

March 25, 2005



Allan Klein
Administrative Law Judge
Office of Administrative Hearings
100 Washington Square, Suite 1700
Minneapolis, MN 55401-2138

Re: In the Matter of Xcel Energy's Application to the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board for a Route Permit for 345 kV Transmission Line From the Split Rock Substation to Lakefield Junction Substation and a 115 kV Transmission Line from Nobles County Substation to Chanarambie Substation and the Nobles County Substation
EQB File No. 03-73-TR-XCEL
OAH Docket No. 6-2901-16384-2

Dear Judge Klein,

Wind on the Wires ("WOW") files this letter in the above referenced docket in support of Xcel Energy's preferred route for the 345 kV transmission line known as the Interstate Route (currently known as the modified Interstate Route). As detailed below, WOW supports the modified Interstate Route because it will result in an August 2007 in-service date for the new transmission line as opposed to a September 2008 in-service date for the Alliant Route. An in-service date that is 13 months earlier is extremely important to WOW members to allow timely development of wind farms that are currently under development and will utilize capacity on the new 345 kV and 115 kV transmission lines.

WOW has been actively involved in wind power and transmission line issues for the past 3 years. Our members include, among others, wind developers, wind turbine manufacturers, and non-profit advocacy organizations working to advance the development of wind power in the Upper Midwest. WOW (through the Izaak Walton League of America) was actively involved in the certificate of need proceeding that resulted in the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission approving the 4 new transmission lines for Southwestern Minnesota, including the 2 lines in the above referenced docket. We understand that it is critical to upgrade the transmission system to be able to deliver wind energy to market.

The New Transmission Lines Must Be In Service As Soon As Possible

Demand for outlet capacity to serve wind generators on the Buffalo Ridge currently exceeds the available outlet capacity on the ridge. The four new transmission lines approved by the

Minnesota Public Utilities Commission in March 2003 for Southwestern Minnesota will result in a total outlet capacity of 825 megawatts ("MW") in the Buffalo Ridge area. As stated above, WOW supports the modified Interstate Route because it will result in an in-service date that is 13 months earlier than the Alliant Route. Adding 13 months to the construction schedule is unacceptable to wind developers who are counting on an in-service date of Fall 2007 at the latest. A 13-month delay would potentially have large financial impacts to wind developers, utilities purchasing the wind energy, and to consumers who ultimately pay for the wind power.

In summary, WOW strongly supports the modified Interstate Route for the 345 kV transmission line. We appreciate you accepting our comments into the record in this proceeding.

Sincerely,



Beth Soholt
Director
Wind on the Wires



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