



January 29, 2024

Mr. Will Seuffert  
Executive Secretary  
Public Utilities Commission  
121 Seventh Place East, Suite 350  
Saint Paul, MN 55101-2147

RE: Dodge County Wind, LLC Draft Route Permit (IP6981/TL-20-867)  
161 kV Transmission Line to Pleasant Valley Substation

Dear Mr. Seuffert:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit Mower County's comments specific to zoning, feedlot, or water-related issues concerning the above-referenced Project. This letter will address concerns related to routing across lands in Mower County only.

### **BACKGROUND**

As a part of a large wind energy conversion system (wind farm) currently proposed in Dodge and Steele Counties, the developer, Dodge County Wind LLC (DCW), has elected to transport the power generated from the wind farm from Dodge County approximately 27 miles into the Great River Energy Pleasant Valley Substation in Mower County, along one of two routes under consideration in this permit.

The "Highway 56 Route" primarily utilizes State Highway 56, with some Mower County and Township right-of-way proposed. The "Hybrid Route" primarily utilizes Dodge and Mower County Right of way. Both route options conjoin at a point 2 miles east of CSAH 20 on County 1, where the route then would be co-located with an existing transmission line which is located on private property and previously permitted by Mower County through a Conditional Use Permit process.

### **HYBRID ROUTE CONSIDERATIONS**

The proposed Hybrid Route utilizes 3 miles of right of way along County 20 and 2 miles of right-of-way (ROW) on County 1 followed by 2.5 miles which is co-located poles outside of the ROW along County 1.

Preliminary pole placements were staked and considered along this route and have been modified by Mower County for accommodations such as farm access and potential drainage tile interference, where inlets were visible in the ROW.

The following table summarizes setback distances and the presence or absence of any screening barrier between dwellings along the route and the ROW. Mower County has a setback of 40ft. minimum between any structure and the ROW. Screening barrier (vegetative or otherwise) is often a consideration for permitting commercial and industrial uses for the mitigation of nuisance conditions.

### Hybrid Route

Owner	Location of Dwelling or Primary Structure	setback to ROW (40ft min)	Side of Road	screening barrier in place
Nielson, Chris and Jill	33854 630th Ave	65 ft.	East	Partial
Nielson, Blake	32512 630th Ave	545 ft.	East	Yes
Larson Products	32208 630th	110 ft.	East	Yes
Larson Products	Swine Facility	55 ft.	East	Yes
*Heydt, Curtis and Camilla	6320 310th	55 ft.	North	Partial
*Blanchard, Daniel and Kathleen	63517 310th	70 ft.	South	No
*Eggert, Norbert / PV Wind Sub.	63745 310 <sup>th</sup>	75 ft.	South	No
*Kiefer, Roger and Shirley	64384 310th	53 ft.	North	Partial

*\* Heydt, Blanchard, Pleasant Valley Wind (Eggert), and Kiefer properties are on both routes*

There are three registered feedlots along the Hybrid route in Mower County:

- Larson, Farrow to Finish (swine)
- Keifer, Cattle operation
- Ulwelling\*, Swine finisher

*\*The Ulwelling farm is on the segment of route that is proposed as co-located on exiting lines.*

There are no shoreland boundary crossings on the segment of the proposed hybrid route with new pole placement in the ROW.

### HIGHWAY 56 ROUTE CONSIDERATIONS

The proposed Highway 56 Route enters onto Mower County roads at County 1 east of Waltham, then utilizes one mile of right of way on County 1, followed by 3 miles of Township ROW, then utilizes County right of way along County 20 and County 1 for the remainder of the route (to the point of co-located poles).

Preliminary pole placements were NOT physically staked for observation along most of this route.

The following table summarizes setback distances and the presence or absence of any screening barrier between dwellings along the route and the ROW. Mower County has a setback of 40ft. minimum between any structure and the ROW. Screening barrier (vegetative or otherwise) is often a consideration for permitting commercial and industrial uses for the mitigation of nuisance conditions. There are three residential or primary structures along this route that do not meet the current minimum standard for setback to the ROW: Jorgenson (~35 ft.), Rothwell/Prem (~10 ft.), and ProAG Solutions (~10 ft.).

### TH 56 Route

Owner	Location of Dwelling or Primary Structure	setback to ROW (40ft min)	Side of Road	screening barrier in place
Jacobsen, Scott and Kristi	33608 590th Ave	780 ft.	West	Yes
Smith, Kevin and Rose	32229 590th Ave	365 ft.	West	Yes
<b>Jorgenson, Steven and Tera B. Rothwell and S. Priem</b>	<b>33082 State Hwy 56</b>	<b>35 ft.</b>	East	Partial
	<b>33071 State Hwy 56</b>	<b>10 ft.</b>	West	No
Whittington, Dustin	59060 327th St	74 ft.	East	Yes
Gebhardt Farms	32438 560th Ave	160 ft.	East	Yes
Amerud, Hope	32483 State Hwy 56	53 ft.	West	Yes
<b>ProAg Solutions (Commercial Use)</b>	<b>32129 State Hwy 56</b>	<b>10 ft.</b>	West	Yes
Hulst, Gregory	32130 State Hwy 56	620 ft.	E and N	Yes
Danks, Lois	60156 320th St	235 ft.	North	Yes
Jax, Douglas and Rebecca	60534 320th St	220 ft.	North	Partial
W.G. Johnson Trust	61874 320th St	110 ft.	North	Yes
Johnson, Melissa	62297 320th St	75 ft.	South	Yes
Reid, Thomas	62522 320th	265 ft.	North	Yes
Vanbuskirk, Harry	62571 320th St	1185 ft.	South	Yes
Larson Products	32208 630th Ave	1095 ft.	North	No
Larson Products	Swine Barn	615 ft.	North	No
*Heydt, Curtis and Camilla	6320 310th	55 ft.	North	No
*Blanchard, Daniel and Kathleen	63517 310th	70 ft.	South	No
*Eggert, Norbert / PV Wind Sub.	63745 310 <sup>th</sup>	75 ft.	South	No
*Kiefer, Roger and Shirley	64384 310th	53 ft.	North	Partial

*\* Heydt, Blanchard, Pleasant Valley Wind (Eggert), and Kiefer properties are on both routes*

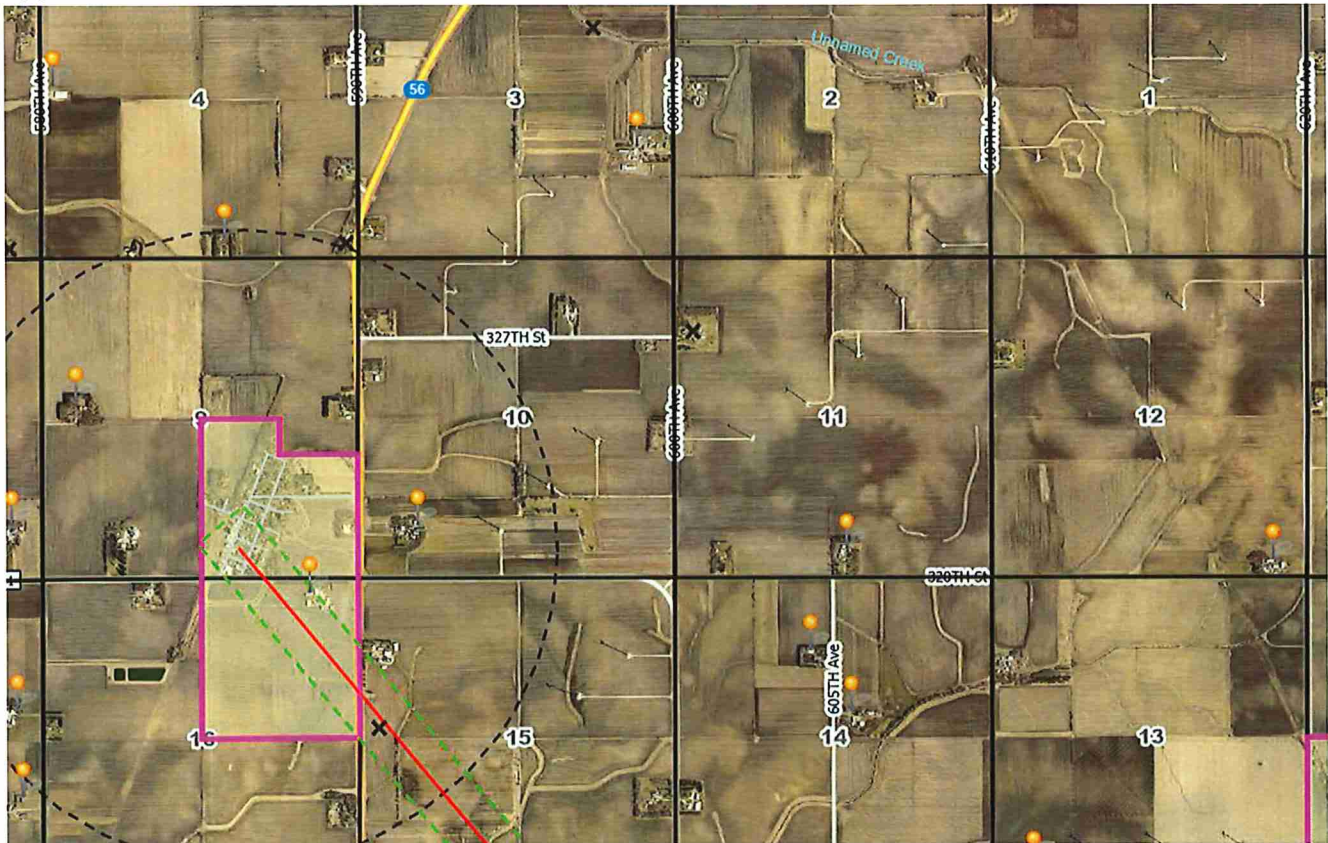
There are six currently or historically registered feedlots along the “Highway 56” route in Mower County:

- Fjerstad Farms (closed registration), horses
- Hulst, Cattle operation
- Jax, Cattle operation
- Johnson, Cattle operation
- Keifer, Cattle operation

- Ulwelling\*, Swine finisher  
*\*The Ulwelling farm is on the segment of route that is proposed as co-located on exiting lines.*

There are no shoreland boundary crossings on the segment of the proposed hybrid route with new pole placement in the ROW.

There is a communication corridor (red line bound by green dashes) which extends from Waltham, MN to the southeast. As proposed, the lines appear to be out of any interference, however, should a permit be issued for this route, Mower County requests a condition that the applicant demonstrate there will be no interference and is responsible for any mitigation.



### GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Mower County has an Essential Services Ordinance that governs the use of the Right of Way by utilities through permit. Mower County has land use regulations (Zoning Ordinance) that may impact ancillary activities. Any new or modified points of interconnection with County roads require a Driveway/Access permit. We ask that these activities become requirements of any permit issued by the PUC.



Mower County further requests that an NPDES Permit and associated SWPPP become a requirement of any permit issued by PUC through Mower County so that the Owner and installer of any transmission line is required to put measures in place that prevent erosion, to mitigate runoff, and to establish a responsible party who continues to monitor and manage these practices for the duration of the project.

There are several farms (feedlots) that may be impacted on either route; Mower County requests a requirement that the applicant monitor these sites for any stray voltage and be responsible for mitigating any impacts.

### **CLOSING COMMENTS**

In review of the EA, it states DCW asked for 450ft width in the route permit. As indicated in Section 5.1, "A wider route width also allows permittees to work with landowners to address their concerns and to address engineering issues that may arise after a permit is issued". However, section 5.4 asserts, "DCW has stated it does not have the authority to exercise eminent domain. It should be noted that in cases where the transmission proposer has the power to exercise eminent domain pursuant to Minn. Stat. Ch. 117, the proposed may acquire and easement through....condemnation if a negotiated settlement could not be reached with a landowner." As a general comment on this proposal, it is unfortunate that DCW has not been able to negotiate private easement and is thereby restricted to use of the ROW, which could be very limited in some areas and costly to mitigate in others.

While Dodge County and Mower County have differing "preferred" routes, what we share in common is the desire to keep the public safe on our roads. The placement of large transmission line poles in township right of way, even with mitigation, is of serious concern to the County and Townships both. Even with mitigation, the traveling public is at risk of serious harm to health and life if there is a collision with a large pole, for example.

Thank you for considering Mower County's comments concerning this Project. If there are any questions, or if additional information is required, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



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Valerie Sheedy, P.G.

**Assistant Public Works Director**

Email: [valeries@co.mower.mn.us](mailto:valeries@co.mower.mn.us)

Direct: 507-434-2639

Cc: Suzanne Steinhauer, MN Department of Commerce

**From:** [Valerie Sheedy](#)  
**To:** [Staff, CAO \(PUC\)](#)  
**Cc:** [Steinhauer, Suzanne \(COMM\)](#); [Michal Hanson](#)  
**Subject:** Comments, Docket # IP6981/TL-20-867  
**Date:** Tuesday, January 30, 2024 11:41:45 AM  
**Attachments:** [2024-01-29 Zoning Comments Mower County.pdf](#)

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Attached please find comments from Mower County's Environmental Services Division regarding the Dodge Wind LLC Route Permit

Thank you,

**Valerie Sheedy, P.G.**

*Assistant Public Works Director*

Mower County Public Works

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