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SCOPING AND INFORMATIONAL MEETING
MENA HGA - MARCH 24, 2015 - 6:00 P.M.
BEFORE THE MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
AND DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

In the Matter of the Application of Great River Energy
and Minnesota Power for a Certificate of Need and a Route
Permit for the Menahga Area 115 kV Transmission Project
in Hubbard, Wadena and Becker Counties, Minnesota

MPUC DOCKET NOS. ET-2,E-015/CN-14-787
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Menahga Senior Center
19 Cedar Avenue
Menahga Minnesota

March 24, 2015

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1 MS. TRACY SMETANA: Good evening,
2 everyone. My name is Tracy Smetana, I'm the public
3 advisor with the Minnesota Public Utilities
4 Commission. And we are here for a public
5 information and scoping meeting for the proposed
6 Menahga Area Transmission Project. Kind of a
7 mouthful.

8 You can see on the cover page here I do
9 have what we call the Public Utilities Commission
10 docket numbers for the two pieces of this puzzle, if
11 you will. And these are sort of the keys to finding
12 information at the Commission. So those docket
13 numbers are important to keep in mind when you're
14 communicating with folks about the project.

15 Briefly, our agenda for tonight. I'll be
16 speaking a little bit about the certificate of need
17 and route permit process. Great River Energy will
18 provide some information about the project. The
19 Department of Commerce will talk about the
20 environmental review that will happen for this
21 project. And then the main event, of course, would
22 be your comments and questions.

23 So I always like to start out with a
24 little introduction of who is the Public Utilities
25 Commission anyway? I'm guessing a lot of folks

1 maybe haven't heard of us before or haven't
2 communicated with us before. I can tell you before
3 I started working for the Public Utilities
4 Commission I had no idea such a thing existed.

5 So we regulate permitting for power
6 plants, pipelines, and transmission lines, which is
7 why we're here this evening. We also regulate local
8 and in-state long-distance telephone companies as
9 well as rates and services for investor-owned
10 electric and natural gas utilities.

11 We have five commissioners that are
12 appointed by the governor. They serve staggered
13 terms. So they don't all come in when we get a new
14 governor, some are appointed by our current governor
15 and some have been appointed by governors past. And
16 for those commissioners it is full-time employment.
17 So it's a little bit different than, say, you know,
18 the Menahga City Council where folks have a day job
19 and they do the city council thing on the side, so
20 to speak. For our commissioners it is full-time
21 employment for them. We also have about 50 staff
22 that help them do their regulatory work.

23 So why is it that we care about this
24 particular project? Well, the statutes and rules
25 call this project that Great River Energy is

1 proposing a large energy facility. And so this is
2 what a large energy facility is according to the
3 rules. It's based on capacity and length, and in
4 that case it requires what we call a certificate of
5 need. So the question is there a need
6 for this project. And I've provided information on
7 the statutes and rules that apply to that.

8 This proposed project is also what the
9 rules and statutes call a high voltage transmission
10 line. It will operate at 100 kilovolts or more and
11 it's greater than 1500 feet in length. When that's
12 the case, then it requires what we call a route
13 permit from the Public Utilities Commission. In
14 other words, where is it going to go.

15 Next we'll get into a little bit about
16 who is who. As you can imagine, we have a lot of
17 terminology that's going to be unfamiliar to folks.
18 First off, we refer to the companies that are asking
19 for the certificate of need and route permit as the
20 applicant. In this case, the applicant, there's two
21 of them, Great River Energy and Minnesota Power. So
22 if you hear the term applicant, we're talking about
23 those companies.

24 We also have the Department of Commerce.
25 There's two different groups within Commerce that

1 will participate in this process. The first is the
2 Energy Environmental Review and Analysis group. You
3 might see that abbreviated as EERA. And they're
4 another state agency and their job is to conduct the
5 environmental review. And you'll hear more about
6 that a little bit later. The other part of Commerce
7 that participates in this process is called the
8 Energy Regulation and Planning division. Again, a
9 state agency, and their job is to represent the
10 public interest when utilities ask to change their
11 rates, services, facilities, and so on.

12 Later on in the process we will have the
13 Office of Administrative Hearings, again, another
14 abbreviation, sometimes you'll see that as OAH,
15 another state agency, where we'll have an
16 administrative law judge that will hold public
17 hearings and will summarize the facts in the record
18 and write a report for the Public Utilities
19 Commission.

20 At the Public Utilities Commission, in
21 addition to the commissioners which I already
22 mentioned, there are a couple different staff people
23 that you may interact with. The first is our energy
24 facilities planner and their job is to deal with
25 sort of the technical aspects of the record.

1 Assisting and building the record, informs
2 commissioners on the impacts of various decision
3 alternatives. And then the other is the public
4 advisor, and that's me, and my job is to help you
5 figure out how to navigate through this process. In
6 each case, the Commission staff members are neutral,
7 we don't give legal advice, and we don't advocate
8 for one party or another.

9 So how does the Public Utilities
10 Commission decide when a company comes forward
11 asking for permission to build this type of project.
12 I'm not going to read through this whole list, but
13 just to let you know there is a long list of items
14 in statute and rule that tells the Commission these
15 are the things you have to consider before you can
16 grant these permits.

17 And so a lot of these are certainly areas
18 that you're interested in as well. What the
19 statutes and rule do not do, however, is rank them.
20 So what's going to happen throughout the process is
21 some people might say, well, you know, it's most
22 important to use existing rights-of-way. Someone
23 else might say it's most important to avoid people.
24 And so in the end the commissioners will have to
25 decide which priority wins over and where it's going

1 to go if it does indeed grant the permit.

2 If there is a permit issued, some of the
3 terms you might see there are a permitted route.
4 And that's sort of the route from point A to point
5 B. The route width can vary up to a mile and a
6 quarter along that route. As we get smaller, there
7 is the right-of-way. And that's a term that a lot
8 of folks are familiar with. That's the actual land
9 required within that route for the construction,
10 maintenance, and operation of the line. As we get
11 smaller yet, it is what we call the anticipated
12 alignment and that's the actual anticipated location
13 of the line and poles. So you can see we just get
14 narrower and narrower as we go down the line here.

15 Now, here's a picture of what the review
16 process looks like. And you can see we're right
17 here. So we're pretty early on in the process. The
18 first step is the company submits an application.
19 And when you see that term application accepted, all
20 that means is the company provided all the
21 information needed to begin the review process. It
22 doesn't mean anything has been approved, all it
23 means is, yep, we've got an application, let's start
24 working on it.

25 And so the Department of Commerce will

1 talk about the environmental aspects over here.
2 Later on we'll be back with that administrative law
3 judge to hold a public hearing. And then there will
4 be continued review of the facts in the case. The
5 judge will write a report. And ultimately the
6 Public Utilities Commission will make the decisions
7 on the question of need and on the question of the
8 route for this proposed project.

9 Now, if you're a list person instead of a
10 picture person, this slide is for you. I'm a list
11 person so I like this one better. So you can see,
12 again, we're right here in March 2015 with the
13 information and scoping meeting. We've got a number
14 of steps before we get to a decision point, which
15 today we expect in January of 2016. Now, as you can
16 imagine, as we go through the process, some of these
17 could be adjusted slightly. So don't mark it on
18 your calendar and plan your vacation around it or
19 anything, but this is when we anticipate when things
20 will happen. At this point our best guess is we'll
21 be back for that public hearing in September, okay.

22 Now, as we go through the process there
23 are various opportunities for you to have a chance
24 to weigh in and participate in the process. One of
25 those is by coming to the meeting that you're at

1 tonight. Another is when we ask for comments.
2 We'll send out a notice of comment period. And now
3 you can see this is one from back in January so this
4 one is already closed, but I bring this up to point
5 out that throughout the process we're looking for
6 help answering different questions as we go. And so
7 some key things to look at when you get a notice
8 like this. Here we go again, that docket number,
9 always the key to information.

10 The comment period, there will be a close
11 date and a close time listed on there and so it's
12 important to include your information by the close
13 date. And then there's also a list of topics that
14 are open for comment. And so at this stage we were
15 looking for information on was the application
16 complete, should an advisory task force be appointed
17 and so on. These issues are closed, so you want to
18 make sure you pay attention to which issues are open
19 at the time you're submitting your comments.

20 And so, again, the keys to sending your
21 comments. Include the docket numbers. For this
22 particular project there are two. One is 14-787,
23 the other is 14-797. You want to stick to the
24 topics that are listed as open for comment as much
25 as possible. That's going to be the most help as we

1 move through the process. You don't need to submit
2 your comments more than once. So, for example, if
3 you speak here tonight, you don't also need to send
4 them in writing, okay. Once we have them, we have
5 them, they're in the record. And, again, on that
6 same theme, oral and written comments carry the same
7 weight, so speaking doesn't give you extra credit,
8 writing doesn't give you extra credit, they both
9 give you full credit, okay.

10 We also focus on sort of the quality for
11 versus quantity. So I know in some cases we've had
12 folks decide they wanted a letter writing campaign
13 or a postcard campaign, lots of folks sending in the
14 same comment. It's really not necessary to do that.
15 If you tell us once, you know, the Mississippi River
16 is here, we already know it, you don't need to tell
17 us again and again and again. Once it's in the
18 record, it's in the record.

19 Also, so you know, the comments that are
20 submitted are public information. They will be
21 posted in our online record keeping system so that
22 everyone can see them. So you want to just be
23 careful not to put sensitive information that you
24 don't want others to see in there. And when the
25 Public Utilities Commission is accepting comments,

1 our close time is 4:30 p.m., our close of business
2 is the end of that comment period.

3 Now, there are some ways to get more
4 information if you want to stay in tune with this
5 project. So the first way is through our electronic
6 filing system that we call eDockets. This is where
7 everything that happens in this case is filed. So
8 you can think of it like an electronic file cabinet,
9 everything is in there. So you can go to our
10 website, you select Search eDockets, and then the
11 instructions are there for both the certificate of
12 need and the route permit docket.

13 You also can ask to be added to our
14 project mailing list. When you came in there was an
15 orange card at the table, you can fill that out and
16 hand that to me or to Cezar or to Ray before you
17 leave this evening and we'll make sure you get added
18 to the Commission's project mailing list. You can
19 choose to receive your information by e-mail or U.S.
20 mail. If you forget the orange card tonight and you
21 say, oh, shoot, I really want to be added to that
22 list, you can just call or e-mail our office and
23 we'll make sure you get added.

24 We also have an e-mail subscription list.
25 So if you want to receive an e-mail every time

1 something new comes in, you can subscribe through
2 our website as well. And there's the instructions
3 for that. Because a lot of documents will be filed
4 in these cases, subscribing could end up being more
5 e-mail than some people like to receive. So if that
6 ends up being the case, you can always unsubscribe
7 or you can ask to be on that mailing list that I
8 mentioned previously, which will send you more of
9 the highlights of the case as opposed to every
10 little thing that happens. And this is just a
11 picture of what the subscription page looks like
12 when you go out there. It's not super user friendly
13 so I always like to give people a picture so you
14 know what it's supposed to look like and what you're
15 supposed to fill in when you get there.

16 And, again, at the Commission, there's
17 two different folks that you may interact with as
18 part of the process. The first, again, is me, I'm
19 the public advisor, my name is Tracy Smetana, my
20 contact information is there. And then my
21 counterpart, our energy facilities planner is Cezar
22 Panait, he's in the back. And so if you have
23 questions for either of us, we're happy to answer
24 those for you.

25 With that, I'm going to turn it over to

1 Great River Energy. Thank you.

2 MS. MICHELLE LOMMEL: Thank you, Tracy.

3 I'm Michelle Lommel with Great River
4 Energy. And I represent our land rights area. When
5 I get to the end of my portion of the presentation I
6 will also introduce a few of the other
7 representatives that we have here this evening.
8 They cover other areas. We have a collaborative
9 approach, I guess, when we do our routing on our
10 projects and so we had a number of people that
11 worked on our proposed route for this project.

12 The Menahga project would address the
13 system overloads that are being seen in the area.
14 Currently there's a 34.5 kV system that serves the
15 area and it's aging, it's becoming outdated, and so
16 this new 115 kV transmission line would address
17 that. In addition, it would also serve Minnesota
18 Pipe Line's new pump station, substation that's down
19 in Red Eye Township, that would be on the very
20 southern end of the project.

21 I'll run through this just briefly and
22 then I have some maps that I'll show after this and
23 so I'll run through a little more detail on where
24 the proposed route is. And I would encourage you,
25 if you didn't get a chance to look at the aerial

1 maps in the back, we do have some maps series. You
2 should be able to locate your property if you're
3 right on the proposed project, so certainly take
4 some time to take a look at those also.

5 The first portion of the project on the
6 north end would be a seven mile segment that would
7 come from our Hubbard Substation. This would go
8 over to Minnesota Power's Straight River Substation.
9 And they do propose to build a new substation over
10 where the existing pump station is.

11 A portion of this line would be built to
12 double-circuit standards, which means that we would
13 carry two sets of conductors on each side of the
14 poles, and that portion would be set up for a future
15 project that would be going north. And then from
16 that Straight River Substation, we would be going
17 south for about 15 and a half miles and extending
18 down to the Red Eye Substation. And then in about
19 the middle, just about, of this 15 and a half mile
20 segment, there would be a new 115 kV substation
21 called the Blueberry Sub. And if any of you are
22 familiar with where the Todd-Wadena's existing
23 Menahga distribution substation is, it would be
24 close to that, it would be about a half mile south
25 of that substation, and eventually the plan is that

1 the Menahga Substation would actually be moved to
2 the Blueberry site.

3 The first map that I have. Again, I
4 apologize, I know for those of you sitting back
5 further, you're not going to be able to see a whole
6 lot on here. Here is the Hubbard Substation over on
7 the right. And we propose to follow a 34.5 kV
8 transmission line that's out there. That
9 transmission line is owned by MP and it does need to
10 stay energized so that the Straight River Substation
11 can stay energized while we build our new 115 kV
12 line. But the 34.5 line will be retired when we're
13 complete with the 115 line through this portion.
14 And this is probably the portion of the project that
15 we'd like to construct sooner if the project is
16 approved so that we can keep the pump station that's
17 existing over there energized.

18 And then from the Straight River
19 Substation here on the north end, we would come down
20 about a mile, we would parallel with Minnesota Pipe
21 Line's existing pipeline through this section. And
22 then we would turn on Hubbard Line Road for about
23 three-quarters of a mile. And then we would drop
24 south, we're proposing to be on the east side of
25 County Road 156, or 136, depending on if it's Becker

1 or Wadena County, that's kind of a county line road
2 there. It would follow that south until we get down
3 to Highway 87, and then we propose to go east on the
4 south side of 87 for about three-quarters of a mile.
5 And then we would jump to the north, and then we
6 would actually turn and go south and get to the
7 existing Menahga Substation, and then drop a little
8 further south to the new Blueberry Substation.

9 And from the Blueberry Substation we
10 propose to come out kind of southwesterly and get to
11 109th Avenue. We would be on the west side of 109th
12 Avenue for about a mile and a half. And then we do
13 have a section that we're looking at jumping over to
14 the east side of the road. And then we would come
15 back to the west. Then when we get down to County
16 Road 13, initially we would be on the south side of
17 the road for a short segment, then we would jump to
18 the north side for about a mile, come back to the
19 south side, and then we would stay on the south side
20 all the way up to -- I forget the name of our last
21 road, 139th Avenue. And there we would stay on the
22 west side of the road until we get down to the
23 proposed Red Eye Substation.

24 For the project we have a little bit
25 different terminology, I guess. I think Tracy

1 referred to it as the permitted route. And the term
2 that I have in here is actually route width. And
3 this is a little bit wider area, it gives us some
4 flexibility in placing the line, although we are
5 proposing to have a centerline at this point, but
6 there is, let's say if we had to deal with a feature
7 that may be on one side of the road or another, it
8 does give us some flexibility within this route
9 width, which is 250 feet on each side of actually
10 the road centerlines that are out there, so 500 feet
11 wide total. We do have a couple of sections that
12 are a little bit wider. One was up on the northern
13 end of the project. We have a large wetland that,
14 for those of you who have had a chance to look at
15 the map, we wanted to maybe avoid this large wetland
16 that would be difficult to get across. There also
17 are existing transmission lines out there that we
18 have to navigate around so we need a little bit
19 wider area up there. And then beyond that we just
20 have a little bit wider area around each of the
21 substations that are a part of the project. Part of
22 that is just to give us some flexibility in
23 designing the ins and outs to those substations.

24 And then within that route width or that
25 permitted route, we have the right-of-way. And the

1 right-of-way could also be referred to as the
2 easement. We generally need an easement that's 50
3 feet on each side of the transmission line. So it
4 is quite a bit narrower than that larger route
5 width. And the easement, for those of you who would
6 have an easement on your property, this would also
7 be the legal description of where the transmission
8 line easement would be on your property.

9 As far as where we typically place
10 transmission line structures, generally, if we're
11 following a roadway, we'll try and be just outside
12 of the road right-of-way. And so what that means is
13 a portion of that easement actually overlaps with
14 the road right-of-way. And so typically we end up
15 with an easement that's maybe 55 to 57 feet wide
16 total. And then, again, those poles are just
17 outside of the road right-of-way. We do allow for,
18 you know, if you're cultivating the property, if you
19 have a need to put in fences or future driveways,
20 that is permissible through the easement and, in
21 fact, our easement document actually states that you
22 can go ahead and do those things in the future.
23 When we get into easement acquisition we come out,
24 we present the easement, and also an offer of
25 compensation. And at that time we'll discuss things

1 like tree removal, access that would be needed, our
2 construction practices.

3 As far as the design of the line,
4 typically we're going to have -- the most common
5 structures are going to be this one right here.
6 It's going to be a single-circuit line and wood
7 poles. Generally when we have a section of these
8 types of poles they're spaced roughly 350 feet
9 apart. Of course, that varies depending on terrain
10 and other features that we need to navigate around.

11 This would be an example of a
12 double-circuit structure. So up at the very
13 northern end, northeastern portion of the project,
14 that would be the style of transmission line poles
15 up there, and those are spaced a little closer
16 together.

17 In areas where Todd-Wadena may have
18 distribution lines, if we opt to carry those
19 distribution lines on the transmission line poles,
20 then this is the style of structure that is used
21 with the cross arm lower with the distribution line
22 carried on it. And then we may have some areas
23 where we have either difficult soil types,
24 challenging terrain, things where we need larger
25 stands between the structures, then we could go with

1 something like an H frame structure.

2 As far as the process. Once we negotiate
3 the easement and have that in place, then the
4 construction process, we typically come out, we
5 stake the centerline for the transmission line, they
6 stake where the poles would be placed. And then
7 sometimes they also would stake the edge of where
8 the clearing would be. And then a crew comes in and
9 they clear the trees and the vegetation from the
10 right-of-way. Typically, the transmission line
11 structures are dropped at each location where
12 they're going to be set, they'll usually set them in
13 the ditch and frame them right at that location
14 before they're set. And then once all of the
15 structures are set, which may just be for a section,
16 not the entire project but a certain section, then
17 they'll come back in and string conductor. And then
18 once a project is all complete we come in and do
19 restoration and clean up any damages. They do do a
20 fair amount of cleanup as they go as much as they
21 can, but any of the final restoration is done after
22 the fact once the project is complete.

23 And at this time I just have a few people
24 I'd like to point out. I know they're kind of in
25 the back of the room, but they do represent some

1 other areas at Great River Energy. Again, I
2 represent the land area. We have Mark Strohfus that
3 is helping us out with some of the environmental
4 issues and health issues, I guess. Rick Geneston
5 (phonetic) is our transmission design engineer.
6 Carol Schmidt represents our environmental area and
7 she leads the efforts with this permitting process,
8 we appreciate that. Chuck Lucarella, he's our
9 project manager. And Dave Kemp represents our
10 planning area. And they are critical for coming up
11 with the global need for this project and making the
12 improvements for the area.

13 And next I guess Ray would be up.

14 Thanks.

15 MR. RAY KIRSCH: Thanks, Michelle.

16 Good evening, everyone. My name is Ray
17 Kirsch, I'm with the Minnesota Department of
18 Commerce. I'm the environmental review manager for
19 this project and we'll get into what that means in a
20 minute. I've included on the slide and you have in
21 your packet my e-mail, my phone number. There are
22 also business cards in the back if you need to get
23 ahold of me at any time during this project.

24 There are three things I'd like to talk
25 with you about tonight. One is environmental

1 review, just briefly that concept. Two, the idea of
2 scoping or putting together the table of contents
3 for the document we're going to create together.
4 And then three, how to comment on the project during
5 this time period. And then we'll open it up to your
6 comments.

7 So let's start with the idea of
8 environmental review. The Department of Commerce is
9 tasked with conducting environmental review for
10 transmission lines. And this is a fancy way of
11 saying we'd like to have an objective analysis of
12 the project. Of the impacts, the mitigation
13 measures that we need to know about, putting
14 together these facts in a way that does not
15 advocate, that is just the facts. And the goal here
16 is objective, informed decision-making. So the
17 Public Utilities Commission needs to have these
18 facts in front of them so they can make a good
19 decision. Other state agencies that might issue a
20 permit for this project, for example, a license to
21 cross public waters from the Department of Natural
22 Resources, they need to have the facts in front of
23 them. We don't want to get to the end of the
24 process and say, oop, you know what, here's a fact
25 that we missed. We don't want to have that happen

1 to the extent we can. So that's a part of this
2 process and putting all the facts together early on
3 and having them be part of the process.

4 So for this project we are going to
5 prepare an environmental assessment both for the
6 certificate of need and the route permit. This is a
7 term of art in our business. All it means is that's
8 the name of the document. Here's an example, one
9 that I put together with other staff members for a
10 project in St. Paul. It's a document that looks
11 sort of like the application, it talks about the
12 project and different possible impacts and
13 mitigation measures. I will also say that all the
14 fact-finding that we do has to be put down, written
15 down somewhere, and the environmental assessment is
16 the document that's going to capture that.

17 The first step in putting that together
18 is what we call scoping, which is a fancy word for
19 table of contents. What it really means is what do
20 we need to know, what does the Public Utilities
21 Commission need to know and analyze about this
22 project. We get input from state agencies, from
23 local units of government, and from you. And your
24 voice is very important because you live here. You
25 know the area best, you know the issues that should

1 be brought to the attention of the Public Utilities
2 Commission, so that's the point of this meeting and
3 this comment period.

4 So there's two parts to the scoping
5 because there's a certificate of need and a route
6 permit for this project. The first is related to
7 the certificate of need. And it is what are the
8 human and environmental impacts that we need to know
9 about and that we need to analyze. And what are the
10 strategies that might mitigate these impacts. And
11 one of the strategies is an alternative to the
12 proposed project. So we think about this generally
13 as size, type, and timing.

14 For example, here the applicants have
15 proposed a 115 kV, that's the size, transmission
16 line, that's the type, to be energized, constructed,
17 put in place by 2017. You all may think of a
18 different kind of project that perhaps doesn't
19 happen for a number of years down the road. Or just
20 to throw stuff out off the top of my head, maybe you
21 should install solar panels and provide power to the
22 pump station that way as opposed to building a
23 transmission line. So there may be an alternative
24 to the project itself that still meets the need for
25 the project but doesn't quite look like what's been

1 proposed. Here's what the rule says, and I'll
2 briefly just read it to you so you have a sense of
3 what the rule requires. A person desiring that an
4 alternative or a possible adverse impact of the
5 project be considered shall identify the alternative
6 or impact to be included and provide an explanation
7 of why the alternative or impact should be included
8 and submit all supporting information the person
9 wants the commissioner to consider. So that sounds
10 a little bit daunting. It doesn't have to be that
11 much, it just says if you have an idea for a
12 different kind of project that could meet the need
13 and might mitigate an impact to the project,
14 describe it as best you can, all right.

15 If there is an alternative to the
16 project, it must mitigate a specific impact.
17 There's no sense running around looking at other
18 projects that doesn't mitigate an impact that you're
19 concerned about, right, that's the reason why you
20 propose something. It could be an aesthetic impact,
21 a land use impact, a natural resource impact, or
22 some other impact. And it also has to meet the need
23 for the project. So it has to meet the same need
24 that's been proposed by the applicants.

25 The second part of the scoping process

1 has to do with the route permit. Again, we're
2 asking you what human and environmental impacts do
3 we need to know about, do we need to analyze, so
4 that the Public Utilities Commission can make an
5 informed decision. If there's a strategy that you
6 want to put forward for mitigating those impacts or
7 you've thought about or you want us to investigate,
8 you just heard about it and say this might help,
9 would it help, we want to hear about that. And,
10 finally, one way to mitigate impacts are
11 alternatives to the proposed route.

12 So there is a route that's been proposed
13 by the applicants, Minnesota Power and Great River
14 Energy, there may be another route that also
15 fulfills the need for the project that might
16 mitigate some of the impacts of the project. And
17 here's the rule language. A person desiring a
18 particular site or route be evaluated shall submit
19 to the commissioner during the scoping process --
20 that's where we are right now -- an explanation of
21 why the site or route should be included in the
22 environmental assessment and all supporting
23 information the person wants the commissioner to
24 consider.

25 All right. It's not too heavy a burden,

1 we don't want to make it a heavy burden, we just
2 want to make sure we have the information of the
3 impact you're trying to mitigate. So if you're
4 going to make a comment of this kind, and I
5 encourage you to do so, an alternative route must
6 mitigate a specific impact. In other words, let's
7 say the aesthetic impact on a particular route runs
8 by five homes and you put it on a different route
9 and it also runs by five homes. You may have moved
10 it off of your property, but you've put it on
11 someone else's property that also has the same
12 number and could have the very similar aesthetic
13 impact. Or let's say there's a natural resource
14 impact. There's a mining or a gravel pit, you could
15 move the route off of that and not move it onto
16 another gravel, all right, that would be a good
17 thing, but if you move it from one and put it on
18 another, you haven't mitigated, you've just moved it
19 from one to the other.

20 If you submit an alternative route to me,
21 to our office, it needs to be specific and
22 identifiable. So, if you can, use a map. Or, in
23 addition, write it out. Give it to your neighbor.
24 Give it to someone in your family to read. Ask them
25 if they could draw it out just based on what you've

1 written down. That's a really good test, that's
2 just a good common sense test.

3 I'll stop here and note that we do have a
4 computer set up in the back here in the corner where
5 you could print out a map of your property and its
6 relationship to the proposed transmission line and
7 you could draw on that map. You could just take it
8 home with you for your own edification, but you can
9 use that to make a comment. You can draw on that
10 map, I encourage you to draw on one, and send it to
11 me if you have an alternative or if you have an area
12 where you think there's going to be an impact, or
13 however you want to use that map, they're very
14 valuable. And it has to meet the need for the
15 project. So if you're going to propose an
16 alternative route and it doesn't go down to a
17 substation which can then help pump oil, then you're
18 not meeting the need for the project. So it has to
19 meet the need for the project.

20 And now I'm going to move on to comment.
21 You can comment tonight, tonight's meeting, we'll
22 take verbal comments in just a few minutes. You can
23 complete and submit a comment sheet. The sheets are
24 on the back table. This is what they look like.
25 You do not have to use this sheet. It's a tri-fold,

1 you can fold it up and put a stamp on the back. If
2 you need to use additional sheets, please do. If
3 you want to send a comment in some other form,
4 please do. Again, I encourage you to use a map.
5 You can comment online on the Minnesota Department
6 of Commerce's website. And you can mail, fax, or
7 e-mail me a comment. Here's my address at the
8 Minnesota Department of Commerce in St. Paul and the
9 fax number and the e-mail address.

10 The key point is that comments need to be
11 to me by Friday, April 10th, 2015. So they need to
12 be to me by Friday, April 10th. As Tracy mentioned,
13 the mode of commenting does not matter. You can
14 make a verbal comment, you can comment online, you
15 can send me an e-mail, you can send me a letter,
16 they all carry the same weight, right, you get full
17 credit for each of those.

18 We have a court reporter with us tonight.
19 We're going to start comments here in one second.
20 I'd ask that you come up one speaker at a time.
21 Please state and spell your name for the court
22 reporter. Please limit your comments to a few
23 minutes and maintain respect for others. And if you
24 can, direct your comments or questions to the scope
25 of the environmental assessment.

1 I realize you may have a question that
2 you just want to have answered. We can try and
3 answer, we have a lot of folks who have a lot of
4 knowledge about the project in the room tonight,
5 maybe answering a question first would help you
6 formulate a comment. Or maybe you're thinking about
7 a comment and you just need to know a little bit
8 more so, please, ask a question.

9 So here is a recap of comment topics.
10 We're working on table of contents for this
11 document, for this fact-finding document that will
12 help the Commission make a really good decision, an
13 informed decision. At least they'll have the facts
14 before them. People may disagree about what those
15 facts mean and the value of each of the facts, but
16 they will have the facts before them. What do we
17 need to know, what do we need to analyze. What
18 impacts are you concerned about? What strategies do
19 you have in mind to mitigate those impacts that we
20 should analyze? Are there alternatives to the
21 proposed project that might mitigate an impact, and
22 are there alternatives to the proposed route that
23 might mitigate an impact? All those are the topics
24 that we're going to talk about tonight and through
25 April 10th. And I'll leave that slide up there so

1 that you can look at it and think about it while
2 we're talking here for the next few minutes.

3 So in the back we had a speaker sign-up
4 sheet and I'm going to go off the sheet first and
5 then after we go through that then I'll open it up
6 to a show of hands. We'll have plenty of time here
7 so everyone will get a chance to speak.

8 So the first person who signed up is Lori
9 Elmore. Did I get that right?

10 MS. LORI ELMORE: Yep.

11 MR. RAY KIRSCH: Lori, could you come up?

12 MS. LORI ELMORE: I'm not a public
13 speaker, but --

14 MR. RAY KIRSCH: That's all right. And
15 if you could state and spell your name for the court
16 reporter.

17 MS. LORI ELMORE: Lori, L O R I, Elmore,
18 E-L-M-O-R-E. And I live at 10705 State Highway 87.
19 I'm right on -- right smack dab in the middle of
20 where the proposed line is on Highway 87 where you
21 would jog across to the north side, I'm on the south
22 side, and you propose to jump to the north side and
23 I live right there. So that would mean you're
24 coming down on the south side for clearing and
25 taking out a wind grove, you know, from protection

1 from the north wind, not to mention putting a pole
2 in my front yard.

3 But my greatest concern is the impact it
4 would have on the lady's slippers that are from the
5 county line to 111th. That whole area, both sides
6 of the road. We're talking thousands of lady's
7 slippers, not just the pink ones, but yellow ones
8 and miniature yellows. So that is a major
9 environmental impact.

10 I guess those are my concerns.

11 MR. RAY KIRSCH: All right. Great.
12 Thank you very much.

13 UNIDENTIFIED: Lori, you should have
14 turned the mic on. We couldn't hear you.

15 MS. MICHELLE LOMMEL: I can turn it up.

16 MR. RAY KIRSCH: Okay. Michelle will
17 turn it up just a tad.

18 Okay. We have a couple who marked no,
19 but one person did mark yes. Deanna Malone, is that
20 right?

21 MS. DEANNA MALONE: Oh, that's me, but I
22 thought I was just signing in.

23 MR. RAY KIRSCH: All right. And then
24 also Wayne Hanson? Am I close? No?

25 All right. That's all the people then

1 that got on the list. I apologize if I'm not
2 reading that right. Then let's go to a show of
3 hands. Is there anybody else who would like to make
4 a comment or ask a question?

5 MS. ALICE NEBALA: Yeah. Why aren't we
6 following already the -- what line is that? That
7 pipeline. Why do they not follow that through?
8 That's cleared already, ready to go.

9 MR. RAY KIRSCH: So your question is why
10 don't they follow the pipeline, there's already an
11 oil pipeline that goes actually from the pipeline
12 substation all the way down to where the Red Eye
13 Substation would be proposed. And that would
14 possibly be an alternative route for the project.
15 And it could mitigate certain impacts of the
16 project, I'm not sure. But, yes, it's a
17 possibility.

18 MS. ALICE NEBALA: Is that up for
19 consideration?

20 MR. RAY KIRSCH: You're raising it, so
21 yes.

22 MS. ALICE NEBALA: And how strong is
23 this -- let's see. It sounds like this is pretty
24 well written hard in, that this is what's going to
25 happen regardless.

1 MR. RAY KIRSCH: And I apologize, ma'am,
2 maybe you could give your name to the court
3 reporter.

4 MS. ALICE NEBALA: Oh. Alice Nebala,
5 A-L-I-C-E, N-E-B-A-L-A. 33089 109th Avenue.

6 MR. RAY KIRSCH: So thanks. So this is
7 what's been proposed by the applicants. Projects do
8 change, though. The project that they propose may
9 not be the one that the Commission grants a permit
10 for. So there could be a small change in the route
11 or a change in the alignment or some change in the
12 project that mitigates impacts of the project. And
13 what comes out is slightly different than what was
14 applied for.

15 I would encourage you to, if you think
16 the pipeline is a good way to go, to follow up on
17 that and say what impacts are being mitigated by
18 putting it along the pipeline as opposed to putting
19 it along the roadway. So that my office is clear
20 and the Commission is clear as to what mitigation
21 you're trying to achieve there. I understand you're
22 saying that it's already clear and that sort of
23 thing, but there may be impacts associated with
24 going along the pipeline as well as going along the
25 roadway too.

1 MS. ALICE NEBALA: So this isn't as
2 strong as it sounds, then, that this is definitely
3 going in?

4 MR. RAY KIRSCH: Well, that's what
5 they've applied for. If the analysis shows that
6 there's a better way and the Commission selects that
7 way, then that's what the applicants will have to
8 build. So it really depends on building the record,
9 as we say, building the bases of facts. Saying we
10 live here, we've looked at this, here's all the
11 reasons why we think this is a better way to go.
12 And participating not only now and adding more to
13 what you've just said, but coming back when the
14 judge comes. As Tracy mentioned, there will be a
15 hearing. And advocating, saying, Judge, we've
16 gotten the facts together about this, based on the
17 things we value where we live, this is a better way
18 to go. And that doesn't mean that the judge or the
19 Commission is going to see it that way, but that's
20 the best way to get it out there and make your case
21 for that. And things change from when the
22 application comes in to when the final permit is
23 issued. I can't give you a percentage or how many
24 times, but it does happen. It's a good question and
25 comment. Thank you.

1 Is there anybody else who wants to make a
2 comment or has a question about the project or the
3 process?

4 Please, could you come up, sir, and state
5 your name and spell it for the court reporter?

6 MR. GERALD TOMPERI: By my place there
7 that they're going to eliminate, what are they going
8 to do with the land?

9 MR. RAY KIRSCH: Could we get your name
10 first, just so we have it?

11 MR. GERALD TOMPERI: Gerald Tomperi.

12 MR. RAY KIRSCH: Can you spell the last
13 name?

14 MR. GERALD TOMPERI: T-O-M-P-E-R-I.

15 MR. RAY KIRSCH: And which substation are
16 you near, the Menahga Substation?

17 MR. GERALD TOMPERI: Yeah, it's just west
18 of here.

19 MR. RAY KIRSCH: West of Menahga?

20 MR. GERALD TOMPERI: Yeah, an acre off my
21 land.

22 MR. RAY KIRSCH: As I understand it, that
23 substation will be removed.

24 MR. GERALD TOMPERI: That's what they
25 told me.

1 MR. RAY KIRSCH: And put inside or become
2 part of the new Blueberry Substation.

3 MR. GERALD TOMPERI: I don't know if that
4 land -- they're moving it further down, the new one.
5 What are they going to do with the land from the old
6 one? Will I get it back?

7 MR. RAY KIRSCH: I'm assuming you would,
8 but maybe I'll ask Michelle or someone from Great
9 River Energy. Do you have any thoughts about that
10 right now?

11 MR. ROBIN DOEGE: Want me to come up?

12 MR. RAY KIRSCH: Please, come up. We
13 have somebody from Great River Energy or --

14 MR. ROBIN DOEGE: Robin Doege, I'm the
15 president and CEO at Todd-Wadena Electric Co-op.

16 Your name again, sir?

17 MR. GERALD TOMPERI: Gerald Tomperi.

18 MR. ROBIN DOEGE: Did we talk together on
19 the phone?

20 MR. GERALD TOMPERI: No.

21 MR. ROBIN DOEGE: Your question is, when
22 the -- what I'll call the old Menahga Substation is
23 vacated and moved to the new GRE Blueberry
24 Substation adjacent to that -- can you hear me now?

25 Anyway, typically what we do when that

1 happens is do a quit claim deed on that property,
2 deed it back to the original property owner when we
3 vacate land for a substation. That's typically the
4 process.

5 MR. GERALD TOMPERI: That's just what I
6 was wondering, what they're doing with it.

7 MR. ROBIN DOEGE: Yep.

8 MR. GERALD TOMPERI: If they're going to
9 keep it or give it back.

10 MR. ROBIN DOEGE: No, we give it back.

11 MR. GERALD TOMPERI: Give it back. Okay.

12 MR. RAY KIRSCH: Thank you for your
13 question.

14 Anybody else have a question or a comment
15 that they want to make tonight? Please, come on up.
16 Look, we've got all the experts in the room, right.
17 We've got you guys and we've got the folks who are
18 proposing the project, so don't be shy about asking
19 a question or making a comment.

20 Please, spell your name.

21 MS. JANELLE LAKE: Sure. Janelle Lake,
22 J-A-N-E-L-L-E, L-A-K-E. 10772 County Road 13. So I
23 live right on the corner of 13 and 109th. And going
24 north on 109th is a natural gas line. And we had
25 spoken earlier about a concern of how you're going

1 to deal with that, going next to or how much
2 clearing. And you did stake out, and I'm just
3 wondering if that, you know, you have the natural
4 gas line and then so many feet from that you need a
5 clearance for your line, and then so many feet
6 beyond that the right-of-way and so I still have
7 concern of that.

8 And then the next question is, your
9 different examples of poles have anywhere from four
10 lines to seven, eight lines in ranging of 60 to 90
11 feet, so do you have any narrowing down of that? I
12 mean, there's quite a variance of four to seven or
13 eight lines.

14 MR. RAY KIRSCH: Those are good
15 questions. Let me ask Michelle from Great River
16 Energy.

17 MS. MICHELLE LOMMEL: I can get started
18 on it. As far as the natural gas pipeline that's
19 out there, it's an eight inch natural gas line owned
20 by Minnesota Energy. That line, we would look at
21 paralleling for approximately three miles. And,
22 Janelle, I know we had met and talked about it.
23 What we're proposing to do is in most areas where
24 we're next to the pipeline, the transmission line
25 poles would be roughly 25 feet from where that

1 natural gas line is. And any of the stakes that you
2 had seen out there, it was just our surveyors
3 working with Minnesota Energy to identify exactly
4 where that pipeline is. So roughly 25 feet the
5 poles would be away from it, and then our easement
6 would extend an additional 50 feet beyond that.

7 And my understanding is the natural gas
8 line, for the most part, I think, it's outside of
9 the road right-of-way, it seems like. So those
10 easements would be a little bit wider. When I was
11 explaining earlier, that typically we're just
12 outside of the road right-of-way, our easement would
13 be about 55, maybe 57 feet wide. In this case we
14 probably are going to be closer to an easement that
15 would be 80 to 90 feet wide. And so we would be a
16 little further into the property in those areas.

17 MS. JANELLE LAKE: And you'd clear that?

18 MS. MICHELLE LOMMEL: We would clear out
19 to the edge of the easement, yes. One thing that is
20 important to note is that if we're concerned with
21 things like wind breaks, if it's a buffer for, you
22 know, for a home, then we can work with you on
23 vegetation that could be inside the easement as long
24 as it's a compatible vegetation that would grow to a
25 height of 15 feet, or mature at a height of 15 feet

1 or less. And that's done on a case-by-case basis.
2 It's part of the easement negotiations that we do.
3 And then as far as your second question -- is that
4 enough information for your first question?

5 MS. JANELLE LAKE: Yeah.

6 MS. MICHELLE LOMMEL: Okay. As far as
7 the range and the structure types and whether we
8 have two sets of conductors, that type of thing, as
9 far as the 115 kV system, the only portion that's
10 proposed to be double-circuit is up on the very
11 northeast portion of the project. It would be the
12 first four and a half miles that come out of the
13 Hubbard Substation. And the Hubbard Substation is
14 going to be the one that's on the very northeast
15 side of the project. And so four and a half miles
16 would be double-circuit, and then the remainder of
17 the transmission line would just be single-circuit.
18 Although we do have some areas that we may carry
19 Todd-Wadena's distribution line as underground on
20 our transmission line poles. And that's a little
21 different configuration. We don't have -- there's
22 no connectors up at the top with extra insulators,
23 what we have is the cross arm that's down lower and
24 then the distribution line would be carried on that.

25 MR. WAYNE DUNBAR: Michelle, why are you

1 going on those steps? You've been to my place, so
2 the pipeline --

3 MR. RAY KIRSCH: Could you come up and
4 introduce yourself, please?

5 MS. MICHELLE LOMMEL: Wayne, just because
6 we have a court reporter, I think they want to make
7 sure that they can get your name on the record.
8 Thank you.

9 MR. WAYNE DUNBAR: Wayne Dunbar,
10 W-A-Y-N-E, D-U-N-B-A-R.

11 So if you go 25 foot from the pipeline
12 and then you want 50 foot more to clear, which
13 wouldn't put you far into my woods, you know, but
14 this 500 foot thing is just completely -- I don't
15 know what that has to do with --

16 MS. MICHELLE LOMMEL: Ray, do you want to
17 explain?

18 MR. RAY KIRSCH: I'll try to explain,
19 Mr. Dunbar. So when the Commission issues a route
20 permit, they issue a route width. So it goes along
21 a road or wherever it's going and it's so many feet
22 wide. In this case the applicants have asked for
23 500 feet. That may stay throughout the process or
24 get narrowed or enlarged as we work through the
25 permitting process. But what that means is that's

1 where the line could be placed. 500 feet gives
2 enough predictability as to where it's going to be,
3 but allows for the company to work with landowners
4 to move the line within that 500 feet. So the
5 project, say it's permitted with a 500 foot route
6 down by your place, it could go on one side of the
7 road or the other side of the road within that 500
8 feet, but the 500 feet is just where it could go.
9 It does not have anything to do with the land
10 rights, the land rights is the 100 foot easement
11 that they need to construct. So the company doesn't
12 get control over 500 feet. They could put it in
13 that area, but they only need 100 feet. And as
14 Michelle mentioned, if they are sharing part of that
15 with a road or the gas pipeline, then the impact on
16 your land would be less 'cause they're sharing some
17 of the right-of-way with that and, as was mentioned,
18 you might need 70 or 80 feet.

19 MR. WAYNE DUNBAR: But what you're saying
20 is, then, anywhere within that 500 foot they can do
21 whatever they want to, cut the trees or put the
22 power line, instead of just sticking to the 25 foot
23 from the gas line?

24 MR. RAY KIRSCH: Right, so it seems like
25 that, but that is not the case. When we do the

1 environmental assessment, when we put the facts
2 together and when the company comes in and they've
3 applied for their permit, they put the route width
4 in there and they put on what's called an
5 anticipated alignment, like where they think the
6 line is going to go, where the poles are going to
7 go, they call that the alignment. If the company
8 wanted to change the alignment for any reason after
9 we've gone through this whole permitting process,
10 there's a route and an alignment, they would have to
11 show the Commission that the change didn't increase
12 the impacts of the project at all.

13 So by the time we get to the permit,
14 we'll have a route and we'll have an anticipated
15 alignment. And that alignment is pretty much what
16 the company is going to have to build, unless they
17 can show something new has come, there's some
18 engineering thing that has come up or they've worked
19 with a landowner and they've agreed to something
20 else that has the same or less impacts. So it does
21 give them flexibility, but when you get to the
22 permitted route and they have that alignment,
23 they're going to be on that alignment unless they
24 can show the Commission that for some reason they
25 cannot be on it.

1 MR. WAYNE DUNBAR: What you're saying,
2 then, is the Commission has a say on whether they do
3 whatever they want to on my land in the 500 foot and
4 I don't have any say.

5 MR. RAY KIRSCH: No, you do have say. So
6 it's designed to work in the landowner's favor and
7 not against them. So, in other words, if for some
8 reason there's this 500 foot and you think about it
9 and you know it would be better if you did move it a
10 little bit this way, just from my barn or my animals
11 or whatever reason, the company can do that. If you
12 said I want you to move it way outside the route,
13 the company cannot do that, they would have to come
14 back to the Commission and get permission. On the
15 flip side, as I just mentioned, there is an
16 alignment in the permit and the company has to stick
17 to that unless they can show that moving it a little
18 bit one way or the other will actually reduce the
19 impacts of the project. So it should, when we get
20 to the permit, have the least amount of impacts. We
21 should have worked through the environmental
22 assessment and through the judge and through the
23 hearing, we've gotten to a point where we think
24 we've gotten those impacts to a minimum.

25 MR. WAYNE DUNBAR: Okay.

1 MR. RAY KIRSCH: Is there -- and we can
2 talk more about that. I've tried to explain it and
3 I hope I did the best, I did the best I could there.

4 Is there anybody else who has a question
5 or a comment?

6 UNIDENTIFIED: I've got a written
7 comment, I don't know if you want to do the same
8 thing as well as talking?

9 MR. RAY KIRSCH: You can do whatever
10 you'd like. You can submit the comment, you can
11 drop it off at the table in the back, or if you want
12 to come up. And you don't have to read it, you can
13 submit it, you can do whatever you'd like. And you
14 can do both. You can make a comment here and submit
15 the written comment.

16 Please state and spell your name for the
17 court reporter.

18 MR. WAYNE HAVERINEN: Wayne Haverinen,
19 34585 109th Avenue, H-A-V-E-R-I-N-E-N.

20 MR. RAY KIRSCH: And, Wayne, if you could
21 move a little closer to the mic so folks can hear
22 you.

23 MR. WAYNE HAVERINEN: I've got an organic
24 dairy farm along 109th Avenue and the wires are
25 running three-quarters of a mile through my farm.

1 And the south half a mile would -- I plan on putting
2 an irrigation system in there, so I do have concerns
3 about pumping water through the electromagnetic
4 field under the wire and current coming through the
5 water. It is a concern of mine. Michelle was out,
6 we did talk to it.

7 And on the north side of my driveway,
8 this time of year during breakup I feed my cows
9 underneath the proposed route where the wire is
10 because it drains so well. I also have concerns
11 over that and I've asked Great River Energy for any
12 similar operations that I could reference to see how
13 other farmers have dealt with it. To date, I have
14 not got a response. So those are my concerns.

15 MR. RAY KIRSCH: Okay. Those are topics
16 we can look at in the environmental assessment.
17 Thank you.

18 Does anybody else have a question or a
19 comment tonight?

20 Yes, ma'am. Please come on up and state
21 and spell your name. Thank you.

22 MS. MICHELLE NEELS: Michelle Neels,
23 N-E-E-L-S.

24 And we've already submitted four
25 different alternative routes. Do we need to expound

1 on that, giving more details than what we already
2 have? Because we submitted a map along with a
3 letter, but didn't do any of the impacts or
4 anything. Do we need to actually do more of the
5 submitted details on those alternative routes?

6 MR. RAY KIRSCH: Are you talking about
7 the letter that --

8 MS. MICHELLE NEELS: Yes.

9 MR. RAY KIRSCH: Is it your father?

10 MS. MICHELLE NEELS: Yes.

11 MR. RAY KIRSCH: No, your dad submitted a
12 map and he did draw all of that and he talked about
13 the various impacts that he was worried about.

14 MS. MICHELLE NEELS: So we don't need to
15 submit any more details on it?

16 MR. RAY KIRSCH: No, you do not. I have
17 your letter and I've read it and I know the letter
18 and I can speak to that.

19 MR. WAYNE DUNBAR: She mentioned the
20 pipeline, you know, and I know we talked to Michelle
21 about it, but she pretty much answered it as far as
22 going down the pipeline, but I never could quite
23 understand why you couldn't do that.

24 MR. RAY KIRSCH: It is a possibility. Do
25 you want to talk about it? Are there any concerns

1 of possibility that it would be brought in as a
2 route and evaluated. You know, we don't know that
3 at this point, but it's something that we considered
4 but considered pretty briefly just because of the
5 difficulty in access and how we would impact the
6 land uses that are out there. And certainly, again,
7 it's not that there wouldn't be tree clearing,
8 because our transmission line would have to be set
9 back away from that corridor.

10 Do you have any follow-up questions or is
11 that enough information?

12 MR. WAYNE DUNBAR: Not really. I know
13 what fields you're talking about. It's my
14 neighbor's over there. But, also, I think there
15 could be a jog there down, she owns land down on
16 119th, and that would go -- bypass all them fields.
17 From there on down I don't think there's any other
18 open fields it goes through. It just seems to me
19 like the best route, but I don't know.

20 MS. MICHELLE LOMMEL: You know, and I
21 know one thing, Wayne, that we had talked about,
22 too, is the pipeline doesn't necessarily follow in a
23 straight line. You know, for a transmission line,
24 the cleanest design for us is going to be following
25 straight sections because then we have structures

1 that don't have angles on them. Every time we have
2 even a slight angle we're generally going to need
3 guy wires. And if we get into larger angles we may
4 need to go into specialty type structures, those
5 types of things. So for us to try and follow that
6 pipeline, you know, the design of it wouldn't be as
7 clean as we can get if we just follow along the
8 roadways or a section line. We don't have too much
9 cross country on this project. You know, and
10 certainly down in your area we're proposing to be
11 along the roadway, but that gives us a much
12 straighter shot, which gives us the cleanest design
13 for the transmission line without those guy wires.

14 MR. WAYNE DUNBAR: It looks to me like
15 you got to go around a lot of places, according to
16 your maps.

17 MS. MICHELLE LOMMEL: Yeah. And every
18 time we do one of those jumps across the road, you
19 know, those angle structures would require guy
20 wires. We try and situate those as much as we can
21 so they would follow a property line or a fence
22 line. We certainly try not to place them in any
23 areas that are being cultivated. And I think that
24 we've taken that into consideration with what we've
25 proposed. And that's something, too, that we can

1 work with landowners on. If, you know, you find
2 that that guy wire is really not in a good spot, we
3 may have some ability to move that at the point
4 where we're negotiating. But we certainly do try
5 and place those in areas where they would be out of
6 the way and not affect farming operations or access
7 or anything like that.

8 MR. RAY KIRSCH: Thanks, Michelle.

9 And if I could just add, sir, if you
10 think there's a hybrid solution, which I think
11 you're proposing, maybe it's using the pipeline for
12 part of the project and roads for another part. So
13 that might be another alternative. But you guys
14 have already submitted some alternatives, but we
15 have until April 10th to bat this around and you
16 guys can sit around the table with your neighbors
17 and maybe visit with those folks.

18 I do think Michelle is right, I mean, I
19 drove the line today just to get some familiarity
20 and you can see where the pipeline is, but there
21 isn't anything beyond, it's all below ground, you
22 can see where people are farming over it. And I
23 think you would have to think about it because if
24 you were to put in a transmission line it changes it
25 because it's above ground, you know, it's a very

1 visible diagonal line as opposed to following the
2 road. I take your point, people live along the
3 roads, there's a lot of development along roads. We
4 hear this all the time, people say, oh, put it along
5 the road, but, oh, my house is there so put it
6 behind. So there's not a perfect solution. If you
7 think that there is the pipeline, and this lady has
8 already raised it, expand on what the possible ways
9 that mitigate and if there's a hybrid solution, part
10 pipeline and part something GRE has proposed, that's
11 also welcome into the record too.

12 MS. ALICE NEBALA: I'd like to ask
13 another question.

14 MR. RAY KIRSCH: Could you please come
15 up?

16 MS. ALICE NEBALA: No, this is fine.
17 Alice Nebala.

18 If we decide to try to move or to sell
19 our place, with this big high line pole across our
20 way practically in our front yard, or it would be,
21 that's going to drop the value of the house. Okay.
22 Are they going to compensate for this?

23 MR. RAY KIRSCH: So the question is if
24 the transmission line was built and you were then to
25 subsequently sell the house or sell the property --

1 MR. WAYNE DUNBAR: Well, I can answer her
2 question. I had a realtor come out and I asked him
3 that. He said it would cut the value of that 40
4 that you were going across in half. 'Cause we can't
5 build on that. You know, we wanted to build back
6 there.

7 MR. RAY KIRSCH: It is something we will
8 look at and we typically look at in the
9 environmental assessment. There's a lot of studies
10 about transmission lines and what people will say
11 they do, sort of survey studies, and then sort of
12 what people actually did based on sales data and
13 decreases in property value.

14 The term of art in Minnesota statutes and
15 rules is to make you whole, just compensation. So
16 when they pay you for an easement, they need to
17 factor in -- the company needs to factor in all the
18 factors that that property has. Every property is
19 unique, it may have trees, it may have a house, it
20 may be in a great school district, or whatever it is
21 about that property that makes it unique, they try
22 to make you whole.

23 MS. ALICE NEBALA: Okay. But this is not
24 on our property, it would be across right in front
25 of us, which we are very close to the road, so this

1 would be not a very -- not very good.

2 MR. RAY KIRSCH: Okay. I take your
3 point. And so there are some difficult situations
4 where the transmission line is not on your property
5 but it's near it, and so the company may not
6 purchase an easement, right, they don't need an
7 easement, right, to construct the line, it's not on
8 your property, they need an easement from your
9 neighbor's property. But nonetheless, you can see
10 it, right, or --

11 MS. ALICE NEBALA: Well, it's right in
12 your face.

13 MR. RAY KIRSCH: It's right there. And
14 so in those cases, no, they don't have to compensate
15 you for that because they're not purchasing an
16 easement from you. And that is a difficult
17 situation. Sometimes the Minnesota legislature
18 takes up that and tries to figure out a way to
19 resolve that, but to this point it's not resolved.
20 Folks who are very close to the line who don't have
21 an easement don't get compensated because they're
22 not getting paid for an easement for the line. And
23 you can say that that's not a good situation, and I
24 would agree with you, but I'm not sure what to do
25 about it.

1 Is there anyone else who has a question
2 or a comment tonight? Okay. I'm not seeing any
3 hands.

4 All right. We'll try this. I just want
5 to remind you -- let's go back a few slides. We've
6 almost exhausted bullet number one, tonight's
7 meeting. Comments have to be to me by Friday,
8 April 10th. All modes of commenting are equal,
9 online, fax, mail, send me a letter, fill out a
10 comment form on the back table, use as many pieces
11 of paper as you need. Use a map. Please use a map
12 if you're so inclined even just the tiniest bit.
13 Please show it to your neighbor. Ask them if they
14 understand what you're talking about, if you're
15 concerned about how the comment reads or if you're
16 clear enough. And we do have a station in the back
17 to help you print maps.

18 I'll ask one more time. Any more
19 questions or comments?

20 All right. Well, I want to thank you all
21 for coming out, we very much appreciate it, and our
22 meeting is adjourned for tonight. Thank you.

23 (Matter concluded at 7:10 p.m.)

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