route the really preferred route and the  
16 alternate is just because you have to have a second?

17                   MR. LANGAN: Thank you for asking that  
18 question. Minnesota law asks the utility to name  
19 one route a preferred route. But that they need to  
20 also establish an alternate to that route so they  
21 need to propose the two routes.

22                   Each route, you know, one is called the  
23 preferred, one is called the alternative; however,  
24 both are reviewed using the same criteria. So in  
25 the Public Utilities Commission's eyes, there's not

1 necessarily a preferred route in their eyes, they  
2 don't give special preference to that. They're  
3 using the same criteria as they review each proposed  
4 route.

5 And that would include, if other route  
6 segments or route alternatives are suggested and  
7 included in the scope, they would review those under  
8 the exact same criteria, looking for how many houses  
9 does it pass and within what distance, what are the  
10 natural resource affects associated with that, what  
11 percentage of the line follows existing corridors.  
12 So all of the routes that we end up studying in our  
13 environmental document are reviewed by the same  
14 criteria.

15 MS. MARLENE DEBOEF: Thank you.

16 MR. LANGAN: Thank you.

17 Please.

18 MS. SUE HINRICHS: Sue Hinrichs,  
19 H-I-N-R-I-C-H-S. I know you mentioned this earlier  
20 in the meeting about the wind companies. Now, the  
21 wind company, Horizon, that's going in, that's  
22 supposedly going in, can they hook up into your  
23 substation?

24 MR. LANGAN: Tom, do we have -- do you  
25 have somebody that can answer that?

1 MR. HILLSTROM: Grant, do you want to  
2 take that one?

3 MR. STEVENSON: Sure. Can you repeat the  
4 question?

5 MS. SUE HINRICHS: The question is, can  
6 the wind development company tap into your  
7 substations that you have proposed, the two  
8 substations?

9 MR. STEVENSON: I'm Grant Stevenson, I  
10 work for Xcel Energy and I'm the project manager.

11 And the answer is yes. There's a process  
12 by which a wind company, large or small, need to  
13 make an application to a utility oversight group  
14 called the Midwest Independent System Operator and  
15 go through several study steps. And that is the  
16 process by which they determine where they would  
17 connect. So, yes, they could propose to connect  
18 into any of the transmission lines that you see in  
19 the area.

20 MS. SUE HINRICHS: Thank you.

21 MR. LANGAN: Sir.

22 MR. BOB BIRD: My name is Bob Bird,  
23 B-I-R-D. I'm on 52 and I'm one of the eight houses  
24 where you're looking at taking the whole thing if  
25 they pass within that 75 foot, so I'm kind of

1 wondering how we're going to get compensated and who  
2 all has to get involved in this.

3 MR. LANGAN: One second.

4 Okay. I guess we have to get pretty  
5 close to the microphone so everyone can hear.

6 MR. BOB BIRD: I'm one of the eight  
7 houses that you guys are looking at transitioning on  
8 52 there. And we want to know what's going on, how  
9 are we going to be compensated, what are you going  
10 to replace, what are you taking? If you want 75  
11 foot that denotes the whole home place, so we want  
12 to have somebody tell us what's going on with that.

13 MR. LANGAN: Sure. Tom, if you want to  
14 take that question.

15 MR. HILLSTROM: The routes that we've  
16 shown on our maps have been looked at by our  
17 engineers and they've done a preliminary engineering  
18 design on those. Based on that preliminary  
19 engineering design, we would not need to take any  
20 houses out of the way. In other words, the houses  
21 are more than 75 feet from where we would propose to  
22 put the lines. So, the line will fit there, but in  
23 some cases there are houses pretty close to the line  
24 and there's tree clearing associated with the route.  
25 And in most cases we were able to go to the other

1 side of the road to avoid those kind of situations,  
2 but there may be some situations where we can't do  
3 that.

4 In the case where we can't do that, the  
5 line would fit through there, and then you would  
6 have to be compensated for that easement purchase.  
7 And there is a provision in the law, it's called the  
8 Buy the Farm provision, where if you're not happy  
9 with how that line sits on your property, you can  
10 ask the utility to purchase your entire parcel. So  
11 that is an option for a landowner.

12 MR. BOB BIRD: Okay. How are we  
13 compensated for crop loss? Is that through a local  
14 elevator or what?

15 MR. HILLSTROM: I'm not exactly sure how  
16 they calculate the dollar value for crop loss, but  
17 it's done based on some sort of an agricultural  
18 estimate, it's commonly used estimate, it's a fair  
19 payment. If you're interested in exactly how it's  
20 calculated, our right-of-way agent is in the back of  
21 the room and she can describe the details of that.

22 MR. BOB BIRD: Okay. And how much room  
23 are they going to be taking up to erect this stuff?

24 MR. HILLSTROM: For construction?

25 MR. BOB BIRD: You got six poles on the

1 land already and if you're taking all of those out  
2 and hanging these new ones up, you know, it's --

3 MR. HILLSTROM: Okay.

4 MR. BOB BIRD: It's not going to be done  
5 in the driveway, so I was kind of wondering.

6 MR. HILLSTROM: So your question is  
7 during the construction how much room is going to be  
8 taken up?

9 MR. BOB BIRD: Yeah.

10 MR. HILLSTROM: Well, that 150-foot  
11 easement that we build the line in is enough space  
12 for us to work within, so it's very rare that we'd  
13 need to use land outside of that easement area.

14 MR. BOB BIRD: Yeah, you got to come  
15 look, 'cause that's not how the numbers are. 'Cause  
16 the poles are already on the 75-foot and 80-foot  
17 line there. 'Cause you said MnDOT gave you guys  
18 five foot back towards the highway in the document,  
19 and we're inside of that easily.

20 MR. HILLSTROM: Yeah, there are cases  
21 where there are some site-specific concerns, and  
22 maybe what we can do is after the formal part of  
23 this meeting you can show me exactly where you live  
24 and we can talk about that.

25 MR. BOB BIRD: Okay. Thanks.

1 MR. LANGAN: Yes, sir.

2 MR. DAVID ARNDT: David Arndt, A-R-N-D-T.

3 I have the sheet map that was given a  
4 long time ago and on sheet map 17 is where my  
5 property is. And I was wondering if the larger  
6 kilovolt line would be able to go further north to  
7 get it away from Pine Island, the city of Pine  
8 Island, and it would just so happen that it would  
9 remove it from my land too. But if that could not  
10 be done, they do head south on the east perimeter of  
11 one of our properties, and it's a quarter of a mile  
12 that they go south and then they go right through  
13 the middle of my other property, and I was wondering  
14 if they could go to 500th Street and Number 11, at  
15 least they could follow the property lines. And  
16 I've talked to my neighbor, Norm Miller, and he said  
17 it would be all right with him to follow the north  
18 line on his 80 that's next to mine, because it would  
19 have to go through his other land on the other side  
20 of 220th Avenue and it would go through his land no  
21 matter which way it went through. So those are my  
22 comments.

23 MR. LANGAN: Okay. Thank you very much.  
24 There's some scuttling around, I think we're going  
25 to try and fix the mic a little bit here.

1 MR. HILLSTROM: I'm going to see if this  
2 mic works a little better.

3 MR. LANGAN: I think we just need to get  
4 up as close to the microphone as we can, but it  
5 sounds like this is working better.

6 Okay. Yes, sir.

7 MR. NORM MILLER: Norm Miller,  
8 M-I-L-L-E-R. And I live in Section 26 of Pine  
9 Island Township. I am Mr. Arndt's neighbor and  
10 actually I had another question too. Can I farm  
11 right up to the base of the tower if it's on my  
12 property?

13 MR. HILLSTROM: (Nods yes.)

14 MR. NORM MILLER: And in reference to  
15 what Dave said, I would like to see that line moved  
16 some so that it follows the half section line  
17 instead of going on a quarter section line, so maybe  
18 you could take a look at that sometime and see if  
19 that would be feasible.

20 MR. HILLSTROM: (Nods yes.)

21 MR. NORM MILLER: And if I have any  
22 neighbors that would rather have it on their  
23 property, you can have it. Thank you.

24 MR. LANGAN: Thank you. Just to clarify,  
25 we got a nod to the answer, but yes, the answer was



1 interference -- this thing is cutting out -- if  
2 there is interference, will the power company  
3 mitigate the problem in some way?

4 MR. LANGAN: I'm going to turn that over  
5 to Tom because there are ways to mitigate or avoid  
6 those types of issues.

7 MR. HILLSTROM: Grant.

8 MR. STEVENSON: Okay. Our general train  
9 of thought is if we break it, we fix it. So if we  
10 cause interference, it's our obligation to fix it.

11 Now, we can look later, you know, some of  
12 you who have suggested alternate routes, we can  
13 print out maps and help you mark them out, and in  
14 your case, try to look in the proximity.

15 The only instance I've heard of any  
16 radio, telephone, cell phone type interference is in  
17 the direct shadow of a pole. And then that's even  
18 very rare. We've had other instances where a gas  
19 station was concerned about satellite reception, all  
20 their credit card transactions go over the satellite  
21 system. They had their antennas on the ground, I'm  
22 used to seeing them on the roof. Today, down in  
23 Jackson, Minnesota, their satellite antennas are  
24 looking right through the wires and they've not  
25 reported any problems. So theoretically it's

1 possible, but very unlikely. And if there is a  
2 problem, we feel like we're obligated to remedy the  
3 situation.

4 And on the microphone, it may be -- these  
5 things are very directional, so when you turn to the  
6 side it might not pick you guys up very well, so  
7 that will help.

8 MR. QUINN FEUERSTEIN: That's what I was  
9 doing.

10 MR. STEVENSON: So eat the microphone, is  
11 what I was always told.

12 MR. LANGAN: Okay. Other comments or  
13 questions?

14 Okay. Yes, please, down here.

15 MR. TOM WYTASKE: Tom Wytaske,  
16 W-Y-T-A-S-K-E. I'm on the 161 K alternate route.  
17 Right now I have a 345 and a 69 K on my property. I  
18 live in the city limits of Pine Island, which is 810  
19 Fifth Street Southwest.

20 A couple of questions. What is the  
21 easement width for the 161 and what distance does it  
22 have to be from an existing line? And if that land  
23 is development land for single-family housing, can a  
24 street be built under the power lines, parallel,  
25 directly under, or do they have to be out of the

1 150?

2 Let's see. If it does come that way, can  
3 the 161 be added to the 345? Can it follow the 69 K  
4 route instead of along the 345? And if you do come  
5 out there, can it be on the west side, at least?

6 Now, my comments. I'm a customer, a  
7 shareholder, I'm a birder and I ride bike, cycles.  
8 Of course, this involves the Douglas Trail. As a  
9 customer and shareholder, with the alternate route  
10 there's extra costs which comes out of my pocket,  
11 either way, as a customer and shareholder. As a  
12 birder and a bicyclist, the preferred route is the  
13 shorter distance touching the Douglas Trail. I  
14 would definitely prefer having it go to the third.  
15 And besides, I already have two lines on my  
16 property, I don't want another one. Thanks.

17 MR. LANGAN: Thank you for those  
18 comments. And I think, Tom, that's a 10-part  
19 question to you.

20 MR. TOM WYTASKE: Go one by one.

21 MR. HILLSTROM: I'll do my best to  
22 remember all the parts.

23 The first question was what's the  
24 right-of-way on a 161 line. And we talked about the  
25 345 being 150 feet, a 161 line would be an 80-foot

1 right-of-way width. And another thing that you  
2 asked about is if that 161 line were built next to  
3 an existing transmission line, how close could it  
4 get to that existing transmission line. And in this  
5 case I think you're talking about an area where  
6 there's already a 345 line, so I'm just going to  
7 talk in generalities here, I'm not the engineer, and  
8 even if I was an engineer I'd have to do some  
9 calculations to really answer that question. But  
10 assuming you have a 150-foot right-of-way for an  
11 existing transmission line and you wanted to build a  
12 new line next to it on an 80-foot easement, then if  
13 you add those two together it would give you 150  
14 plus 80 feet, which would be a 230-foot wide  
15 easement.

16 Now, some of that easement can be  
17 overlapped. So what I'm saying is that there is an  
18 amount of that easement that can be overlapped so  
19 that the 161 line can be built a bit closer to the  
20 345 line if it were built right next to it. And I'm  
21 not exactly sure of just how much closer it can be  
22 built. Maybe 30 feet, maybe that 230 feet could be  
23 narrowed down to 200 feet. But, again, that would  
24 be a question that an engineer would have to  
25 calculate.

1           In the area that you asked about, you  
2           asked if a new 161 line could be built onto the  
3           existing 345 line. And it could, but we did not  
4           propose that because it's very expensive to do that.  
5           In a case where we're building a new 345 line and we  
6           want to build a smaller line onto the structures  
7           that we're building the new line on, well, then,  
8           that just involves removing some smaller structures  
9           and putting it on the big structure that we're  
10          building there anyways.

11           In this case, where we're building a  
12          smaller line and adding a bigger line to it, that  
13          would mean that we'd have to build very much bigger  
14          structures than we would if we just built the small  
15          line. So it adds a whole lot of costs. And we had  
16          this question last night, too, and Grant gave me  
17          this calculation about how much more it would cost.  
18          And the 161 kilovolt lines generally cost \$600,000  
19          per mile. The 345/161 double circuit would cost  
20          about a million and a half dollars per mile. So  
21          what that tells me is that the idea of consolidating  
22          a smaller line with an existing bigger line adds  
23          about \$900,000 per mile. So that's the reason we  
24          didn't propose it, just because it does have that  
25          extra cost. And in our judgment, that cost wasn't



1 the line.

2 MR. HILLSTROM: And the last question was  
3 can streets be built, or can these lines be built  
4 next to streets. And the answer is yes.

5 In the case of a 161 line, the 80-foot  
6 easement that would be needed, up to half of that  
7 easement can be shared with a road right-of-way. So  
8 there obviously has to be some safety clearance  
9 between the travel lane and an obstruction, but just  
10 whatever is needed outside of that safety clearance,  
11 the pole could be built so that the base of the pole  
12 is right on that property boundary between the road  
13 right-of-way and the private property, so about half  
14 of that easement would share with the road  
15 right-of-way.

16 MR. TOM WYTASKE: I have one more  
17 question. The last question is the Douglas Trail.  
18 If it follows the Douglas Trail, are trees going to  
19 have to be removed or how far away will it be from  
20 the trail?

21 MR. HILLSTROM: Yeah, in some cases trees  
22 would have to be removed. Where we did parallel  
23 that trail with the route, we did our best to -- in  
24 some places there are roads that are parallel with  
25 the trail and there's a gap between the roads and

1 the tree line, and then there are other places where  
2 the line could be built away from the trail. And  
3 it's sort of a tradeoff. The pole bases would be  
4 farther in the agricultural field to save the trees,  
5 and it's something that still has not been  
6 determined. It's sort of one of those tradeoffs.  
7 You could clear the trees or you could end up with a  
8 pole more in the middle of somebody's field, so  
9 that's something that would have to be determined  
10 still.

11 MR. LANGAN: Okay. Thank you.

12 Other questions? Yes, sir.

13 MR. DAVID ARNDT: Dave Arndt, A-R-N-D-T.  
14 I'm representing the township this time.

15 And there are several -- well, actually,  
16 500th Street and 210th Avenue that the 161 kilovolt  
17 line will go on, and I was wondering, you kind of  
18 touched on it, that you can take half the  
19 right-of-way. Which side of the road do you go on  
20 then for the other half of the right-of-way you  
21 need? I just so happen to have land where that is,  
22 too.

23 MR. HILLSTROM: What we show on the maps  
24 back there, in the middle of our routes is the  
25 center line. And in a case where there's a house on

1 one side of the road and there's no house on the  
2 other side of the road, it's just logical for us to  
3 be on the opposite side of the road.

4 Now, there are some places where it costs  
5 a lot of money and it's not acceptable to the road  
6 authority to make a lot of those zigzags, but on  
7 these 161 lines and on these smaller roads, the  
8 township roads and the county roads, it is -- it's  
9 quite easy to cross over the road. Where you go  
10 down one side of the road and there's a house with  
11 some trees around it, we understand the value of  
12 those shelter belts and you don't want the trees  
13 removed around your house, and so in that case we  
14 understand that it's best to go on the other side of  
15 the road. So where there is that opportunity to go  
16 on the other side of the road, well, that's where  
17 we'll go.

18 MR. LANGAN: Other questions or comments?

19 MR. ZACK GROVE: Can I have the cordless?

20 MR. LANGAN: Yes.

21 MR. ZACK GROVE: My name is Zack Grove.  
22 I live at 16016 445th Street, Section 26, Minneola  
23 Township.

24 MR. LANGAN: Can you spell your name?

25 MR. ZACK GROVE: G-R-O-V-E. And I guess

1 where the line's coming out of Hampton, it crosses  
2 the Zumbro River and then it turns and heads south  
3 going -- not going through Zumbrota. And I guess  
4 the impact of that, I don't understand what the --  
5 with the easement already being there with 52, why  
6 they're not taking that. It's going across an  
7 active gravel pit, going by the preferred route, so  
8 what are the impacts of that, too?

9 MR. LANGAN: Thanks. Tom, do you want to  
10 talk about that?

11 MR. HILLSTROM: Sure. And the area that  
12 you're talking about is coming down 52 just north of  
13 Zumbrota where our preferred route goes off of 52  
14 and goes straight south just west of Zumbrota. We  
15 looked at the idea of continuing on 52 through  
16 Zumbrota, and that's a fair comment, because of our  
17 emphasis on following roads and those existing  
18 corridors, but we found -- or in our analysis it  
19 seemed better to follow that property boundary route  
20 that does deviate from Highway 52 to the south, and  
21 for a couple of reasons.

22 One of the reasons is in our substation  
23 siting area it works best to come into a substation  
24 from the west and you exit from the east, instead  
25 of, if we had stayed on 52 all the way down to the

1           substation siting area, we would have a line that  
2           would have to come from 52 into the substation and  
3           back out on that same path. And so just from a  
4           routing standpoint and a substation configuration  
5           standpoint, it was better to us to come into that  
6           substation from the west and that meant having to  
7           get off of 52 at some point and come into that  
8           substation siting area from the west. So that was  
9           one consideration.

10                       The other consideration was that there  
11           are some obstructions and some buildings through  
12           Zumbrota, we found that property boundary to be  
13           fairly clear of houses and buildings, not completely  
14           clear, but in our analysis and, like I said, we go  
15           by kind of a systematic, scientific analysis, that  
16           oftentimes doesn't take into account local knowledge  
17           and local values. But in our systematic analysis we  
18           made the judgment that that route on property  
19           boundaries west of Zumbrota was better than  
20           continuing on Highway 52.

21                       MR. ZACK GROVE: I guess you're following  
22           it through Cannon Falls, which is a much heavily  
23           populated area than going through Zumbrota. And  
24           also touch on and going across a gravel pit. Is it  
25           a pole you're going to move as they're mining

1 material out, or where are you at with that?

2 MR. HILLSTROM: That's a fair question  
3 and that would have to be worked out with the owner  
4 of the gravel pit. We have not talked to them yet.  
5 What we would have to do is every 1,000 feet or so  
6 we would have to place a structure. And so that  
7 gives us some pretty good flexibility to span areas  
8 that are being worked in the gravel pit, but we want  
9 to be staying away from unstable soils or things  
10 like that, so that still has to be worked out.

11 And your question about Cannon Falls.  
12 You're right about that, we do stay on Highway 52  
13 through Cannon Falls, and the main reason for that  
14 is the Cannon River and the Little Cannon River go  
15 near Cannon Falls and we need to get across the  
16 Cannon River as well. And when we come to a river  
17 crossing, the best place to cross that river to  
18 minimize the impact of the river and Lake Byllesby  
19 would be to stay on an existing crossing of that  
20 river. And the existing crossing that was there,  
21 that we saw as an opportunity, is Highway 52. And  
22 if you follow Highway 52 across the Cannon River,  
23 that puts you kind of right in the middle of Cannon  
24 Falls. And so that's why we made the judgment that  
25 staying on Highway 52 through Cannon Falls was the

1 best route there.

2 MR. LANGAN: Sir.

3 MR. DAN RUDE: Hi. Dan Rude, I'm Zack's  
4 father-in-law. R-U-D-E.

5 And what about induction? They're going  
6 to have a baby here in a month and the line is 75  
7 feet from their house. That kid will not be able to  
8 play out there.

9 MR. LANGAN: For my part, we do evaluate  
10 any potential human health effects associated with  
11 the line.

12 MR. DAN RUDE: Have you ever been  
13 underneath a transmission line?

14 MR. LANGAN: I have. I have.

15 MR. DAN RUDE: You know what I'm talking  
16 about then.

17 MR. LANGAN: This is an issue that's been  
18 studied extensively and it's been studied for about  
19 30 years. The information that we use in studying  
20 it is studies from the World Health Organization,  
21 from the Minnesota Department of Health, also in  
22 sort of the five state region, those states have  
23 studied it as well. And so we draw from those  
24 studies and that information in our environmental  
25 document that we'll put together in draft form.

1           If there's more information that's out  
2           there that we miss, we'd like to hear from folks and  
3           we can incorporate that, we can review that and  
4           include that information, respond to those questions  
5           in the final environmental impact statement. So  
6           that is an issue that we look real closely at.

7           MR. DAN RUDE: Okay. And what impact  
8           does it have, like, if you've got a certified  
9           organic farm?

10          MR. LANGAN: That's an issue we can  
11          study. And we've got that down as a comment. If  
12          there are certified organic farms along the route,  
13          certainly ones that you know of or that other folks  
14          know of, we'd like to know about them. And we can  
15          look at that and see how -- if that's compatible  
16          with that land use and what potential effects there  
17          are there and ways to avoid or mitigate those  
18          impacts.

19          MR. DAN RUDE: And you talk about tree  
20          trimming. If it is a certified organic farm, you  
21          can't be spraying, because now you're taking -- I  
22          mean, there's a lot of land that's involved with  
23          that then. Do they do that? Do they not spray?

24          MR. LANGAN: Tom, if you will, you can  
25          talk about the operations.

1                   MR. HILLSTROM: Yeah. And I, myself,  
2                   have not run across a project that had to go across  
3                   an organic farm, but I have heard of others that  
4                   have, so my knowledge is kind of secondhand.

5                   But we can't jeopardize your organic farm  
6                   standing. And that would mean that, you know,  
7                   during construction, you know, if we pass from one  
8                   farm that's not organic to a farm that is organic,  
9                   we would have to comply with anything that was  
10                  required to make sure that we didn't track any  
11                  chemicals onto that organic farm. And the same with  
12                  the spraying, I mean, if you have an organic farm,  
13                  it just makes sense that we wouldn't go spraying  
14                  pesticides through that area, so we would not do  
15                  that.

16                 MR. DAN RUDE: Okay. And then who  
17                 decides the fair market value when you do these  
18                 assessments and pay for easements?

19                 MR. HILLSTROM: The utilities, once they  
20                 get a permit, they can't build the line unless we  
21                 get an easement. So what happens after we get a  
22                 permit, a right-of-way agent will go out and  
23                 approach the landowners and discuss an offer with  
24                 them. And the utility will make an offer to the  
25                 landowner and the landowner can look at the offer

1 and discuss that with the utilities. And in the  
2 end, if the land-owning utility can't arrive at an  
3 agreed on price -- and normally we can, I mean, this  
4 is usually -- we do this a lot and it's very rare  
5 that a price isn't negotiated, and we have a very  
6 strong track record of giving fair easement  
7 payments.

8 MR. DAN RUDE: You haven't met my wife.

9 MR. HILLSTROM: Well, in the case that  
10 the utility and the landowner can't agree on a  
11 price, then the landowner has the option of bringing  
12 the process to the eminent domain proceeding. And  
13 that's a proceeding where an independent commission  
14 is convened, where you get three local appraisers  
15 from your neighborhood and they hear both sides of  
16 the story and in the end they are the one that will  
17 agree on the price.

18 MR. DAN RUDE: Okay. Thank you.

19 MR. LANGAN: Okay. Other questions or  
20 comments?

21 MR. CHARLES DEWITZ: Yeah, I got another  
22 issue, I guess, on the smaller line. I'm Charles  
23 Dewitz again.

24 And I've got a platted subdivision and I  
25 have an almost 400-acre general development plan

1 done on 60th Avenue in Rochester. And I was kind of  
2 wondering, I know there's the 161 volt line that is  
3 going to come up through there, what side of 60th  
4 Avenue that that line might be on?

5 We have some commercial districts on that  
6 property that have gone through the general  
7 development stage, and it's a special zoning, it's  
8 called a special district that we have down there  
9 that requires some closer setbacks, closer to the  
10 property lines than farther away. And that would  
11 really impact. We could have a five-story building  
12 in that commercial area right up to the property  
13 line, and I don't want anybody reaching out the  
14 window and touching a high voltage line either.

15 So just kind of wondering maybe if that  
16 could be taken into account when they're looking at  
17 what side of 60th Avenue to place that line. And I  
18 know I've talked to people before on it, and yet you  
19 can move them, but I also heard, you know, it's  
20 probably \$75,000 each time you want to jog one for  
21 another pole there, keep winding it back and forth  
22 across the road. So it's a money issue also, but it  
23 would have a big impact on us, where we've already  
24 given the right-of-ways, dedicated them, they're  
25 drawn out, it would make a big impact on our

1 commercial development there. Thanks.

2 MR. LANGAN: Thank you. Other questions  
3 or comments?

4 Okay. If no one has any more questions  
5 or comments, we will be around if you want to have  
6 conversations with us individually. We've still got  
7 the maps set up in the back of the room, we've got  
8 the computer set up for individual maps if that  
9 would help with the comments that you provide in  
10 writing, we're happy to print you out some maps.

11 But a couple things. One, remember that  
12 written comments are due to us by May 20th at this  
13 stage, and to encourage you, if you want to continue  
14 to track the review process, to sign up on our  
15 project mailing list so we can get you materials as  
16 you go through.

17 With that, thank you very much for  
18 attending today, we appreciate it. Thank you.

19 (Meeting concluded at 3:26 p.m.)

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