



Minnesota Department of Transportation

Office of Land Management

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Bill Storm, State Permit Manager
Minnesota Department of Commerce
Energy Facility Permitting
85 7th Place East, Suite 500
St. Paul, Minnesota 55101-2198

RE: In the Matter of Route Permit Application by Xcel Energy and Great River Energy for the Chaska Area Transmission Line Upgrade Project
PUC Docket Number: E002/TL-12-401

Dear Mr. Storm,

On September 7th 2012, the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (PUC) issued a Notice of Public Information and Scoping Meeting and a request for comment regarding the route permit for the Xcel Energy and Great River Energy Chaska Area Transmission Line Upgrade in Carver and Scott Counties. The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) has reviewed the application regarding the proposed project and submits the following comments in response to the Notice.

MnDOT appreciates the opportunity to comment on the scope of the EA. MnDOT wishes to participate in the development of the EA so that it will contain a thorough evaluation of the effects various route proposals may have on the state transportation system. MnDOT's fundamental interest is to ensure that the EA identifies and quantifies, to the extent possible, any impacts the proposed high voltage transmission line (HVTL) may have on the safety of the transportation system, the effectiveness of the operations or maintenance of the state trunk highway system and any additional costs that may be imposed on the state trunk highway fund as a result of the location of the proposed HVTL.

MnDOT's approach to the HVTLs such as those involved in Xcel Energy and Great River Energy's (Applicants) proposal is to work to accommodate these HVTLs within or as near as feasible to the trunk highway rights of way, based on an evaluation of the specific locations to ensure that appropriate clearance is maintained to preserve the safety of the traveling public and highway workers and the effective operation of the highway system now and in the foreseeable future. MnDOT has adopted a formal policy and procedures for accommodation of utilities on the highway rights-of-way (Utility Accommodation Policy"). A copy of MnDOT's policy can be found at <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/utility/files/pdf/appendix-b.pdf>

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MnDOT's policy seeks to permit utilities to occupy portions of the highway rights-of-way where such occupation does not put the safety of the traveling public or highway workers at risk or unduly impair the public's investment in the transportation system.

A review of the route permit application shows that a portion of the proposed 115kV transmission line crosses and may directly abut state trunk highway (TH) 212 starting at Creek Road and running south to County Road 140. This portion of TH 212 is control-of-access freeway design. Minnesota Rules 8810.3300 Subp.4 requires that utilities such as the Applicant's shall be located outside the control-of-access lines when paralleling such highways.

Additionally, in light of the revised Scott County Substation plans that MnDOT Metro District received, the US 169 Interregional Corridor Management Plan has identified this section of US 169 as a future controlled access facility. These future plans may be affected by the transmission line and substation location proposals. The EA should assess the relationship of the placement of the proposed utility poles and the location of the highway activities for both the current traveled way and the future traveled way since future improvements to the highway may change the proximity of the proposed HVTL and make the line close enough to occupy a portion of the highway right-of-way. More specifically, there is a cooperative agreement/plan between Jackson Township and MnDOT Metro State Aid to relocate the access for the Chaska substation from US 169 to an extension of Bonnevista Drive. This extension of Bonnevista Drive would be required to extend further west to serve another existing development that currently has access only on US 169. The future Bonnevista extension to the west should be platted, and the transmission lines should be placed in such a way as to accommodate the new road.

Highway crossings by utilities generally do not pose insurmountable difficulties in issuing a permit, and MnDOT routinely grants such permits to a variety of types of utilities. These permits usually have conditions associated with them, such as placement of the poles so that they do not become a physical obstruction that might be struck by an errant vehicles or block the visibility of traffic. MnDOT also does not permit utilities to run diagonally across intersections and prefers that crossings occur as close to right angles as possible. MnDOT has a long history of working with the Applicants to establish appropriate conditions in locations where the utility seeks to cross a trunk highway.

On page 71 of the route permit application, the Applicants state their intention to work with MnDOT on future highway planning, that transmission line planning will be conducted in accordance with MnDOT policies, and that they will follow MnDOT's Utility Accommodation Policy. On page 94 of the route permit application, the Applicants note that they will need to obtain a permit from MnDOT and that they will work with MnDOT in obtaining said permit. It should be noted that the Applicants may need several different types of Utility Permits including but not limited to Form 2525 (Application for Utility Permit on Trunk Highway Right of Way) and not just the Application for Utility Permit on County Highways Right-of-Way form as stated. MnDOT acknowledges these statements by the Applicants and has a continuing interest in working with the

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Applicants to ensure that possible impacts to highways and other significant areas of highway right of way are adequately addressed. We appreciate the opportunity to provide these comments.

Sincerely,



Stacy Kotch
Utility Transmission Route Coordinator
Minnesota Department of Transportation

cc: Tod Sherman – MnDOT Metro Planning
Sage Tauber – Xcel Energy
Carole Schmidt - GRE

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