

**Environmental Impact Statement
Scoping Comments Received**

Big Stone South to Alexandria 345 kV Transmission Project

Docket No. TL-23-160

Energy Environmental Review and Analysis (EERA) staff received 104 comment submissions about the scope of the environmental impact statement for the Big Stone South to Alexandria 345 kV Transmission Project.

Several options were available to comment on the project. Options to comment included a paper comment form and an online comment form provided by EERA; comments could be emailed or mailed to EERA staff, or comments could be filed to eDockets. In addition to the public comment period, interested persons could provide verbal comments at the public information and environmental impact statement scoping meetings; 22 of the 104 comments received were during the public meetings.

Comments are arranged by unique number, which corresponds to the commenter's last name. Identical comments received by multiple submission types were only counted/cataloged once. The table below is sorted by last name and provides a crosswalk of last names and the corresponding comment numbers associated with those last names. Comments are organized by comment number.

To find a specific comment, refer to the table below to locate the unique number and use the bookmark function to locate the unique number.

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<u>Last Name</u>	<u>First Name</u>	<u>Additional Authors</u>	<u>Agency</u>	<u>Comment Number</u>
Aaberg	Andy			18
Anderson	Bill and Marilyn			2
Arndt	Allen			17
Arnold	Joseph			5
Ascheman	Pat			40
Beyer	Daniel and Becky			28
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Boehnke	Brian			49
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Egstad	Stacy Kotch		Minnesota Department of Transportation	71
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Maas	Jackie			61
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Nohl	Jon			31
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From: eera.admin_no_reply@state.mn.us
To: [Ness, Jenna \(COMM\)](#)
Subject: Public Comment re: Big Stone South to Alexandria 345 kV Transmission Line Project
Date: Monday, January 20, 2025 4:41:22 PM

Big Stone South to Alexandria 345 kV Transmission Line Project

Submitter Name: Joy McDonald

Submitter Email: joejoy@tds.net

Submitter Telephone: (320) 599-4284

Comment:

I am submitting this for Arthur Isackson. I am his daughter and POA. Art has land in the North 1 proposal section. I am recommending the route instead be put on the North 2 section. The North section 2 has less homes it affects and less farm land. We have a century farm and it would be aesthetically displeasing to ruin the natural look of the land. There aren't too many century farms left and we would like to keep this one the way it currently looks. So much of North 1 goes through the Isackson farmstead and farm land. It would cut down on farm rent every year. It is also inconvenient for our land renter. At the last meeting I learned that shadows off of the poles can mess with the GPS on tractors and machinery. My last concern is health. My sister who is planning on moving to the farm after retirement has a brain tumor. I don't know if exposure over a long period of time to the EMF could harm her. Again, I am recommending the North 2 route.

Submit Date: 01/20/2025 10:41 PM

From: [Lobby, Sam \(He/Him/His\) \(PUC\)](#)
To: [Ness, Jenna \(COMM\)](#)
Subject: FW: Comments on 345 kv power line
Date: Thursday, January 23, 2025 8:07:18 AM

-----Original Message-----

From: Marilyn Anderson <fairfieldtrucking@fedteldirect.net>
Sent: Wednesday, January 22, 2025 4:16 PM
To: Lobby, Sam (He/Him/His) (PUC) <Sam.Lobby@state.mn.us>
Subject: Comments on 345 kv power line

[You don't often get email from fairfieldtrucking@fedteldirect.net. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification>]

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Good day,

I know that you had Environmental Impact Scoping meetings in our area last week. My husband and I did not attend, but wanted to let you know that since the last time that we emailed about this project that our opinion on the project has not changed.

We live right along Swift County 22 and there are already two power lines that run along that road. Our shop is to the west of the Fairfield Substation where one of the lines quits. The line on the north side of the county road continues east from there.

Our thoughts are that Ottertail Power is part of this project so it makes sense to us that as long as they service the area down along Highway 12 that is where this new line should run. We just don't need nor want another power line in our neighborhood.

We have been very vocal about not wanting wind turbines put up by us as well and we feel that will happen if you decide to put that power line through here.

I'm also concerned about the wildlife and our water system in this area. We used to have hundreds of monarchs migrate through here, but last summer we hardly saw any. I know that a lot of that has to do with the chemicals being used and migration patterns changing. We would just as soon keep what bits of nature we have left.

We hope that with the change of leadership in this country that a lot of things will be changed.

I thank you for taking time to consider what we are asking for and please don't run that power line along Swift County 22.

Sincerely,

Bill & Marilyn Anderson

I am writing this letter concerning the proposed transmission line that could potentially go across my property on the West 1/2 of Sec 12 in Artichoke twp, Big Stone County. We farm the field running North and South, the full mile down and back, with no obstacles. If you put the line in the proposed route, it will split my field in half making it more difficult and costly to perform all farming operations to maintain and grow the crop.

There is an uncrossable drainage ditch, approximately 500 feet East of 590th Ave., that the proposed transmission line is running directly across. This will be extremely difficult to access the line for installation and maintenance on the east side of the ditch.

I am including a map that shows about 436,412 feet (82.65 miles) of tile installed in that field. The physical and economical damage that would be done to the tile system would be irreversible and the economic loss would be substantial as it would also affect the cropland directly to the North, causing it to not drain properly.

The effects that the high voltage lines could have on our GPS equipment is also a huge concern, as we rely heavily on it for our precision farming practices.

Enclosed is a map with a proposed new route.

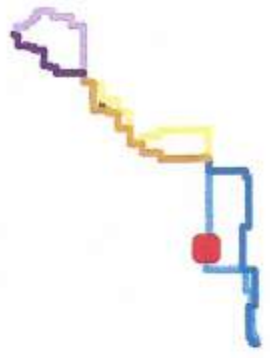
Thanks
Brian Hamann
Ortonville Mn. 56278

Big Stone Ag
 Brian Haemann
 Artichoke 12



- 10 inch - 2995 t
- 12 Flex - 3840 t
- 12 inch - 2611 t
- 3 inch - 376623 t
- 4 inch - 41448 t
- 6 inch - 2221 t
- 8 inch - 5337 t

South



- Route Option
 South 2
 Route Width
 Home
 Other Structure
 TYPE
 AC Transmission Line
 Rivers and Streams (MN Natural Resources)
 Parcels selection 1



From: [Jeff McCoy - McCoy Environmental](#)
To: [Ness, Jenna \(COMM\)](#)
Subject: Re: Big Stone South Line
Date: Tuesday, February 11, 2025 10:48:11 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[Eagles Nest.pdf](#)

Hello Jenna.

Thanks for reaching out. I will take a look and see if I can map something out.

Update to the eagle nest - my son does a lot of bow hunting out there and he said that the eagles are still using that nest (even though it looked damaged to me). Here's a map showing that nest location (Highway 114 and Malmedal lake south of Lowry)

Thanks.

Jeffrey McCoy
Managing Director

McCoy Environmental, Inc.
3831 Queens Road SE, Alexandria, MN 56308
320.815.3567
jeff@mccoye.com | mccoye.com

Your Need - Our Purpose

From: Ness, Jenna (COMM) <jenna.ness@state.mn.us>
Sent: Tuesday, February 11, 2025 10:22 AM
To: Jeff McCoy - McCoy Environmental <jeff@mccoye.com>
Subject: RE: Big Stone South Line

Hi Jeff, I hope you've been well.

We are working on "digitizing" your suggested route alternative for consideration in the environmental review of the project. It's a bit vague, which could make it not specific enough to study. So, I'm reaching out to see if you'd like to provide more specificity for your route so we can draw it on a map better.

Right now, we've drawn our best guess of what following the existing line near Lowry means. There

Untitled Map

Write a description for your map.

Legend
📍 Untitled Placemark

📍 Eagles Nest

Google Earth

Image © 2025 Airbus

↑
N
1000 ft

Lake

📍 Starbucks at Magmental Lake

are multiple existing lines in the area. We can use what we have drawn as is as well. Feel free to give me a call if you have questions or want to see how the line is drawn on the map right now.

Thanks,

Jenna Ness

Environmental Review Manager

[Energy Environmental Review and Analysis](#)

651-539-1693

Schedule: Monday – Thursday



From: Jeff McCoy - McCoy Environmental <jeff@mccoye.com>

Sent: Wednesday, December 18, 2024 3:24 PM

To: Ness, Jenna (COMM) <jenna.ness@state.mn.us>; Lobby, Sam (He/Him/His) (PUC) <Sam.Lobby@state.mn.us>

Subject: Re: Big Stone South Line

Sure you can file it as an official comment. Thanks, will be in touch

Jeffrey McCoy

McCoy Environmental, Inc.

320.815.3567

Sent via phone, please disregard grammatical errors.

From: Ness, Jenna (COMM) <jenna.ness@state.mn.us>

Sent: Wednesday, December 18, 2024 3:20:32 PM

To: Jeff McCoy - McCoy Environmental <jeff@mccoye.com>; Lobby, Sam (He/Him/His) (PUC) <Sam.Lobby@state.mn.us>

Subject: RE: Big Stone South Line

Thanks Jeff. Would you like this email to serve as an official public comment? We can file it for you if so. You can submit multiple public comments at different times or submit everything you want to say about the area all at once.

I can note this specific eagle's nest. You can report to me if you see eagles rebuilding it. In the Environmental Impact Statement, I will also talk generally about distance limits the utility must comply with during construction so they don't get too close to the eagle's nest where the eagles abandon it. There are also USFWS permits prohibiting fatalities and likely limiting construction to a

certain type of year (non-breeding, etc.).

From: Jeff McCoy - McCoy Environmental <jeff@mccoye.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 18, 2024 2:41 PM
To: Ness, Jenna (COMM) <jenna.ness@state.mn.us>; Lobby, Sam (He/Him/His) (PUC) <Sam.Lobby@state.mn.us>
Subject: Re: Big Stone South Line

Appreciate it.

And, I would like to add an eagle's nest on the north side of the lake - but it actually was badly damaged in a wind storm last year, and it appears that they have abandoned it. That nest is in the cottonwoods on the western border of my property not sure if they will try and re-build but will be watching...

I would also like to add...we have a fisher on camera several times this year and appears to be living there. It's well out of the range of its normal territory, a testament to the unusual ecology in the area.

Thanks.

Jeffrey McCoy
Managing Director

McCoy Environmental, Inc.
3831 Queens Road SE, Alexandria, MN 56308
320.815.3567
jeff@mccoye.com | mccoye.com

Your Need - Our Purpose

From: Ness, Jenna (COMM) <jenna.ness@state.mn.us>
Sent: Wednesday, December 18, 2024 2:15 PM
To: Jeff McCoy - McCoy Environmental <jeff@mccoye.com>; Lobby, Sam (He/Him/His) (PUC) <Sam.Lobby@state.mn.us>
Subject: RE: Big Stone South Line

I've saved this lake in my Environmental Impact Statement to do list.

- There is also a park (Starbuck at Magmental Lake Wayside Park) that would be best avoided, several nearby USFWS waterfowl production areas (increasing impacts from avian collision),

and nearby DNR wildlife management areas.

- In addition, this lake is listed as a wildlife management priority for the DNR as a shallow lake. These designations are for lakes with a minimum surface area of 50 acres and a maximum depth of 15 feet that offer a unique type of wildlife habitat.
- Lastly, I think it is important to note that there are wetlands all over the place, which are best spanned, and two nearby protected areas that are also best to avoid. So, siting around this area may be difficult. These areas are the 1) Nature Conservancy which has prairie fee land east of 280th Avenue, and 2) a Reinvest in Minnesota Reserve Partnership Easement east of 300th Avenue along a stream that outlets at the southern tip of the lake. The latter is managed for biodiversity, so disturbance events are suppressed.

This isn't a full review or final indication of changes that may need to occur, but I wanted to provide you with an initial assessment that you can build on for your public comments if you want. Thanks

From: Jeff McCoy - McCoy Environmental <jeff@mccoye.com>

Sent: Tuesday, December 17, 2024 4:29 PM

To: Ness, Jenna (COMM) <jenna.ness@state.mn.us>; Lobby, Sam (He/Him/His) (PUC) <Sam.Lobby@state.mn.us>

Subject: Re: Big Stone South Line

Thanks Jenna. The Lake I was talking about is Malmedal Lake. The DNR classifies the basin Natural Environment - like most of the small bodies in the area providing the most development protection (as opposed to General Development or Recreational Development). The path skirts around the lake and between numerous state and federal wildlife areas to the west of the lake.

I will continue to pay attention to the process. Thanks.

Jeffrey McCoy

Managing Director

McCoy Environmental, Inc.

3831 Queens Road SE, Alexandria, MN 56308

320.815.3567

jeff@mccoye.com | mccoye.com

Your Need - Our Purpose

From: Ness, Jenna (COMM) <jenna.ness@state.mn.us>
Sent: Tuesday, December 17, 2024 1:36 PM
To: Lobby, Sam (He/Him/His) (PUC) <Sam.Lobby@state.mn.us>; Jeff McCoy - McCoy Environmental <jeff@mccoye.com>
Subject: RE: Big Stone South Line

Hi Jeff,

Glad you reached out and that Sam was able to field your first question. If you need help with anything Sam suggested below, such as submitting comments or choosing which public meeting to attend, let us know.

I can tell you that the last transmission line of this length and size to get a route permit was (off memory alone here) at least 30% different in its final alignment than what it was proposed to be. So, I want to offer assurance that we all work our best to suggest the least impactful route while weighing a multitude of factors. Thus, participation in comments is the best way to affect the outcome of where the line ends up going. Are there more specific questions I can answer for you about alternatives? That would be a new route you can offer in your public comment other than what's proposed. It's always helpful to include why you think it's prudent, and property values, environmental impacts, etc. things you already mentioned are good reasons to list.

I'd also like to know more about the environmental lake (Waterfowl production? Wildlife management? State recreation area?) you're referring to so I can ensure I cover that in the Environmental Impact Statement, which is considered when the final route is decided.

To your second question, I agree with Sam that the utilities will know much more about the engineering reasons why that corridor can't be utilized and that reaching out to Jason Weiers or speaking to him at the public meeting will probably give you the info you need. I'd also bet that they wouldn't be able to upgrade those lines enough to deliver the amount of power that's needed throughout the grid due to the increased energy demand that is driving the construction of these lines. That's only part of the story.

Let me know how else I can help,

Jenna Ness

Environmental Review Manager

[Energy Environmental Review and Analysis](#)

651-539-1693

Minnesota Department of Commerce

85 7th Place East, Suite 280 | Saint Paul, MN 55101



From: Lobby, Sam (He/Him/His) (PUC) <Sam.Lobby@state.mn.us>
Sent: Tuesday, December 17, 2024 12:59 PM
To: Jeff McCoy - McCoy Environmental <jeff@mccoye.com>; Ness, Jenna (COMM) <jenna.ness@state.mn.us>
Subject: RE: Big Stone South Line

Jeff,

Thanks very much for reaching out, you have found the right folks to talk to about the permitting side of things as well as about the proposed routes. It is very early in the process so you are getting involved at the right time. We very much appreciate your input and comments, we do our best to inform both planning and decision making based on comments received by the public, so hearing from you early in the process is very helpful for both of us.

I will answer part of your question and defer to Jenna regarding route alternatives and proposing alternate paths the transmission line can take. As for your first question, you are already taking the right steps to get your opinion in the record so that it can be factored into planning and permitting. Coming up in January there will be the first opportunity for formal public input at 5 in-person meetings, one virtual meeting, and through written comments submitted into the record. The Notice for those meetings was just issued today, and I have pasted the link below for your convenience:

<https://www.edockets.state.mn.us/documents/%7B009AD593-0000-C21A-BEAF-314ED54AF768%7D/download?contentSequence=0&rowIndex=1>

The meetings will be held at different locations along the proposed route, and that will be an opportunity for the public to come and learn more about the project as well as provide input on what the Environmental Impact Statement should cover. At that time you can either attend in person and speak at a meeting or you can submit written comments into the record which will be accepted through Friday, January 31st. I would encourage you to submit comments regarding the impacts it will have on you and your land as you discussed in your message. That will be the best first opportunity to get your comments considered, and there will be several other opportunities for you to comment as the docket progresses – the permitting phase alone will take at least a year if not longer, just to give you a sense of what to expect.

As for the proposed routes, those are definitely not set in stone so any comments you have regarding that route will be very helpful in the planning process. I will defer to Jenna to talk more about that, she will be the one looking at all the suggested alternatives and can help you along with that process.

As for the transmission corridor near Lowry, I am not able to answer that question unfortunately but I would recommend holding on to that and bringing it up at the public meetings if you are able to attend, the company may have more insight as to why they didn't choose that route. If you would like to get in touch with someone from the company, you can reach out to Jason Weiers, Manager,

Transmission Project Development, jweiers@otpc.com or 218-739-8311.

If you have more questions you can always reach out to Jenna or I, we will be the main State staff working on this project throughout the duration. Thanks again for getting involved and letting us know what your questions and concerns are.

Sam Lobby | Planner, Director – Energy Facilities Permitting Unit

Pronouns: He, Him, His

Minnesota Public Utilities Commission

121 7th Place E, Suite 350

Saint Paul, MN 55101-2147

O: 651-201-2205

mn.gov/puc



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From: Jeff McCoy - McCoy Environmental <jeff@mccoye.com>

Sent: Tuesday, December 17, 2024 11:04 AM

To: Lobby, Sam (He/Him/His) (PUC) <Sam.Lobby@state.mn.us>; Ness, Jenna (COMM) <jenna.ness@state.mn.us>

Subject: Big Stone South Line

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Hello Sam and Jenna.

I own land that already has a power line running through it along the I-94 corridor. They crossed my property because they had to go around a rest stop , because for some reason

these routes won't mess with the federal government. That route effectively left my two residential lots un-buildable.

Now I own property on two additional proposed routes. One of the properties is situated in the rolling hills south of Lowry MN, along a 200 acre environmental lake. Having that excessively tall power line will greatly reduce the future value of that property. And we individual property owners are helpless. All because we built power plants in the Dakotas, and now people need power out east.

I have a couple questions:

1) is there an effective way to oppose this line/route?

2) I know there is a rather large 50-year old power transmission corridor near Lowry, why don't we use the same corridor and re-engineer those lines/add lines?

**Thanks,
Jeff McCoy
320.815.3567**

From: eera.admin_no_reply@state.mn.us
To: [Ness, Jenna \(COMM\)](#)
Subject: Public Comment re: Big Stone South to Alexandria 345 kV Transmission Line Project
Date: Tuesday, December 24, 2024 9:27:25 AM

Big Stone South to Alexandria 345 kV Transmission Line Project

Submitter Name: Joseph Arnold

Submitter Email: joedarnold@hotmail.com

Submitter Telephone: (320) 297-0285

Comment:

I am a farmer and landowner in Swift county that could potentially have six farms impacted by the Big Stone South to Alexandria transmission line. My recommendations to mitigate the affects of the transmission line on landowners and farmers is to put the line on property lines wherever possible. When the line is running parallel to a road, it would be great if the poles could be placed in the right of way. Also, it would be important to not interfere with the operation of center pivot irrigators. Recently I saw a 345kv line placed in the right of way of a road along a field that had a center pivot in it, the pole was placed so it would not affect the center pivot or the farmers other field operations. The location was roughly 3-4 miles north of Richmond, MN along CR9 and then it headed west along CR42 and stayed on the edge of the road RW not affecting the farmers. Lastly, it would be good if the affected landowners could provide drain tile locations to the project to make sure there are no tile that get unknowingly destroyed during construction.

Submit Date: 12/24/2024 03:27 PM

LAKE MARY TOWNSHIP

PO BOX 1172

ALEXANDRIA, MN 56308

320-766-5205

lakemarytownship@hotmail.com

01-14-2024

To Whom It May Concern,

The Lake Mary Township Board has several concerns regarding the proposed route of the Big Stone South to Alexandria powerline through Lake Mary Township.

- The proposed line would impact many of our township's agricultural properties. In several cases it would split the fields and operators would have to farm around towers and lose valuable tillable acres.
- We are also concerned about the proposed route between Lake Mary and Lake Andrew, as it would negatively impact the nearby lakeshore properties' values.

The Lake Mary Township Board feels the powerline should follow existing rights of way, such as Federal, State, County, and Township Roads, and or utility rights of way, such as railroad, pipeline, or existing electric utilities.

The Lake Mary Township Board understands the powerline may be needed to enhance present and future power needs. With that being said, the Board feels the powerline should be routed in a way, that will minimize the impact on residents and property owners as little as possible. The Board feels the current proposed route does not meet those criteria.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,
The Lake Mary Township Board
James Schmidt, Chairperson
Pete Fernholz
Max Radil

From: [Lance Mumm](#)
To: [Ness, Jenna \(COMM\)](#)
Subject: route of bss to alex line
Date: Wednesday, January 22, 2025 10:18:39 AM

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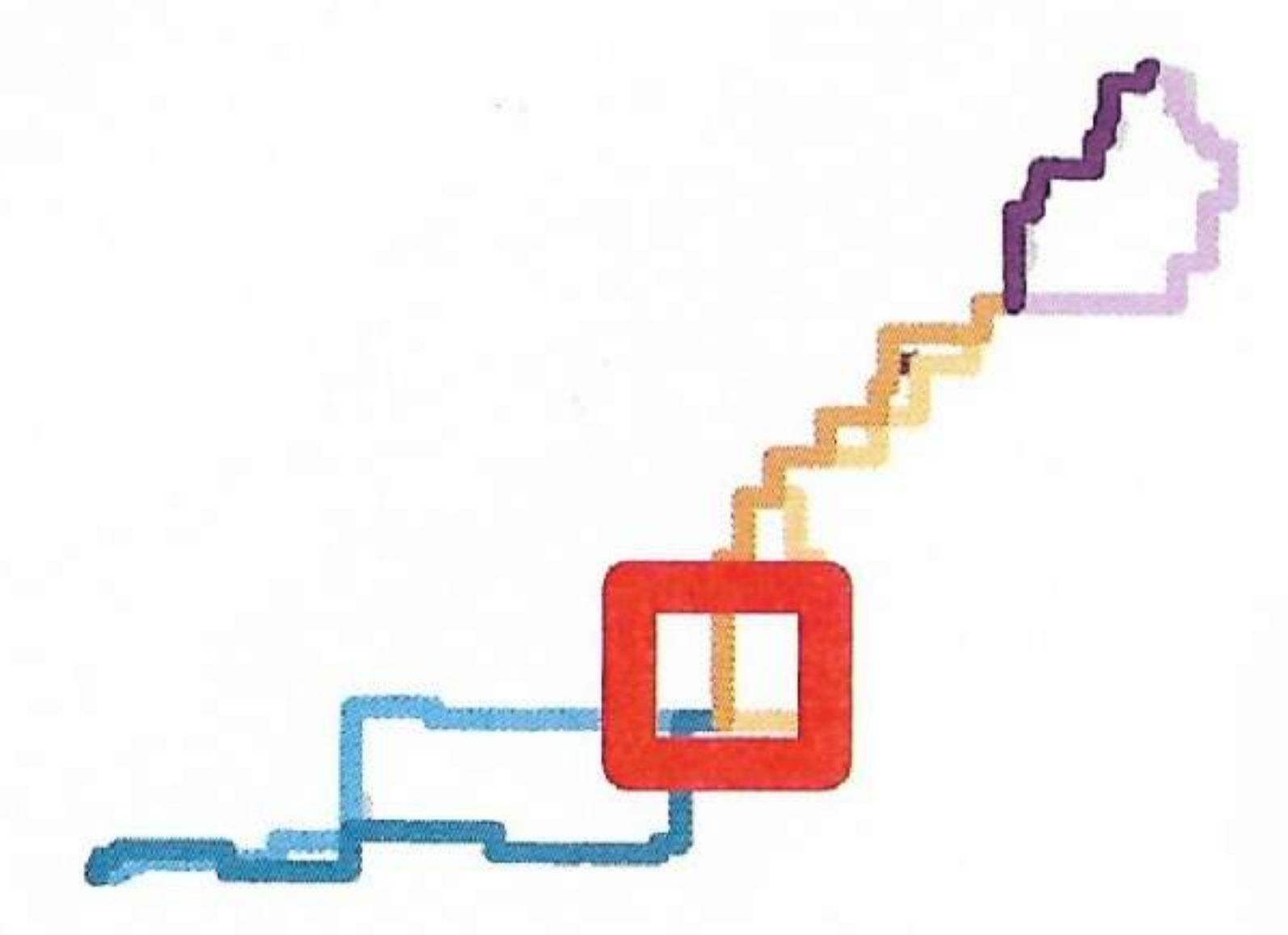
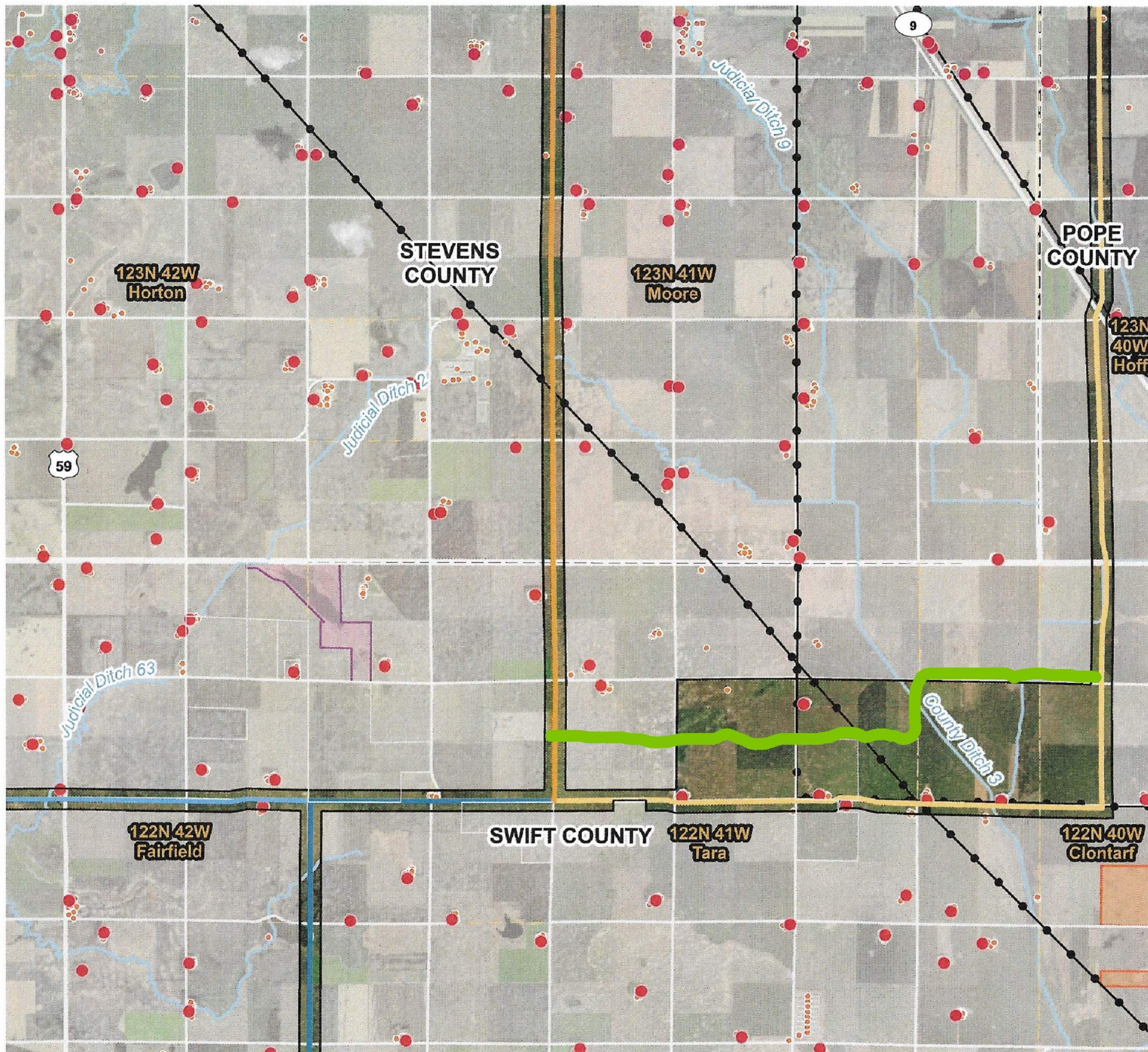
Hello,

I am a farmer and landowner in the pathway of the new transmission line. My concern today is regarding the route options. I think "Central 2" (the east route) is a poor option because it is in the pathway of many irrigators. I also think the line is near too many homes in this option. However, if this line is the option you go with, I feel the line could be moved north a quarter mile and run down the property line. This way, each farmer would only have half of the width of the tower to swerve around when farming instead of the whole tower creating an awkward space between the tower and the road when we don't know where farming equipment will go in the future. We already have 132 foot sprayers. What if the future is in unmanned tractors and they can't steer around an entire tower? I feel putting it on the property line would be better for everyone and it wouldn't interfere with irrigators or have to be in front of homes. It also lets people share in the burden. Again, I think the western route would be better, but if you go east I have added a map for your consideration. I drew it freehand on my computer so it is a little shaky but you will get the idea.

In a separate matter I would like to say thank you for moving the line across the road from my field 122N41W Tara because that field is pattern tiled and has a water main running parallel to the road. That being said, I have a similar situation in section 7 of Tara township. We have a couple mains planned and are planning on plowing in some pattern tile this fall. I thought about waiting until the line was built but that would be at least six years down the road and I can't afford to suffer the loss in revenue in the meantime. Not to mention the waste of money putting the tile in that is already there. If "South 1" is used, please keep it on the south side of the road in Tara 18. This would avoid the pig barn and our water mains. The same can be said for "South 2." If the line comes west to east in section 12 of Fairfield township, please have the line cross to the south before the pig barn back into section 13 Fairfield and continue down section 18 of Tara township. In order to evade my water mains on section 17 of Tara you would have to cross to the north either right before the place in section 7 of Tara or right after. If these water mains are disturbed it will be very costly in large tile project repairs and lost revenue from crop loss. The other pieces of land around us are only risking small seepage tile lines to my knowledge. But I don't know the details of other farmers' tile maps. Again, I have attached a map to give you an idea of what I mean.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this. I realize it is late in the game but I also think they are adjustments that will not only benefit the land owners but save in the cost of the project.

Sincerely,
Lance Mumm



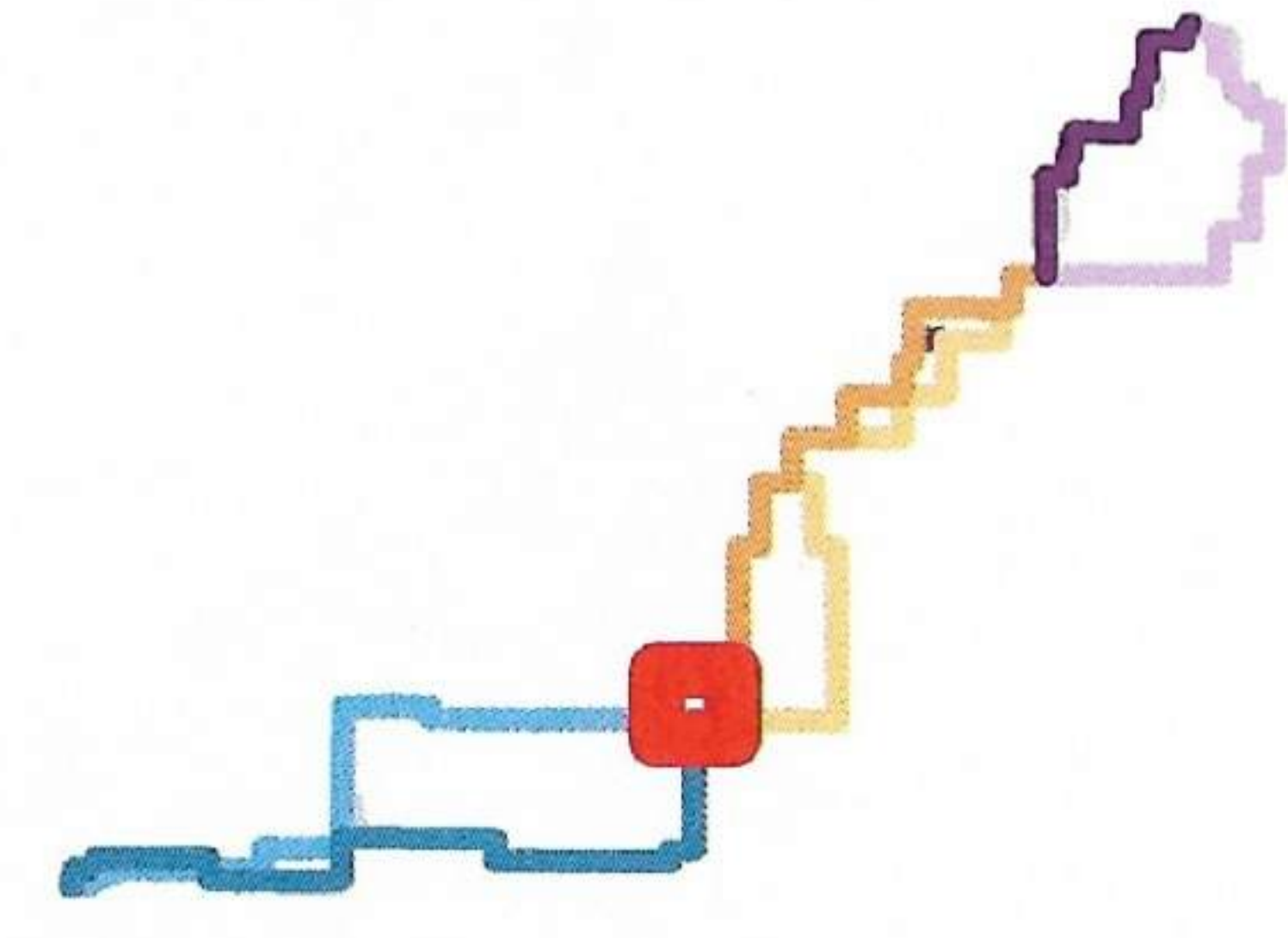
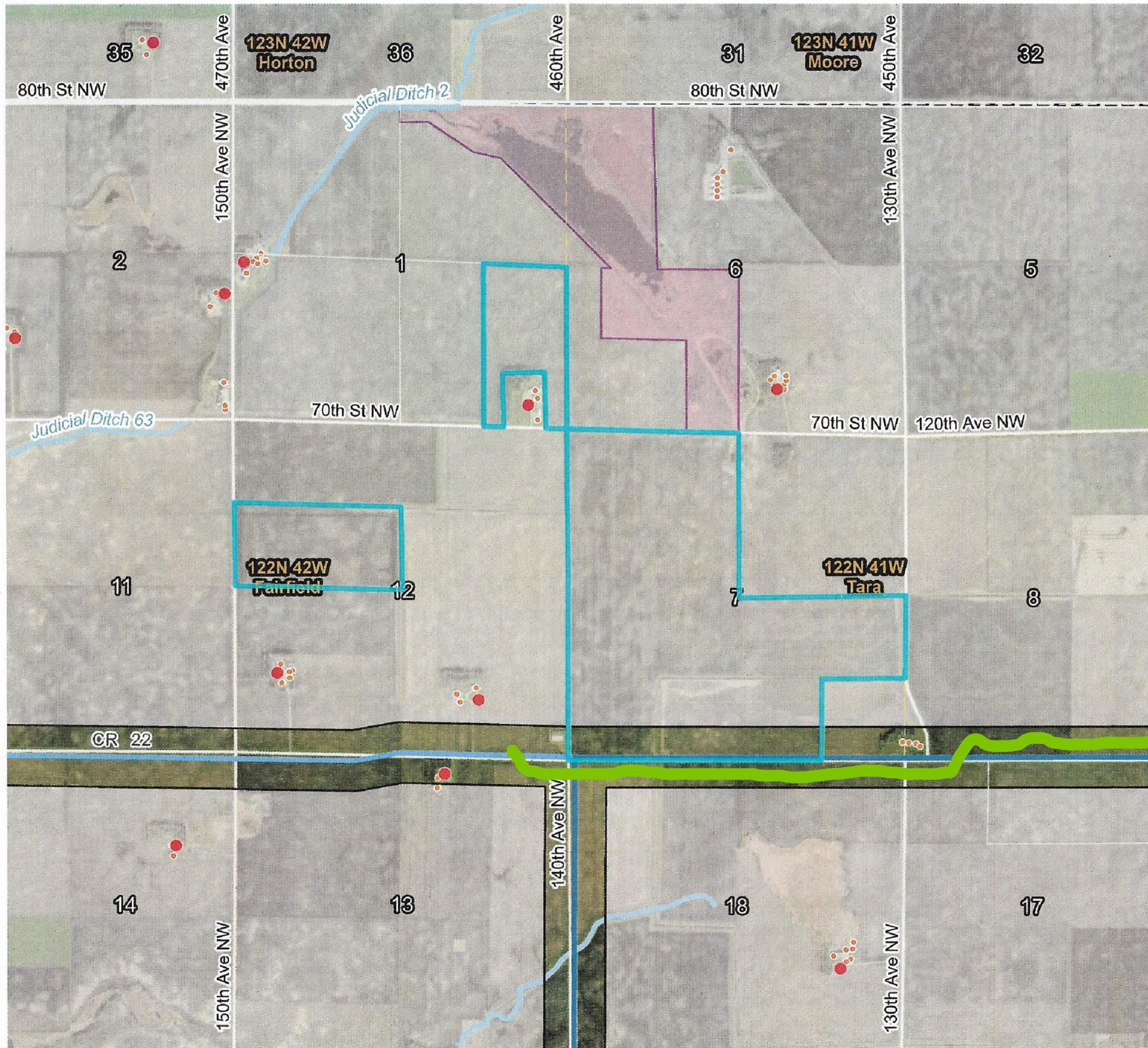
- Route Option**
- Central 1
 - Central 2
 - South 1
 - South 2
 - Route Width
- State Lands**
- DNR Managements Units
 - State Conservation Easement (BWSR)
 - Home
 - Other Structure
- TYPE**
- AC Transmission Line
 - Rivers and Streams (MN Natural Resources)
 - Parcels selection 1



01,000 Feet

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
 SCOPING MEETINGS
 1/15/2025**

BIG STONE SOUTH TO ALEXANDRIA 345KV



- Route Option**
- South 1
 - South 2
 - Route Width
- State Lands**
- DNR Managements Units
 - Home
 - Other Structure
 - Rivers and Streams (MN Natural Resources)
 - Parcels selection 1



0 1,000 Feet



**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
SCOPING MEETINGS
1/15/2025**

BIG STONE SOUTH TO ALEXANDRIA 345KV

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MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
ATTN: JENNA NESS
85 7TH PLACE EAST, SUITE 280
SAINT PAUL MN 55101-2198

FOLD HERE

Comment Period Closes Friday, January 31, 2025, at 4:30 p.m.
Comments must be post-marked or received electronically by the comment deadline.



How to comment:

- Mail comments to the address on this form or submit this form at today's meeting.
- Use the online comment form: <https://mn.gov/commerce/energyfacilities/#comment>
- Email comments to the Environmental Review Manager: jenna.ness@state.mn.us

Comments do not need to be on this form. We encourage you to provide comments in whatever way is most convenient for you. If commenting by email please use "Scoping Comment 23-160" in the subject line. Please include "Docket Number 23-160" in all communications.

THANK YOU for participating in the permitting process! By commenting you are helping inform the Public Utilities Commission's decision regarding this project.

FOLD HERE



Scan QR code to view project webpage.
Data rates apply.

Environmental Impact Statement
Scoping Comment Period
Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project
Docket No. E017, ET10/TL-23-160



Scan QR code to view project map.
Data rates apply.

The applicants propose to construct over 90 miles of new transmission line from Big Stone South, South Dakota to Alexandria, Minnesota along portions of Big Stone, Swift, Stevens, Pope, and Douglas Counties to connect the existing substations in Big Stone South and Alexandria.

Comments will be used to focus the environmental impact statement on potential human or environmental impacts and other issues important to making an informed permit decision. Please be as detailed as possible. Use additional pages as needed. Contact the Environmental Review Manager, Jenna Ness, with any questions about commenting or submitting your comments.

For additional project information visit: <https://apps.commerce.state.mn.us/web/project/15867> or contact the Environmental Review Manager at: jenna.ness@state.mn.us; 651-539-1693; or toll free 1-800-657-3794.

Please provide your contact information. This information and your comments will be publicly available.

Name: Loren Boyesen Phone: 320 760 0199

Street Address: 14723 300th AVE

City: Lowry State: MN ZIP: 56349

Email: lcb@runestone.net

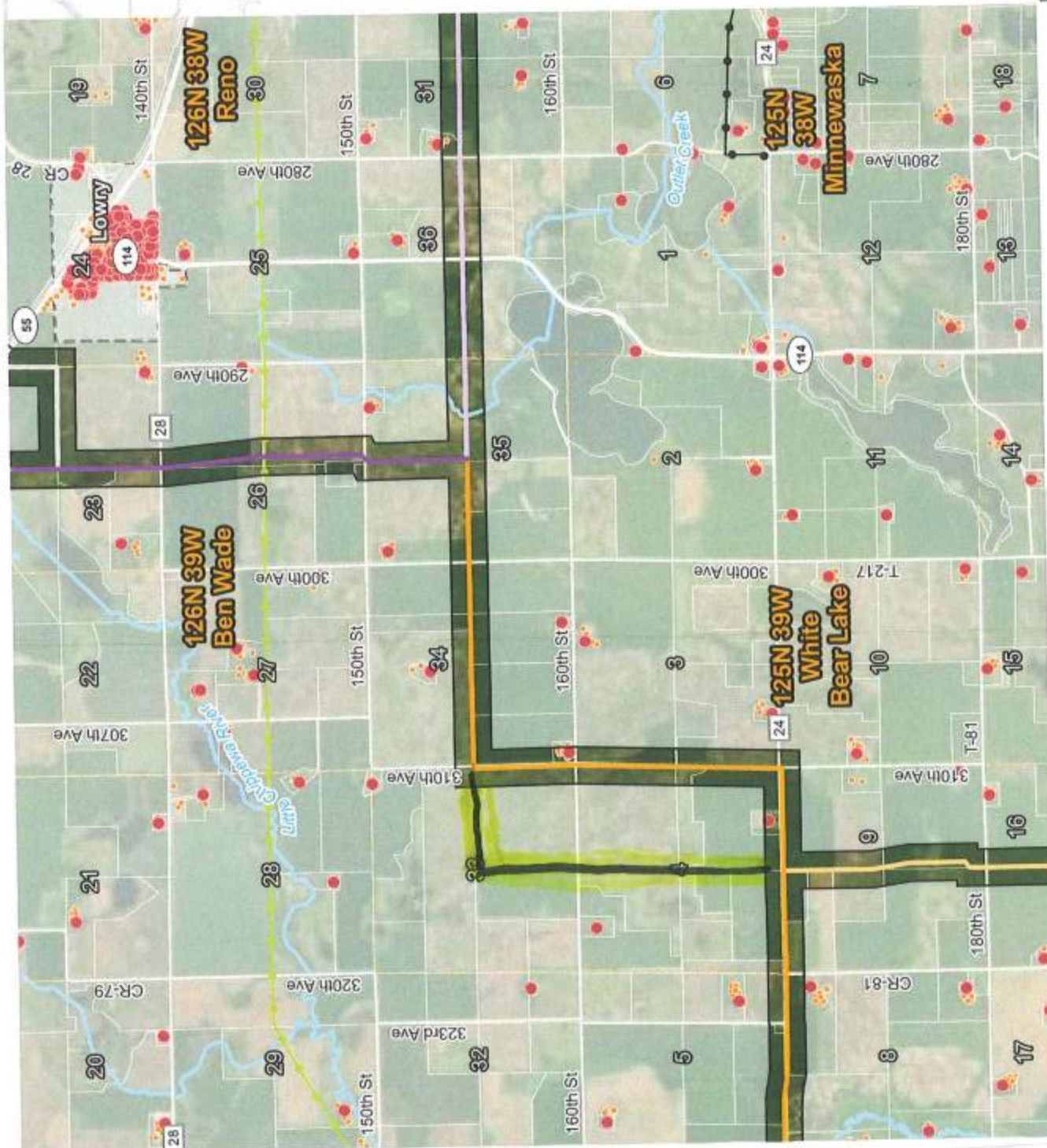
Share your comments as specifically as possible on the EIS that will be prepared for the Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project.

- What potential human and environmental impacts of the proposed project should be considered in the EIS?
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- ① Are there any alternative routes or route segments that should be considered in the EIS to address or mitigate potential impacts associated with the proposed project? **If so, please provide a map with the proposed route drawn** and a description of the proposal.
- Are there any unique characteristics of the proposed project that should be considered in the EIS?

② Keep it ~~away~~ away from roads and people's building sites



- Route Option
- North 1
- North 2
- Central 1
- Central 2
- Segment Alternative
- Route Width
- Home
- Other Structure
- AC Transmission Line
- DC Transmission Line





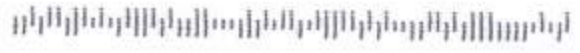
Loren Boyesen
14723 300th AVE
Lowry, MN 56349

SAINT PAUL MN 550
17 JAN 2025 PM 7 1



Minnesota Department of Commerce
ATTN: Jenna Ness
85 7th Place East, Suite 280
Saint Paul, MN 55101-2198

55101-214355



From: [Lori Warner](#)
To: [Ness, Jenna \(COMM\)](#)
Cc: [Lobby, Sam \(He/Him/His\) \(PUC\)](#)
Subject: Big Stone South to Alexandria Environmental Review Comments
Date: Tuesday, January 21, 2025 8:24:05 PM

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Hello Jenna;

Thank you for taking time to visit with me at the January 14, 2025, Public Information and Environmental Review Scoping meeting in Alexandria for the Big Stone South to Alexandria Transmission Project. I appreciated the information you presented and the opportunity to provide input at the meeting.

You may recall that I spoke at the public hearing advocating for use of North Route 2 to mitigate as many negative agricultural impacts as possible in the north segment of this project. I further advocated that if North Route 1 is unfortunately selected, Segment Alternative N9 must be used instead of Segment N2 because N2 has greater negative environmental and agricultural impacts than N9. Per your document "Segment Alternative N9 would result in fewer impacts to residences within 301-500 feet and less acres of impacts to upland forest, non-forested wetlands, agricultural land, and introduce one less waterbody crossing along the proposed length." **Those are clear and decisive reasons to use Segment Alternate N9.** (See Table 2, Comparison of N9 to N2, page 6 of 10.)

Both of these segments are in Ben Wade Township: N9 is the existing State Highway 114 corridor. Segment N2 dissects farmland.

The Ben Wade Township family farm that has been in my parents' ownership for over six decades will be significantly and forever harmed if the power line is put on our prime farmland as proposed in North Route 1, Segment N2. The negative and severe agricultural impact can't be overstated and shouldn't be ignored. In the case of the section of power line that would run through our farm, a preferred option using an existing public corridor is available and recommended as Segment Alternative N9, This route (N9) would not disrupt presently unhindered farmland. Segment N2 will cause irreparable agricultural harm - power line poles will cause a significant problem **forever** as large farm equipment has to maneuver around multiple poles costing my family time and money. It is not acceptable to disrupt open farmland with a power line when an existing public corridor with fewer environmental and agricultural impacts is available and is an identified, viable solution.

Therefore, if North Route 1 is chosen, Segment Alternative N9 must be utilized. N2 is not a viable option; N2 creates additional agricultural and environmental harm as well as negative aesthetic impacts. Our property should not even be under consideration for the power line route (N2) when an existing public corridor with fewer negative impacts to the environment and agricultural property is available (N9).

In conclusion, to mitigate significant and lasting agricultural harm, the power line must not be

placed on our farmland as proposed in North Route 1, Segment N2. As was alluded to at the public meeting, the power line should at all times be placed in a way to mitigate agricultural, environmental, and aesthetic harms. Thus, North Route 1, and within that, Segment N2 should not be considered. North Route 2 is preferred. If North Route 1 is ultimately selected, Segment Alternative N9 must be used to mitigate the agricultural and environmental harm caused by Segment N2. Segment N2 must be eliminated from consideration due to the unnecessary negative agricultural and environmental impacts it causes.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Kind Regards,

Lori Johnson-Warner

Affix
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MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
ATTN: JENNA NESS
85 7TH PLACE EAST, SUITE 280
SAINT PAUL MN 55101-2198

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Environmental Impact Statement
Scoping Comment Period
Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project
Docket No. E017, ET10/TL-23-160

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Please provide your contact information. This information and your comments will be publicly available.

Name: Marlowe Klevel Phone: 320-815-5717

Street Address: 1375 390th St.

City: Odessa State: MN ZIP: 56276

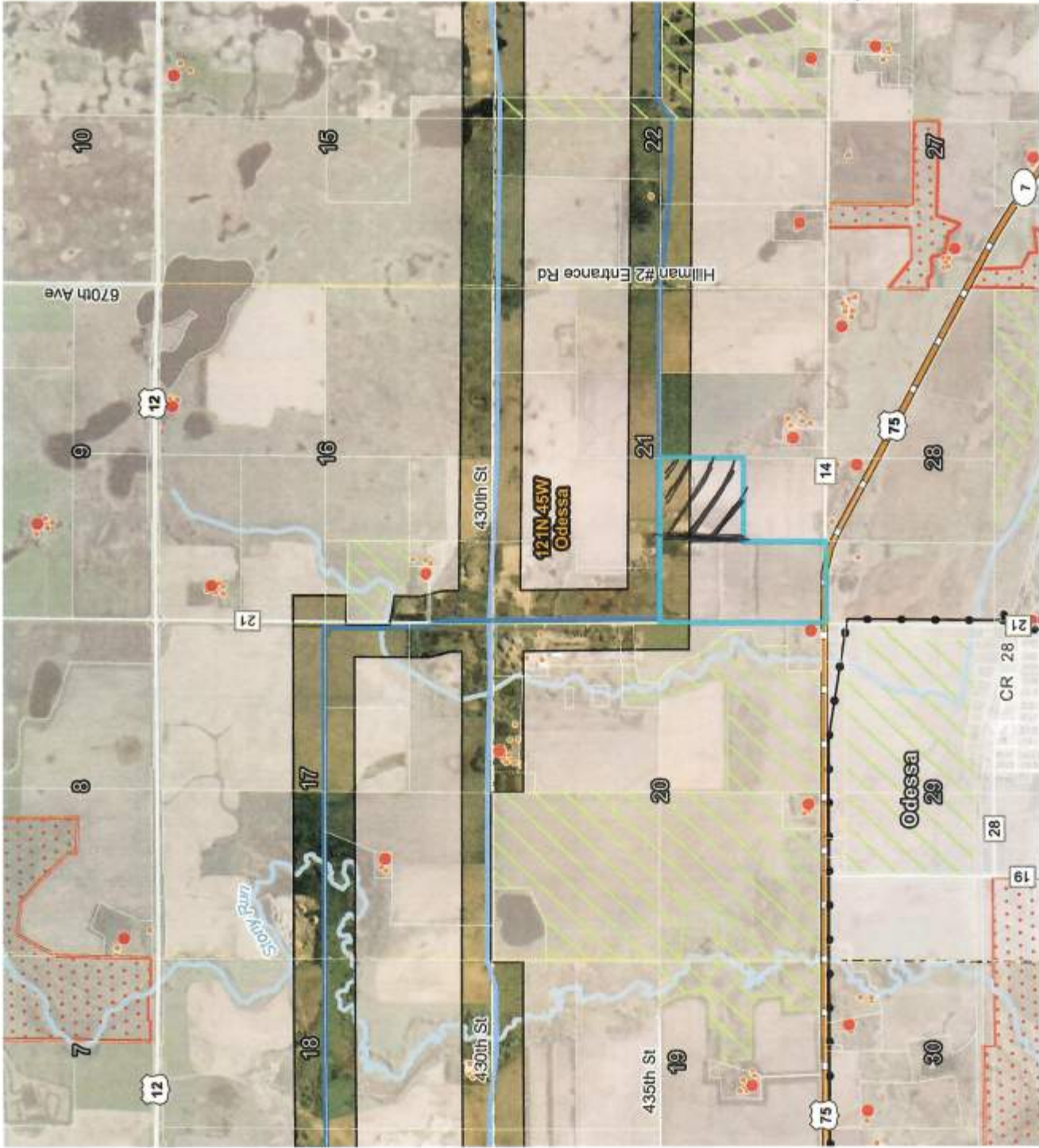
Email: _____

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- Please see Map 1. I own land SW 1/4 of section 21. I have identified native prairie that has never been tilled. It is important to my family that it remains native and undisturbed. Also the route to the north makes more sense because it's more accessible and follows a Hwy corridor. It also saves project money with less turns.

- See Map 2. I have identified native prairie in the SW 1/4 of section 23. It has never been tilled. It's important that it remains native and undisturbed. Also the southern route crosses USFWS land. The northern route would disturb less Ag land and habitat. The north route follows existing Hwy corridor and should be followed.



- Route Option**
- South 1
 - South 2
- Route Width**
- USFWS Easements
 - USFWS National Wildlife Refuge
- Home**
- Other Structure
- TYPE**
- AC Transmission Line
 - MN DOT Scenic Byways
 - Rivers and Streams (MN Natural Resources)
 - Parcels selection 1

Map 1
Native Prairie

2



- Route Option
 - South 1
 - South 2
- Connector Segment
- Route Width
- USFWS Easements
- USFWS National Wildlife Refuge
- Home
- Other Structure
- MN DOT Scenic Byways
- Rivers and Streams (MN Natural Resources)
- Parcels selection 1

Map 2

- Native Prairie

Minnesota Department of Commerce
attn: Jenna Ness
85 7th Place East, Suite 280
Saint Paul, MN 55101

January 27, 2025

BIG STONE SOUTH TO ALEXANDRIA 345-KV TRANSMISSION PROJECT

Dear Jenna,

My family has bought, paid for and paid taxes on the land that you are proposing to run a power line across since 1895. My family and I own, rent and farm on multiple properties on both of the proposed routes on the Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project.

We farm corn, soybeans, wheat and sugar beets with large equipment and auto steer. We hire aero spray companies which are increasing prices for obstacles in the fields. The more obstacles, the more crop damage and loss due to navigating around them.

We are worried about the signals disrupting our devices, such as navigation (auto steer), 2-way radios, cell phones, and who knows what else in the future.

It will affect property values and cash rent values. Even if we are compensated accordingly right now, that does not factor in the increased land values that the future generations will miss out on.

We are concerned about the health concerns of stray voltage and destroying the beauty of our land and surrounding area.

We have dealt with the government and power companies in the past few years. Highway 12 was recently rebuilt. We were told they were going to widen it out and re-contour the ditches to make it safer, but when they were done, there was not a significant change. We also had a local power company change power lines. Both times, we ended up signing a bunch of paperwork and selling easements and all we ended up with was rutted up fields and a crappy rough highway.

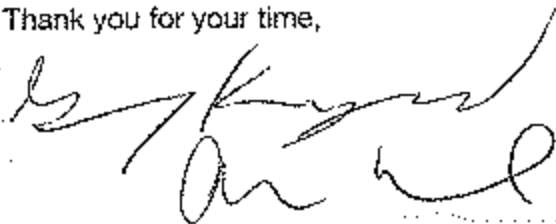
We find it completely ridiculous that you are avoiding US Fish and Wildlife land and other government land considering that this is a public power line. It should be put on public land and leave us small family farmers, landowners and our families out of it.

We would also like you to figure out ways to produce electricity in urban areas and the people that are actually consuming the electricity to deal with these problems instead of those of us that work this land to make a living.

Therefore, we propose a new route is considered for this project along Highway 7 East, until it makes sense to go north, some where around Holloway. There is more less-valuable tillable land there which would impacts far fewer farmers. There is more pasture, CRP fields and wasteland along that route.

In speaking for our ancestors, our current family and our next generation, please consider our request to avoid our family farm land.

Thank you for your time,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg and Angela Krogsrud". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Greg and Angela Krogsrud
60651 410th Street
Correll MN 56227

Docket # 23-160

To Whom it Concerns:

We have a family farm of 240 Acres
we have lived and farm all of our lives to make
this a better family farm so we can pass this
farm on to our children and next generation
only to have the big power companies the big cities
and government come in and destroy every thing
we have worked for

To start with in the beginning BSS A and
OTTERTAIL said they would follow existing right of ways
for proposed routes and NOT to disrupt private
and farm land and would reroute any lines
that would cause hardship

one proposal is going right through the middle
of our family farm you have no idea of the
hardship this will cause

with the proposal of a 345 kilovolt line
tell me this: why is it that fish & wildlife and
the DNR and Minnesota owned public land will
NOT let big power lines cross or be installed
on their property and we as farmers and
land owners are supposed to ?? why is it
that scientists - engineers - government officials
and etc can't explain the problems with stray
voltage and interference of all kind and

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medical & health concerns both for humans and livestock. How many times have you driven by power lines and lost signal and interference and static on radios and other devices

Each transmission pole is a monopole with 90' - 150' structure and big base - what an eye sore. This will completely ruin and destroy the beauty of the landscape.

I think the open house meetings you had earlier were just a formality to satisfy the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission, the OTP and the MRES. I think all along they knew which routes they were planning and not telling the people that live out here.

I would like to know if the CEOs and the heads of these departments and the people that make these decisions would feel and react to if an organization wants to put in a walking or bicycle trail right through the middle of their backyard.

The Biden administration and the democrats has a goal of Net Solar and battery powered grid by 2035 - This was in The Farm Journal

May - June 2024 issue. If the big cities need all this power why don't they put up power plants - solar farms near where they need them along with wind turbines NO because the people by the big cities don't want them so let's go out to rural Minnesota and destroy their way of life and farming

Some but not all of the hardship this will cause:
Value of the family farm decreased tremendously
Center pivot irrigation - we have plenty of water. We have center pivots 1 mile away looking to install in future

How are we supposed to farm around these monopoles with 120 foot sprayers, 24-36-48 row planters and they are getting bigger

Custom Applicators

Aerial spraying very limited have to come back with a ground sprayer

What about weed problems next to monopoles

Flying drones for farming or mapping - weed

Scouting - Soil & Crop deficiency

Water - Storm & hail damage

What about interference with GPS - auto steer

2-Way radios - Cell phones

Cash rent going down and farming ability

What about increasing the building site
increase or expand a livestock feeding lot
it will completely limit future expansion
BSSA Coordinating with Landowners - work with
you to resolve questions & concerns
agreements and monetary offer based on
Fair Market Value (yeah right)

There is no way you can put a Fair
market Value on this. As mentioned
previously this is a life time for me and
my children and estate for any and all future
endeavors

Has any consideration been given for Taxes
on Capital gains Most of the Land owners will
have to pay between 40 & 50% of the payments
for Taxes that doesn't leave the land owner
very much. BSSA must pay the landowner
Value many times over

Put the transmission line underground
or better yet maybe the Trump administration
will intervene and stop the project

I have talked to my children about this
project because someday they own and farm
this land after I am gone they are
completely devastated by this proposal of

Running this power line right through the middle of our family farm I and my family want nothing to do with this. IT will completely limit any future endeavors

As you can tell I am devastated by the fact your considering a 345-Kilovolt transmission line right through the middle of our family farm
Akron Twp Sec 20 Big Stone County

Ron Schmitt
43176 630th Ave
Correll, Mn 56227

Linda Schmitt Family Trust
43176 630th Ave
Correll, Mn 56227

LINDA SCHMIDT
630TH AVE
LL, MN 56227

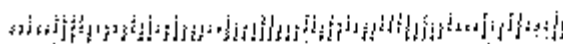
SAINT PAUL MN 550

15 JAN 2025 PM 6 L



Jenna Ness
Minn Dept. of Commerce
85 7th Place East Suite 280
ST. Paul, Mn 55101

55101-214355



From: [Ryan Engelbrecht](#)
To: [Ness, Jenna \(COMM\)](#)
Subject: Transmission Line - Alexandria Area
Date: Tuesday, January 14, 2025 12:42:57 PM

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Hello Jenna,

I attended the meeting today in Alexandria, thank you for your presentation. My main concern/questions are the following:

I would be impacted by the north segment as I have property on both of the proposed routes of the north segment. I have 80 acres (two 40-acre parcels) impacted on the West proposed segment and 80 acres that would be impacted by the route of the east segment, all located in Douglas County.

The section-township-range of the properties impacted on the potential west segment are 3-127-38 and 2-127-38.

The section-township-range of the property impacted on the potential east segment is 21-127-37.

The properties I will have the most concern with will be the two 40-acre parcels on the west segment, 3-127-38 and 2-127-38. I purchased these two 40-acre properties in 2017 and 2018 and currently farm them, however also purchased them as investment properties, considering their proximity to the interstate, town and that they are in city limits. My concern would have to do with property value impact. From an agriculture standpoint, it may not have a huge impact, but if this property passes next to or across my property, I feel it will greatly reduce the value of this land. If the line was to cross or run adjacent to it, my expectation would be compensation to reflect the fact that the property is no longer as valuable for potential development purposes.

I would still have these same concerns of course with the property 21-127-37, but not nearly the devaluation concerns I would have with 3-127-38 and 2-127-38 north of Lake Andrew.

Thank you,

Ryan Engelbrecht
320-304-1489

From: eera.admin_no_reply@state.mn.us
To: [Ness, Jenna \(COMM\)](#)
Subject: Public Comment re: Big Stone South to Alexandria 345 kV Transmission Line Project
Date: Wednesday, January 22, 2025 3:32:59 PM

Big Stone South to Alexandria 345 kV Transmission Line Project

Submitter Name: Susan Nelson

Submitter Email: susan@hanlawoffice.com

Submitter Telephone: (320) 257-3388

Comment:

Scoping Comment 23-160 I am working with Lee Hanson and attended the public meeting hearing in Hancock, MN on the 15th of January with him. Mr. Hanson got up and spoke on behalf of the irrigation farmers from the area. The point of his speaking was to be heard on record, that the opinion of the more than 20+ irrigation farmland owners in the Morris-Hancock area, who are potentially affected by the location of this power line, prefer the alternative #1 (or more west route option). He misspoke on record at that hearing. He actually said alternative #2. So, I am submitting this comment as a correction to that and would ask that the record show that the route that is supported by those farmland owners is in fact, alternative #1 (the more westerly route). Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, you can contact me or Lee Hanson directly at Lee@hanlawoffice.com.

Submit Date: 01/22/2025 09:32 PM

From: [Tom](#)
To: [Ness, Jenna \(COMM\)](#)
Subject: Big Stone South to Alexandria
Date: Tuesday, January 14, 2025 7:09:25 PM

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My property is in Lake Mary Township Douglas Mn parcel # 30-0337-200 and 30-0337-000. We feel it would better to run the power line along county road 21 instead of going through my woods and affecting possible future development of lakeshore property. Please feel free to call me 320-760-2657
Tom Hills

Please provide your contact information. This information and your comments will be publicly available.

Name: Wayne Erickson Phone: 320-491-1878

Street Address: 8438 E Lake Carlos Dr. NE

City: Carlos State: MN ZIP: 56319

Email: ~~wlerick~~@Centurylink.net
wlerick

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- Are there any unique characteristics of the proposed project that should be considered in the EIS?

* See attached map for property we own.

1. This land has been in our family for over 150 years. My grand father homesteaded in this location between Lake Mary and Lake Andrew because of the beautiful sunrise and sunset. The homestead also sits on high ground where our views were optimal. My daughter and son-in-law chose to build a house on this homesteaded location in 2017 for the very same reasons that my grandfather did - the great views, the great location, the wonderful hunting, and the prime farm ground. The beautiful views of the sunrise and sunsets would be negatively affected by this line. This land means a lot to our family and is used for recreational purposes and it would negatively affect this use as well. It will diminish and negatively affect the value.

2. The negative human impacts are undeniable. I recently had a buyer of my land that wanted to develop it. See attached map. He backed

Please provide your contact information. This information and your comments will be publicly available.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Email: _____

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out on the purchase because of this proposed line. We were set to close on November 28th with my realtor and he backed out on Nov. 25th. He stated his only reason was due to the proposed line. If the eastern (N2) is chosen buyer would be interested again.

3. The land I own has great potential for future development. It is 5 miles from Alexandria and is near several great lakes. This is important for future buyers. The location is prime. It is also future income for my family. This will be lost if the transmission line is built.

4. I would prefer N2 - the eastern route coming into Alexandria. That route would go through a more industrialized part of Douglas County and Alexandria. It is built more for manufacturing and would make more sense for the transmission line to be in this type of area instead of prime agland and residential areas.



3.



- Route Option
- North 1
- Route Width
- Home
- Other Structure
- TYPE
- AC Transmission Line



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
SCOPING MEETINGS
1/14/2025

BIG STONE SOUTH TO ALEXANDRIA 345KV

2

Please provide your contact information. This information and your comments will be publicly available.

Name: Allen Arndt Phone: 320-815-1592

Street Address: 1028 Minnesota St. N

City: Ortonville State: MN ZIP: 56278

Email: _____

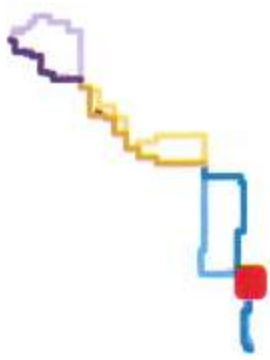
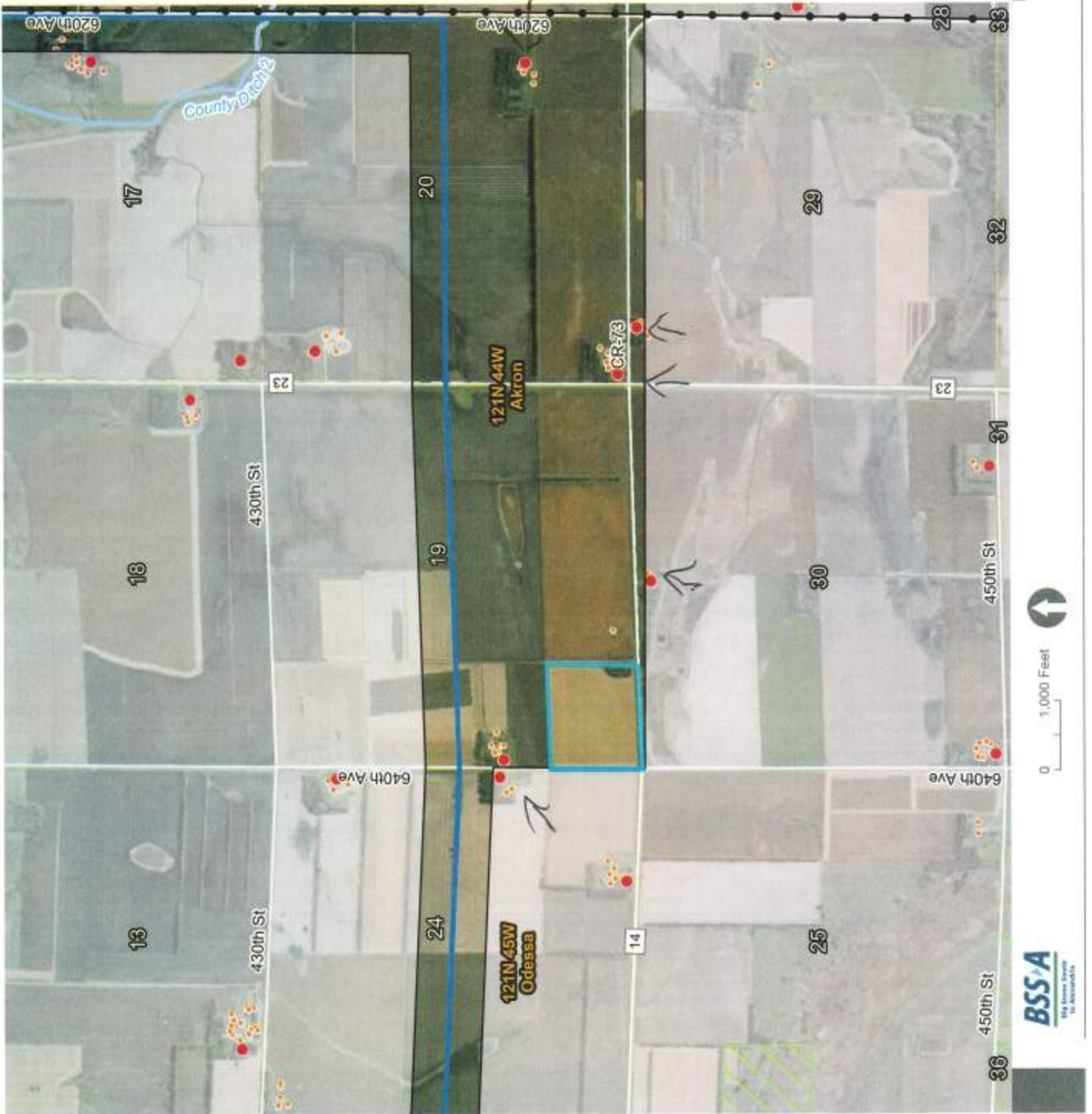
Share your comments as specifically as possible on the EIS that will be prepared for the Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project.

- What potential human and environmental impacts of the proposed project should be considered in the EIS?
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- Are there any unique characteristics of the proposed project that should be considered in the EIS?

- I own the SW 1/4 of the SW 1/4. The proposed corridor was widened in this area for no reason. It should stay where the current Right of way is to the north to avoid 6 homes. It would make no sense to move it closer to homes. see map 1 in 16-121-44

- 16-121-44 - I own land in the SW 1/4. We just signed a transmission easement. The line would need to stay on the west side of 620th Ave. If it is on my side the poles would be out in my field to avoid the other easement. This would significantly decrease the value of my land. See Map 2. Due to poles be placed in field and making it un-farmable.

- Please see Map 3. The south route makes more sense because the map is not correct. There is more land in USFWS that is ~~not~~ indicated on the map. And the structure I circled is no longer there. You would cross more habitat on the North route so south would be best option.



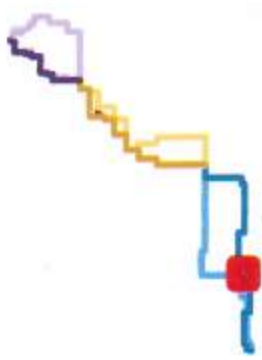
- Route Option
- South 1
- Route Width
- USFWS Easements
- Home
- Other Structure
- TYPE
- AC Transmission Line
- Rivers and Streams (MN Natural Resources)
- Parcels selection 1

Map 1

* do not closer to homes.

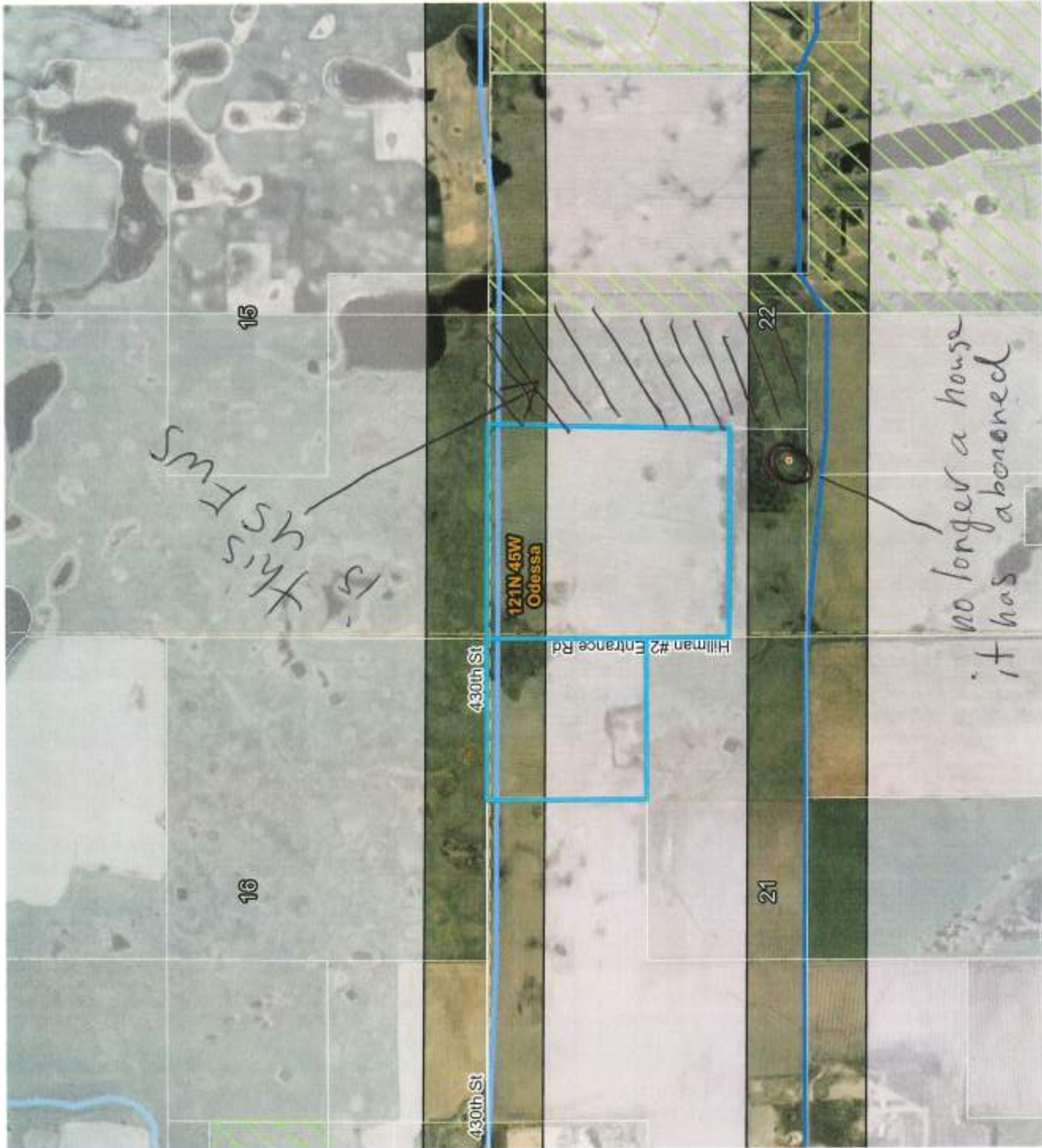
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
SCOPING MEETINGS
1/16/2025





- Route Option
- South 1
 - South 2
- Segment Alternative
- Route Width
- State Lands
- DNR Managements Units
 - State Conservation Easement (BWSR)
- Home
- Other Structure
- TYPE
- AC Transmission Line
 - Rivers and Streams (MN Natural Resources)
 - Parcels selection 1

Map 2



- Route Option
- South 1
- South 2
- Route Width
- USFWS Easements
- Other Structure
- Rivers and Streams (MN Natural Resources)
- Parcels selection 1

Map 3



From: eera.admin_no_reply@state.mn.us
To: [Ness, Jenna \(COMM\)](#)
Subject: Public Comment re: Big Stone South to Alexandria 345 kV Transmission Line Project
Date: Friday, January 24, 2025 5:56:18 PM

Big Stone South to Alexandria 345 kV Transmission Line Project

Submitter Name: Andy Aaberg

Submitter Email: aaberg@hcinet.net

Submitter Telephone: (320) 808-1639

Comment:

Our concerns with the projected route of the Big Stone to Alexandria powerline project refer to "Route Option Cental 2". Location in New Prairie township section 25 and White Bear Lake township section 30 specifically 210th Street and 340th Avenue. The water table is extremely high in this area. There are 3 artesian flowing wells and multiple springs in this proposed route. There will need to be an extreme de-watering plan, and we are concerned with where this water will drain to and the potential soil erosion. We are dairy farmers, and stray voltage is an alarming concern to our livelihood and well-being of our herd of cattle. Lastly, we enjoy the sandhill cranes that nest and return to our farm every year. We would be sad and disappointed if their environment would be disrupted by this proposed route. Andy and Beth Aaberg

Submit Date: 01/24/2025 11:56 PM

Please provide your contact information. This information and your comments will be publicly available.

Name: Dalen Roe Phone: 320 305 2643

Street Address: 42804 715th Ave
Ortonville, MN 56278

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Email: daleroe@gmail.com

Share your comments as specifically as possible on the EIS that will be prepared for the Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project.

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- Are there any unique characteristics of the proposed project that should be considered in the EIS?

A) My home/farm is marked on the attached map. The southern route shown on this map would be just across the road. It is too close to my home. I raise livestock - beef cattle. And the constant hum and electric field would be a problem.

I would prefer this line not be put in, at all.

The northern route on this map would be preferred if the line has to be built.

Dalen Roe

From: eera.admin_no_reply@state.mn.us
To: [Ness, Jenna \(COMM\)](#)
Subject: Public Comment re: Big Stone South to Alexandria 345 kV Transmission Line Project
Date: Monday, January 27, 2025 11:22:08 AM
Attachments: [BSSA Proposal.PDF](#)

Big Stone South to Alexandria 345 kV Transmission Line Project

Submitter Name: David Hovde

Submitter Email: dbhovde@comcast.net

Submitter Telephone: (612) 618-0011

Comment:

There have been a number of proposed routes east out of Ortonville. I believe all of them have impacted the Dolores Christensen (David Hovde, Jane Medcalf, Ann Verdoorn) farm which is basically the south half of section 14 and the north half of section 23. The first proposal went along the southern fence line of the farm. Because the line followed an existing boundary there was little impact to the farmability of any fields. A subsequent proposed route went into the middle of the farm and turned north. That route presents more farmability (obstacles) challenges. There are two suggestions to that mid-farm route which minimize the obstacle issues and uses some field/pasture boundaries while recognizing the 1400 foot span of the power line. Of these two, route A is preferable because it leaves a nice square piece of land rather than clipping off a corner of the pasture. Note potential pole placement by the white circles.

Submit Date: 01/27/2025 05:19 PM

Section 14

A B



Attn: Kendal Sethre
Communications

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: D+J Livestock, LLC
(Donald Beon)
Address: 44694 300th St.
City Hancock State MN ZIP 56244
Phone Number: 320-304-0255
Email: _____

PLEASE RETURN COMMENTS BY
MARCH 22, 2024

Mail:
Big Stone South to Alexandria
345-kV Transmission Line Project
C/O HDR
1601 Utica Avenue South, Suite 600
St. Louis Park, MN 55416-3400

Email:
connect@bigstonesouthtoalexandria.com

Comment: Our family is against BSSA power lines going up near our farm because of the harmful health risks they would cause. We have read that studies have been done by many learned people and results are similar.

Harvard graduate, Dr. David A. Carpenter, prof. of environmental science at Albany, SUNY, writes "... this review summarizes the evidence stating that excessive exposure to magnetic fields from power lines and other sources of electric current increases the risk of development of some cancers and neurodegenerative diseases, and that excessive exposure to radiofrequency radiation increases risk of cancer, male infertility, and neurobehavioral abnormalities."

Paul Brodeur, American science writer, writes for the "New Yorker", and is a well-known author who in 1968 alerted the nation to the health hazards of asbestos. He wrote in his books "The Great Power-Line Cover-Up" and "Zapping America" about the damage of electromagnetic fields to humans, especially children, and how it increased the rates of brain cancer.

The "Observer" piece also cited the findings of the study recently conducted by Genevieve Mateski, the epidemiologist at John Hopkins, who had found that the incidence of brain tumors among 4500 New York Telephone Company cable spicers - men whose work near power lines and substations exposes them to electric and magnetic fields - was almost twice as high as that of the company's office workers, and that their leukemia rate was 7 times as high. Nancy Wertheimer told the newspaper that a majority of the scientific studies conducted since 1979 showed that there was an association between exposure to electromagnetic fields and the development of cancer.

Sam Milham, MD, of the state of Washington, studied occupational illnesses and his findings were similar.

002H



Please fold, fasten, and mail - No envelope necessary

Place
Postage
Here

**Big Stone South to Alexandria
345-kV Transmission Line Project**
C/O HDR
1601 Utica Avenue South, Suite 600
St. Louis Park, MN 55416-3400

We noticed your map goes around wildlife areas. We would hope more consideration would be given to the health of humans than to birds and animals.

The legal term "precautionary principle" is that we should not have to prove evidence of ill effects, but it's your responsibility to prove it's safe.

If the power line goes through our state, consider the route be further east on Highway 12, and then north along Highway 29, going through less populated areas. Better it is to go through wetlands than to endanger people.

While our culture uses more and more electricity, we need to be wise and cautious where to put power lines.

Please provide your contact information. This information and your comments will be publicly available.

Name: Donald Stock Phone: 320-273-2728

Street Address: 43153 640th Ave

City: Odessa State: MN ZIP: 56276

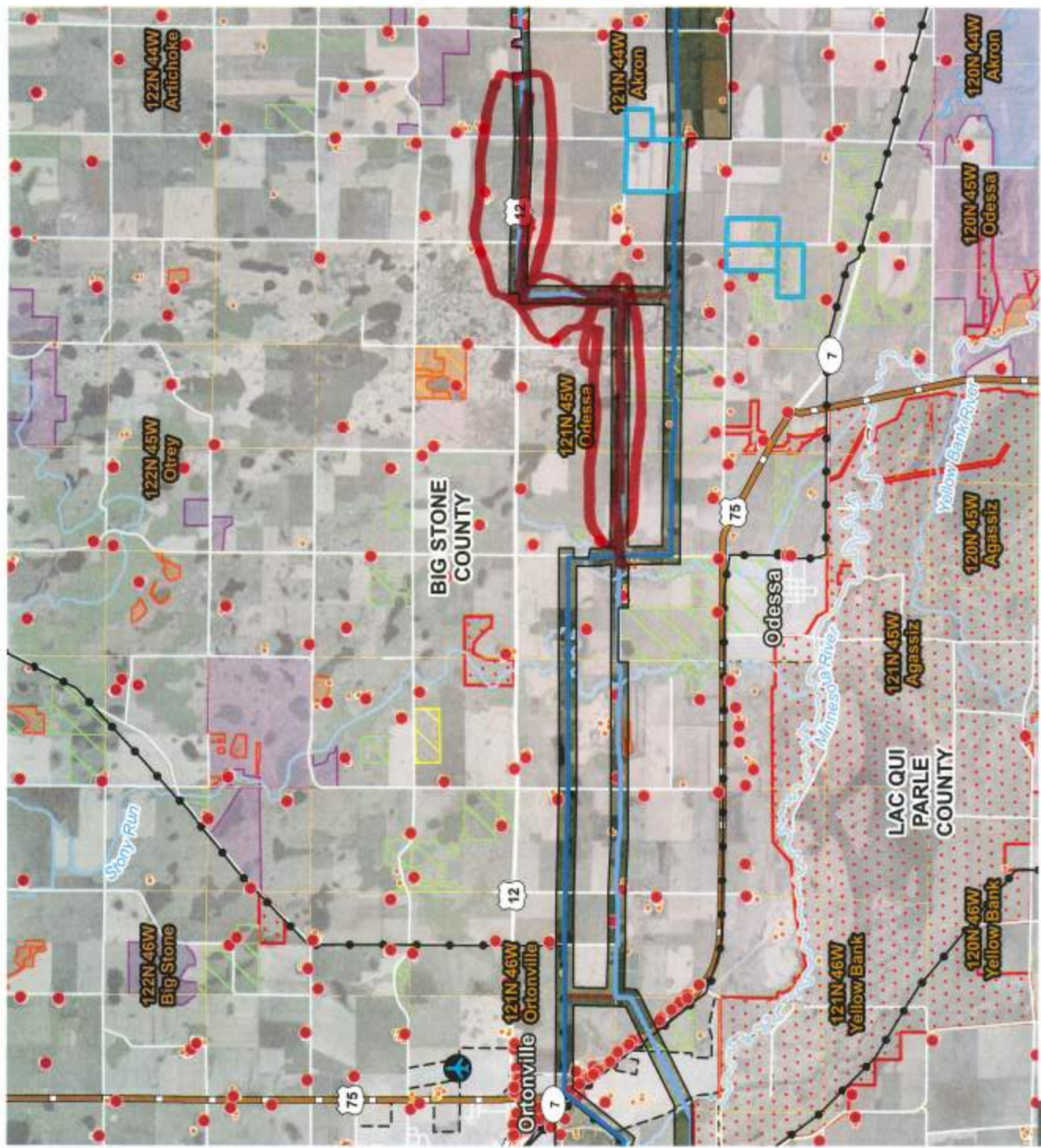
Email: de_jstock@fedtel.net

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- Are there any unique characteristics of the proposed project that should be considered in the EIS?

We prefer the circled route - south 2

Stock



- Route Option
- South 1
 - South 2
 - Connector Segment
 - Route Width
- State Lands
- DNR Managements Units
 - State Conservation Easement (BWSR)
 - State Migratory Waterfowl Area
- Federal Lands
- NRCS Easements
 - USFWS Easements
 - USFWS National Wildlife Refuge
- Home
- Other Structure
- TYPE
- AC Transmission Line
 - Airports
 - MN DOT Scenic Byways
 - Rivers and Streams (MN Natural Resources)
 - Parcels selection 1

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
SCOPING MEETINGS
1/16/2025

BIG STONE SOUTH TO ALEXANDRIA 345KV



01,000 Feet



Please provide your contact information. This information and your comments will be publicly available.

Name: Dusty - Tim Schroeder Phone: 320-287-2819

Street Address: 1200 20th St NW

City: Holloway State: MN ZIP: 50249

Email: midwesterndrilling@gmail.com

Share your comments as specifically as possible on the EIS that will be prepared for the Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project.

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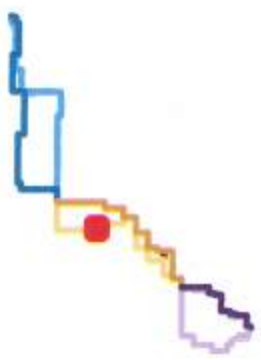
* Parcel No: 16-0045-004 123N 40W Sect 7
Holt Township

We are planning to build a home on this property in the near future. (2025)

This transmission line would prohibit our building as the easement completed covers our entire property.

The visual impacts of this line are not preferred and we would really love to build in this location. Pope county already has a shortage of building land and it took us several years to find this property so close to Hancock.

Pope county does not allow more than one homestead to be built in one section. We will have no other options to build our dream home if this line is placed on our property.



- Route Option
 - Central 2
 - Route Width
- Home
- Other Structure
- TYPE
 - AC Transmission Line
 - Rivers and Streams (M/N Natural Resources)



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
 SCOPING MEETINGS
 1/15/2025

BIG STONE SOUTH TO ALEXANDRIA 345KV

From: eera.admin_no_reply@state.mn.us
To: [Ness, Jenna \(COMM\)](#)
Subject: Public Comment re: Big Stone South to Alexandria 345 kV Transmission Line Project
Date: Monday, January 27, 2025 5:26:43 PM

Big Stone South to Alexandria 345 kV Transmission Line Project

Submitter Name: Guido Niederoest

Submitter Email: grndarloa01@gmail.com

Submitter Telephone: (406) 210-4376

Comment:

Docket Number 23-160. Concerning the North Route Segment re the North 2 corridor. I do not see the need to place this power line so close to the town of Forada and near the eastern side of Maple Lake. Many people live in this area all year long along with a great influx of summer residents. I believe this will have a negative impact on these residents and their property values as well as the wildlife including eagles which are in the area year round. If it is to be built at all it would seem to be more reasonable to locate this power line on the North 1 corridor.

Submit Date: 01/27/2025 11:26 PM

Troy Schmidtke
1423 McKinley Street
St. Paul, MN 55108

January 27, 2025

Re: In the Matter of the Application for a Route Permit for the Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project in west-central Minnesota.
Docket # 23-160-TL

I am submitting this letter as a public comment on the Application for a Route Permit for the Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project. I am a property owner in White Bear Lake Township in Pope County, and my property will be affected by the choice of route for the Central Segment of the project. I am writing in support of selection of Route Central 1 and in opposition to selection of Route Central 2.

I own approximately 400 acres of land west of Starbuck, MN. More specifically, my property is located along 190th Street adjacent to 33224 190th Street. Proposed Segment C10 of Route Central 2 would run along the northern edge of my property. This would drastically and negatively affect my property, with larger impact on the wildlife, wildfowl, and environment in the surrounding area.

In discussing the proposed routes, I will be referring to segments of the proposed lines as laid out in Appendix D-2 to PUC Application. I will be specifically addressing the routes proposed in the northern portion of the Central Segment of the project, pages 7 – 9 of Appendix D-2. In the northern portion of the Central Segment of the transmission line project, Segments C4 and C5 are a part of Central Route 1, while Segments C9 and C10 are a part of Central Route 2.

As an initial point, a large portion of my property, including the area in which Segment C10 of Route Central 2 would run, is subject to a RIM Conservation Easement.

The RIM program, managed by the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), permanently protects environmentally sensitive land by placing restrictions on its use. The program protects the state's water and soil resources by permanently restoring wetlands, adjacent native grassland wildlife habitat complexes and permanent riparian buffers. BWSR acquires conservation easements to permanently protect, restore and manage critical natural resources without owning the land

outright. The land remains in private ownership and the landowner retains responsibility for maintenance and paying applicable real estate taxes and assessments.

The Little Chippewa River and its floodplain runs through my property in a north-south line, and my RIM land borders the river on both the East and West sides. The RIM land includes a spruce grove, hardwood trees, and native prairie grasses, as well as emergent area of restored oak savannah.

Oak savanna is a transitional ecosystem between the tallgrass prairie and woodland environments, so it is an important habitat for both woodland and prairie wildlife. This habitat is particularly valuable to a number of bird species that depend on open woodlands for feeding and nesting such as red-headed woodpeckers, eastern bluebirds, loggerhead shrikes, and eastern whip-poor-wills. Prior to European settlement, oak savanna was one of the most common ecosystems in Minnesota, covering roughly 10 percent of the state. Fire suppression, agriculture, and urban growth have reduced the extent of oak savanna coverage to less than one-tenth of one percent of its original acreage, making it one of the rarest plant communities in the region. As the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources has noted, “Given the significance of this habitat type, the acreage that has been lost, and its importance to a diversity of wildlife, you should consider actions to restore or preserve any oak savannas on your property.”

The right-of-way for proposed Segment C10 would overlie the RIM land, including crossing the Little Chippewa River, the associated riparian lowland, and the oak savanna. It also would impinge on my neighbor’s property to the west, which itself is subject to a wetland easement. Segment C10 would require crossings of multiple other waterways, as I discuss below. Segment C10 also would impinge on another parcel of RIM land further to the north of my property.

This negative impact of Segment C10 is likely to be disproportionately adverse because of the land itself over which the line would run. Installation along these properties would not follow any pre-existing roadway or other easement. In fact, none of Segment C10 of Route Central 2 would follow roadways – it would all run across natural land.

This obviously will cause damage to my RIM-protected land, both during the construction phase and thereafter during operation of the power line. This will be both from the clearing and cutting that installation and maintenance of the line will require of vegetation in the protected area, and from the damage of getting crews and equipment to the area will cause – as temporary roads will likely need to be cut.

In addition to inclusion in the RIM program, since acquiring my property, I have invested significant time and money to restore the land to a more natural state.

The Little Chippewa River runs through my property, and I have spent more than \$100,000 on erosion control measures to prevent soil and other runoff from flowing into the river and another stream which enters the river on my land. The goal of my investment has been to restore and protect the riparian and floodplain areas to improve and enhance water quality and wildlife habitat by decreasing sediment, pollutant, and nutrient transport, reducing hydrologic impacts to surface waters, and increasing infiltration for groundwater recharge. I have also spent more than \$25,000 replacing pre-existing pastureland which had bracketed the floodplain area with native prairie grasses and trees.

The land over which the northern portion of the Central Segment is projected to run is heavily farmed. Some public acreage has been set aside into wildlife management areas (WMAs), but little privately-held land remains which is not in agriculture. Of that remaining private land, there is very little wooded acreage. The remaining wooded and watercourse areas in the northern portion of the Central Segment, including my land, are therefore disproportionately critical to the support of wildlife and birds in the area.

In short, placement of the transmission line project along my property would very significantly negatively impact the flora and fauna of the immediate and surrounding area, both during the construction phase and thereafter. Even if the right of way (ROW) for the project were shifted north to merely abut my property, the line itself would discourage birds and wildlife both from the area, and may very well have a negative impact upon the Little Chippewa River itself.

Construction of Route Central 2, and particularly Segment C10, would cross several waterways including the Little Chippewa. Ultimately, these waterways drain into

Lake Minnewaska. It is therefore critical to evaluate the impact the construction and maintenance of the line will have upon these waterways, and limit the negative impact to the greatest extent possible.

If Segments C9 and C10 are chosen, multiple waterway crossings would occur across natural land, with no roadway or access points. Construction in these areas would be highly likely to negatively impact these waterways. By contrast, Segments C4 and C5 would cross fewer waterways, and generally do so along existing roadway rights of way. Specifically, the Little Chippewa River would be crossed by Segment C5 in the existing roadway easement for CSAH 24, which features an existing bridge over the river. Route Central 1 would therefore have a much-lessened impact upon waterways, and should be preferred for that reason.

As a further reason why Route Central 1 should be selected, Route Central 2 (specifically Segment C9) as proposed would directly abut the Pope County Waterfowl Production Area. The Minnesota Biological Survey identifies this as an area of Moderate Biodiversity Significance. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, in its Natural Heritage Review of the project, has recommended that the project avoid such sites as much as possible. (MN DNR Heritage Review, December 6, 2024)

Apart from the impact upon my property and the wildlife in the northern portion of the Central Segment, Route Central 1 is preferable to Route 2 for broader overall factors. Route Central 1 is shorter, affects less acreage and fewer properties in ROW and route width, and affects less prime farmland and farmland of state importance. (Appendix C to PUC Application). Central Route 1 also affects significantly fewer acres of emergent herbaceous wetlands and NWI wetlands, and affects fewer streams and waterbodies. (Appendix C to PUC Application).

In short, Central Route 1 as proposed will have a significantly smaller impact upon environmentally important areas within the Central Segment, with a correspondingly smaller negative impact upon the flora and fauna of the Central Segment – and the environmental impact of the project is of the primary factors to be analyzed under Minn. R. 7820.1900.

In addition to the environmental factors, Central Route 1 is also the less expensive option proposed, with an estimated cost of \$165,629,500 versus \$193,880,500 for Central Route 2 – a difference of \$28,251,000, or approximately 15% of the project cost for the Central Segment.

And more specifically, as to the northern portion of the Central Segment, Route Central 1 should result in significantly less cost than the proposed Route Central 2. In the northern portion of the Central Segment, Segments C4 and C5 comprise Central Route 1, while Segments C9 and C10 comprise Central Route 2.

As to Central Route 1, Segment C4 is proposed to run for approximately half of its length along an existing roadway, CSAH 1 / 360th Avenue. It is to be expected that it would be easier to build the project within or along existing roadway ROWs. However, for the remainder of its length, Segment C4 would run through private land, away from existing roadway ROWs. Segment C5 also is proposed to run through private land until meeting up with CSAH 24, where Segment C5 then turns east and follows the roadway ROW. (Appendix D-2 to PUC Application, pages 7 and 8).

In comparison, Segments C9 and C10 would cross approximately 33% more private land, and would cross more waterways – including needing to cross the Little Chippewa River on private land (as opposed to along the roadway of CSAH 24, as Segment C5 would). This would involve more expense in acquiring ROWs over the affected private land, and also would likely result in increased construction costs (including the cost of mitigating the environmental impact of crossing multiple waterways). (See Appendix D-2 to PUC Application, pages 7 and 8).

For the above reasons, it is clear that Route Central 1, and more specifically Segments C4 and C5, are the better route for the project versus Route Central 2. I would urge the PUC and the utility to choose Route Central 1 as the designated route for this portion of the transmission line, and advocate for the Administrative Law Judge to adopt that portion of the route for the project.

Public Comment of Troy Schmidtke
Docket # 23-160-TL
January 27, 2025
Page 6 of 6

Thank you for your consideration.

/s/ Troy Schmidtke

RECEIVED



JAN 24 2025

MAILROOM

Please provide your contact information. This information and your comments will be publicly available.

Name: Irma Johnson Phone: _____

Street Address: 12731 300th Ave

City: Lewry State: MN ZIP: 56349

Email: _____

Share your comments as specifically as possible on the EIS that will be prepared for the Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project.

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- Are there any unique characteristics of the proposed project that should be considered in the EIS?

I own farm property in Ben Wade Township (see attached map).
 I have reviewed proposed routes and have reasons for my recommendation to route the line on North Route 2.

To mitigate agricultural and environmental impacts, North Route 2 is the only acceptable route. North Route 1 should not be used.

My agricultural property will suffer severe negative impacts if the powerline is placed on my property. It will hinder smooth farm operations and negatively affect our farming operation. To help mitigate this large negative impact, North Route 2 is preferable.

However, if North Route 1 is selected, Segment Alternative N9 must be used. Per the EIS Table 2, pgs 5-6, Alternate N9 results in fewer impacts to residences w/in 301-500', less acres of impacts

to upland forest, non-forested wetlands, agricultural land, and ^{less} have one less waterbody crossing. Therefore, it is clear that Segment Alternative N9 is the ~~preferred~~ preferred and only acceptable option ^(w/ North Route 1).

~~Do not~~ Within ~~North Route 1~~ North Route 1, Segment N2 shall not be used.

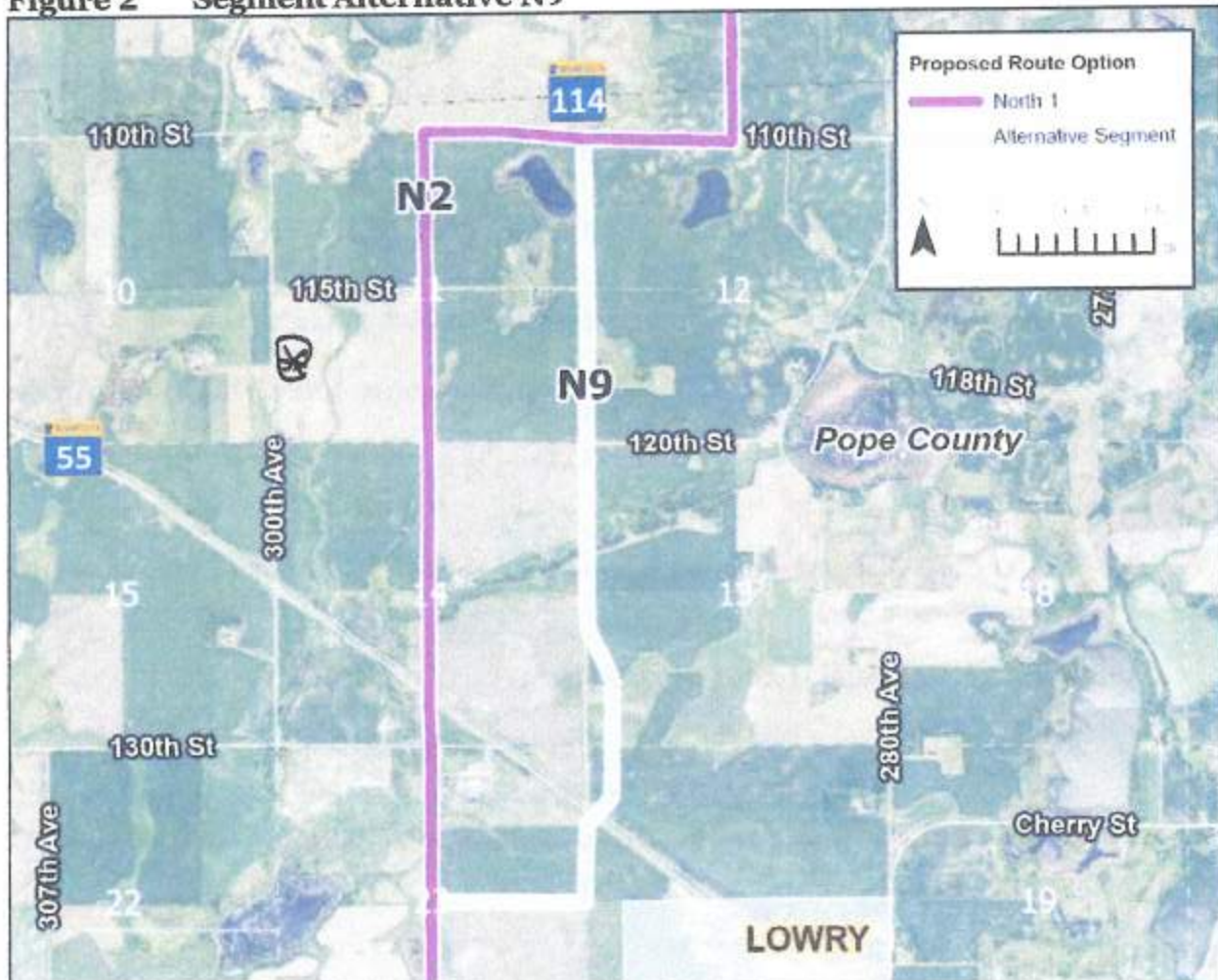
Do not cause irreparable harm to me and my family - and our ~~farm~~ farm land when an existing public state highway (14 Corridor) is available in Segment Alternative N9. Alternative N9 mitigates agricultural, environmental, and aesthetic impacts. Segment N2 increases agricultural, environmental & aesthetic impacts.

Recommendation - Use North Route 2
 If ~~North Route 1~~ North Route 1 is selected, segment Alternate N9 must be used.

Segment Alternative N9

Route Option North 1 includes an approximately 3.0-mile-long Segment Alternative N9, which is provided as an alternative to Subsegment N2 due to routing constraints at the State Highway 55 crossing and the limited routing options available along County Road 21 SW. Segment Alternative N9 runs east, perpendicular to Route Option North 1 along a quarter section paralleling 130th Street to the north, then turns north, parallels State Highway 114, and turns northwest to span State Highway 55 perpendicularly. It then continues north, generally paralleling State Highway 114 until it rejoins Route Option North 1 near the intersection of State Highway 114 and County Road 76 (Figure 2). A comparison of Subsegment N2 and Segment Alternative N9 is provided in Table 2.

Figure 2 Segment Alternative N9



⊗ Property

Property has CRP land

2

Preferred
↓

Table 2 Comparison of N9 to N2

Resource Type	Subsegment	
	N2 ¹	N9 ²
Total Length of Route (miles)	3.03	3.04
Double-Circuit with Existing Transmission Line (miles)	0	0
Parallels Existing Transmission Line (miles)	0	0
Follows Other Existing Linear Infrastructure (miles)	3.03	3.04
Residences within 0-75 feet (number)	0	0
Residences within 76-150 feet (number)	0	0
Residences within 151-300 feet (number)	1	1
Residences within 301-500 feet (number)	1	0
Upland Forest (acres)	3.25	0
Forested Wetlands (acres)	0	0
Non-Forested Wetlands (acres)	0.58	0.54
Agricultural Land (acres)	49.06	45.21
Waterbody Crossings	3	2

¹Route Option North I.

²Segment Alternative N9.

Segment Alternative N9 is 0.01 mile longer than Subsegment N2, and both Subsegment N2 and Segment Alternative N9 would follow existing linear infrastructure for the entirety of their length. Segment Alternative N9 would result in fewer impacts to residences within 301-500 feet and less acres of impacts to upland forest, non-forested wetlands, agricultural land, and introduce one less waterbody crossing along the proposed length.

Do not use N2 and irreparably harm prosperous farm land.

Use N9, an existing state highway corridor, to mitigate agricultural and environmental impacts.

Attn: Jenna Ness

RE: Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kv Transmission Project

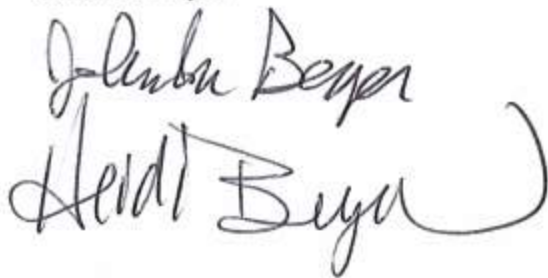
Docket # E017, ET10/TL-23-160

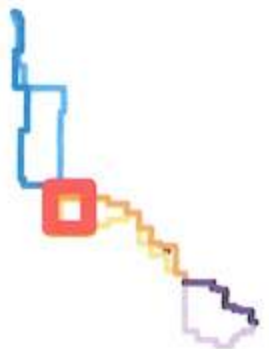
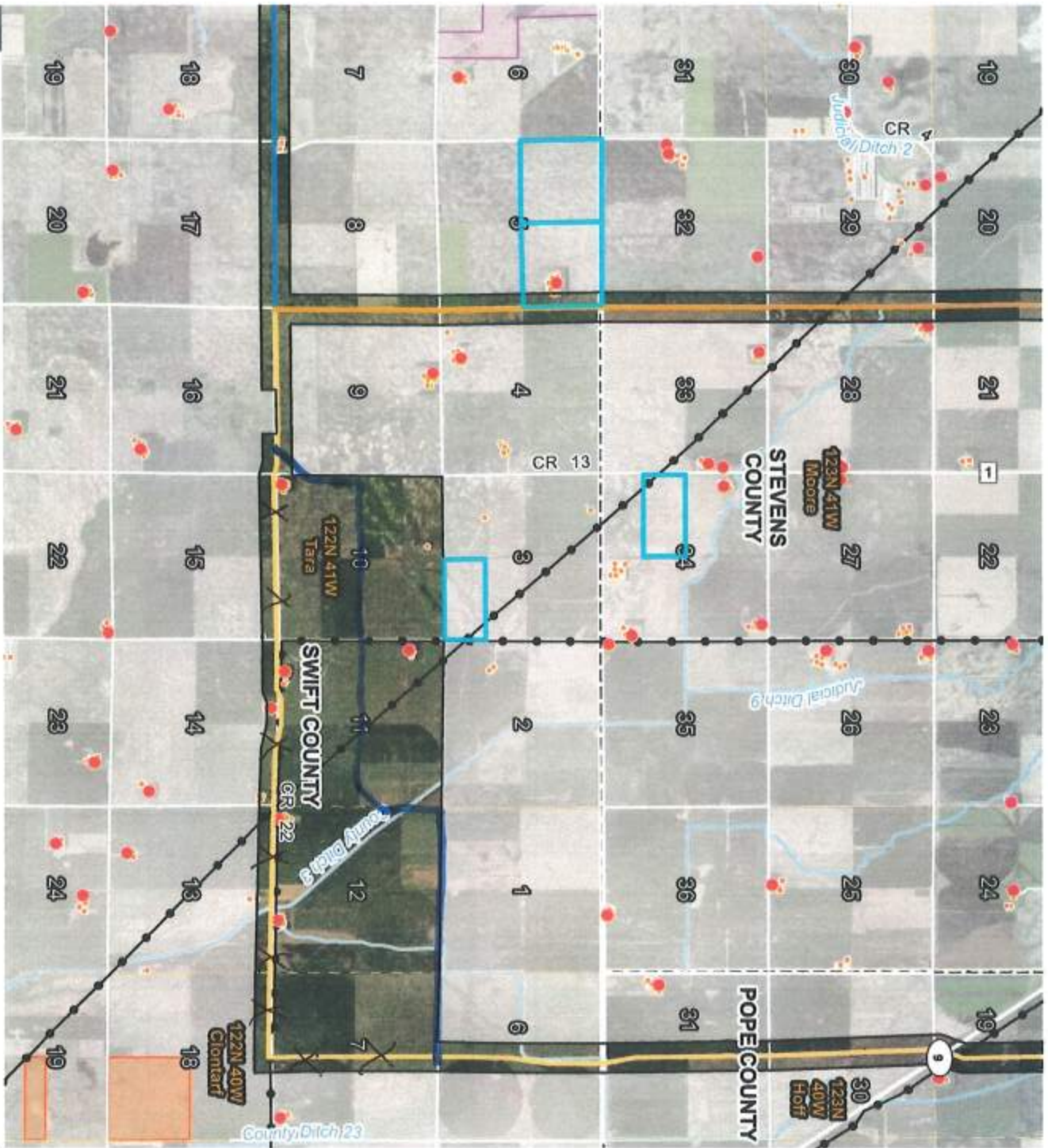
I am writing to you today on behalf of myself and my wife, Heidi, in opposition of the proposed power line segment 'Central 1'. I would argue that it is entirely too close to my place of work which is located in Section 5 of Tara township (Norman Beyer's residence). I spend a lot of time daily working in our family's shop located a mere 300 ft from the proposed route. I feel that is too close. Also, my family and I raise bred dairy heifers at this farm and we have had discussions with our supplier of said dairy heifers and the future of that enterprise if the power line were to be installed so close to where they are housed. Our supplier has stated that he would no longer employ our services if the power line is placed as close as what is proposed. This will be a financial detriment to my family's operation. Who makes up that economic shortfall?

I would like to propose using the 'Central 2' route with a slight variation from what is shown on your map. (See attached map) This route would keep the power line further away from 5 of my neighbors as well as eliminate the 4 crossings back and forth over the top of highway 22. It seems like a common sense route to minimize human exposure to the power line. My wife is the owner of the SW ¼ of section 10 and we would be in favor of this route. We strongly urge you to consider this variation of 'Central 2' routing.

Thank you for your consideration.

Regards,
John M. Beyer
Heidi C. Beyer

Handwritten signatures of John M. Beyer and Heidi C. Beyer. The signature of John M. Beyer is written above the signature of Heidi C. Beyer. Both signatures are in cursive and appear to be written in black ink.



- Route Option**
 - Central 1
 - Central 2
 - South 1
 - South 2
 - Route Width
- State Lands**
 - DNR Managements Units
 - State Conservation Easement (BWSR)
 - Home
 - Other Structure
- TYPE**
 - AC Transmission Line
 - Rivers and Streams (MN Natural Resources)

Proposed route for Central 2



0 1,000 Feet

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
SCOPING MEETING
1/15/20

BIG STONE SOUTH TO ALEXANDRIA 345

Please provide your contact information. This information and your comments will be publicly available.

Name: Daniel Beyer Phone: (320) 219-0096

Street Address: 33371 County Rd. 1

City: Hancock State: MN ZIP: 56244

Email: dbbeyer@fedtel.net

Share your comments as specifically as possible on the EIS that will be prepared for the Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project.

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- Are there any unique characteristics of the proposed project that should be considered in the EIS?

See attached letter

Attn: Jenna Ness
RE: Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kv Transmission Project
Docket # E017, ET10/TL-23-160

We are writing to you to express our concerns with the proposed routing of the transmission project named above. We live south of Hancock between both the "Central 1" and "Central 2" routes. However, we work at our family farm located at 770 120th Ave. NW Hancock, MN and the western "Central 1" route comes within 500' of that. We have a shop nearer the road that would only be about 300' away. We're not comfortable with such a large, high voltage transmission line coming that close to where we work most every day. Also, our farm raises some livestock and we would be unsure of the future of this with the transmission line so close.

We would like to propose using the eastern "Central 2" route with a slight variation from what is shown on your map. (See attached map) This route would keep the power line further away from myself and my neighbors as well as eliminate the 4 crossings back and forth over the top of highway 22. It seems like a common sense route to minimize human exposure to the power line. We strongly urge you to consider this variation of "Central 2" routing.

We also want to express our disappointment in what appears to be the routes avoiding state lands of Minnesota. If this transmission line is a benefit to the residents of this state, it would seem appropriate that public lands be used in such a project to help reduce costs of the construction and ultimately costs to the public. We can't think of a good reason why such a transmission line would rather be placed over private lands and homes instead of over state held lands.

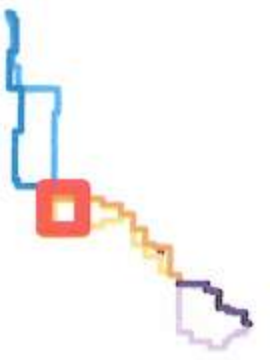
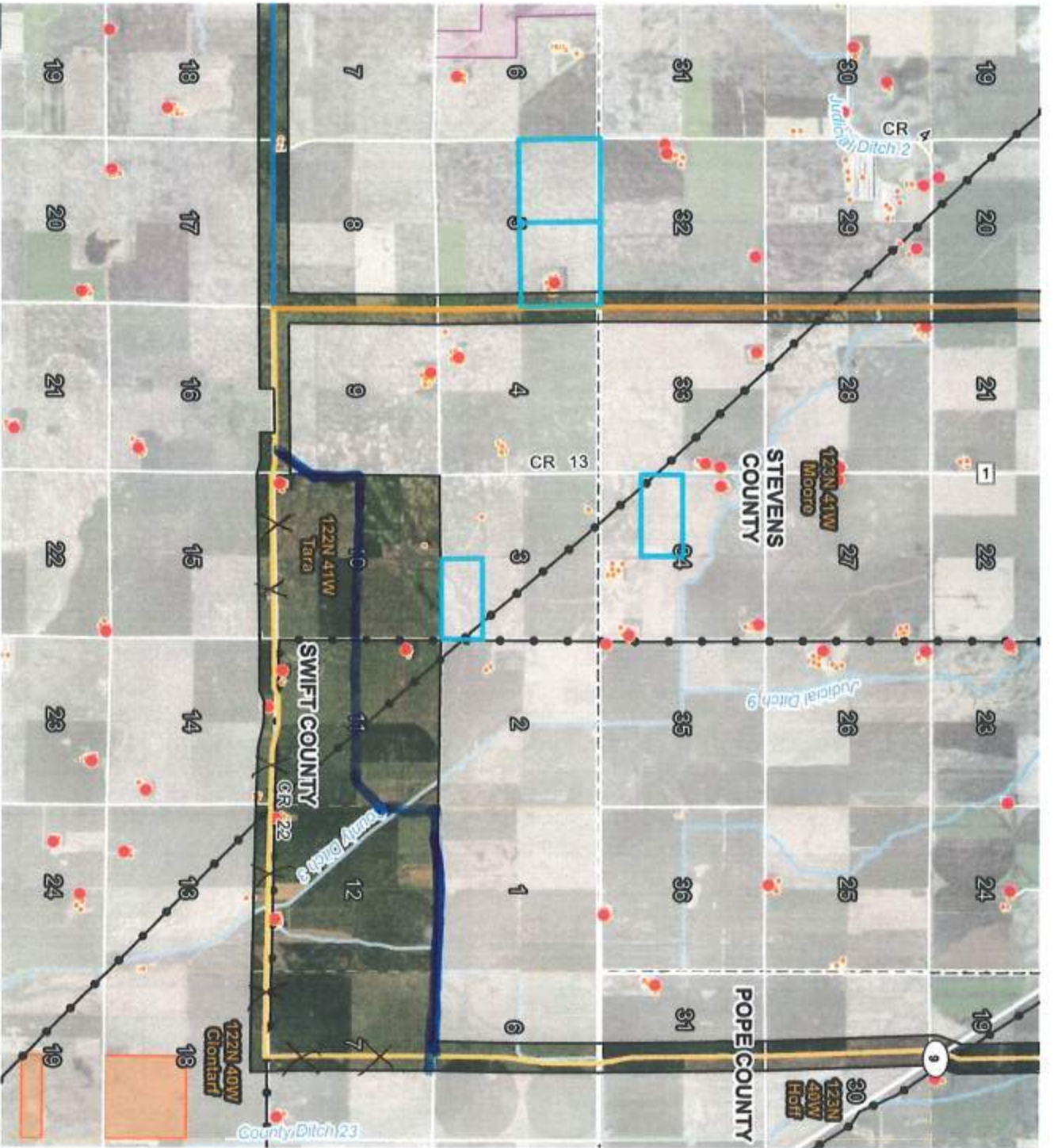
Thank you for your consideration.

Regards,
Daniel Beyer



Becky Beyer





- Route Option
 - Central 1
 - Central 2
 - South 1
 - South 2
 - Route Width
- State Lands
 - DNR Managements Units
 - State Conservation Easement (BWSR)
 - Home
 - Other Structure
- TYPE
 - AC Transmission Line
 - Rivers and Streams (MN Natural Resources)

Proposed route for Central 2'

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
SCOPING MEETING
1/15/20



Attn: Jenna Ness

RE: Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kv Transmission Project

Docket # E017, ET10/TL-23-160

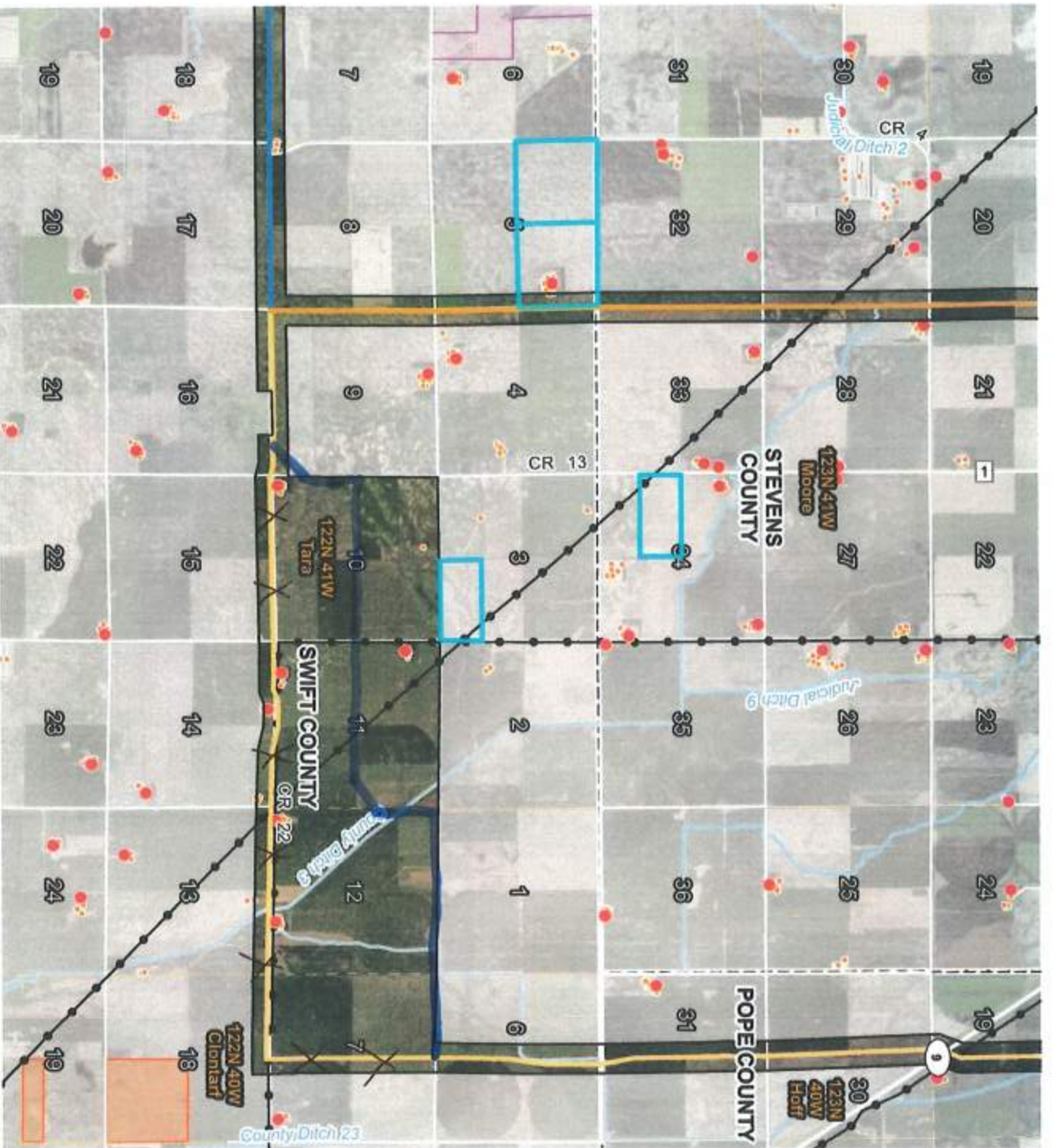
I am writing to you today on behalf of myself in opposition of the proposed power line segment 'Central 1". I would argue that it is entirely too close to my home and place of work which is located in Section 5 of Tara township. I spend a lot of time daily working in our family's shop located a mere 300 ft from the proposed route. I feel that is too close. Also, my family and I raise bred dairy heifers at this farm and we have had discussions with our supplier of said dairy heifers and the future of that enterprise if the power line were to be installed so close to where they are housed. Our supplier has stated that he would no longer employ our services if the power line is placed as close as what is proposed. This will be a financial detriment to my family's operation. Who makes up that economic shortfall?

I would like to propose using the 'Central 2' route with a slight variation from what is shown on your map. (See attached map) This route would keep the power line further away from 5 of my neighbors as well as eliminate the 4 crossings back and forth over the top of highway 22. It seems like a common sense route to minimize human exposure to the power line. I strongly urge you to consider this variation of 'Central 2" routing.

Thank you for your consideration.

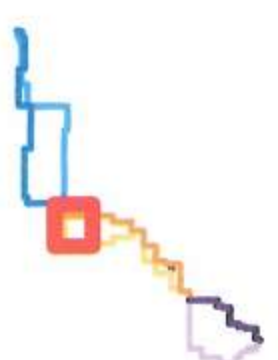
Regards,
Norman Beyer

Norman Beyer



BSSA
The Good Guys
in Environmental

0 1,000 Feet
↗



- Route Option
 - Central 1
 - Central 2
 - South 1
 - South 2
 - Route Width
- State Lands
 - DNR Managements Units
 - State Conservation Easement (BWSR)
 - Home
 - Other Structure
- TYPE
 - AC Transmission Line
 - Rivers and Streams (MN Natural Resources)

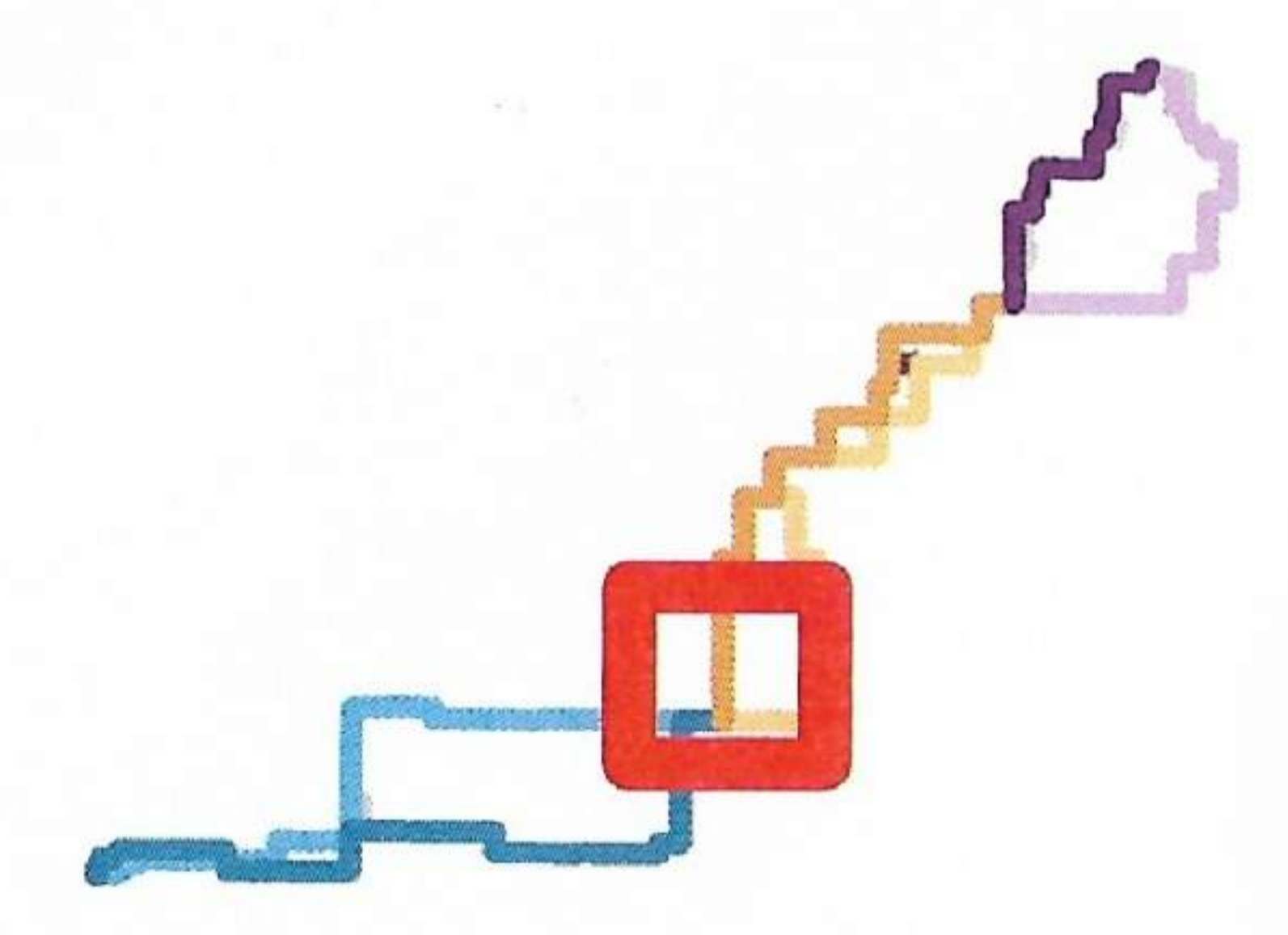
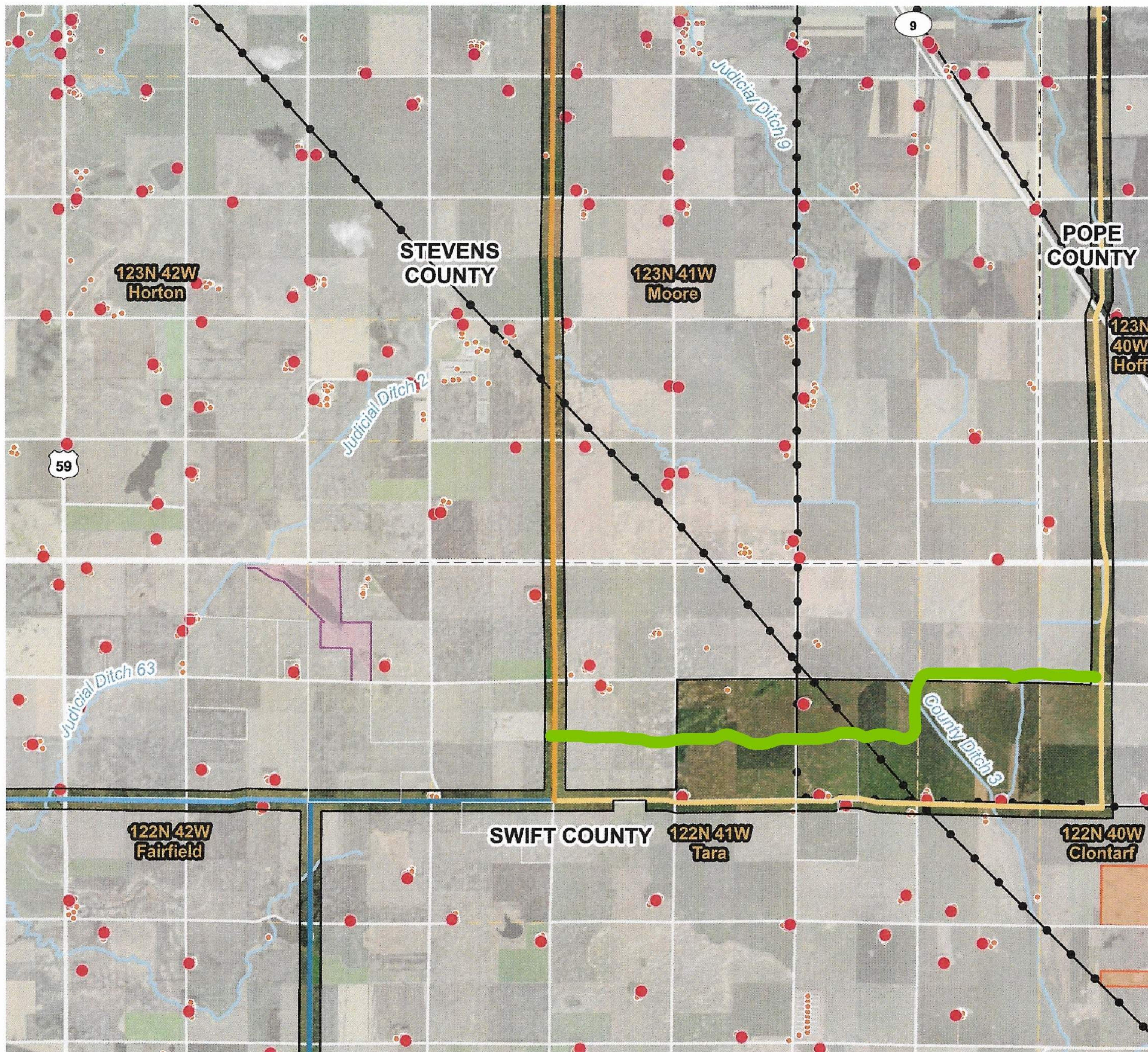
Proposed route for central 2

From: [Hazel Mumm](#)
To: [Ness, Jenna \(COMM\)](#)
Subject: central 2
Date: Wednesday, January 29, 2025 12:56:16 PM

[You don't often get email from ahmumm@fedteldirect.net. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification>]

This message may be from an external email source.
Do not select links or open attachments unless verified. Report all suspicious emails to Minnesota IT Services Security Operations Center.

To whom it may concern,
I am a landowner along the path of the Big Stone to Alexandria power line. I think "Central 2" is a poor option. I feel it goes past too many homes including my own. East of my home it will run into irrigators.
However, if that is the only option, I would like to see it moved a quarter mile to the north so it stays away from the road and runs down the property line so we both share the burden and it is only half of the tower to farm around.
I still think "Central 1" is a better option.
I also own a piece of ground on county road 22 in Tara township section 7 that is scheduled to have pattern tile put in. We have some tile along the road already installed. If you run the line south of county road 22 across from the pig barn into section 18 you will avoid my tile.
I will have my son attach a couple maps to illustrate what I mean.
Thank you for your consideration.
Sincerely,
Allen Mumm



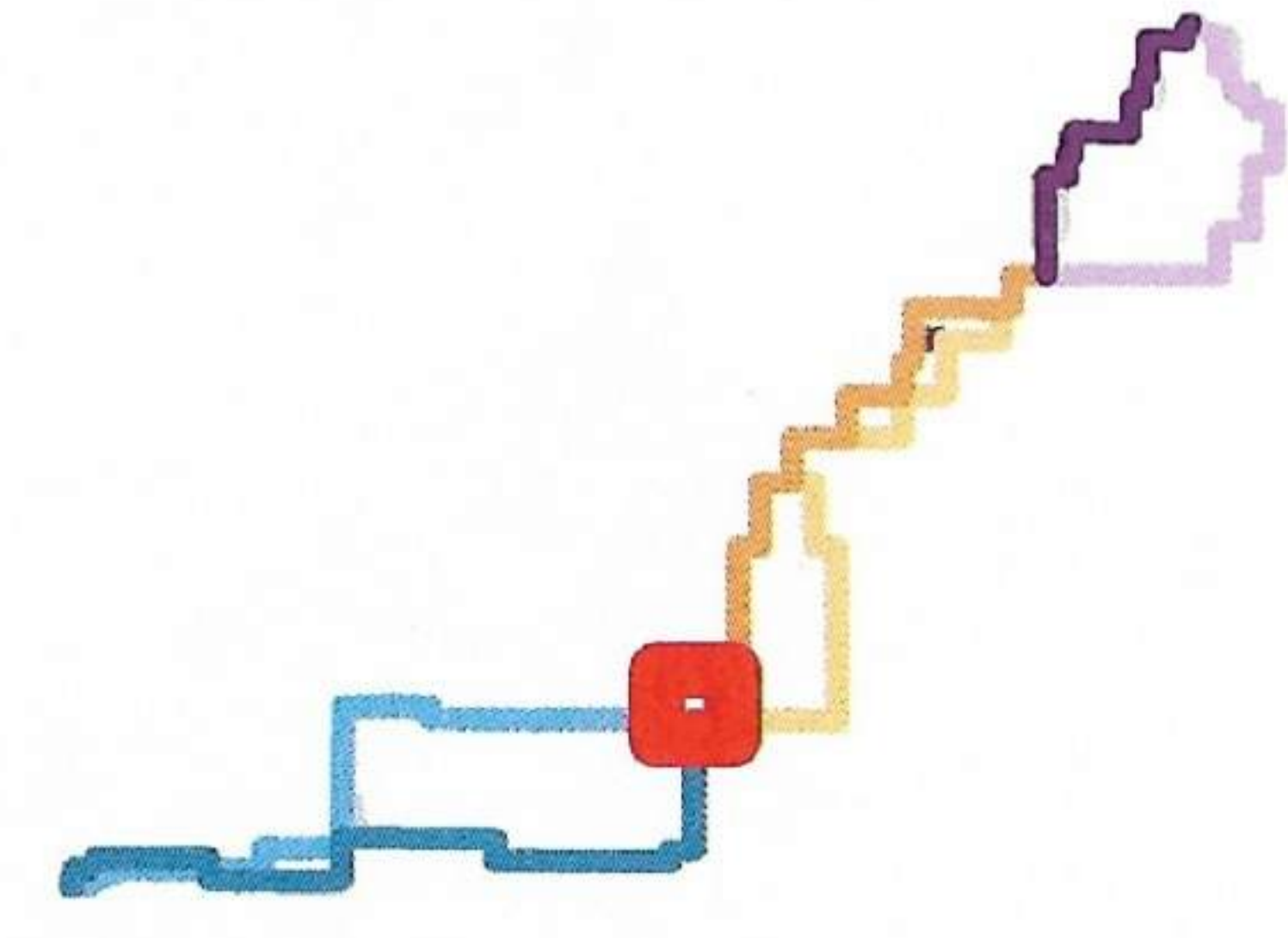
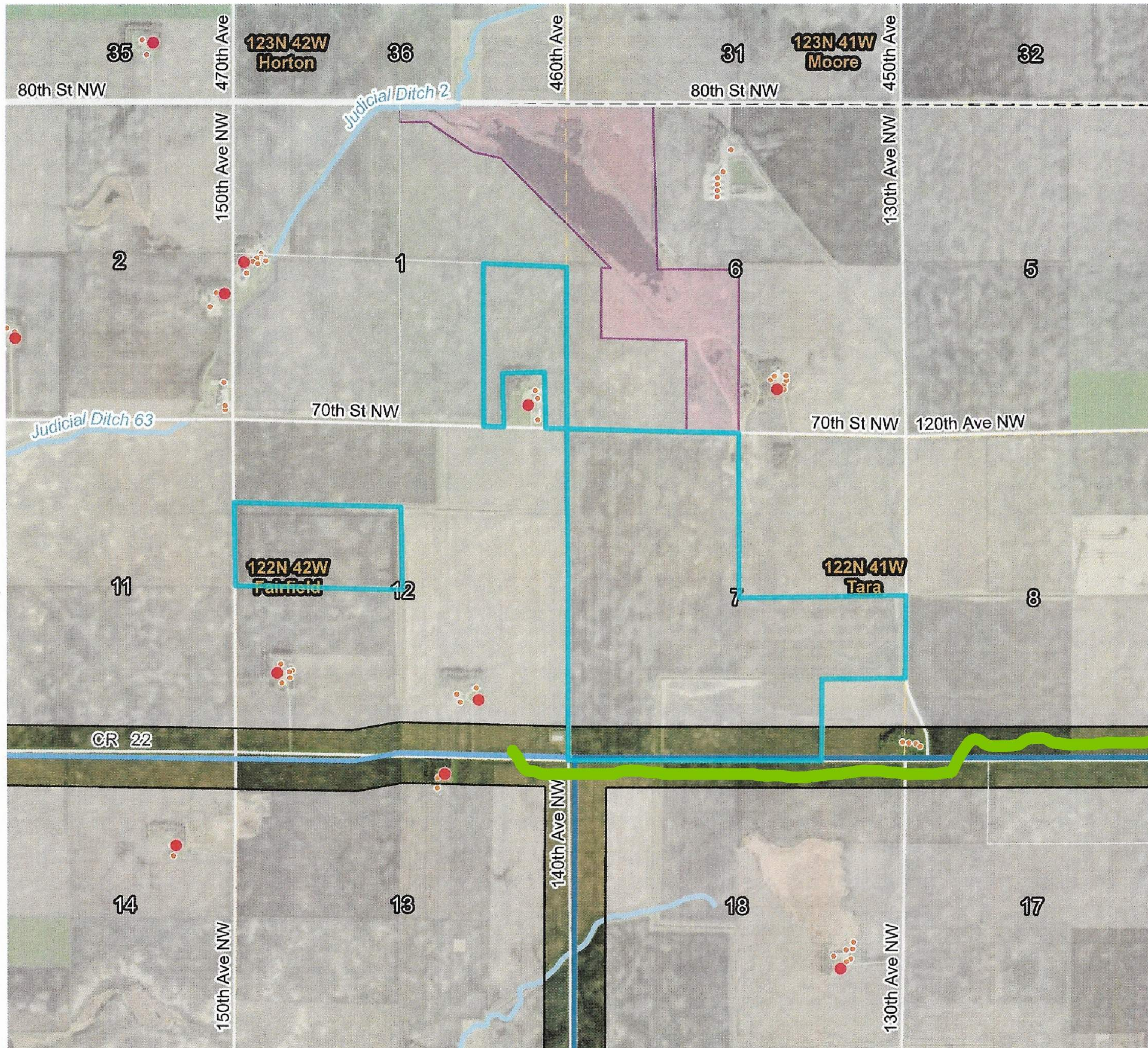
- Route Option**
- Central 1
 - Central 2
 - South 1
 - South 2
 - Route Width
- State Lands**
- DNR Managements Units
 - State Conservation Easement (BWSR)
 - Home
 - Other Structure
- TYPE**
- AC Transmission Line
 - Rivers and Streams (MN Natural Resources)
 - Parcels selection 1



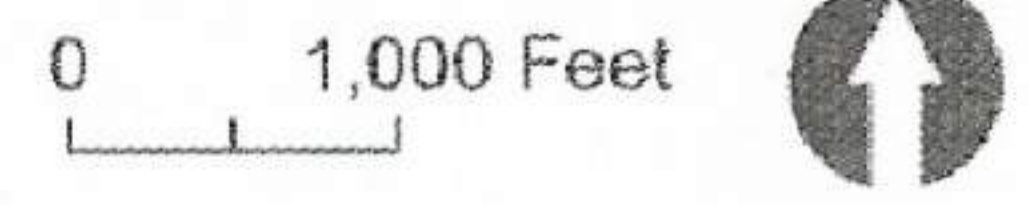
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**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
 SCOPING MEETINGS
 1/15/2025**

BIG STONE SOUTH TO ALEXANDRIA 345KV



- Route Option**
- South 1
 - South 2
 - Route Width
- State Lands**
- DNR Managements Units
 - Home
 - Other Structure
 - Rivers and Streams (MN Natural Resources)
 - Parcels selection 1



**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
SCOPING MEETINGS
1/15/2025**

BIG STONE SOUTH TO ALEXANDRIA 345KV

Please provide your contact information. This information and your comments will be publicly available.

Name: Jon Nohl Phone: 320 766 4638

Street Address: 42823 285th St

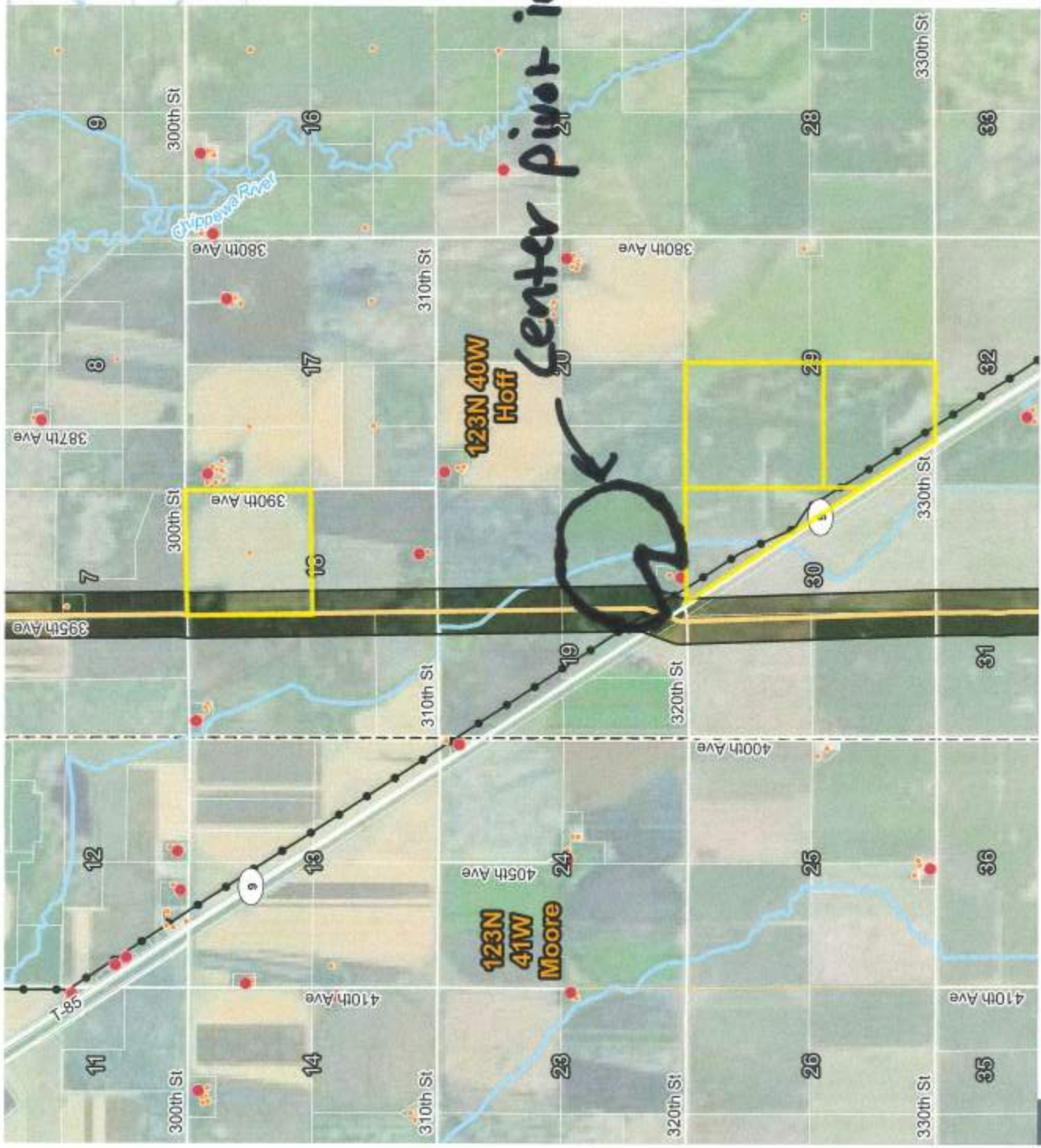
City: Hancock State: MN ZIP: 56244

Email: jonnohl77@gmail.com

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- Are there any unique characteristics of the proposed project that should be considered in the EIS?

Central 2 route adversely affects an irrigated parcel of land we operate. The irrigator goes directly across the proposed route. This would drastically affect the value and productivity of the property in a negative way and an alternative route should be considered.



- Route Option
- Central 2
 - Route Width
 - Home
 - Other Structure
 - AC Transmission Line

Center pivot irrigator

123N 40W Hoff

123N 41W Moore



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
SCOPING MEETINGS
1/15/2025

BIG STONE SOUTH TO ALEXANDRIA 345KV

Please provide your contact information. This information and your comments will be publicly available.

Name: Jon Nohl Phone: 320 766 4638

Street Address: 42823 285th St.

City: Hancock State: MN ZIP: 56244

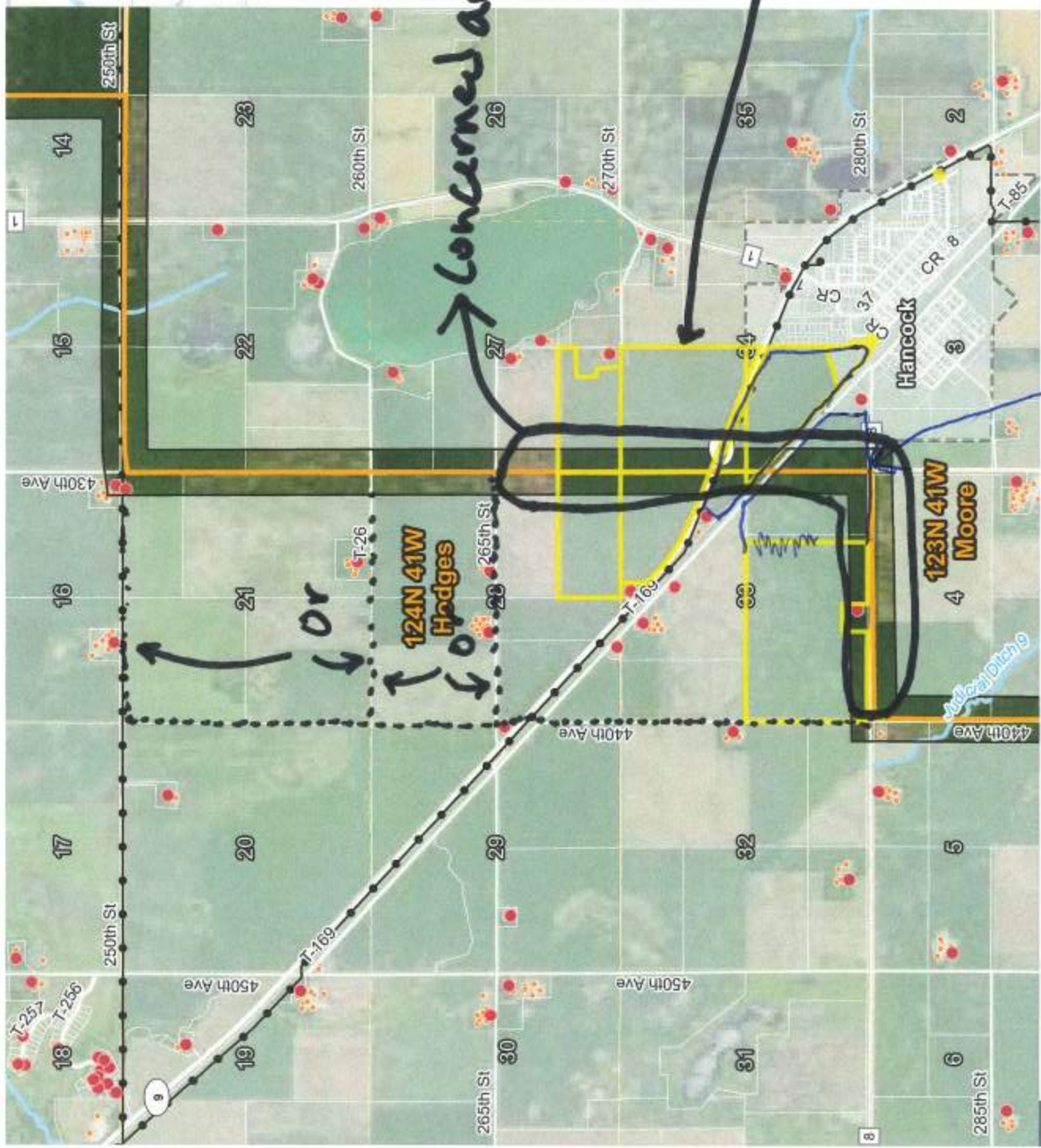
Email: jonnohl77@gmail.com

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- Are there any unique characteristics of the proposed project that should be considered in the EIS?

Central 1 route option cuts through three fields we farm on the north and west side of Hancock. Please consider alternative route as the proposed route goes right through the center of a contiguously farmed area and is not along a road.

Alternative routes are on attached map in permanent marker dotted lines.



- Route Option
 - Central 1
 - Central 2
 - Route Width
- Home
- Other Structure
- AC Transmission Line

Yellow outline represents farm fields

blue outlines + blue outlines

Concerned area

road ends here



Affix
Necessary

MINNESOTA
ATTN: JENNA
85 7TH PLACE
SAINT PAUL

Hfi Jenna

*Thank you again for
all your help and
time.*

*I really appreciate
the chance to have
this proposed route
revisited so the
adverse impact on
the environment, the
wildlife, the stock, the
people, and the property
value can be avoided.*

Cathy

Comment Period Closes Friday,
Comments must be post-marked or received

How to comment:

- Mail comments to the address on this form or submit this
- Use the online comment form: <https://mn.gov/commerce>
- Email comments to the Environmental Review Manager: jenna.ness@state.mn.us

Comments do not need to be on this form. We encourage you to comment for you. If commenting by email please use "Scoping Comment 23-160" in all communications.

THANK YOU for participating in the permitting process! By the Commission's decision regarding this project.



Scan QR code to view project webpage. Data rates apply.

Environmental Impact Statement
Scoping Comment Period
Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project
Docket No. E017, ET10/TL-23-160



Scan QR code to view project map. Data rates apply.

The applicants propose to construct over 90 miles of new transmission line from Big Stone South, South Dakota to Alexandria, Minnesota along portions of Big Stone, Swift, Stevens, Pope, and Douglas Counties to connect the existing substations in Big Stone South and Alexandria.

Comments will be used to focus the environmental impact statement on potential human or environmental impacts and other issues important to making an informed permit decision. Please be as detailed as possible. Use additional pages as needed. Contact the Environmental Review Manager, Jenna Ness, with any questions about commenting or submitting your comments.

For additional project information visit: <https://apps.commerce.state.mn.us/web/project/15867> or contact the Environmental Review Manager at: jenna.ness@state.mn.us; 651-539-1693; or toll free 1-800-657-3794.

Please provide your contact information. This information and your comments will be publicly available.

Name: Cathy Klebafski Phone: 605-467-3465

Street Address: 42234 715th Ave

City: Ortonville State: MN ZIP: 56278

Email: cathy_namaste@yahoo.com

Share your comments as specifically as possible on the EIS that will be prepared for the Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project.

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- Are there any unique characteristics of the proposed project that should be considered in the EIS?

The proposed routes have multiple negative impacts:

Dark blue route (runs as proposed along the southern edge of my property)

- goes thru middle of 14 acre lake. This impacts the birds that use it while migrating. The BNR stocked the pond with walleye in 2022. This line intact will effect both. Also, what if the line breaks and falls in the water? Water + electricity are a bad combination.

- I purchased this property for recreational use and to have a place my dogs can roam freely. The pond was a deciding factor.

- My residence/well are approx 200 feet from the north edge of the route width.

Light blue route (runs as proposed along 430th St)

- There are livestock who are pastured here.
- There are residences/wells very close to the route.

Either route

- There are existing high voltage lines to the north + to the south of the blue routes. Either blue route will add more land area exposed to residual voltage, which will impact people, wildlife, etc.

- This area has household lines provided by Agrialite. A few years ago Agrialite buried the lines to homes due to the difficulty of servicing them in winter.

RECEIVED

(con'd)

JAN 24 2025

I am requesting alternate routes be studied, and suggest the following options:

Preferred - There is an existing line that runs just west of 715th Ave going due north across Hwy 12, then angling northeast toward Artichoke Lake. It could then go due east north of Artichoke Lake to connect with the proposed light blue route as indicated on the enclosed map.

- This would eliminate the entire proposed blue routes between 715th Ave + Rte 59.
- In my area this would result in the new line avoiding both the pastures and my lake.
- It would keep the residual voltage in the same areas it already exists, minimizing the impact of residual voltage covering a wider overall area that adding a 3rd high voltage line would cause.

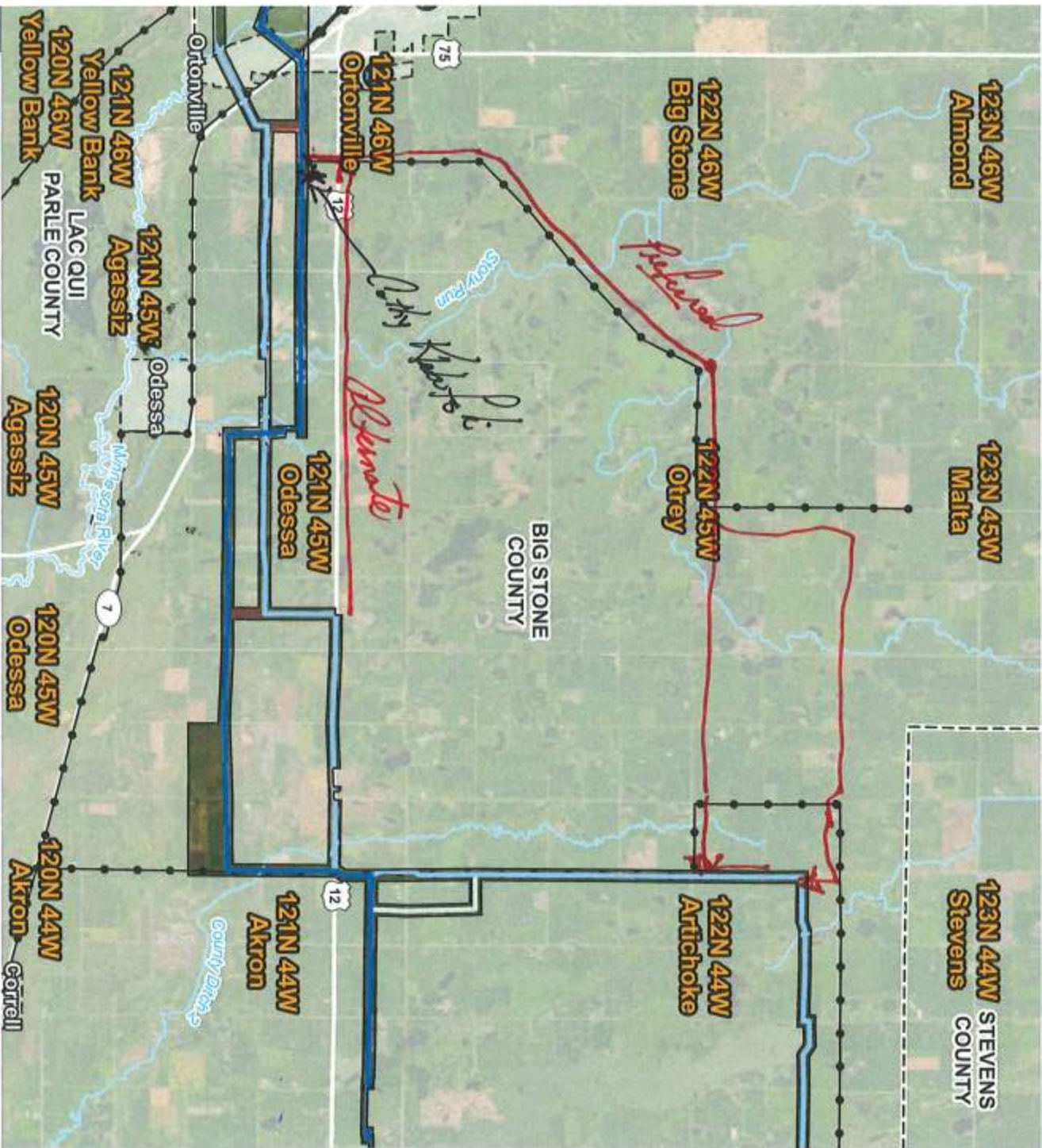
Alternate - This would mean running up the west side of 715th to Hwy 12, then running straight east to connect with the proposed light blue line that runs east along Hwy 12.

- In my opinion this would still be adding additional residual voltage environmental impact.
- It would however avoid the pastures and lake issues discussed.

I would ask that the Preferred Route I have outlined be used if at all possible. Thank you. Cathy Klobofski



- Route Option
- South 1
- Route Width
- Home
- Other Structure
- AC Transmission Line



- Route Option
- South 1
- South 2
- Segment Alternative
- Connector Segment
- Route Width
- AC Transmission Line
- Airports



8,000 Feet

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
 SCOPING MEETINGS
 1/16/2025

BIG STONE SOUTH TO ALEXANDRIA 345KV

Affix
Necessary
Postage

RECEIVED
JAN 24 2025
MAILROOM

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
ATTN: JENNA NESS
85 7TH PLACE EAST, SUITE 280
SAINT PAUL MN 55101-2198

FOLD HERE

Comment Period Closes Friday, January 31, 2025, at 4:30 p.m.
Comments must be post-marked or received electronically by the comment deadline.

How to comment:

- Mail comments to the address on this form or submit this form at today's meeting.
- Use the online comment form: <https://mn.gov/commerce/energyfacilities/#comment>
- Email comments to the Environmental Review Manager: jenna.ness@state.mn.us

Comments do not need to be on this form. We encourage you to provide comments in whatever way is most convenient for you. If commenting by email please use "Scoping Comment 23-160" in the subject line. Please include "Docket Number 23-160" in all communications.

THANK YOU for participating in the permitting process! By commenting you are helping inform the Public Utilities Commission's decision regarding this project.

FOLD HERE



Scan QR code
to view
project webpage.
Data rates apply.

**Environmental Impact Statement
Scoping Comment Period**

Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project
Docket No. E017, ET10/TL-23-160

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project map.



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Please provide your contact information. This information and your comments will be publicly available.

Name: Kris Lea - Mike Lea Phone: 320-424-0154

Street Address: 30521 150th St

City: Lowry State: MN ZIP: 56349

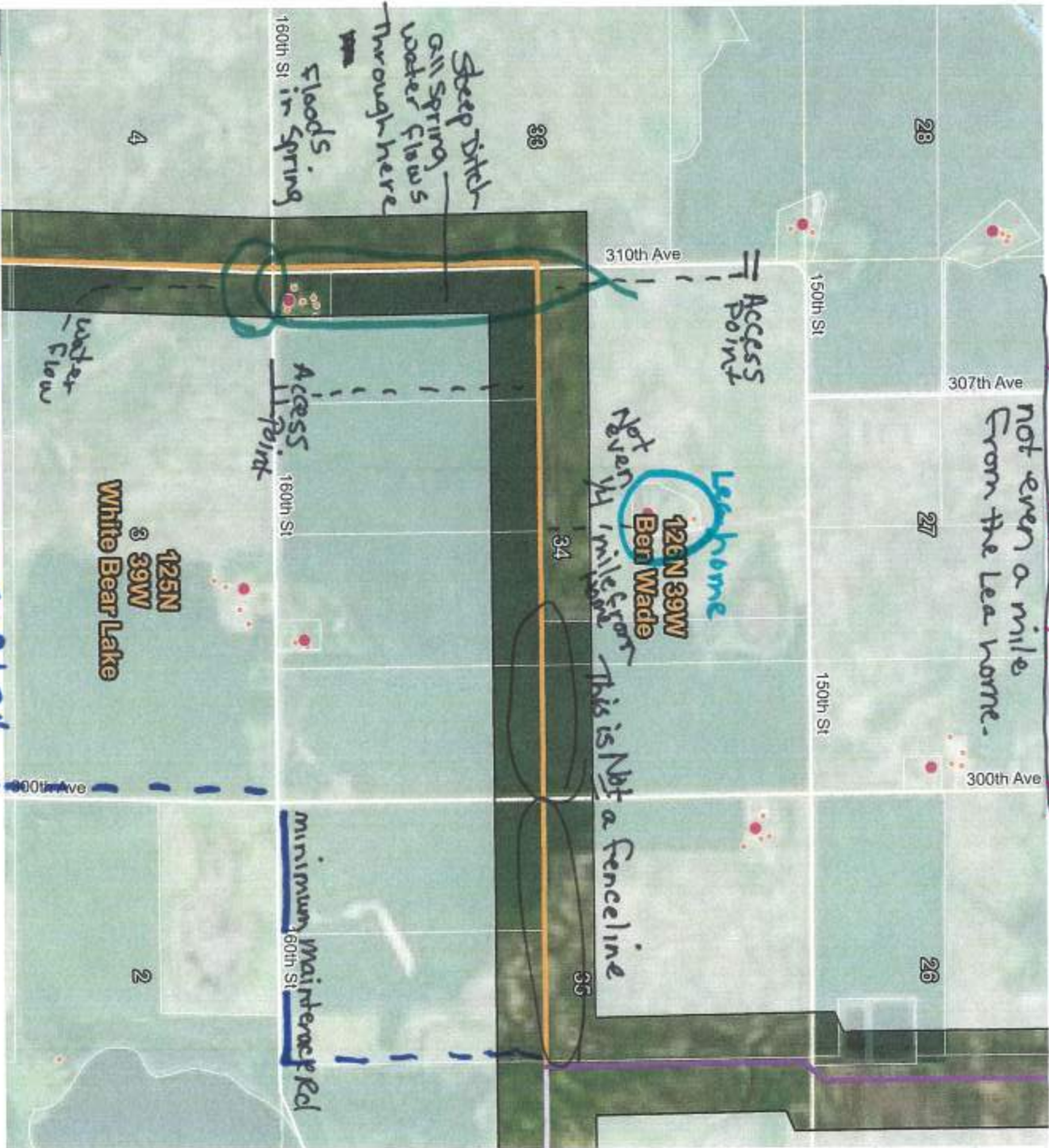
Email: Krisilea@outlook.com

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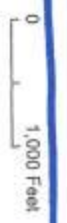
- The Lea Farm is located on the Ben Wade Township #34 area of the map.
- My main concern is that this transmission line is not even ¼ mile from our home and there is already a transmission line not even a mile north of us. I don't like that we will be sandwiched between the two lines and have to bear all that emissions from them.
 - Along the 310th Ave between 150th & 160th St is a very steep ditch where all the spring thaw-water flows hard & fast. This ditch was just cleaned up and new + larger culverts put in to handle all of this water. Therefore to access the proposed field fence line you will have to go ¼ mile up 310th Ave to a field approach and come back through the field impacting that ground & crops. Or you access it from the 160th St and drive ½ mile through the field impacting that ground and crops.
 - The 2nd half of this proposed line is not a fence line & that farmer, Mark Femrite #35 on the map, had just spent a lot of time & money on that land to remove an old building and they did a lot of tiling to get his land all farmable without obstacles and now you are proposing to mess that up for him again.
 - My proposed new route would be to continue east on Co. Rd 24 1 mile, go North on 300th Ave 1 mile, turn East onto 160th St (which is a short minimum maintenance road) and that brings you to a fence line going North to where you are already proposing a Route.

Current Transmission Line
 Not even a mile from the Lea home.



- Route Option
- North 1
- North 2
- Central 1
- Central 2
- Route Width
- Home
- Other Structure

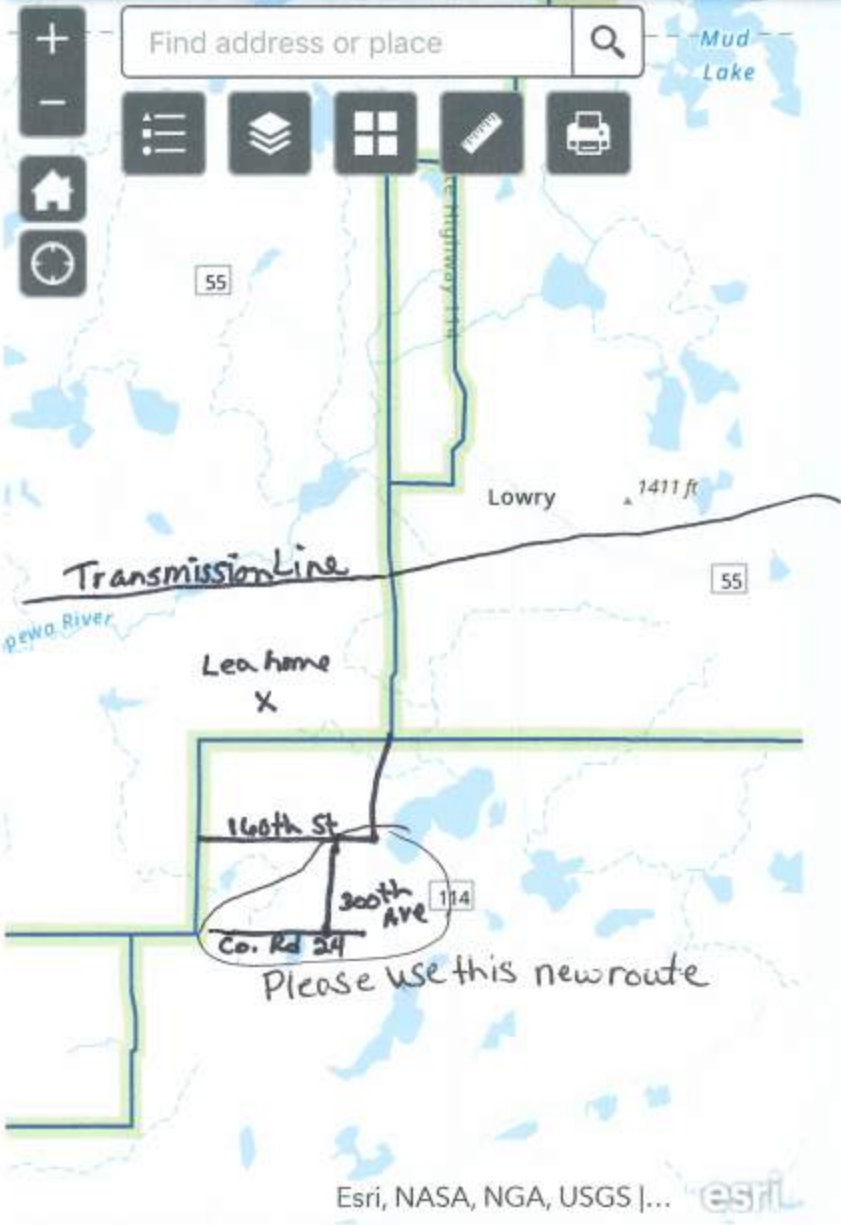
BSSA
 Big Stone South
 to Alexandria



Cold 24

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
 SCOPING MEETINGS
 1/14/2025

BIG STONE SOUTH TO ALEXANDRIA 345KV



2mi

-95.539 45.694 Degrees

Handwritten text, possibly a title or header, located at the top right of the page.

Handwritten text, possibly a label or note, located below the title.



Please provide your contact information. This information and your comments will be publicly available.

Name: Marlowe Klepel Phone: 320-815-5717

Street Address: 1375 390th St

City: Obessa State: Minn ZIP: 56276

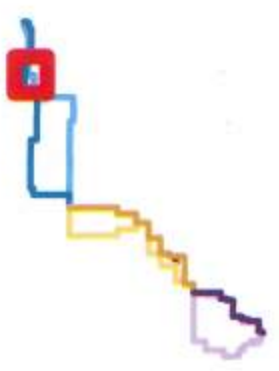
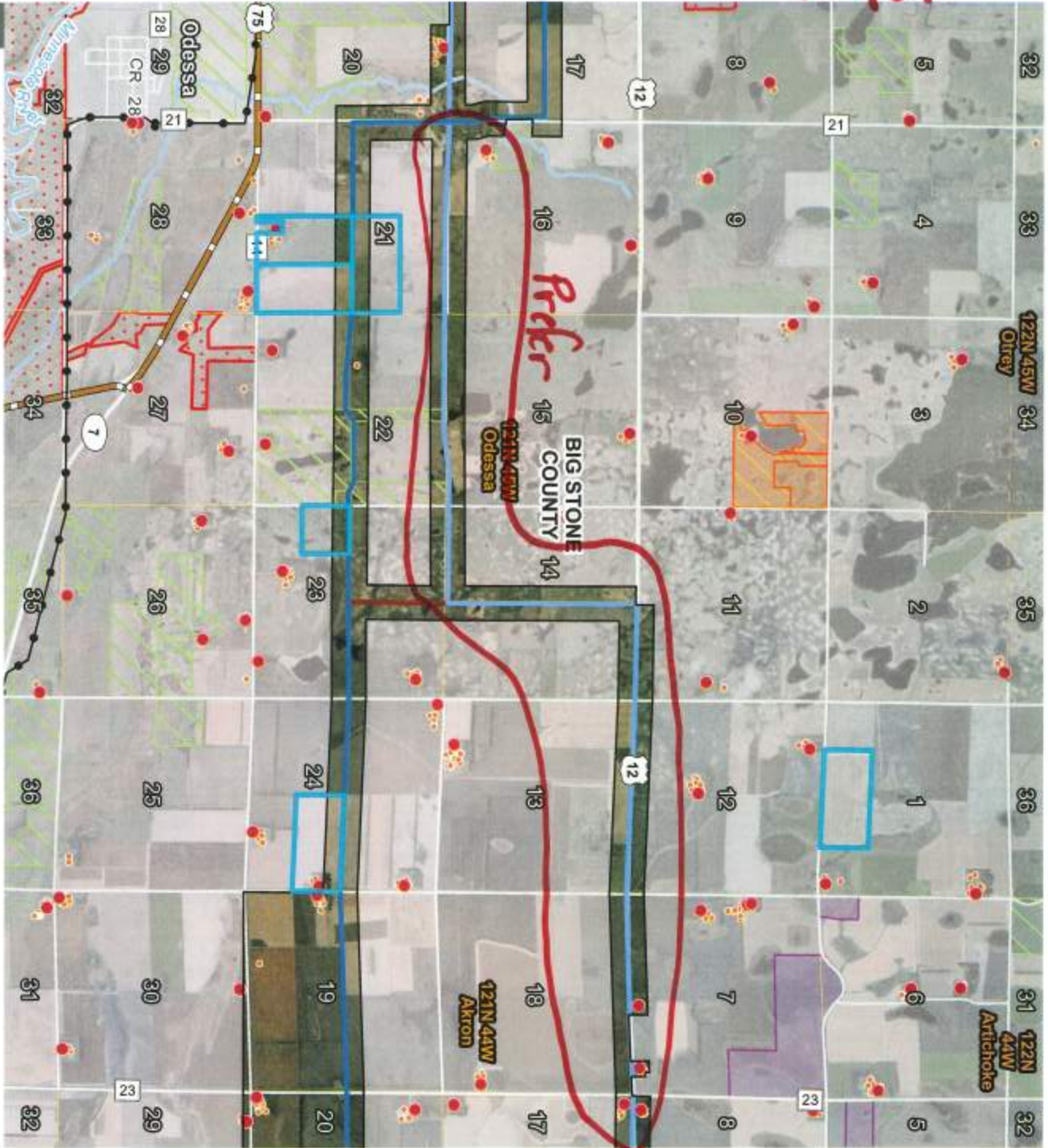
Email: ~~Min~~ mjfarm4@yahoo.com

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I prefer the route circled in red on the enclosed map. That route has the least or no impact on tillable land that affects our income and property values. Please consider this route.

Klepel



- Route Option
 - South 1
 - South 2
- Connector Segment
- Route Width
- State Lands
 - DNR Managements Units
 - State Conservation Easement (BWSR)
- Federal Lands
 - NRCS Easements
 - USFWS Easements
 - USFWS National Wildlife Refuge
- Home
- Other Structure
- TYPE
 - AC Transmission Line
 - MN DOT Scenic Byways
 - Rivers and Streams (MN Natural Resources)
 - Parcels selection 1

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
SCOPING MEETINGS
1/16/2025

BIG STONE SOUTH TO ALEXANDRIA 345KV



From: eera.admin_no_reply@state.mn.us
To: [Ness, Jenna \(COMM\)](#)
Subject: Public Comment re: Big Stone South to Alexandria 345 kV Transmission Line Project
Date: Friday, January 24, 2025 7:39:59 AM
Attachments: [Map of Potential Alternate Routes W Bear, Ben Wade To Sec 4,5, 32,33, Pope Co.pdf](#)

Big Stone South to Alexandria 345 kV Transmission Line Project

Submitter Name: Bruce Freske

Submitter Email: bruce_freske@fws.gov

Submitter Telephone: (320) 287-0369

Comment:

I am the Project Leader for the Morris Wetland Management District. Attached are a letter and maps explaining why and where we would like to see additional routes added and considered for review.

Submit Date: 01/24/2025 01:39 PM

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:HWODQGV

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6HJPHQW

1RUWK 5RXWH 6HJPHQW

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3URWHFWHG
:HWODQG DQG
*UDVVODQG

1HZ 3UDIULH

Please provide your contact information. This information and your comments will be publicly available.

Name: Nancy Vollmer Phone: 520-808-3237

Street Address: 2045 Prairie View Circle

City: Benson State: MN ZIP: 56215

Email: _____

Share your comments as specifically as possible on the EIS that will be prepared for the Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project.

- What potential human and environmental impacts of the proposed project should be considered in the EIS?
- Are there any methods to minimize, mitigate, or avoid potential impacts of the proposed project that should be considered in the EIS?
- Are there any alternative routes or route segments that should be considered in the EIS to address or mitigate potential impacts associated with the proposed project? **If so, please provide a map with the proposed route drawn** and a description of the proposal.
- Are there any unique characteristics of the proposed project that should be considered in the EIS?

- I own SW 1/4 of Section 7 in Marysland Township. If this is the route chosen I would prefer the line on the west side of 140th Ave SW. This would keep the line further from the building site circled on the attached ~~map~~ map.

- That land is my only income and would affect the value for sale and cash rent.



- Route Option
- South 1
 - Route Width
 - Home
 - Other Structure
 - Airports



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
SCOPING MEETINGS
1/15/2025

BIG STONE SOUTH TO ALEXANDRIA 345KV

Please provide your contact information. This information and your comments will be publicly available.

Name: Neal & Becky Block Phone: 320-305-1708

Street Address: 658 Paul Bunyan St.

City: Ortonville State: MN ZIP: 56278

Email: nwbblock@wat.midco.net

Share your comments as specifically as possible on the EIS that will be prepared for the Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project.

- What potential human and environmental impacts of the proposed project should be considered in the EIS?
- Are there any methods to minimize, mitigate, or avoid potential impacts of the proposed project that should be considered in the EIS?
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- Are there any unique characteristics of the proposed project that should be considered in the EIS?

Our little 5 acre parcel is located along and on South side of US 12 approximately 10 miles east of Ortonville. This is our little recreation area covered with trees, grass and water holes. Each year bee hives are placed right next to our property to the east by a commercial honey producer.

The farmland next to us to the east and south for many years has been in a program of tall grasses and plants that supports a lot of wildlife.

We haven't chosen to "build" on our site yet ourselves but that is a possibility if not for us maybe our extended family.

Our concern of course is should there be built a giant powerline over, through, or very near our little plot, in my opinion it would no longer be suitable for our possible future plans. And beyond that it seems it may not be too enjoyable to spend the recreational time there as we have done for many years past.

We do understand the line must go somewhere but we would be saddened to have it so close to us. Thanks for your consideration.

Sincerely Neal & Becky Block



- Route Option
- South 2
- Route Width
- Home
- Other Structure

Our little 5 acre recreation area and possible building site highlighted yellow.



0 1,000 Feet



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

SCOPING MEETINGS

1/16/2025

Please provide your contact information. This information and your comments will be publicly available.

Name: Neal Kalina Phone: 320 808 9220

Street Address: 10465 275th Ave

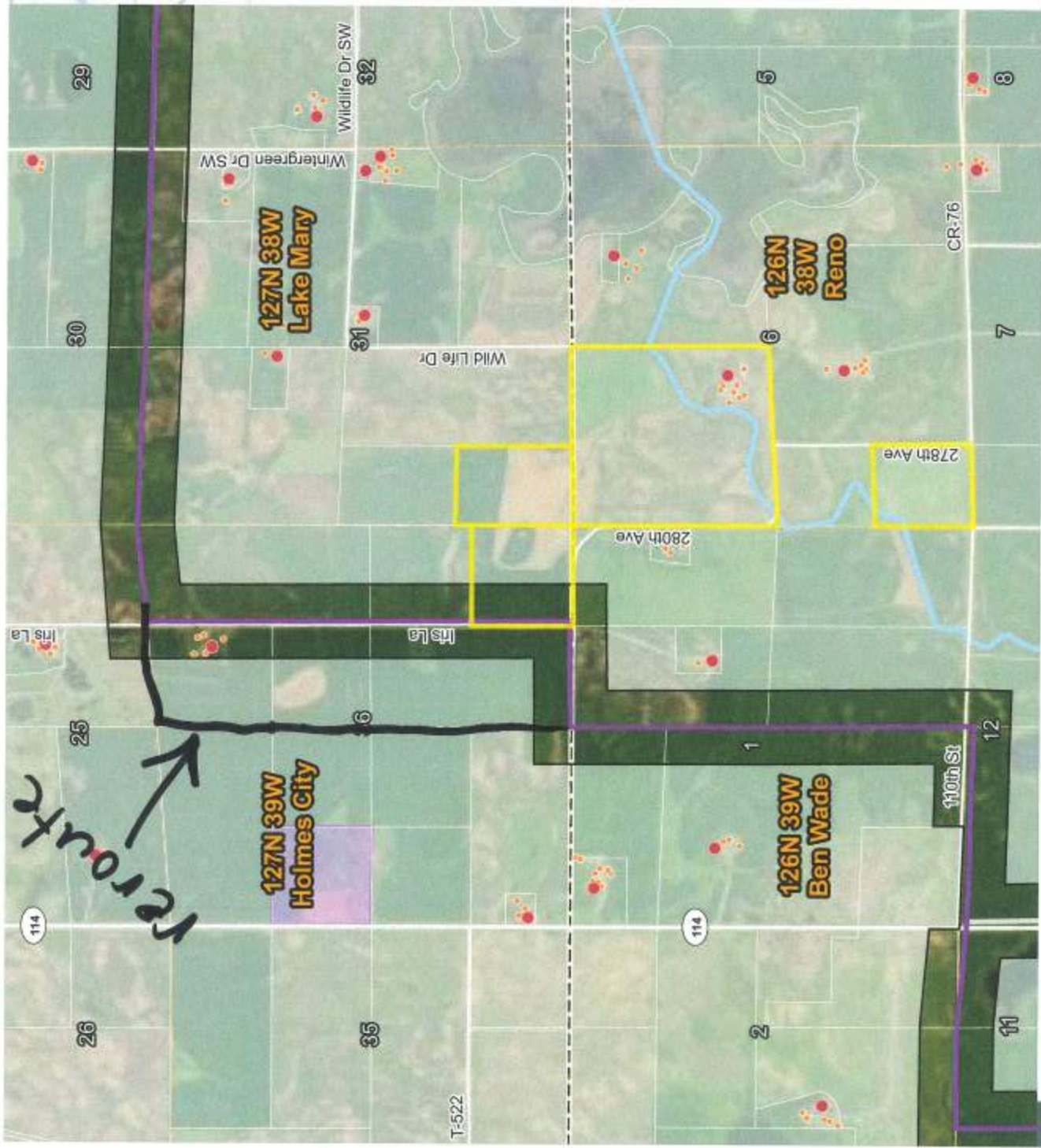
City: Lowry State: MN ZIP: 56349

Email: Neal Kalina 58 @Comail.com

Share your comments as specifically as possible on the EIS that will be prepared for the Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project.

- What potential human and environmental impacts of the proposed project should be considered in the EIS?
- Are there any methods to minimize, mitigate, or avoid potential impacts of the proposed project that should be considered in the EIS?
- Are there any alternative routes or route segments that should be considered in the EIS to address or mitigate potential impacts associated with the proposed project? **If so, please provide a map with the proposed route drawn** and a description of the proposal.
- Are there any unique characteristics of the proposed project that should be considered in the EIS?

- My land is on proposed route.
- My reroute suggestion saves project team money - Makes route shorter and goes by less homes.
- I makes more sense then constant turns



- Route Option
 North 1
 Segment Alternative
 Route Width
 State Lands
 DNR Managements Units
 Home
 Other Structure



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
 SCOPING MEETINGS
 1/14/2025

BIG STONE SOUTH TO ALEXANDRIA 3-45KV

Please provide your contact information. This information and your comments will be publicly available.

Name: Pat Ascheman Phone: 320-288-9846

Street Address: 640 Hwy 59 NW

City: Holloway State: IN ZIP: 56249

Email: pdascheman@gmail.com

Share your comments as specifically as possible on the EIS that will be prepared for the Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project.

- What potential human and environmental impacts of the proposed project should be considered in the EIS?
- Are there any methods to minimize, mitigate, or avoid potential impacts of the proposed project that should be considered in the EIS?
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- Are there any unique characteristics of the proposed project that should be considered in the EIS?

I am asking that the project can follow the right of way as much as possible to avoid encroaching into the fields.

Thank You

From: eera.admin_no_reply@state.mn.us
To: [Ness, Jenna \(COMM\)](#)
Subject: Public Comment re: Big Stone South to Alexandria 345 kV Transmission Line Project
Date: Monday, January 27, 2025 5:58:33 PM

Big Stone South to Alexandria 345 kV Transmission Line Project

Submitter Name: Patricia Bouta

Submitter Email: pbouta51@gmail.com

Submitter Telephone: (406) 210-4701

Comment:

Docket Number 23-160 - For the North Route Segment - I do not want the transmission line built in the North 2 corridor. Reasons: 1) It would negatively impact the waterbody of Maple Lake and the wildlife in and near the lake. There are eagles that nest near Forada and Maple Lake that would be negatively affected. 2) There are a lot of wetlands in this area and there is a lot of wildlife in the wetland areas. 3) It is too close to Forada and would negatively impact the residents of Forada. 4) The presence of a transmission line in the North 2 corridor near Forada will ruin the aesthetics of the open country. 5) I listened to the information on EMF and read the written information provided on it. It states that laboratory studies failed to substantiate a relationship between EMF and adverse human health effects. I don't know where the results of that study are on-line, or how the study was done. Since it was in a laboratory it may not have long term exposure. Also, not enough time may have been allowed to see the effect on people over the long term. Also, the fact is that some people are more sensitive to EMF than other people and some people could be more sensitive than the people chosen for the study.

Submit Date: 01/27/2025 11:58 PM

Please provide your contact information. This information and your comments will be publicly available.

Name: Randy Zeithamer Phone: 320-460-0651

Street Address: 8309 Teal Trail S.W.

City: Alex State: MN ZIP: 56308

Email: _____

Share your comments as specifically as possible on the EIS that will be prepared for the Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project.

- What potential human and environmental impacts of the proposed project should be considered in the EIS?
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- Are there any unique characteristics of the proposed project that should be considered in the EIS?

- This proposed move is on my land.
- This would make it more accessible
- Shorter route for conductor and would save money.

Please provide your contact information. This information and your comments will be publicly available.

Name: Ron Schmidt Phone: 701-361-6963

Street Address: 43176 630th Ave

City: Correll State: MN ZIP: 56227

Email: _____

Share your comments as specifically as possible on the EIS that will be prepared for the Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project.

- What potential human and environmental impacts of the proposed project should be considered in the EIS?
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- Are there any unique characteristics of the proposed project that should be considered in the EIS?

See attached map with comments



- Route Option
- South 1
- South 2
- Segment Alternative
- Connector Segment
- Route Width
- Home
- Other Structure
- AC Transmission Line

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
SCOPING MEETINGS
1/16/2025

0.1,000 Feet



BIG STONE SOUTH TO ALEXANDRIA 345KV

Docket # 23-160

To Whom it Concerns:

We have a family farm of 240 Acres
we have lived and farm all of our lives to make
this a better family farm so we can pass this
farm on to our children and next generation
only to have the big power companies the big cities
and government come in and destroy every thing
we have worked for

To start with in the beginning BSS A and
OTTERTAIL said they would follow existing right of ways
for proposed routes and NOT to disrupt private
and farm land and would reroute any lines
that would cause hardship

one proposal is going right through the middle
of our family farm you have no idea of the
hardship this will cause

with the proposal of a 345 kilovolt line
tell me this: why is it that fish & wildlife and
the DNR and Minnesota owned public land will
NOT let big power lines cross or be installed
on their property and we as farmers and
land owners are supposed to ?? why is it
that scientists - engineers - government officials
and etc can't explain the problems with stray
voltage and interference of all kind and

RECEIVED

JAN 17 2025

MILROOM

medical & health concerns both for humans and livestock. How many times have you driven by power lines and lost signal and interference and static on radios and other devices

Each transmission pole is a monopole with 90' - 150' structure and big base - what an eye sore. This will completely ruin and destroy the beauty of the landscape.

I think the open house meetings you had earlier were just a formality to satisfy the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission, the OTP and the MRES. I think all along they knew which routes they were planning and not telling the people that live out here.

I would like to know if the CEOs and the heads of these departments and the people that make these decisions would feel and react to if an organization wants to put in a walking or bicycle trail right through the middle of their backyard.

The Biden administration and the democrats has a goal of Net Solar and battery powered grid by 2035 - This was in The Farm Journal

May - June 2024 issue. If the big cities need all this power why don't they put up power plants - solar farms near where they need them along with wind turbines NO because the people by the big cities don't want them so let's go out to rural Minnesota and destroy their way of life and farming

Some but not all of the hardship this will cause:
Value of the family farm decreased tremendously
Center pivot irrigation - we have plenty of water. We have center pivots 1 mile away looking to install in future

How are we supposed to farm around these monopoles with 120 foot sprayers, 24-36-48 row planters and they are getting bigger

Custom Applicators

Aerial spraying very limited have to come back with a ground sprayer

What about weed problems next to monopoles

Flying drones for farming or mapping - weed

Scouting - Soil & Crop deficiency

Water - Storm & hail damage

What about interference with GPS - auto steer

2-Way radios - Cell phones

Cash rent going down and farming ability

What about increasing the building site
increase or expand a livestock feeding lot
it will completely limit future expansion
BSSA Coordinating with Landowners - work with
you to resolve questions & concerns
agreements and monetary offer based on
Fair Market Value (yeah right)

There is no way you can put a Fair
market Value on this. As mentioned
previously this is a life time for me and
my children and estate for any and all future
endeavors

Has any consideration been given for Taxes
on Capital gains Most of the Land owners will
have to pay between 40 & 50% of the payments
for Taxes that doesn't leave the land owner
very much. BSSA must pay the landowner
Value many times over

Put the Transmission Line underground
or better yet maybe the Trump administration
will intervene and stop the project

I have talked to my children about this
project because someday they own and farm
this land after I am gone they are
completely devastated by this proposal of

Running this power line right through the middle of our family farm I and my family want nothing to do with this. IT will completely limit any future endeavors

As you can tell I am devastated by the fact your considering a 345-Kilovolt transmission line right through the middle of our family farm
Akron Twp Sec 20 Big Stone County

Ron Schmitt
43176 630th Ave
Correll, Mn 56227

Linda Schmitt Family Trust
43176 630th Ave
Correll, Mn 56227

LINDA SCHMIDT
630TH AVE
LL, MN 56227

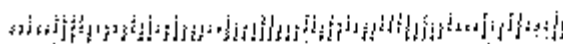
SAINT PAUL MN 550

15 JAN 2025 PM 6 L



Jenna Ness
Minn Dept. of Commerce
85 7th Place East Suite 280
ST. Paul, Mn 55101

55101-214355



Please provide your contact information. This information and your comments will be publicly available.

Name: Scott Johnson Phone: 612-845-8847

Street Address: 20169 Priest Point Road

City: Glenwood State: MN ZIP: 56334

Email: scottjohnson.sj@gmail.com

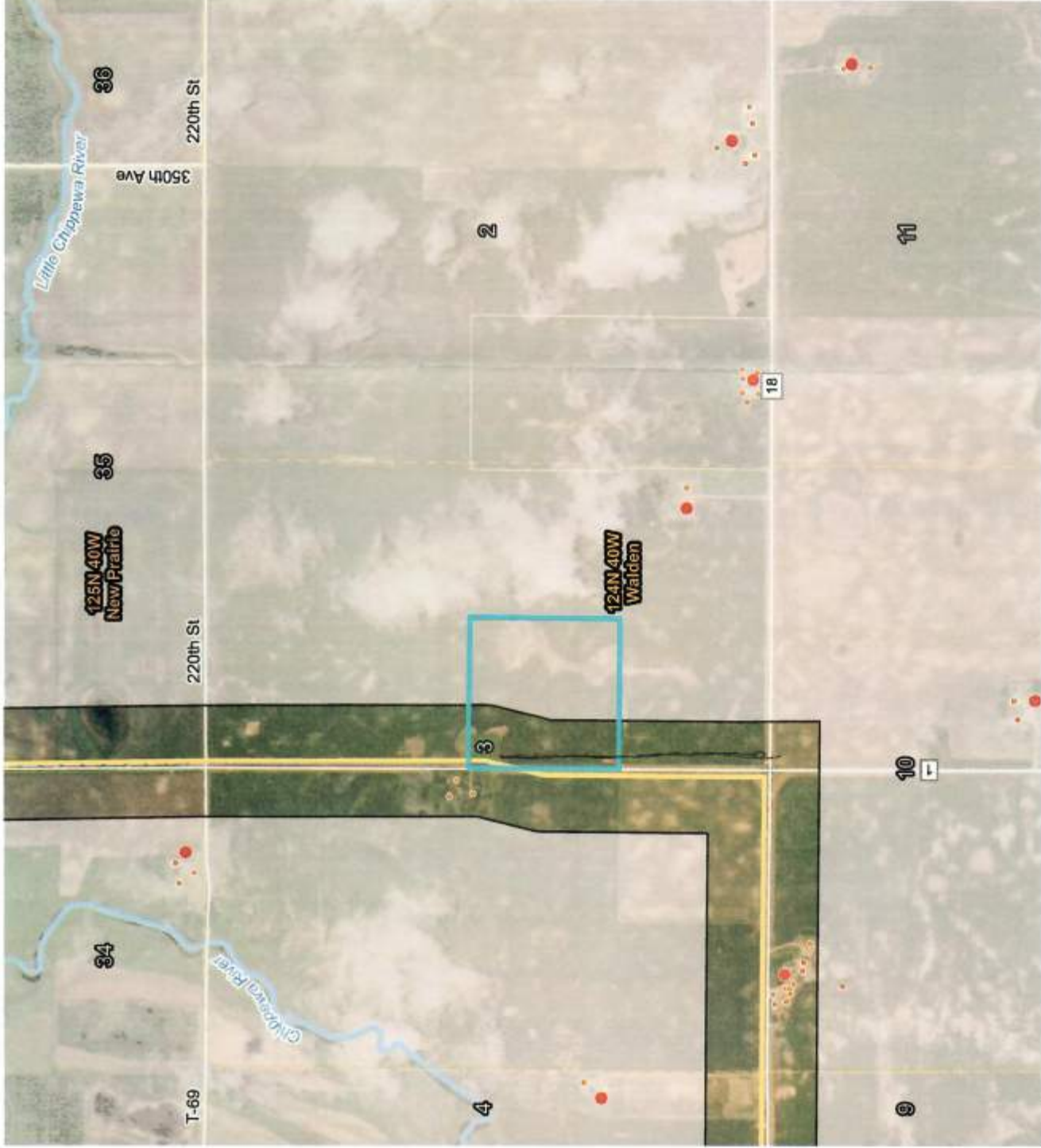
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• If power line goes by my property, I would prefer it on my land. If my property is used it would require less dead ends and save money. Would just ask that it doesn't block my field entry.

• Also, using the East side of Ct Rd 1 the line would miss a building site, (Michael ~~Rahn~~ Rahn)

• If it goes on my property, I want structures placed one edge of field, not in my field.



- Route Option
- Central 2
- Route Width
- Home
- Other Structure
- Rivers and Streams (MN Natural Resources)

Please provide your contact information. This information and your comments will be publicly available.

Name: Stuart Brustuen Phone: 320-596-2317

Street Address: 560 230th Ave. NW

City: Appleton State: MN ZIP: 56208

Email: _____

Share your comments as specifically as possible on the EIS that will be prepared for the Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project.

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- See attached map of my property

- There is a transmission line on the north side of county road 22 already. We do not need another transmission line in this area.

- There is a distribution line on the south side of county road 22. If this route is chosen does this mean it's in the middle of my ag land? That would cause a negative affect on the value of my land. That is not right.

- We would like to do future irrigation and if those are placed in my fields we will not be able to. This has a negative affect on my land value.

- We have tile and want to do more.

- I would prefer the southern route that utilizes an existing Hwy corridor along State Hwy 12.



The Swensons
Tim, Tracy, Theo, & Thaya
22501 150th St
Glenwood MN 56334
4tswenson@gmail.com
320-805-0444

January 22, 2025

Minnesota Department of Commerce
Attn: Jenna Ness
85 7th Place East, Suite 280
Saint Paul MN. 55101-2198

Dear Ms. Jenna Ness,

RE: Docket No. E017, ET10/TL-23-160

I recently attended the Public Information and Environmental Review Scoping Meeting for the Big Stone South to Alexandria proposed transmission line project on January 15, 2025 in Benson MN. We would like to express our concerns in regards to the project and ask that they would be taken in to consideration in the Environmental Review that will be conducted by your team in the upcoming months. Our property is located at 22501 150th St Glenwood MN in Section 36 of Reno Township, Pope County MN which is located on Route 2 of the Northern Segment of the proposed transmission line project.

In 2021, we purchased our home and eleven acres surrounding it. We completely remodeled the home and have made many improvements to the property. We have put our entire life savings in to this property to make it our own with the intentions to raise our two children ages seven and nine. We spent over five years searching for a place that would enable us to raise our family in a location where we can explore wildlife, produce our food, enjoy recreational activities, and appreciate the solitude of the countryside.

Our property is located within approximately 1300 feet of the proposed Route 2 of the Northern Segment of the Big Stone South to Alexandria proposed transmission line. As a result, the Big Stone South to Alexandria transmission line project has the potential to negatively affect our family's health, our family's financial well-being, as well as negatively affect the many unique attributes of our property.

In reviewing, the handout that was distributed at the meeting and drafted by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission it indicates that researchers continue to investigate possible mechanisms for how low frequency Electric and Magnetic Fields (EMF) may cause indirect biological effects. It is my educated interpretation that because there is only just over a century of the use of transmission lines the implications of EMF on human health may not be evident as of yet.

The Swensons
Tim, Tracy, Theo, & Thaya
22501 150th St
Glenwood MN 56334
4tswenson@gmail.com
320-805-0444

Next, as mentioned above we have invested a significant amount of time, money and energy in to our property. With the proposed Route 2 of Northern Segment being in such, close proximity to property, our property values will decrease and thus decreasing our financial well-being.

Lastly, our home faces south and currently has an unobstructed view of the gently rolling hills on Reno Township. Large double circuit steel transmission poles with a height between 120-180 feet and spaced every 400-1400 feet would most definitely undesirably affect our view. Not only would our view be negatively affected, but also more our goal of raising our young family and enjoying the solitude of the countryside would be greatly diminished because of the undesirable noise pollution that high voltage transmission lines emit.

For your reference, I have attached a map and two photographs of our property in relation to the proposed Route 2 of the Northern Segment of the Big Stone South to Alexandria transmission line project. The map was utilized to estimate the distance from our property line on the South side of our property to the proposed location of Route 2 of the Northern Segment. The first photograph is taken from the approximate location of proposed Route 2 of the Northern Segment would be and looking to the North at our property to the North. The second photograph exhibits the view from our property facing South to where the structures of the proposed Route 2 of the Northern Segment would be. As you can see because of the unique configuration of our property, our main view from our home would be greatly diminished with the placement of Route 2 of the Northern Segment.

Our young family's health, our property values, as well as our view and the many unique characteristics of our property would be negatively impacted by the proposed Route 2 of the Northern Segment of the Big Stone South to Alexandria transmission line. In addition, considering cost as a factor it is evident that Route 2 of the Northern Segment would require more distance and related costs than Route 1 of the Northern Segment. In conclusion, I strongly urge you to consider Route 1 of the Northern Segment, rather than Route 2 of the Northern Segment of the Big Stone South to Alexandria transmission line project. If you would need any additional information, explanation, or clarification, please do not hesitate to reach out to us at the contact information listed above. Thank you for your time and taking in to consideration our concerns into the Environmental Impact Study for the proposed Big Stone South to Alexandria transmission line project.

Sincerely,

Thaya Swenson
Tracy Swenson
Theo Swenson

12:45

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ON X HUNT

100 ft

1,083 ft Elevation

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446.7 yd

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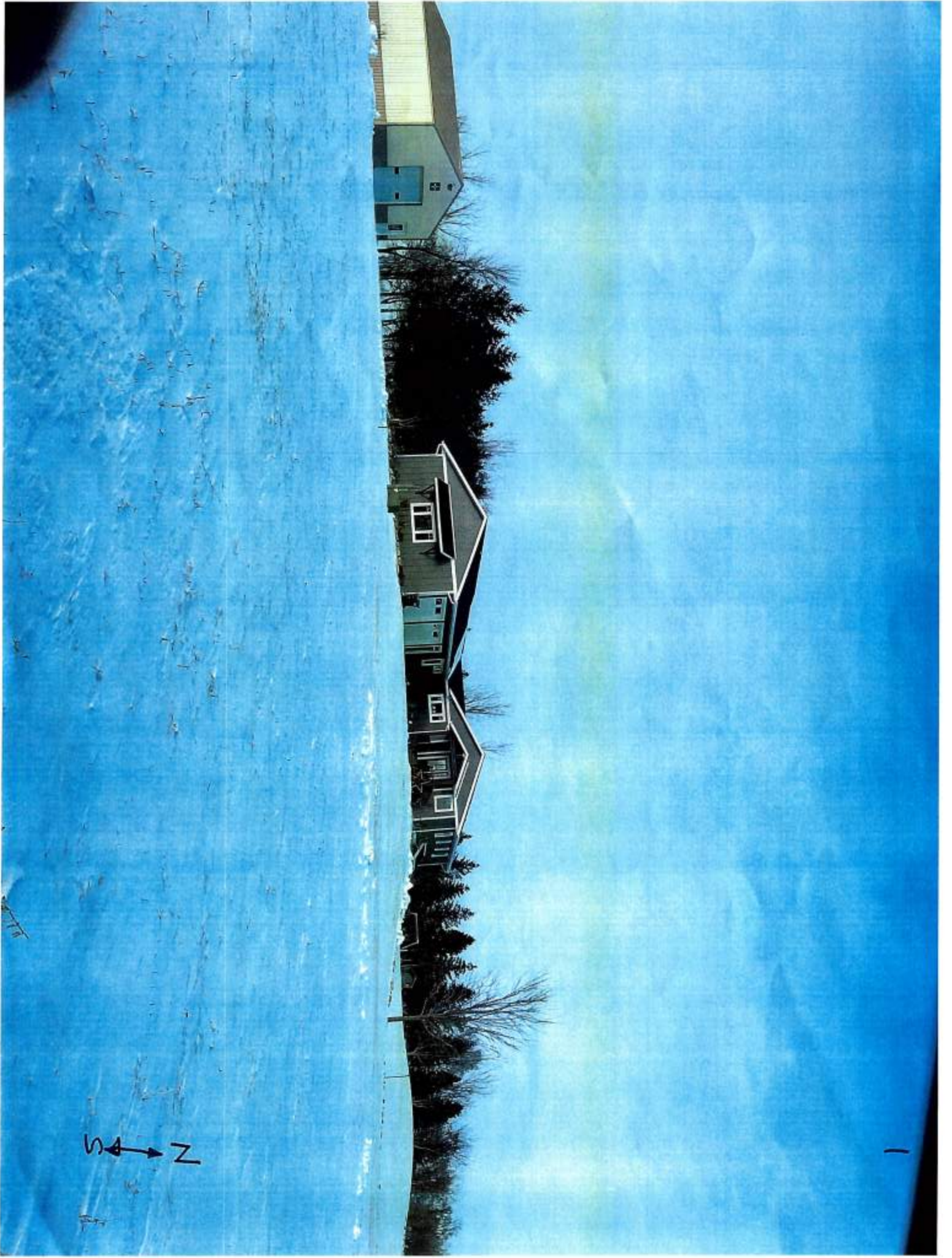
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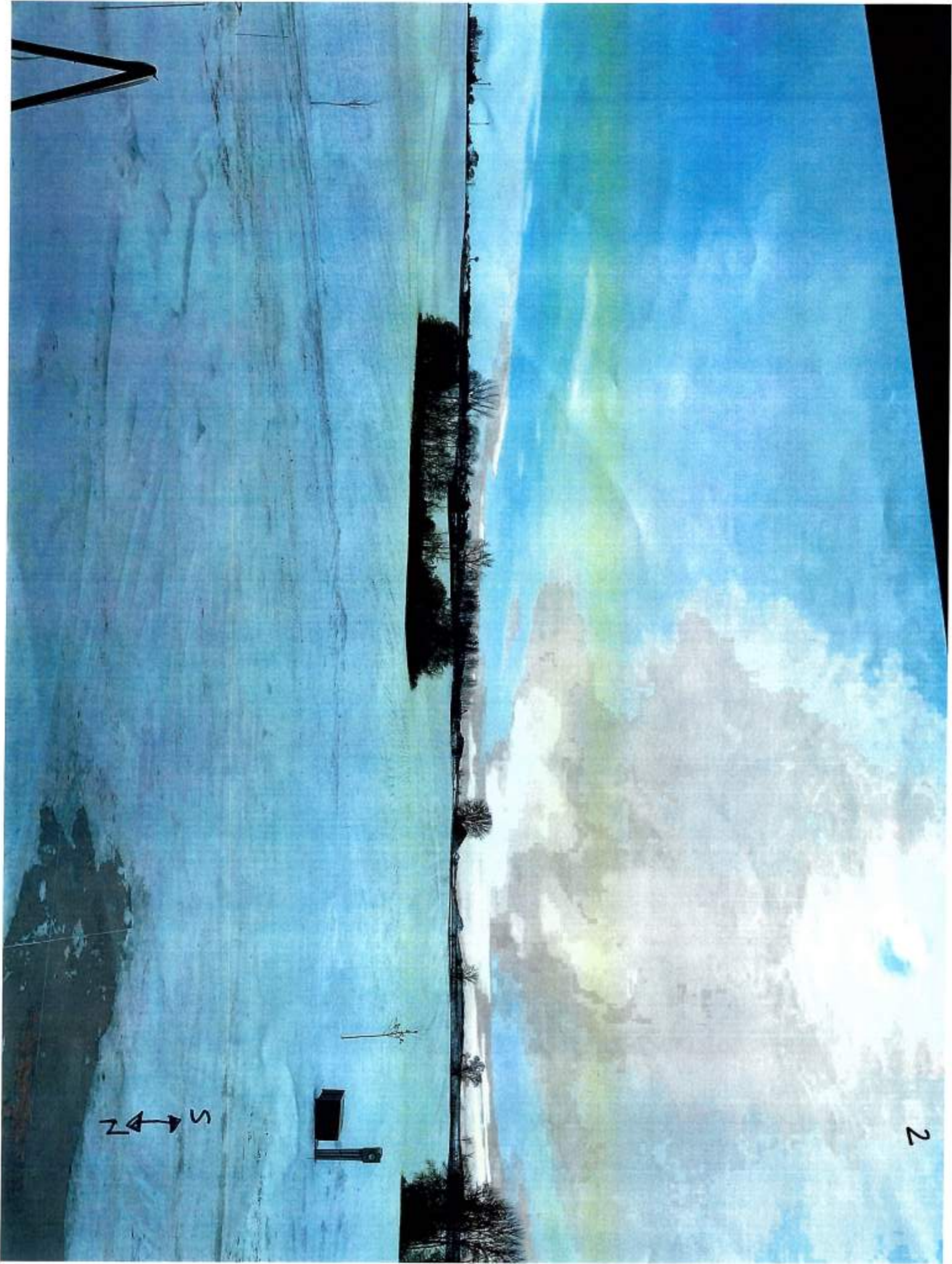
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N → S



2

From: eera.admin_no_reply@state.mn.us
To: [Ness, Jenna \(COMM\)](#)
Subject: Public Comment re: Big Stone South to Alexandria 345 kV Transmission Line Project
Date: Friday, January 24, 2025 5:55:50 PM

Big Stone South to Alexandria 345 kV Transmission Line Project

Submitter Name: Ted Diekmann

Submitter Email: diekmann98@yahoo.com

Submitter Telephone: (320) 815-4465

Comment:

These high voltage power lines pose significant risks to the environment, livestock, water tables, and human health. Electromagnetic fields (EMFs) from power lines have been linked to increased risks of cancer, neurological disorders, and developmental issues in humans, particularly children. Livestock near power lines can experience stress, reduced milk production, and reproductive issues. High voltage lines can also interfere with groundwater quality by altering the natural electrical balance, potentially contaminating water tables. Furthermore, these lines disrupt natural habitats, harming wildlife and ecosystems. Constructing high voltage power lines near homes intensifies these effects, making it essential to prioritize public health and environmental protection. Typically, the foundations for such structures range from 30 to 60 feet deep and can be several feet in diameter. In soft or unstable soils, deeper and wider footings or caissons may be required to ensure stability. The construction and presence of power line poles could potentially contaminate private wells and aquifers in the following ways: 1. Construction Activities: Drilling and excavating for footings can disturb soil and groundwater layers, introducing contaminants such as oils, grease, or drilling fluids. 2. Concrete Leachate: Concrete used in the footings may release alkaline substances, potentially altering the pH of nearby groundwater and affecting water quality. 3. Construction may increase erosion, depositing sediments into aquifers or well systems. The water table in our area is very high and our well are not very deep, there is a real threat to those who live near the tower locations. At a minimum these towers should be built further away from Lake Minnewaska or not built at all. Just like southern Minnesota they want to build these lines so they can then continue to build more wind turbines and solar farms. They have already done this in southern Minnesota. I do NOT want these towers built next to my house or even in my county. If Minnesota needs more electricity then build more natural gas or nuclear power plants near existing high voltage lines or closer to where the demand is. Build the wind turbines inside the 494/694 beltway, put up the solar farm on top of the governor's mansion and put 2 wind turbines in his yard. I DO NOT support these lines being built at all. Do not ruin west central Minnesota like they have southern Minnesota.

Submit Date: 01/24/2025 11:55 PM

From: [Freske, Bruce](#)
To: [Ness, Jenna \(COMM\)](#)
Cc: [Kerr, Tom](#); [Powers, Neil](#); [Budd, Michael](#); [Klavetter, Mead](#)
Subject: US Fish and Wildlife Service Comments Re: Proposed BSSA 345-kV Transmission Project; Docket Number: E017, ET10/TL-23-160
Date: Thursday, January 23, 2025 4:59:25 PM
Attachments: [F&WS Letter Re Docket Number E017, ET10TL-23-160.pdf](#)
[Map of Potential Alternate Route Odessa Township Secs 21, 23, 24, BS County.pdf](#)
[Map of Potential Alternate Route Ortonville Township Secs 13, 14, BS County.pdf](#)
[Map of Potential Alternate Routes Akron,Shible Town Sec13-16, 16-18,BS,Swift Co.pdf](#)
[Map of Potential Alternate Routes Stevens,Artichoke To Sec 32-35, 2,5,8,11,Stevens,BS Co.pdf](#)
[Map of Potential Alternate Routes W Bear,Ben Wade To Sec 4,5, 32,33,Pope Co.pdf](#)
[Powerline Shapefiles.zip](#)

You don't often get email from bruce_freske@fws.gov. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Hi Jenna:

Attached is a Fish and Wildlife Service comment letter for the current comment period for the Proposed Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project in West-Central Minnesota; Docket Number: E017, ET10/TL-23-160. This letter describes our request for additional routes to be included and considered for your review. Also attached, are pdf maps indicating the additional routes as well as a zip file with GIS shapefiles of these routes. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about the attached files.

Please acknowledge receipt of this email and thank you for your time.

Bruce Freske
District Manager, Morris Wetland Management District
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
43875 230th Street, Morris, MN 56267
Office: (320) 460-1151
Mobile: (320) 287-0369



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

5600 American Blvd West, Suite 990
Bloomington, Minnesota 55437-1458

IN REPLY REFER TO:

Jenna Ness
Minnesota Department of Commerce
85 7th Place East, Suite 280
St. Paul, MN 55101

Subject: US Fish and Wildlife Service Comments Regarding Proposed Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project in West-Central Minnesota; Docket Number: E017, ET10/TL-23-160

Dear Jenna Ness:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), U.S. Department of the Interior, manages numerous units of the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) in the area of the proposed route of the Big Stone South to Alexandria (BSSA) project. These lands, referred to as Waterfowl Production Areas (WPAs) include fee title lands (WPAs) and two types of conservation easement interest lands (habitat easements and wetland easements). Habitat easements include lands that the FWS has worked with landowners to permanently protect upland and wetland habitat on private lands to provide benefits to migratory bird populations. The FWS also protects wetland areas through a permanent wetland conservation easement program. The wetland easement specifically prohibits burn, drain, dredge and fill impacts to wetlands. These lands are managed through the National Wildlife Refuge Administration Act (16 USC 668 dd) and proposed uses of these lands cannot be allowed unless it is compatible (Compatibility Policy 603 FW2) with the purposes for which the unit was established.

The FWS has worked cooperatively with Otter Tail Power over the last six months in an effort to avoid impacts to lands of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The purpose of this letter is to suggest alternate routes to completely avoid or minimize impacts to federal interest lands managed by the FWS. Projects that propose crossing federal lands must identify all alternatives evaluated and why those alternatives will not satisfy the project needs and therefore, request the crossing of federal lands. In order to evaluate if a federal right-of-way permit will be issued, we will need to satisfy this level of planning/decision making for both compatibility and environmental compliance.

We have reviewed the route segments for the Proposed Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project in West-Central Minnesota and have the following comments:

South Segment: Within this segment there are three areas where both of the two alternative routes cross federally protected lands, as a result, there is no means for federally protected lands to be avoided. This area is of particular concern as it protects one of the largest native prairie and wetland complexes remaining in west central Minnesota. Due to the importance of this area to migratory waterfowl and other prairie wildlife, the Fish and Wildlife Service has been actively restoring and protecting land in this area for over 60 years.

Based on discussions with the applicant, we believe viable alternate routes are available that would avoid federally protected lands and thus believe additional segments should be included for review. Attached are both PDF maps and GIS shapefiles indicating the areas of concern. Also included are possible alternate route segments that avoid federally protected lands and were stated by the applicant to be viable, however, the Service is not vested in these routes but only provides them to demonstrate the availability of viable alternate options that avoid federally protected lands.

Central Segment: The south route of this segment is our preferred route as no federally protected lands are along this route. However, there is one area, near Section 4 in White Bear Lake Township in Pope County, where there is only one route, and this route crosses a federally protected tract. We believe a viable option exists to avoid this tract and have included it for consideration.

North Segment: The northwest route of this segment is our preferred route as no federally protected lands are along this route.

If the applicant desires to utilize lands owned by the Service, the applicant will be required to submit an application for a right-of-way permit. Upon receipt of the application, a complete federal environmental review of the project will need to be completed by the applicant. In addition, a Service compatibility determination, a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis, Endangered Species Act (Section 7) review, and National Historic Preservation Act (Section 106) review will also be conducted. Depending on the findings from the environmental review, the Service may approve the application with conditions or deny the right-of-way permit application. Completion of the environmental review, appraisal and issuance can take two to three years after the application is received by the Service. If a right-of-way permit is issued, the permit is time limited to 50 years. Please also be aware that new rules regarding the permitting of rights-of-way across Fish and Wildlife Service administered lands were finalized in the Federal Register (89 FR 99732) on January 10, 2025.

Attached are both pdf files and GIS shapefiles files for the proposed alternatives.

To discuss this matter further or to discuss the steps involved with the application process, please contact Ashley Kraetsch, Conservation Planner (612-713-5154 or ashley_kraetsch@fws.gov).

Sincerely,

Sarena Selbo
Assistant Regional Director
Midwest Region
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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1HZ 3UDIULH

Please provide your contact information. This information and your comments will be publicly available.

Name: Brian Boehnke Phone: 605-880-2298

Street Address: 2839 171st Ave

City: Bellingham State: MN ZIP: 56212

Email: _____

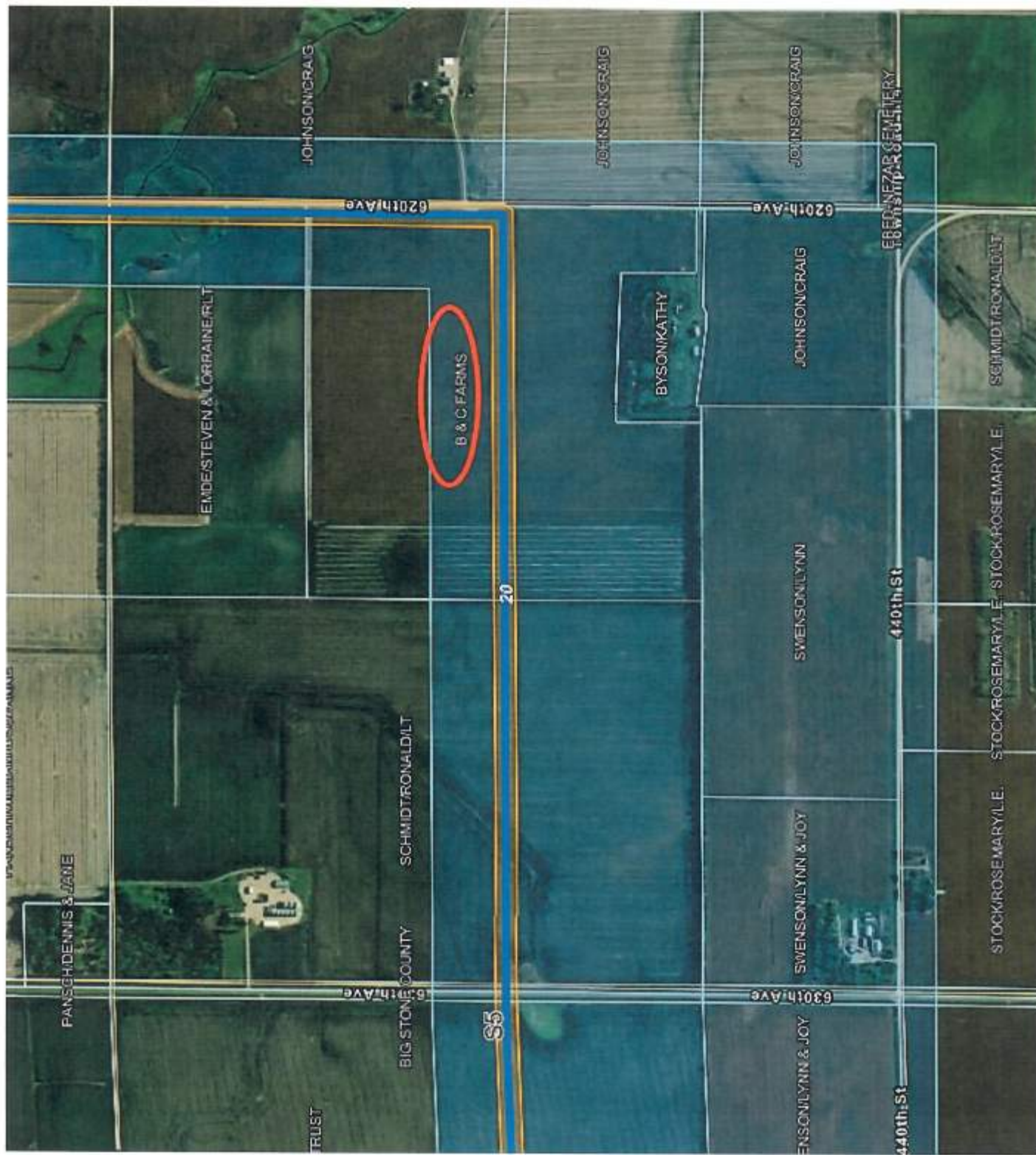
Share your comments as specifically as possible on the EIS that will be prepared for the Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project.

- What potential human and environmental impacts of the proposed project should be considered in the EIS?
- Are there any methods to minimize, mitigate, or avoid potential impacts of the proposed project that should be considered in the EIS?
- Are there any alternative routes or route segments that should be considered in the EIS to address or mitigate potential impacts associated with the proposed project? **If so, please provide a map with the proposed route drawn** and a description of the proposal.
- Are there any unique characteristics of the proposed project that should be considered in the EIS?

- 20-141-25 - I own 150 acres under B+C Farms

- If structures are placed in this field I will have to farm around them due to the irregular field borders the structures will be in the middle of my field.

- Structures in field would limit my ability to put up irrigation or hire aerial applicators.



PANSCH, DENNIS & JANE

ENDE, STEVEN & LORRAINE, RL T

SCHMIDT, RONALD, DL T

B & C FARMS

BYSON, KATHY

JOHNSON, CRAIG

SWENSON, LYNN

SWENSON, LYNN & JOY

SCHMIDT, RONALD, DL T

STOCKROSE, MARYLE, E. STOCKROSE, MARYLE, E.

JOHNSON, CRAIG

JOHNSON, CRAIG

JOHNSON, CRAIG

EBERNEZAR CEMETERY

620th Ave

620th Ave

630th Ave

630th Ave

440th St

20

S5

440th St

TRUST

SWENSON, LYNN & JOY

Docket Number: E017, ET10/TL-23-160

My name is Charles Nelson, I live and farm along the proposed powerline route on the east side of Hancock, MN. I am a member of the group of Irrigation farmers who oppose the 345 KVA powerline route east of Hancock along the Chippewa river basin.

In order to help you understand why we oppose this route, you need to understand the differences between soil types of both routes. West of Hancock, the heavier and silty soils do not like irrigation. The soils have a much higher water holding capacity and usually require drainage tile. That area will not need irrigation.

The land east of Hancock is primarily sandy soils that are well drained but rely heavily on irrigation to produce crops. The advantage of this type of farming allows us to grow higher value specialty type crops, including Carrots, peas, Sweetcorn, and dry edible beans including various types of Kidneys.

Side note: Minnesota has the new distinction of being the number 1 Kidney bean growing state in the USA as of 2024. This happened because of the irrigated acres in Central and western areas of the State.

Because these specialty crops require more intense management, we also rely heavily on Aerial spraying during certain stages of development. The spray pilots will refuse to treat crops close to these power lines because the towers go as high as 140-180 feet up and the bottom of the line arcs down as close as 28 feet from the ground. The route developers plan requires the lines to pass directly over irrigators so the acres underneath can't be treated.

There are 3 main types of irrigation in Minnesota. Center pivot irrigation started back in the early 1970's in this area. An average size irrigated field is roughly 150 acres. The center pivot system irrigates a circle of roughly 120 acres which leaves roughly 30 acres of dry land unproductive corners. As time goes on and with the realization of growing higher value specialty crops on irrigated acres, technology has provided us with ways to irrigate the full acreage of each field through the use of Linear Irrigation and Corner System Irrigation. See Exhibit A

As the old style Center Pivot Irrigators are replaced, (many are 50 plus years old now) farmers are updating to the newer methods.

This takes time and you are looking at a lot of center pivots in the area, but the power line is forever. If the tower spans are half as long as most fields, the plan is to position towers in the un-irrigated corners and the irrigator will swing through under the lines. If this happens, they will kill the plans to irrigate roughly 800 acres of corners. If we lose 2 out of the 4 corners, then the remaining corners are cost prohibitive to improve.

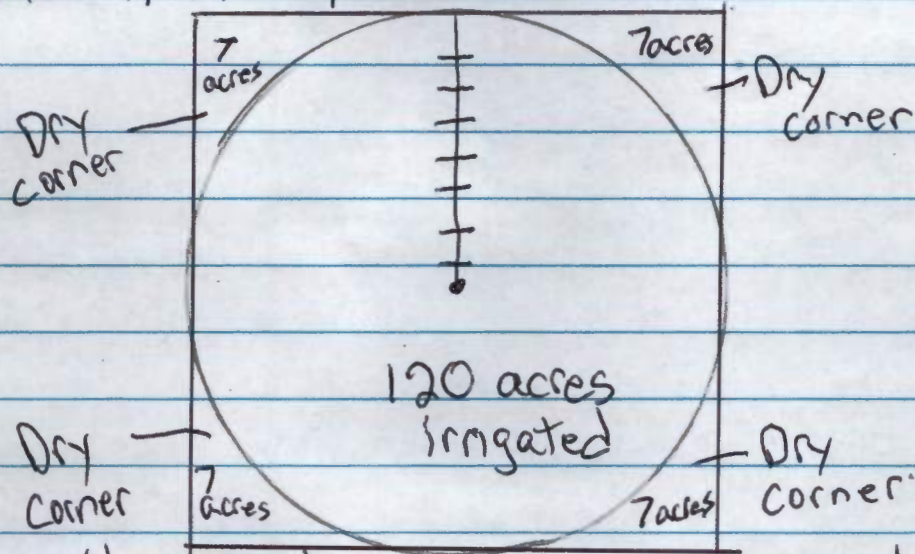
If the route developers take the eastern route, they will be much more restricted as to navigating around our residences and farm sites. In order to stay out of the way of irrigation, the only choice is to stay in the road right of way next to these small gravel township roads. The power lines will have to go right over us. If they use the Western route, they will have the ability to navigate around residences with little or no negative impact.

Our group, who is comprised of a dozen irrigation farmers, 3 State legislators, The Minnesota Irrigation Assn, and an attorney helping us coordinate meetings with power line developers multiple times.

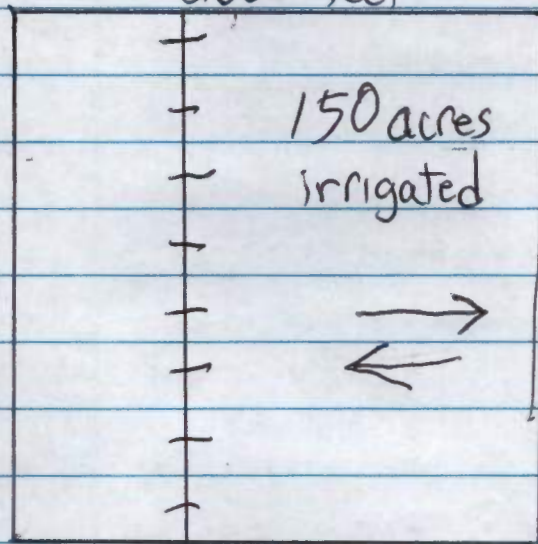
We recommend that we construct the line through the West route at Hancock because the residential and agricultural impact is much lower

Kind Regards Charles Nelson
cell # 320-760-8074

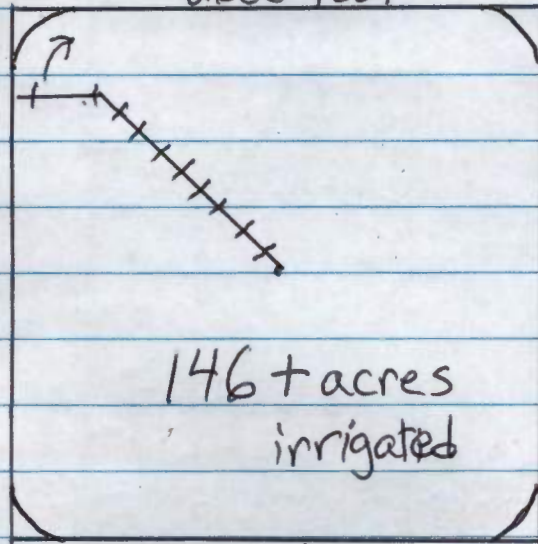
Exhibit A 2600 feet



old center pivot irrigation technology
2600 feet



Linear Irrigation
2600 feet



corner system

This corner system has an arm that swings out into the corner and folds back in the middle of the field.

From: eera.admin_no_reply@state.mn.us
To: [Ness, Jenna \(COMM\)](#)
Subject: Public Comment re: Big Stone South to Alexandria 345 kV Transmission Line Project
Date: Thursday, January 30, 2025 1:19:28 PM
Attachments: [Power map 1.pdf](#)

Big Stone South to Alexandria 345 kV Transmission Line Project

Submitter Name: Don & Michele Greiner

Submitter Email: dmgreiner82@gmail.com

Submitter Telephone: (320) 287-2113

Comment:

We have provided a map from 6/25/24 of the proposed East route; the other map is the latest East route proposal. Our concern is the change of the route at the powerline crossing 280th St in Walden Township, Sec 31, Pope County. On the 6/25/24 map, the powerline went straight North, and on the latter map (which is not dated), it turns West for one mile and then turns north in section 36, Hodges Township, Stevens County. We understand to make those 2 90-degree turns an extra pole would be needed at each 90-degree turn. The 6/26/24 route would be in the middle of the sections running North, not interfering with irrigators or farming operations. We were told the reason for the change from the 6/25/24 map was that it would cross a wetland area. The damage done to a wetland area would be temporary whereas in land that is being farmed, the damage is permanent. It seems making 2 unneeded turns would add a lot of expense to an already expensive project. We believe the common sense thing to do would be to run the power line straight north in Sec. 31 in Walden Township instead of making the 2 unnecessary turns in Sec. 36, Hodges Township. This whole project would not be necessary if we weren't trying to use expensive unreliable intermittent energy sources such as wind turbines & solar panels in the first place. Thank you for your time in hearing our concerns, Don & Michele Greiner

Submit Date: 01/30/2025 07:17 PM

LANDOWNER INFORMATION

Name: Don Greiner

Address: 40878 280th St.

Notes: Power line runs north in Walden Township Sec 31 instead of jogging 1 mile north into Hodges Township Sec 36

- MHI Route Segments
- *Routes Subject to Change
 - North Options
 - Central Options
 - South Options



BSSA
6/25/2024
1,000 Feet

6-25-2024

From: [Stephanie Rohloff Reese](#)
To: [Ness, Jenna \(COMM\)](#)
Subject: Transmission Line route Comment
Date: Thursday, January 30, 2025 9:45:02 AM

[You don't often get email from srmb@runestone.net. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification>]

This message may be from an external email source.

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Hello,

In 1969, Dad and I installed the first Irrigator in the country. It was a valley water drive that went only one way. The technology has changed as you know. Now you can run them from your phone from anywhere. That is why as Irrigator farmers we are so concerned.

I am writing in favor of the Western route because of the irrigators on the Eastern and Southern side.

We have worked along side with Power Company's placement of the route by helping them, by passing the heavy irrigation area and the resistance from them.

Thank you.

John Dosedall

24347 400th Ave

Hancock, MN 56244

320-795-2479

Cell: 320-760-7456

Pope and Stevens County Farmer

Minnerath Investments LLC

6325 County Rd 87, Alexandria, MN 56308

grant@centralspecialties.com

320-808-5066

1-30-25

Minnesota Department of Commerce

Public Comment on Big Stone South to Alexandria 345 kV Transmission Line Project

This letter constitutes a formal comment on the proposed Big Stone South to Alexandria 345 kV Transmission Line Project. Minnerath Investments LLC owns three properties that will be directly affected by the proposed North 2 route. One of these properties serves as our main corporate office, pit, and equipment staging area. . Furthermore, we operate out of the Maas gravel pit in Big Stone County, where our operations will also be impacted. We work closely with Central Specialties Inc., one of the larger road construction companies in the Midwest, and these properties are critical to our operations as gravel pits for public road construction projects.

The proposed transmission line will significantly impede our ability to conduct business on these properties. Specifically:

* **Reduced Aggregate Volume (Maas Pit):** The placement of the transmission lines will restrict access to significant portions of our gravel deposits at the Maas pit, directly reducing the volume of aggregates available for extraction. This reduction in available materials will negatively impact our ability to compete for bids on public road construction projects, as our pricing will be less competitive due to higher material costs or the need to transport materials from more distant locations.

* **Increased Costs (Aggregate Relocation):** Central Specialties, Inc. currently has a large volume of aggregate stockpiled within the proposed transmission line's right-of-way on our corporate office property. Relocating this substantial stockpile will incur significant costs for our company, including handling, transportation, and potential storage fees.

* **Increased Costs (Staging Area Mitigation):** Our corporate office property's staging area represents a significant investment due to substantial grading and development costs. The proposed transmission line's route directly impacts this staging area, requiring us to acquire

additional land, perform further grading, and reconfigure the layout to accommodate the transmission lines and maintain operational efficiency. These mitigation efforts will result in considerable unplanned expenses.

* **Reduced Aggregate Volume (Other Properties):** The placement of the transmission lines will restrict access to significant portions of our gravel deposits, directly reducing the volume of aggregates available for extraction. This reduction in available materials will negatively impact our ability to compete for bids on public road construction projects, as our pricing will be less competitive due to higher material costs or the need to transport materials from more distant locations.

* **Increased Costs:** The loss of access to raw materials within these pits will force us to purchase aggregates from other sources, increasing our raw material costs. This increased cost will make our bids less competitive and potentially preclude us from securing contracts. Furthermore, the presence of the transmission lines may necessitate additional safety measures and operational adjustments, further adding to our expenses.

* **Impact on Corporate Operations:** The transmission line's proximity to our main corporate office and staging area poses potential safety concerns and may disrupt daily operations. The presence of large transmission towers and lines could also limit the maneuverability of heavy equipment, impacting efficiency and potentially creating safety hazards.

* **Diminished Property Value:** The presence of the transmission line will negatively impact the market value of our properties. This devaluation will affect our company's assets and could limit future development or sale opportunities. We anticipate a significant reduction in the value of these properties due to the encumbrance created by the transmission line easement.

We are concerned that the proposed route has not adequately considered the significant impact on our business operations and the long-term economic consequences for our company. We believe that alternative North 1 routes would minimize the impact on active gravel pit operations and other industrial uses.

We urge the Department of Commerce to:

1. Conduct a thorough assessment of the economic impact of the proposed transmission line route on businesses like ours, including the impact on aggregate availability, operational efficiency, and property values.
2. Explore and require the consideration of alternative routes that minimize impacts on existing industrial operations, especially active gravel pits and staging areas crucial for public infrastructure projects, including the Maas pit.

3. Require the applicant to provide appropriate mitigation measures to address the negative impacts on our business, including compensation for the loss of aggregate resources, increased operational costs, and diminished property value.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

Grant Minnerath

Aggregate Manager

From: [roger schmidt schmidt farms](#)
To: [Ness, Jenna \(COMM\)](#)
Subject: Re: Public Comment
Date: Thursday, January 30, 2025 3:18:49 PM

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The red line is the correct route alternative I'm referring to. We farm the East half of Section 15 in Shible Township all as one field. We are considering putting an irrigation system on these two quarters which would be right in the middle of your proposed route and make it impossible to put it there. If you extended the current route 2 miles to the east it would take care of that problem. The church in the NE corner where you would go south is closed and will be taken down at some point. The new route would give us the opportunity to put an irrigation system on the two quarters we farm. I would like this email to be saved as an official public comment. Thank you. Roger Schmidt

Appleton Mn 56208

320-808-9492

On Thursday 30/01/2025 at 10:16 am, "Ness, Jenna (COMM)" wrote:

Roger,

Please review the map attached and confirm that the red line is how you would like to propose a route alternative.

Then respond to this email and say you would like your email to be saved as an official public comment. Describe your route in words so it matches up with the map. Mention the church is closed.

In order for your alternative to be studied, it needs to have less impacts than the current alignment (in blue on the map). Describe what types of impacts would be lessened by your new route.

Thanks, and let me know if you need anything else!

Jenna Ness

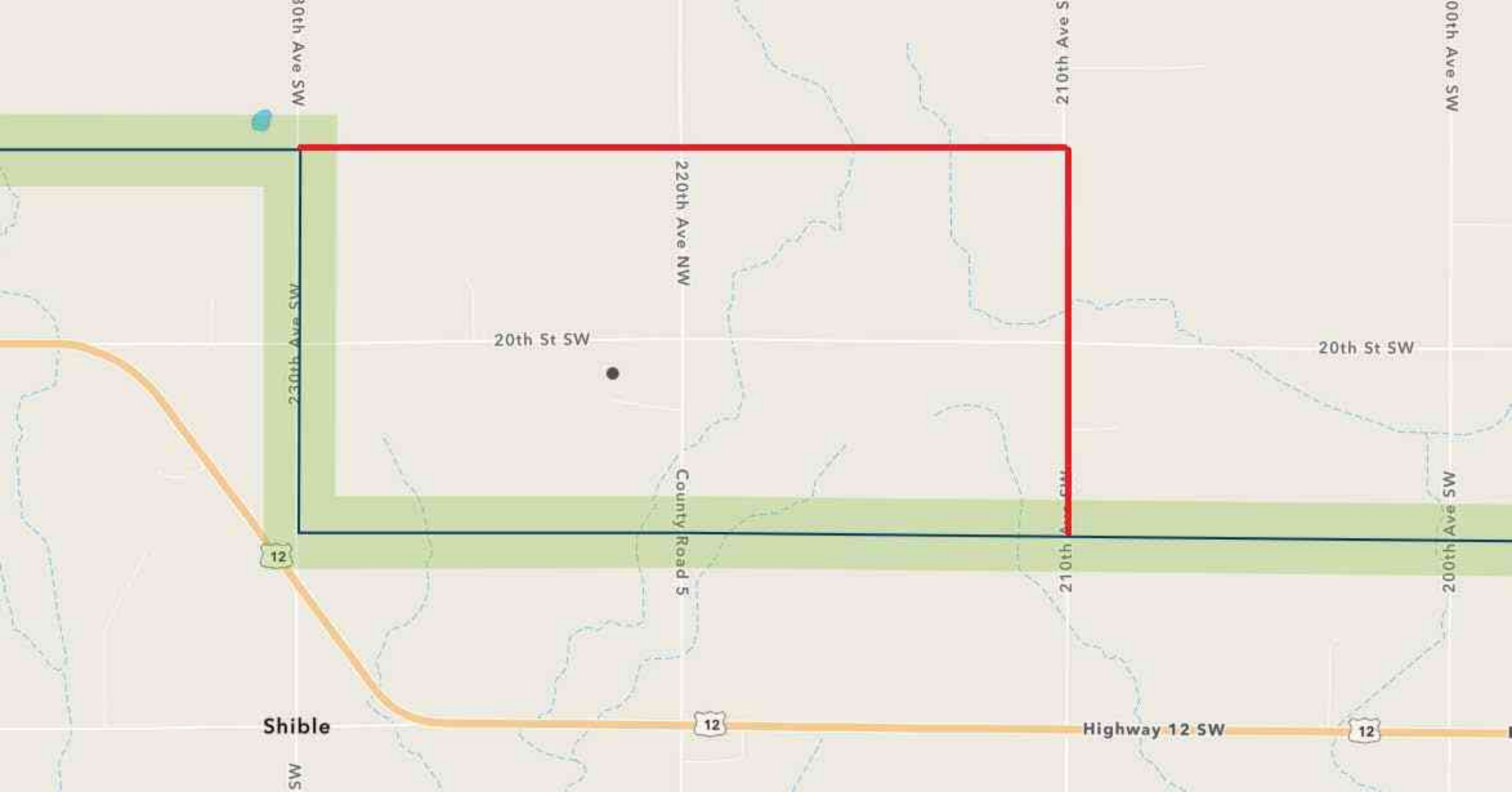
Environmental Review Manager

[Energy Environmental Review and Analysis](#)

651-539-1693

Schedule: Monday – Thursday

[Image]



180th Ave SW

230th Ave SW

12

Shible

SW

20th St SW

220th Ave NW

County Road 5

12

210th Ave SW

210th Ave SW

Highway 12 SW

20th St SW

200th Ave SW

12

200th Ave SW

Dean Solvie

DeGirls LLC

23406 410th ave

Hancock MN 56244 January 31, 2025

Jenna Ness

Minnesota Department of Commerce

858 7th Place East, Suite 280

St. Paul, MN 55101

RE: Big Stone South to Alexandrian 345 KV transmission Project.

Dear Jenna

I am the managing partner in DeGirls. Big Stone has proposed a route through DeGirls land in Section 11 New Prairie of Pope County. This would be on the C5 Section. The proposed line crosses the property from north to south. It does not follow the edge of the property line. If a structure is placed within DeGirls property, this would cause a burden. In the literature the pole spacing can be from 400 to 1,400 ft. That land was purchased in the late 1980's. We have farmed this partial for over 30 years. The structure or structures would make ariel application of herbicides and fungicide very dangerous. Manure application for a drag line system would be complicated. This land is under a Pope County feedlot manure management plan. It would create an obstacle to farm around that never was there previously. If the poles can be placed at edge of property line then there would be less issue with farming around the pole. We would still have the ariel application as an issue. The energy from the power line will interfere with coast guard signal and satellite signal for precision farming. This will affect the planting rate, herbicide rate, fertilizer rate around the power line. The proposed C5 route passes fairly close to 9 to 10 building sites. When looking at other parts of the map, the route stays clear of building sites, homes, and state or federal land.

The C11 and C10 route would have a lot less building sites close to the powerline and it would not interfere with the normal farming practices on DeGirls Land in Sec 11. The C11 and C10 route is preferred route.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Dean Solvie

DeGirls

Dean Solvie

23406 410th ave

Hancock MN 56244 January 31, 2025

Jenna Ness

Minnesota Department of Commerce

858 7th Place East, Suite 280

St. Paul, MN 55101

RE: Big Stone South to Alexandrian 345 KV transmission Project.

Dear Jenna

I am writing you about concerns over the 345 transmission line in Hodges township of Stevens County. My brother Bruce and I own land directly or through an LLC or corporation in the corridor in Hodges Township. The companies we have ownership shares in are Solvie Farms Inc., DeGirls, Canadian Connection, Prairie Gold Farms Inc, Gold Country Farms LLC and Bruce Solvie. The sections involved are 12, 13, 14, 24, 23 and 22.

In section 22 Solvie farms Quarter could have the west side with transmission line and also the north side which already has a large Otter Tail transmission line. This is asking a lot of Solvie Farms Inc to give up that much area in an easement. This path would also be close to two residents in the intersection of 250th street and 430th ave. The field is used in precision farming, it receives manure from a local feedlot. The structures would create a burden to the property owner. In a wind storm I have concerns with 2 transmission lines so close to another. This also applies for DeGirls property.

In Section 22 DeGirls are the property owners of NE quarter. There is an existing Otter tail transmission line on the north end of property. The addition of the 345 transmission line would create undue burden for DeGirls. Also, in that quarter is CRP land that would need to be transversed. Your existing route plans use no State or Federal land, nor Crep land. This land is less affected than peoples homes and building sites. This land is precision farmed and receives manure. Is used in sugar beet production and has arial applications done .

I would propose an alternative route of transmission line. Starting from the SW corner of Section 22 due east to the SE corner of the SW ¼ of 23. Turn north along Prairie gold Farms Inc property line and continue north to County road 10 or 230th street. This would be on the west side of property owned by Solvie Farms in Section 14 then proceed into section 11. This route would be further from residents and businesses.

There are two possible routes approved at this time for the routing of the 345 transmission line from Big Stone to Alexandria. Why is there only one route in my area, in Hodges Township, Stevens County. All other areas have 2 potential routes. The route in this area affects a much larger percentage of land owned by myself or have a vested interest in. This is unproportionate to other property owners along the transmission line. It has created an undue burden in this area.


Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Dean Solvie



Electricity often out!
Transmission line

 Alternate route.

From: [Barb Maas](#)
To: [Ness, Jenna \(COMM\)](#)
Subject: Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kVTransmission Project Scoping Comment 23-159
Date: Friday, January 31, 2025 3:26:49 PM

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Please respond to let me know you received this email.

I own property in T-122 R-44 S-33. There is a Great River transmission line on the west edge of this property. There is also tile in this property. I will not allow this on my property. With what is already there, there should be no reason to add more to it. I also need to add more tile to this property in the future.

If you have questions, let me know.

Thanks.

Barb Maas
320-305-0409

From: eera.admin_no_reply@state.mn.us
To: [Ness, Jenna \(COMM\)](#)
Subject: Public Comment re: Big Stone South to Alexandria 345 kV Transmission Line Project
Date: Friday, January 31, 2025 3:29:00 PM

Big Stone South to Alexandria 345 kV Transmission Line Project

Submitter Name: George Duckwitz

Submitter Email: georgeduckwitz58@gmail.com

Submitter Telephone: (320) 394-2214

Comment:

Instead, we should promote other forms of green energy electrical generation for transmission that is less invasive. Wind and solar requires a high amount of taxpayers' dollars - 18.7 billion dollars in federal subsidies from 2016 to 2022, so far to be feasible, which in turn that destroys the aesthetic, cultural and ecosystems, in the name of climate mitigation. Instead, use these dollars to promote less invasive green energy generation, and transmission of, such as fuel cells that use corn ethanol for the fuel source. Now is a good time to pause to consider other types of green energy and transmissions lines that are less invasive to a community. An example would be fuel cells that use corn ethanol which can be built near where the electrical demand is needed, reducing the need for massive voltage transmission lines such as this proposed line. Employ less invasive types of energy generation and transmission lines, while you have time and financial resources to meet the 2023 legislative mandate before you have created a large, more costly ecological disaster than what we are currently dealing with. Everyone must share equally in the liability regarding the penalty for killing eagles and other migratory birds. Also, include how much additional carbon you are forcing farmers to emit in your calculation of carbon reduction, respect the native cultural sites, and respect our community by not destroying it, by flouting money, by erecting low noise emitting junk, such as massive transmission lines, pitting neighbor against neighbor. Remember our history of past failures because of ones who accepted a bribe destroys the land? and ?Beware of those bearing gifts ?

Submit Date: 01/31/2025 09:28 PM

From: [Heather Eastman](#)
To: [Ness, Jenna \(COMM\)](#)
Subject: Power line route
Date: Friday, January 31, 2025 2:45:15 PM

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Hello! I would like to express my opinion that the power line in Big Stone County should use the north short route on the north side of sections 21,22, and 23. It then would continue north to highway 12. This route avoids many acres of tillable farmland and avoids disturbing 2 native prairie tracts. One is 40 acres in section 21 and one 40 acre in section 22 that have never had any tillage done. Thank you for your consideration! It is appreciated!

Heather Eastman

From: [PAM MAAS](#)
To: [Ness, Jenna \(COMM\)](#)
Subject: Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project Scoping Comment 23-159
Date: Friday, January 31, 2025 2:35:25 PM

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Please respond to let me know you received this email.

- Mike's estate owns land on both proposed routes S3 and S11.
- People should be the main concern when making routing decisions. This land is surrounding Brett and Sara Huizenga's farm site. I'm concerned about the negative effect on the value of my property.
- The S3 route has 6 less homes along the 4 mile stretch of these two route segments. The S3 route would avoid more homes and people. There are 2 homes missing on the S11 route on the map.
- The S11 route has approximately 12 turns to avoid certain areas on both sides of the road. The S3 route has zero turns and would make more economic sense. The number of times the line would have to cross 430th Street would add substantial unneeded costs to the project.
- The ground water aquifer is a major concern, especially along S11. With sandy soil and possible deep foundations on structures, it could be a direct path for pollutants to get into our drinking water. It could change the routing of the veins as well.

**I WOULD PREFER YOU FOLLOW THE EXISTING POWER LINE ON 715TH.
SECONDARY CHOICE, RUN ALONG 435TH.**

If you have questions, let me know.

Thanks.

Pam Rehn
PR for Michael Maas Estate
701-741-7349

From: [Barb Maas](#)
To: [Ness, Jenna \(COMM\)](#)
Subject: Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project Scoping Comment 23-159
Date: Friday, January 31, 2025 2:12:47 PM

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Please respond to let me know you received this email.

- I own land on both proposed routes S3 and S11.
- People should be the main concern when making routing decisions. My home farm site in the SE 1/4 of 18-121-46 is less than 250 feet from the proposed line on S11. This is not far enough away to mitigate possible health effects and the negative effect on the value of my property.
- My son has livestock at this farm site also and the possible health and production effects from having this proposed line so close to them 24 hours a day is concerning.
- The S3 route has 6 less homes along the 4 mile stretch of these two route segments. The S3 route would avoid more homes and people. There are 2 homes missing on the S11 route on the map.
- The S11 route has approximately 12 turns to avoid certain areas on both sides of the road. The S3 route has zero turns and would make more economic sense. The number of times the line would have to cross 430th Street would add substantial unneeded costs to the project.
- The ground water aquifer is a major concern, especially along S11. With sandy soil and possible deep foundations on structures, it could be a direct path for pollutants to get into our drinking water. It could change the routing of the veins as well.
- I have a gravel lease along S11. This proposed line would negatively affect future income if that route is chosen.

**I WOULD PREFER YOU FOLLOW THE EXISTING POWER LINE ON 715TH.
SECONDARY CHOICE, RUN ALONG 435TH.**

If you have questions, let me know.

Thanks.

Jackie Maas
320-273-2327

Please provide your contact information. This information and your comments will be publicly available.

Name: Gerald and Fay Dahlseng Phone: 320-239-2738

Street Address: 19108 340th Ave

City: Starbuck State: MN ZIP: 56381

Email: lazyacrz@heinet.net

Share your comments as specifically as possible on the EIS that will be prepared for the Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project.

- What potential human and environmental impacts of the proposed project should be considered in the EIS?
- Are there any methods to minimize, mitigate, or avoid potential impacts of the proposed project that should be considered in the EIS?
- Are there any alternative routes or route segments that should be considered in the EIS to address or mitigate potential impacts associated with the proposed project? If so, please provide a map with the proposed route drawn and a description of the proposal.
- Are there any unique characteristics of the proposed project that should be considered in the EIS?

- See map for farm site location.

- If proposed route goes along 340th Ave it is only approximately 160 feet away from our home. We feel that this substantially devalues our property.

- If we want to sell our home it will affect our value, income & potential buyers.

- One of our biggest concerns is the potential health effects from this line being so close and us living under it 24 hours a day every day. When there is no wind it's ~~160~~ 160 feet away. When there is wind the blowout of the line will make it even closer. This is a concern for our whole family.

- Our children would love to move home but this line would change their plans of doing so.

Please provide your contact information. This information and your comments will be publicly available.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Email: _____

Share your comments as specifically as possible on the EIS that will be prepared for the Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project.

- What potential human and environmental impacts of the proposed project should be considered in the EIS?
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- Are there any unique characteristics of the proposed project that should be considered in the EIS?

- We have animals also at home that would be near the ~~the~~ proposed line. We are very concerned about their health and production from being near this proposed line.
- We prefer C4 instead of C9. You affect less people. People should be number one priority.
- If C10 is chosen it will eliminate a tree line that protects our farm from wind. This would have a negative effect all year be especially in the winter.
- If C10 is chosen it will eliminate a freeline and cause wind erosion to our field just to the south.
- We do not want C9. We love our sunset views and this will eliminate the view we value so much.

Please provide your contact information. This information and your comments will be publicly available.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Email: _____

Share your comments as specifically as possible on the EIS that will be prepared for the Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project.

- What potential human and environmental impacts of the proposed project should be considered in the EIS?
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- Are there any alternative routes or route segments that should be considered in the EIS to address or mitigate potential impacts associated with the proposed project? If so, please provide a map with the proposed route drawn and a description of the proposal.
- Are there any unique characteristics of the proposed project that should be considered in the EIS?

- We have kids and grand kids that enjoy the recreational benefits of our property. If C10 is chosen the tree line will be gone and will affect my families opportunity to enjoy hunting together.
- We use land rent for income. These structures would have a negative effect on our farm land and income.
- It would make it hard for aerial applicators to be utilized, which has a negative effect on our income.
- We have wildlife easements on our property and others in the area that would be negatively affected.
- After reviewing the map it appears that our home is closer than anyone else. We strongly oppose this line coming by our house.



From: [David Green](#)
To: [Ness, Jenna \(COMM\)](#)
Subject: E017, ET10/TL-23-160
Date: Friday, January 31, 2025 10:23:02 AM

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Jenna

I want to submit a comment/concern relating to the proposed route for the Big Stone to Alexandria utility line project. My property is located at 14348 State Highway 29, Glenwood, MN. The North route (N2) will be directly adjacent to the my east property line. There is a 3.5 acre freshwater pond in that location that serves as habitat for many bird species including migratory birds (see attachment), for an eagle (see attachment) and an owl. I have reviewed the US Fish and wildlife IPaC tool which did verify that some of the migratory birds that use this pond are of migratory concern. I have witnessed loons, ducks, coots, swans and snow geese using this pond. I am concerned that the locating of the high energy power line so close to this pond will impact the habitat and environment for these critters. I imagine that it is possible that they may collide with these lines during take off or landing. Please take into account this impact when considering the N2 proposed route. Sincerely

David and Sarah Green









From: [Dawn Koch](#)
To: [Ness, Jenna \(COMM\)](#)
Subject: Big Stone South to Alexandria Transmission Line - Docket # TL-23-160
Date: Friday, January 31, 2025 1:17:20 PM
Attachments: [map.pdf](#)

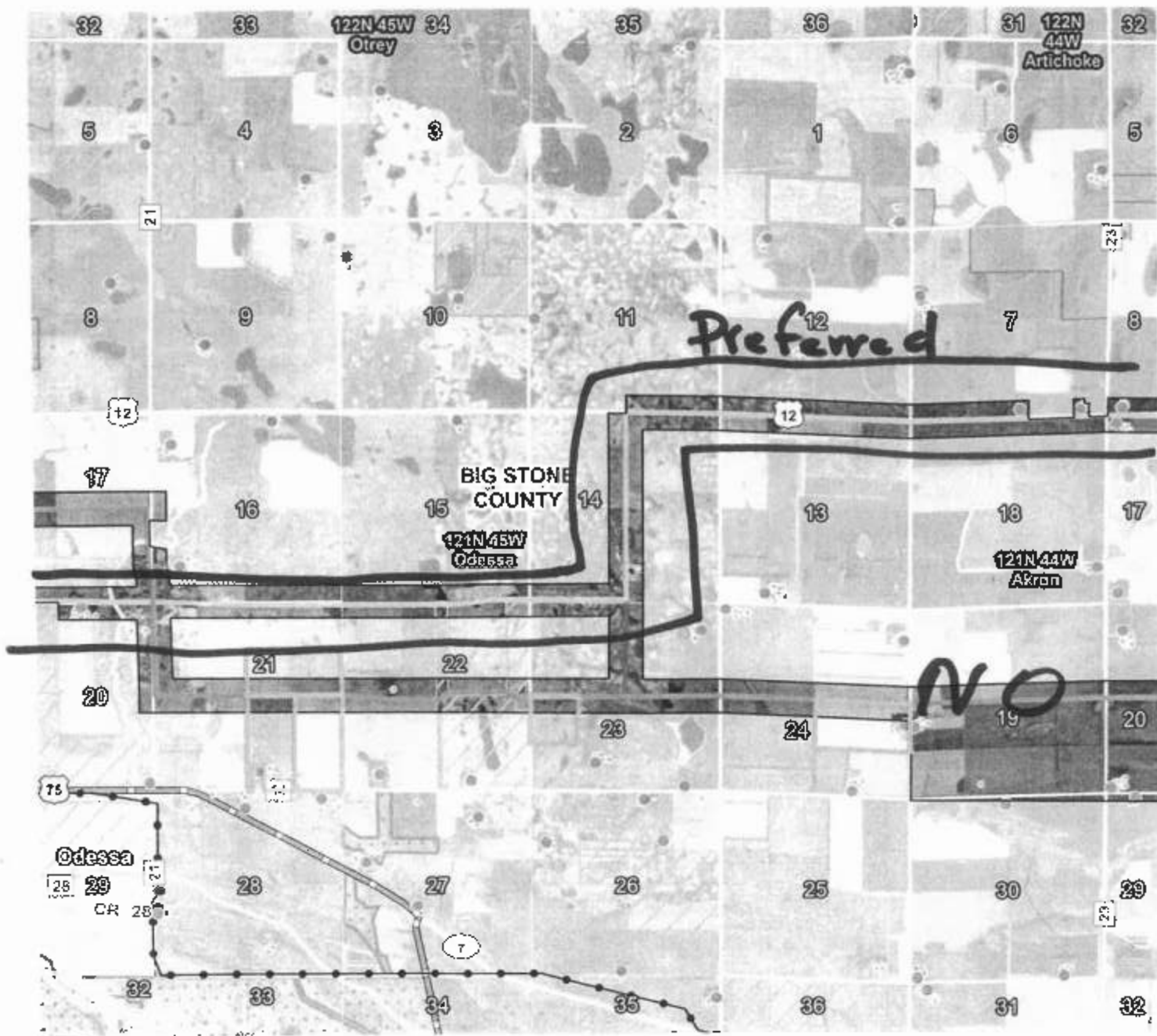
You don't often get email from dmkoch8386@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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I am writing to state my preference for this line. I live at 43634 640th Ave. The property was originally my husband's (deceased) family farm. Upon his death, my daughters (Kirstin & Kendra) inherited his share of the farm in Section 19 Akron Twp. His sister (Ardell Hasslen) also owns a parcel of the original farm and Kirstin rents and farms. We are all opposed to the line coming across our property. We would prefer that the new alternate route be the one considered. I have attached the map to indicate this. The original line would go right behind our house and would go across the best field in the whole farm. It would make farming difficult not to mention the fact that it would devalue the land and be an eyesore for the house site. I have spoken with Jason Krier and Marlowe Klapel (landowners to the west) and they would prefer the alternate site also. Ardell Hasslen is on a trip so I don't know if she will be sending in any comments but I know that she was opposed to the original route. I would ask that you consider our opinions and desires in this matter.

Thank you
Dawn Koch
dmkoch8386@gmail.com
320-444-2241



- Route Option**
- South 1
 - South 2
 - Connector Segment
 - ▭ Route Width
- State Lands**
- ▭ DNR Managements Units
 - ▭ State Conservation Easement (BWSR)
- Federal Lands**
- ▭ NRCs Easements
 - ▭ USFWS Easements
 - ▭ USFWS National Wildlife Refuge
 - Home
 - Other Structures
- TYPE**
- AC Transmission Line
 - MN DOT Scenic Byways
 - Rivers and Streams (MN Natural Resources)
 - ▭ Parcels selection 1



*John J. M...
 John J. M...
 John J. M...*



1:1000 Feet

Please provide your contact information. This information and your comments will be publicly available.

Name: Erik + Sarah Grayley Phone: 320-815-6057

Street Address: 3871 Woodsmen Ln SW

City: Alexandria State: MN ZIP: 56308

Email: egravley@earthlink.net

Share your comments as specifically as possible on the EIS that will be prepared for the Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project.

- What potential human and environmental impacts of the proposed project should be considered in the EIS?
- Are there any methods to minimize, mitigate, or avoid potential impacts of the proposed project that should be considered in the EIS?
- Are there any alternative routes or route segments that should be considered in the EIS to address or mitigate potential impacts associated with the proposed project? **If so, please provide a map with the proposed route drawn** and a description of the proposal.
- Are there any unique characteristics of the proposed project that should be considered in the EIS?

Please see our attached impact statement regarding the N1 route of the BSS to Alexandria Transmission Line.

Thank you,
Erik + Sarah Grayley

We are submitting this statement to voice our strong objections to the proposed routing of the BSS to Alexandria Transmission line. The N1 route that travels through our land along Woodsmen Lane Southwest in Alexandria will have permanent and devastating consequences to both our current lifestyle and future economic opportunities.

We currently own a ten-acre home site on the north side of Woodsmen Lane and also own a 30-acre parcel of land on the south side of Woodsmen Lane. Our children, currently ages 14 and 11 are the fifth generation of the family to live on this property. We purchase our acreage from a family trust in 2017 to maintain family ownership interest. That year, we made the decision to build our house on the building site for many of the same reasons as Sarah's Great-grandparents did over 150 years ago. It uniquely lies between two lakes and offers 360-degree views of the rural countryside. It is also surrounded by many wetland areas and our wooded pasture that supports a variety of wildlife that we enjoy observing. For example, just this morning, Sunday, January 26, 2025, we were enjoying our breakfast while looking outside and noticed two Bald Eagles perched in a tree overlooking one of our ponds on the south side of the road. We observed them for over an hour, enjoying the sun while searching for prey. This is not a sight that many people have the opportunity to experience from their dining room window, and we feel fortunate to be able to live in a place that we can do this. However, it is with great sadness that we realize that the addition of a power line running down our road will have a negative effect on events such as this.

The 30-acre parcel on the south side of Woodsmen Lane that we own was formally used by Sarah's ancestors as pasture for their dairy herds. We currently use it as our hunting and recreational land. Our children have shot their first deer on this land. We hunt pheasants on this land, and had the United States Fish and Wildlife Service assist us in restoring a wetland to support waterfowl production. In the spring of the year, we watch a variety of waterfowl species nest in this pond and use the Wood Duck houses that our children built with assistance of their grandparents. Once again, we know that powerlines would not be advantageous in the continuing this diverse habitat.

We purchased the land with two purposes in mind. The first one being its current use as recreational land as described above. The second being future financial security. With our location, that offers easy access to the city of Alexandria and Interstate 94, we know that it would be ideal for

additional single-family building sites. The uniqueness of the land, with its wetland areas, ancient oak trees, and agricultural land would make a prime funding source for our children's college education and our retirement. We already know that the power line will have a detrimental effect on our financial opportunities as just the proposal of this line was enough to cancel the sale of the land owned by Sarah's father. This event occurred in November of 2024 when they had a signed purchase agreement for a five-acre parcel of land adjacent to our 30 acres. The buyer backed out upon discovery of the proposed transmission line. The loss of revenue from this sale will force my in-laws into borrowing money to complete projects on their house rather than paying cash for these projects.

All this being said, the addition to this powerline in such close proximity to our properties will drive the property value of our home down significantly. Possibly to the point of not being able to sell it or re-coup our investment, much less make any money on the equity that we have acquired. There are alternative routes, through already commercialized areas of Douglas County, that this powerline could follow. We strongly object to the routing that will destroy the rural setting that we and our neighbors currently experience. We urge you to choose an alternate path that utilizes current commercial areas as well as infrastructure already in place.

We thank you for taking the time to read our impact statement. Our children and our children's children will thank you for choosing a different route segment.

Thank you,

Erik and Sarah Gravley

We are submitting this statement to voice our strong objections to the proposed routing of the BSS to Alexandria Transmission line. The N1 route that travels through our land along Woodsmen Lane Southwest in Alexandria will have permanent and devastating consequences to both our current lifestyle and future economic opportunities.

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our financial opportunities as just the proposal of this line was enough to cancel the sale of the land owned by Sarah's father. This event occurred in November of 2024 when they had a signed purchase agreement for a five-acre parcel of land adjacent to our 30 acres. The buyer backed out upon discovery of the proposed transmission line. The loss of revenue from this sale will force my in-laws into borrowing money to complete projects on their house rather than paying cash for these projects.

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We thank you for taking the time to read our impact statement. Our children and our children's children will thank you for choosing a different route segment.

Thank you,

Erik and Sarah Gravley

From: [Kendra Koch](#)
To: [Ness, Jenna \(COMM\)](#)
Subject: Big Stone south
Date: Thursday, January 30, 2025 9:27:25 PM
Attachments: [Koch Map.pdf](#)

You don't often get email from kkoch1061@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

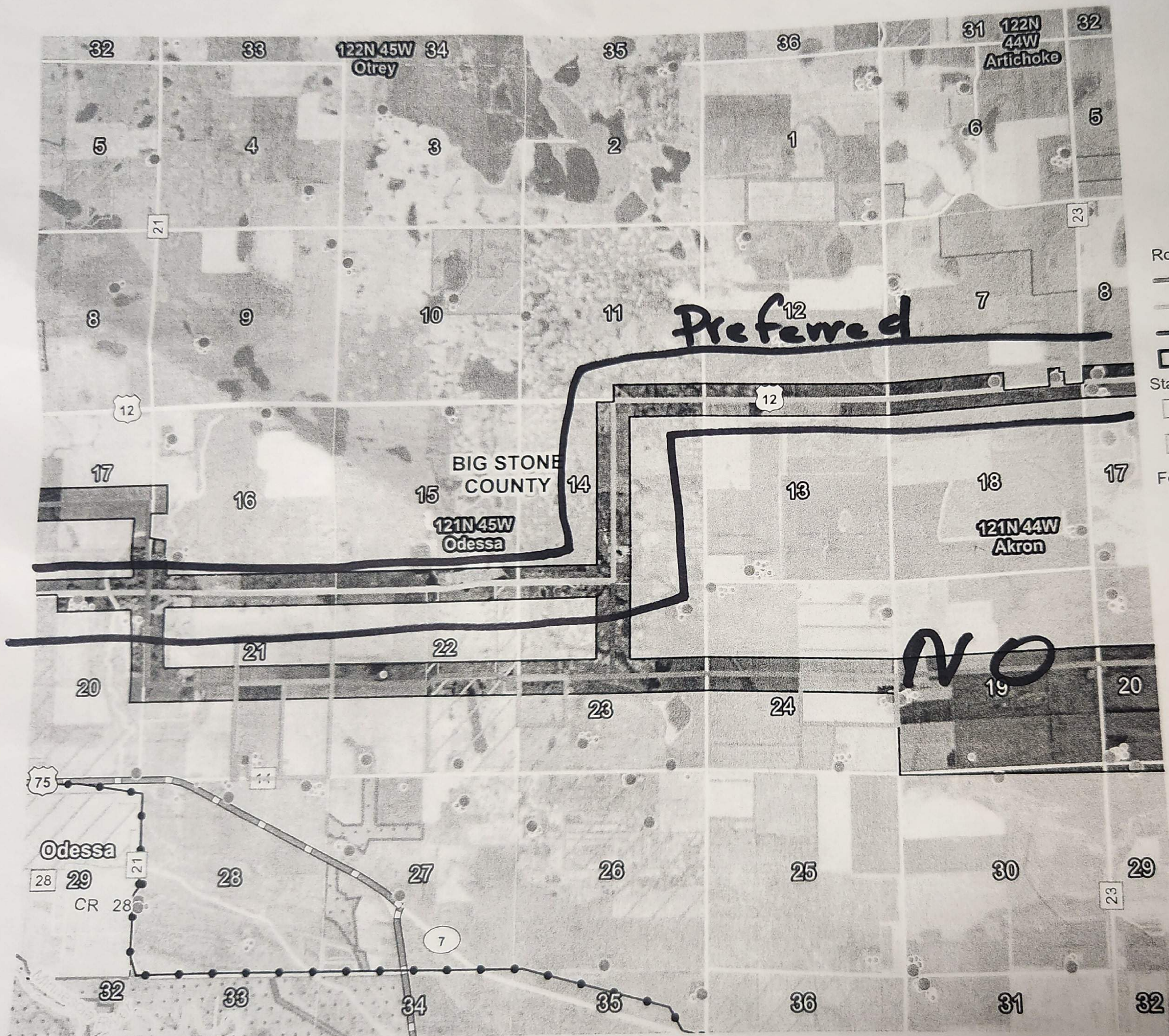
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Jenna

I am writing to let you know that I would prefer the Big Stone South line follow hwy 12 like on the attached map. Here the land is either a gravel pit or a floods rather than prime farm land right near a half of dozen farm places.

Thank you
Kendra Koch



- Route Option
- South 1
 - South 2
 - Connector Segment
 - Route Width
- State Lands
- DNR Managements Units
 - State Conservation Easement (BWSR)
- Federal Lands
- NRCS Easements
 - USFWS Easements
 - USFWS National Wildlife Refuge
- Other Structure
- Home
 - Other Structure
- TYPE
- AC Transmission Line
 - MN DOT Scenic Byways
 - Rivers and Streams (MN Natural Resources)
 - Parcels selection 1

*Does money
 poles
 prairie*

BSS A
 Big Stone South
 to Alexandria

0 1,000 Feet



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
 SCOPING MEETINGS

1/16/2025

BIG STONE SOUTH TO ALEXANDRIA 345KV



US Highway 12

650th Ave

US Highway 12 S13

US Highway 12

US Highway 12

620th Ave

14

13

18

17

Township Road 120

650th Ave

430th St

430th St

S17

23

24

19

630th Ave

20

620th Ave

440th St

650th Ave

440th St

440th St

630th Ave

From: [Kirstin Koch](#)
To: [Ness, Jenna \(COMM\)](#)
Subject: Proposed Big Stone South Line
Date: Thursday, January 30, 2025 5:38:57 PM
Attachments: [image.png](#)

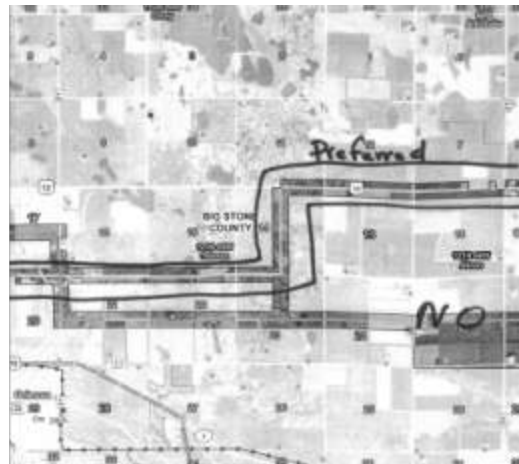
You don't often get email from kochx040@umn.edu. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Hello! I was given your contact information to send concerns on the Big Stone South Line.

The proposed line will go right over the grove of my family farm and the building site. It will impact our use of our property, impact our future building plans, impact the movement and ability to access our tillable acres, that is our livelihood. We will have to give up tillable acres, will not be able to use aerial spray options for our farm, will have to buy smaller equipment to plant around it, etc. Not to mention, it will greatly reduce the value of my home property by having this so close to the residence; the proposed map puts this line right in our backyard. I am strongly against this route and would prefer it be moved to follow a road or already existing rightaway.



A concerned land owner,
Kirstin Koch
43634 640th Ave
Odessa MN 56267

From: eera.admin_no_reply@state.mn.us
To: [Ness, Jenna \(COMM\)](#)
Subject: Public Comment re: Big Stone South to Alexandria 345 kV Transmission Line Project
Date: Thursday, January 30, 2025 9:20:08 PM

Big Stone South to Alexandria 345 kV Transmission Line Project

Submitter Name: Julie and Dan. Lease

Submitter Email: danlease1056@gmail.com

Submitter Telephone: (515) 520-7718

Comment:

We propose that the North 2 Route be implemented instead of North 1. We are the daughter and son-in-law of Arthur Isackson and hope to retire to the family Century Farm at 13318 Iris Lane SW, Lowry Minnesota in a few years. We have the following concerns about the transmission line running along the possible North 1 Route. First, we are worried about the aesthetics of the line running along the front of the Century Farm homestead. The land is rented out for farming, so we are concerned about the loss of tillable land. This could possibly affect income to the owner and cause problems for the farmers renting the land (i.e. effect on the GPS of equipment and aerial spraying). This route, North 1, also seems to impact more family farms. North 2 Route looks to go through areas that are along bigger roads, and are more industrial, thus having a lower impact on important family farmland. With the loss of so much farmland nationwide, we think the more land left intact for production outweighs the plans to run a powerline through it. Docket No TL-23-160 Project name Big Stone South to Alexandria 345 kV Transmission Line Project

Submit Date: 01/31/2025 03:19 AM

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Necessary
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MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
ATTN: JENNA NESS
85 7TH PLACE EAST, SUITE 280
SAINT PAUL MN 55101-2198

Comment Period Closes Friday, January 31, 2025, at 4:30 p.m.

Comments must be post-marked or received electronically by the comment deadline.

How to comment:

- Mail comments to the address on this form or submit this form at today's meeting.
- Use the online comment form: <https://mn.gov/commerce/energyfacilities/#comment>
- Email comments to the Environmental Review Manager: jenna.ness@state.mn.us

Comments do not need to be on this form. We encourage you to provide comments in whatever way is most convenient for you. If commenting by email please use "Scoping Comment 23-160" in the subject line. Please include "Docket Number 23-160" in all communications.

THANK YOU for participating in the permitting process! By commenting you are helping inform the Public Utilities Commission's decision regarding this project.



Scan QR code
to view
project webpage.
Data rates apply.

Environmental Impact Statement
Scoping Comment Period
Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project
Docket No. E017, ET10/TL-23-150

Scan QR code
to view
project map.
Data rates apply.



The applicants propose to construct over 90 miles of new transmission line from Big Stone South, South Dakota to Alexandria, Minnesota along portions of Big Stone, Swift, Stevens, Pope, and Douglas Counties to connect the existing substations in Big Stone South and Alexandria.

Comments will be used to focus the environmental impact statement on potential human or environmental impacts and other issues important to making an informed permit decision. Please be as detailed as possible. Use additional pages as needed. Contact the Environmental Review Manager, Jenna Ness, with any questions about commenting or submitting your comments.

For additional project information visit: <https://apps.commerce.state.mn.us/web/project/15867> or contact the Environmental Review Manager at: jenna.ness@state.mn.us; 651-539-1693; or toll free 1-800-657-3794.

January 31, 2025

Minnesota Department of Commerce
Attn: Jenna Ness
85 7th Place East, Suite 280
Saint Paul, MN 55101-2198

To whom it may concern:

This quarter has also been test drilled for irrigation for future use. On this particular piece of land we have spent over \$300,000 to install mains and pattern tile. This project would crush existing tile, cause heavy compaction and could not be brought back to original condition. This would have a negative impact on family income. (NE ¼ of NE ¼ 35-125-40) These 80 acres had new main lines and pattern tiled in 2024. I have the same concern as my home quarter -- loss of income due to compaction and crushing of tile.

Southwest quarter – SEC 19-125-39 – We have owned irrigated quarter since 1974 and intend to install a new corner system in 2026. This farm also has a lot of tile and a natural gas pipe line running across the quarter. If this power line is built on my property I wouldn't be able to install a new cornering system. This would impact the income of this property greatly. This transmission line along with gas line could cause safety issues and make it a danger to people in the area. I am concerned about compaction and busted tile along with negative income to our family.

You also have not taken into consideration of our neighbors to the east living close to the line of 210 road and neighbors to the north of 210 road. Our neighbor Jerry Dahlseng, north of our irrigated quarter in section 19 is probably within 100 feet of the road. This will cause devastation of his property.

I don't see how the corner tower in the intersection of 210 and 340 can be constructed in the mud, slop and open ditch in that area. It must remain open.

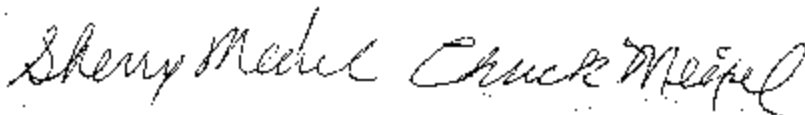
This project is a 'farce'. We are not receiving any of this power, but the Twin Cities and Iron Range are receiving it. Remember wind farms in Texas didn't work too well two years ago and people were freezing. There is no source more reliable than what we have with North Dakota and South Dakota coal fired plants. Benson Minn. didn't work out too well either. It was \$25 million to build and millions to tear it down along with torn up roads.

On all of the above properties there will be no engineering or surveying allowed. I feel this project is violating our civil rights. I feel this project will greatly impact use and income potential of these three properties. There are much better routes available that you are not exploring.

We were originally told 75-foot right of way and now it's change to 150-foot with poles sitting in the middle. We have two 132-foot sprayers and two 66 foot planters. How are we supposed to get around the poles? We also do a lot of aerial spraying. Who will pay for the extra cost? We raise several specialty crops such as sugar beets (1500 acres), edible beans (2000 acres) plus corn, soybeans and wheat.

The transmission line is going to have a very negative impact on our family's income and land use. I think your money would be better spent on harding existing system against EMP and solar flares.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sherry Meixel Chuck Meixel".

Chuck Sr. and Sherry Meixel

Office of Land Management

395 John Ireland Boulevard
Saint Paul, MN 55155
MS 678

January 31, 2025

Jenna Ness, Environmental Review Manager
Minnesota Department of Commerce
85 7th Place East, Suite 280
St. Paul MN 55101

RE: In the Matter of the Application for a Route Permit for the Big Stone South to Alexandria 345- kV Transmission Project in West-Central Minnesota
Docket Number: E017, ET10/TL-23-160

Dear Ms. Ness,

On December 17th, 2024, the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) and Minnesota Department of Commerce issued a Notice of Public Information and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Scoping Meetings on the route permit application (RPA) submitted by Otter Tail Power Company and Western Minnesota Municipal Power Agency through its agent, Missouri River Energy Services (Applicants) for the Big Stone South to Alexandria Transmission Line Project (Project), a new approximately 91- to 105-mile 345-kilovolt (kV) double-circuit capable transmission line from the Minnesota-South Dakota border to the existing Alexandria Substation near Alexandria, Minnesota. Only a single-circuit will be installed initially. The Project would be in portions of Big Stone, Swift, Stevens, Pope, and Douglas counties. The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) has reviewed the application and other available materials regarding the proposed Project and submits the following comments and recommendations in response to the Notice.

As summarized in Section 8.1.2.4 and Appendix 4F of the RPA, the Applicants have been in consultation with MnDOT since October 2023 and completed our Utility Early Notification Memo (ENM) process in September 2024.

Based on our review of the RPA, we offer the following additional comments on the Project.

- All RPA Appendix F [comments](#) MnDOT previously provided in its response to the Utility ENM still apply. These comments are requested to be applied and/or referenced, as necessary, in both the environmental and permitting scope of the Project.
- Section 7.2.6 (Aesthetics) notes that three scenic byways are located within the Project's Study Area; however, only two are described as being crossed (Highway 75 King of Trails Scenic Byway and the Glacial Ridge Trail Scenic Byway). Please address potential impacts to the third scenic byway in the Study Area (Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway).
- As noted in response to the Utility ENM, we are requesting the following be provided for any proposed crossing location of a scenic byway:
 - Streetview Imagery or on-the-ground photographs
 - Photo / visual simulations (existing conditions and post-construction). During early planning phases of project, this may consist of typical drawings/photos of similar projects that have already been constructed. Later in Project design, this should include site-specific assessments depicting photo and visual simulations for users of the byway.

- Regarding only the crossing of the Highway 75 King of Trails Scenic Byway in the South Segment, MnDOT prefers the “Route Option South 1” which has an existing utility crossing compared to “Route Option South 2” which does not. Based on the RPA, we understand Route Option South 1 was developed in coordination with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.
- Table 7.2-21 summarizes state Trunk Highways crossed by the Project routes, as well as length of colocation, if any. We understand colocation as defined in the table is within 1,000’ (500’ on either side) of the proposed alignment.
 - Based on Table 2.4-1, we further understand no structures/poles are planned to be located within MnDOT right-of-way. Should this change during the environmental scope of the Project, timely consultation with MnDOT is warranted.
- As the Applicants are aware, MnDOT Utility Accommodation permits will be required for the placement of any aerial or buried transmission lines crossing MnDOT trunk highways. If colocation *within* any trunk highway is desired, close coordination with MnDOT’s Office of Land Management and District staff will be required. Additional consultation, including “pole-by-pole” analysis meetings may be needed to ensure any given desired colocation is permissible. MnDOT encourages similar coordination with city, county, and township road authorities regarding road crossings/colocations.

MnDOT thoroughly appreciates the Applicants’ extensive early coordination efforts with our agency, which helped to identify potential conflicts and pinch points in the early stages of route design. We look forward to continued coordination with the Applicants and Commission staff through final route selection, permitting, and construction.

Should the Commission issue a permit for the Project, continued coordination with MnDOT staff is expected. Any MnDOT permits required as a part of this Project can be coordinated at an earlier time but may not be issued until the Commission has approved all necessary permits for this Project. All applicable [permitting](#), [traffic control](#) and construction coordination efforts should be made through the appropriate MnDOT [district staff](#). MnDOT District Specialists should be given the opportunity to participate in pre-construction meetings as they apply to MnDOT- owned property.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.

Sincerely,

/s/ Stacy Kotch Egstad

Utility Routing and Siting Coordinator
Minnesota Department of Transportation
Office of Land Management
stacy.kotch@state.mn.us

ec: MnDOT Utility ENM Review Staff

Equal Opportunity Employer

In The Matter Of:

Big Stone South to Alexandria - 23-160

Scoping Meeting - Alexandria - 1-14-25

January 14, 2025

Scoping Meeting - 23-160 - Alexandria - 1-14-25

Shaddix & Associates

7400 Lyndale Avenue South

Suite 190

Richfield, MN 55423

Page 1

1 SCOPING AND INFORMATIONAL MEETING - 23-160
 2 ALEXANDRIA - JANUARY 14, 2025 - 11:00 A.M.
 3 BEFORE THE MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
 4 AND DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
 5
 6 In the Matter of the Application for a Route Permit for
 7 the Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission
 8 Project in West-Central Minnesota
 9
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 11 MPUC DOCKET NO. E017,ET10/TL-23-160
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 14
 15 Broadway Ballroom
 16 115 30th Avenue East
 17 Alexandria, Minnesota
 18
 19
 20 January 14, 2025
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 25 STENOGRAPHIC COURT REPORTER: Janet Shaddix Elling, RPR

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1 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** All right. Good morning,
 2 everybody. Thanks very much for taking the time to
 3 come here today. We really appreciate you being
 4 here.
 5 Your feedback today is very, very
 6 important and you spoke for the permitting process,
 7 so everything that you have to say today, and if you
 8 have anything to say or any written comments that
 9 you want to submit, all of that is taken very
 10 seriously and is factored in the decision-making, so
 11 we appreciate your time.
 12 My name is Sam Lobby, I'm with the
 13 Minnesota Public Utilities Commission, and today we
 14 are here to have a public information and
 15 environmental review scoping meeting. So we're
 16 going to provide some information about the project
 17 and then we're going to talk about the environmental
 18 review process and get your feedback on what you
 19 think we should study as far as this project is
 20 concerned.
 21 There we go. All right.
 22 So just to give you a snapshot of what we
 23 will be talking about today.
 24 Again, I'm Sam Lobby with the Public
 25 Utilities Commission. I'll talk about the permit

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1 application review process, how a permit is actually
 2 granted.
 3 Next is Mr. Jason Weiers with Otter Tail
 4 Power who will talk specifically about the project
 5 itself.
 6 And next is my comports with the
 7 Department of Commerce, Ms. Jenna Ness, who will
 8 talk about the environmental review process, how to
 9 suggest alternative routes, things like that.
 10 So just real quick. This is my
 11 information, as you grabbed a copy of the
 12 presentation you'll have this in there, too.
 13 The comment period for this project, for
 14 this part of the project ends on January 31st, but
 15 you can reach out to me any time you want by phone
 16 or email if you ever have questions or comments or
 17 anything you're concerned about.
 18 So the purpose of today's meeting is
 19 first to provide information about the proposed
 20 project itself and also the state's high voltage
 21 transmission line route permit process and how that
 22 all works.
 23 We want to provide an opportunity for
 24 you, the public, to participate in developing the
 25 scope of the environmental impact statement, so the

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1 environmental impact statement, that's the jargon
2 that we use for the study that will be done on this
3 project. Any sort of environmental concerns that
4 you might have about the project, the standard
5 things that we look at, but we also want to get your
6 feedback as you folks know the area better than any
7 of us.
8 So if you have feedback about
9 environmental issues, and it also includes route
10 alternatives, so if you have a suggestion about you
11 think there is a better route that would work better
12 for you, we want to hear that. Anything you want to
13 say, the Commission wants to hear.
14 Then all of us up here, both the company
15 and the state agencies will provide our contact
16 information in case you have questions later on.
17 So a little bit of background on the
18 Public Utilities Commission and all the agencies
19 that are involved with this, the state agencies.
20 The PUC, we are the government unit that
21 reviews applications such as this route permit
22 application and ultimately we will issue the route
23 permit if it is approved.
24 The Department of Commerce, Jenna,
25 manages the environmental review process for the

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1 electricity, natural gas, and telephone. Our
2 mission is to ensure safe, adequate, and efficient
3 utility services at fair and reasonable rates. And
4 this is an important one, that we provide
5 independent professional oversight and regulation of
6 utility service providers in a manner that is
7 consistent with the public interest.
8 So the Minnesota Public Utilities
9 Commission and Commerce, we're not affiliated with
10 the project, we're not for or against anything,
11 we're just the agency that the utilities come to if
12 they want to build a transmission line. So if you
13 all have comments about what you think about this,
14 we want to hear that so we can factor that into any
15 decision-making.
16 So a little bit more jargon as far as how
17 this process works.
18 The project requirements. Before the
19 project -- This is the project that is referred to
20 as the Big Stone South to Alexandria Transmission
21 Line. Before the project can be constructed, the
22 Commission needs to issue a route permit. And this
23 matter is going through the full review process, so
24 the most rigorous process there is, and that's
25 required for any high voltage transmission line

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1 Commission and will prepare the environmental impact
2 statement on the proposed project.
3 So later on in the process, an
4 administrative law judge from the Office of
5 Administrative Hearings will facilitate a public
6 hearing and provide a report to the Commission
7 setting forth findings of fact, conclusions of law,
8 and recommendations.
9 So just to kind of break that down, what
10 that will look like when the judge is here, it will
11 be a meeting just like this, it will be in the same
12 place. Today you're going to give us feedback about
13 what we should study and then later on in the
14 process when the judge is here, the study will be
15 completed and we'll get your feedback on that and
16 the judge will write a report about that. Did we
17 study what you thought that we would incorporate for
18 route alternatives.
19 So today is just a first step in the
20 process, so if you're here to participate, you're
21 coming at the right time to be involved.
22 So the Minnesota Public Utilities
23 Commission consists of five commissioners that are
24 appointed by the governor and confirmed by the state
25 Senate. We regulate three service industries,

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1 operating at a nominal 200 kilovolts or more and
2 greater than 30 miles in length.
3 For this project, we're just looking at
4 the route permit. Oftentimes there is a route
5 permit that is associated with a certificate of
6 need, and in this case the certificate of need was
7 already granted.
8 So I think I talked to a few folks who
9 had already come and participated in that part of
10 the project. The certificate of need was granted
11 back in October of 2024 for this project, it is part
12 of the larger Big Stone South to Alexandria to Big
13 Oaks Transmission Line Project. If you're
14 interested in looking at that, that is under docket
15 number 22-538. So the certificate of need is to
16 determine if there's a need for the line, and that
17 portion has already been permitted, so now we're
18 looking at the route permit.
19 Again, your comments on the route permit
20 as far as where the route takes, there are no
21 decisions that have been made yet, nothing is set in
22 stone, so your feedback will be taken into account
23 when looking at what the route will be.
24 So I won't get too deep into this because
25 Mr. Weiers will be discussing more about the

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1 project, but a brief overview is the Applicants are
2 proposing to build a new approximately 91- to
3 105-mile 345 kilovolt double-circuit capable
4 transmission line. Only one circuit will be
5 installed initially.
6 The proposed 345 kilovolt line will run
7 from Big Stone, from the Big Stone South substation
8 near the Minnesota/South Dakota border to the
9 existing Alexandria Substation near Alexandria,
10 Minnesota.
11 This transmission project is needed to
12 address regional reliability issues on the existing
13 230 kilovolt system in West-Central Minnesota.
14 So just to give you a little snapshot of
15 what you can expect. If you're here today, you're
16 getting involved at the very beginning of this
17 project as far as the public comment portions are
18 concerned. So we really appreciate you being here,
19 it's great to get folks out that have comments and
20 anything to say, so you're here at the right time.
21 So the application was submitted back in
22 October of 2024 and it was reviewed and accepted by
23 the Commission on December 3rd, 2024.
24 The third one down, the public
25 information meetings, that's what we're here doing

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1 it's a big study, it takes several months and is
2 very detailed. The draft will come out in roughly
3 September of 2025 and then at that point we will
4 visit with the judge. We'll come right back here
5 with the administrative law judge who will want to
6 hear what you have to say. And then they will get
7 that feedback on did we study what you wanted, did
8 we incorporate the route alternatives suggested,
9 then they issue a report ultimately on what comes
10 from that.
11 Also, based on what comes out of that,
12 your feedback, Jenna will finalize that
13 environmental impact statement. So anything,
14 there's multiple opportunity to get really involved
15 and to take a look at what we put together and then
16 we'll keep refining it based on your comments.
17 Then tentatively the Commission will make
18 a final decision on this in March of 2026. So
19 that's quite a ways off, so nothing is happening
20 very fast, nothing is going to happen that you won't
21 have an opportunity to comment or to be involved in
22 it.
23 So, with that, I will go ahead and pass
24 it on to Jason with the company.
25 **MR. JASON WEIERS:** All right. Thanks,

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1 today. So we've got this meeting now, we have
2 another one this evening, we have two more tomorrow,
3 and on Thursday we have one in Ortonville and then a
4 virtual in the evening. If you tune into that
5 virtual one, if after today you think of something
6 and you want to say something, you're more than
7 welcome to do that. It will be the same
8 presentation that will be presented today.
9 If you are not a fan of public speaking,
10 which is totally fine, there's multiple ways to
11 comment. There is a written comment form that you
12 can mail in physically. You can email us. You can
13 go online. If you have a copy of the presentation
14 or received the notice in the mail, both of those
15 are up there, it'll give you information on how you
16 can comment. Whether you're speaking publicly or
17 send us a written comment, they're all weighted the
18 same, so any feedback we appreciate.
19 So today we're getting your feedback to
20 develop the scope of what we studied for this
21 project and in March to April of 2025 all of your
22 feedback will be incorporated and a decision on what
23 will be studied will be released in March or April.
24 After that, Jenna will complete that
25 environmental impact statement. The study itself,

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1 Sam, and good morning, everybody.
2 As Sam mentioned, my name is Jason
3 Weiers, I work at Otter Tail Power Company as
4 manager of transmission project development and I am
5 speaking on behalf of the Applicants.
6 The Big Stone South to Alexandria Project
7 will be co-owned between Otter Tail Power Company
8 and Western Minnesota Municipal Power Agency.
9 Western Minnesota Power Agency is represented in
10 this proceeding by Missouri River Energy Services.
11 So the project of Otter Tail and Western
12 Minnesota are requesting a route permit for an
13 approximately 100-mile 345 kilovolt transmission
14 line that will go from Otter Tail's Big Stone South
15 Substation just west of Big Stone City in South
16 Dakota and it will end at Western Minnesota
17 Municipal Power Agency's Alexandria Substation here
18 in the southwest side of Alexandria.
19 Similar to the transmission line you see
20 along Interstate 94, we are planning to construct
21 this project using double-circuit structures with
22 one circuit being installed initially. Along with
23 the expansions at the end point substations, we may
24 also install what we call a fiber optic regeneration
25 station along the central segment of the line, and

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1 this will be between the two end point substations.
2 As I mentioned earlier, the structures
3 will be similar to those along Interstate 94, with
4 the exception that we will use Cor-Ten steel rather
5 than galvanized steel. So the major difference for
6 this particular line is that it'll have a brown
7 color rather than a gray color.
8 We do expect the typical structures will
9 be between 120 to 180 feet tall. The structures
10 will sit on a concrete foundation between 7 and 14
11 feet in diameter, and those foundations could go
12 anywhere between 25 to 80 feet deep, depending on
13 the soil conditions.
14 The structures will be between 1400 feet
15 apart, depending on the route and the geographic
16 terrain that we cross with the project.
17 Lastly, I do want to also mention that
18 our typical right of way for a line of this voltage
19 is going to require a right of way with 150 feet,
20 which is 75 feet on either side of the centerline of
21 the structures.
22 As Sam mentioned earlier, the need for
23 the project was previously approved by the
24 Commission. But just real briefly, the project was
25 identified by an organization called Midcontinent

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1 effort over the course of approximately 18 months.
2 We had four rounds of open houses to get information
3 to consider to identify the proposed routes that you
4 see in our route permit application.
5 Starting back in April of 2023, we posted
6 our first round of open houses with a broad slate
7 area where the line could be located. We gathered
8 facts from the public and in October of 2023 we
9 brought back corridors for the proposed project for
10 a second round of open houses.
11 Continuing to refine that route, in
12 February of 2024 we posted our third round of open
13 houses and we shared proposed route corridors with
14 the public. And then in June of 2024, we came
15 forward with our proposed route options during our
16 fourth round of open houses.
17 We considered information gathered at
18 these open houses to help refine our proposed routes
19 starting at the raw study area, then defining the
20 route options that ultimately went into our route
21 permit application.
22 So our proposed route segments from the
23 route permit application are shown here on slide 17.
24 And these again extend from the Minnesota-South
25 Dakota border up to the Alexandria Substation.

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1 Independent System Operator, MISO. MISO is a
2 regional transmission organization in this region
3 that identifies regional transmission needs in this
4 region. As part of the long-range transmission
5 planning study that they performed, they did approve
6 a portfolio of 18 new transmission projects back in
7 July of 2022, and one of those projects was the Big
8 Stone South to Alexandria Project, which is shown
9 here as project number two on this map.
10 The project is to ensure system
11 reliability in the future and the project will also
12 help reduce transmission congestion, increase access
13 to low-cost energy and also creates resiliency of
14 the system.
15 So, as Sam mentioned earlier, the need
16 portion of the project was approved by the
17 Commission back in October of 2024, so today we're
18 here to discuss the route permit application that
19 was submitted by the Applicants.
20 Given that part of this transmission
21 project is also located in South Dakota, we have
22 also applied for a facility permit from the South
23 Dakota Public Utilities Commission that we expect to
24 receive no later than April of this year.
25 We have undertaken a quite extensive

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1 Generally speaking, there are two route segment
2 options from the border up to the Alexandria
3 Substation, and overall these route segment options
4 put the line between 91 miles and 105 miles,
5 depending on which route is chosen.
6 For the ease in efforts in analyzing
7 these route options we have divided those segments
8 into three different areas. We have a south area
9 that is shown in the blue shades, we have the
10 central area, which is shown in the orange shades,
11 and then last we have the north area, that's shown
12 with the purple shades.
13 Although we will only need 150 feet for
14 the right of way for this transmission project, our
15 application generally included a 1000-foot-wide
16 route corridor to allow for flexibility in siting
17 that transmission line as we start discussions with
18 landowners.
19 So starting from the south and working to
20 the north, slide 18 here shows a zoomed-in version
21 of the south route segments. The south route
22 segments represent between 39 and 42 miles of line
23 from the Minnesota-South Dakota border and this goes
24 to Tara Township in Swift County.
25 The central segments are anywhere between

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1 34 and 39 miles long and these go from Tara Township
2 in Swift County up to Ben Wade Township in Pope
3 County.
4 And then lastly, the north route segment
5 is between 18 and 25 miles of line from Tara
6 Township in Pope County up to the existing
7 Alexandria Substation located in Douglas County.
8 If you are a landowner along the approved
9 route, slide 21 shows the intersects if you are a
10 landowner along the approved route.
11 Excuse me.
12 So with the land rights in place we start
13 the survey and proposed structure locations. Next
14 will we establish the temporary access roads to get
15 to the approved route along the right of way. Next
16 we will install the concrete foundations. The
17 fourth step shown here is after the foundations are
18 installed we will set structures on these
19 foundations. After the structures are set, we will
20 string the conductor with the help of a helicopter.
21 And the last step is to restore the work area and
22 re-seeding these areas in coordination with the
23 landowners.
24 Sam touched briefly on the schedule for
25 the permitting process. And that will be into the

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1 can send us an email, or leave a voicemail on our
2 toll-free number. We do have project
3 representatives available on a daily basis and we do
4 our best to get back to everybody within 24 or 48
5 hours.
6 At this time, I'll turn it over to Jenna
7 Ness from the Department of Commerce for her
8 presentation.
9 **MS. JENNA NESS:** Hi. Thanks for taking
10 your time to come here today.
11 I am Jenna Ness with the Department of
12 Commerce and I'll be doing the environmental impact
13 statement for this project.
14 So I will briefly go over our role at the
15 Department of Commerce for this project. What
16 creating an environmental impact statement looks
17 like. I'll be referring to that as the EIS. And
18 then we'll talk about different ways you can comment
19 and then we'll get to the actual commenting portion
20 of this meeting where you're welcome to come up here
21 and put in an oral comment.
22 So the Department of Commerce does
23 environmental review for the Commission. We provide
24 an objective analysis of the project for a third
25 party, so to speak. We look at the environmental

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1 overall project schedule as shown here on slide 22.
2 So as Sam mentioned, the permitting
3 process in Minnesota is expected to wrap up early in
4 2026. After the Commission decision of a route, we
5 will begin acquiring land rights for 150 feet of
6 right of way for the project.
7 After these landowners are secured we
8 will perform field surveys and that'll help support
9 our permitting efforts and the other federal, state,
10 and local agencies. Based on these surveys and
11 additional permits it will take approximately two
12 years to obtain. Assuming we obtain all the
13 necessary permits around the first part of 2028, we
14 would anticipate starting construction in the spring
15 of 2028 and wrap up by the end of 2030. This
16 schedule here is subject to change based on a number
17 of different factors, but this is the best
18 information we have available at this time.
19 If you have further questions or would
20 like additional information following the meeting,
21 you're always welcome to reach out to me. My
22 contact information here is on slide 23.
23 Alternatively, we do have a website that
24 we do maintain with the most updated information on
25 on this website. You can leave us a comment, you

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1 and human impacts for the project as well as looking
2 for strategies to avoid or mitigate those impacts.
3 The goal is to have a document that the
4 public or other interested parties can use, so that
5 the state and other people who issue permits can
6 make informed decisions.
7 Today we are at a scoping meeting, which
8 means we're getting the public input on what the
9 table of contents of that EIS will look like. There
10 was a draft scope on the front table, and it's just
11 a high level overview of the things we look at in
12 this document.
13 And that could include alternatives to
14 the proposed route that could mitigate impacts. For
15 example, maybe there is an important water body on
16 your property that should be avoided. Those are the
17 type of environmental impacts we look at. And as
18 you can see in that draft, it covers quite the range
19 of things.
20 If you would like to suggest an
21 alternative today or in your written comments, they
22 must mitigate a potential impact. So it doesn't
23 have to be environmental, it could be something as
24 simple as aesthetically unpleasing. And then it
25 must also be specific and identifiable, which I like

1 to say means draw a map for us so we can actually
 2 study the area that you want us to look at.
 3 So as Sam touched on, you can make a
 4 verbal comment at today's meeting. There is also
 5 comment sheets at the front desk that you can send
 6 in the postal mail, it has my address on there and
 7 you can fold it up into an envelope. There is a
 8 link online where you can type that in. You can
 9 also just email me directly and I will put the
 10 comments in the record. And just remember that the
 11 comment period ends at the end of January, on the
 12 31st.
 13 So now we can get into the content
 14 portion of the meeting. We can only have one
 15 speaker at a time because we have a court reporter
 16 here today and we need to be able to accurately
 17 catch everybody's comments. State your first and
 18 last name and spell it for her, please.
 19 And we don't have a huge crowd here
 20 today, but we try to keep the initial comments to a
 21 few minutes so we make sure we can get to everybody.
 22 And you can of course come back for another round of
 23 comments, and you can keep coming back up if you
 24 need more time.
 25 And if you can, the most helpful comments

1 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Oh, that's fine. You
 2 don't have to come up and speak. But, again, for
 3 you and for everybody, the written comments are
 4 weighted and looked at exactly the same, and if you
 5 still want to comment, you're more than welcome to
 6 submit those written comments by January 31st.
 7 Next up we have Neal Kalina. Am I
 8 pronouncing it correctly?
 9 **MR. NEAL KALINA:** You got it right, but I
 10 already submitted my ideas.
 11 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Thank you, sir.
 12 And the last one I have on the list is
 13 Patricia Bouta. Would you like to speak?
 14 **MS. PATRICIA BOUTA:** Yes.
 15 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Thank you. Thanks for
 16 coming.
 17 **MS. PATRICIA BOUTA:** My name is Patricia
 18 Bouta.
 19 Is this on?
 20 Okay. Patricia Bouta, B-O-U-T-A.
 21 I have a few questions. And I did get a
 22 printout of where the transmission line goes
 23 according to my house and it goes less than a half
 24 mile from my house. And I have another piece of
 25 property, not a house, and it's a quarter to a half

1 are directed at this table of contents. Or for any
 2 questions today, as well, we have lots of
 3 representatives from the Applicants here, and the
 4 state, so this is your best time to get answers to
 5 questions at this meeting.
 6 So just a reminder slide of what the
 7 scope of the EIS is and what we are looking for are
 8 the human and environmental impacts we need to know
 9 about. Maybe the specific property that you're
 10 concerned about, the same with a way to mitigate
 11 those impacts, and then alternatives to the route
 12 that you see on the boards today that you think can
 13 be mitigated.
 14 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** All right. I will just
 15 go ahead and leave this slide up here so that folks
 16 can see where to comment and everything to do if you
 17 don't want to speak today. But with that said, we
 18 do have a sign-in sheet here. So I have three folks
 19 that indicated that they were interested in
 20 speaking.
 21 So it looks like a Dennis Lange. Am I
 22 pronouncing that correctly? Are you still
 23 interested in speaking, Dennis?
 24 **MR. DENNIS LANG:** I guess I didn't know I
 25 marked that.

1 mile from that property, of the alternate route. So
 2 both routes go close to one of my properties, but of
 3 course my house is more important to me.
 4 So I'm wondering, and I see the list here
 5 of what will be in the environmental impact
 6 statement, but for EMF, I know some of the stuff
 7 I've read, it's very general. I'm wondering if an
 8 environmental impact statement would be very
 9 specific on how much EMF there will be at how many
 10 feet or how it dissipates or, I mean, specific, not
 11 general, how specific will it be.
 12 **MS. JENNA NESS:** Thanks for your
 13 question.
 14 The Applicants provide pretty specific
 15 information in the application about the expected
 16 EMF from the centerline, or the alignment, so we do
 17 tend to include those figures. So you can see that
 18 based on the transmission line and all those factors
 19 as well.
 20 **MS. PATRICIA BOUTA:** So you include what
 21 the applicant states?
 22 **MS. JENNA NESS:** Correct.
 23 **MS. PATRICIA BOUTA:** Is there any
 24 verification that looks at transmission lines that
 25 exist now and are going to verify that that's

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1 correct? And what I'm thinking, there are certain
2 people that are much more sensitive to EMF than
3 other people and some people aren't. Some people
4 are very, very sensitive. So I'm thinking of the
5 sensitive people, me, one of them, I think.
6 And then also the verification of what
7 the applicant submits, is there anything to see if
8 that is actually correct?
9 **MS. JENNA NESS:** So we do write about the
10 existing research, we try to look for what's most
11 recent, so we can talk about the potential impacts
12 of a transmission line. Generally it is based on
13 voltage and that sort of thing.
14 As far as if a permit is issued, there
15 are limits in there and, you know, I can't recall
16 specifically recall off the top of my head, but they
17 do have to comply with certain limits with a
18 transmission line. So it would go along with what
19 they submitted in the application or, you know, you
20 can always submit a complaint to the Public
21 Utilities and that will be looked in to.
22 **MS. PATRICIA BOUTA:** Like a complaint or
23 what?
24 **MS. JENNA NESS:** If you had any sort of
25 complaint about the transmission line, including the

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1 you get to the edge of the right of way.
2 **MS. PATRICIA BOUTA:** Is that application
3 online where I can look at it?
4 **MR. JASON WEIERS:** Yes, it is.
5 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** And if you want you can
6 go to the Minnesota eDockets website, so if you go
7 to Google and type in eDockets, then the docket for
8 this is 23-160, and that's all on the very first
9 slide here if you grab this.
10 **MS. PATRICIA BOUTA:** Okay. And then on
11 this approval process of the EIS, there's the slide
12 that says when there will be another public meeting
13 before the final EIS. And I guess once it's final,
14 I mean, there is one period, and if you make
15 comments then, then it's final, and there are no
16 more comments after that; is that correct?
17 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** At that point there will
18 have been at least three comment periods that help
19 influence what that actually looks like. So right
20 now the comments you're providing will be
21 incorporated. But, yes, the final EIS will be
22 issued in December of 2025, roughly, tentatively,
23 and at that point it would be the final opportunity
24 to comment.
25 **MS. JENNA NESS:** And just to be clear,

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1 EMF is stronger than it should be, you can submit
2 that.
3 **MS. PATRICIA BOUTA:** You mean after the
4 fact, after it's built?
5 **MS. JENNA NESS:** Correct.
6 **MS. PATRICIA BOUTA:** Okay. But after
7 it's built, they're not going to take it down.
8 **MS. JENNA NESS:** They have to comply with
9 that requirement. So whatever it takes to come back
10 into compliance, they have to do it.
11 **MS. PATRICIA BOUTA:** What if it was more?
12 **MS. JENNA NESS:** If it was verified, and
13 they have measuring tools.
14 **MS. PATRICIA BOUTA:** Okay.
15 **MR. JASON WEIERS:** Hello, Ms. Bouta. I
16 just want to let you know that Chapter 7 in our
17 application includes the EMF calculations that we
18 have submitted for the state project. And we
19 include electric field strength and magnetic field
20 strength. And the lowest in the application, we
21 compare those to criteria set by the Minnesota PUC
22 for the electric field strength. And the magnetic
23 field strength currently doesn't have any volume
24 criteria, however, we do have calculations that show
25 how that field strength dissipates very quickly as

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1 you can comment on the adequacy of the EIS. That's
2 kind of the last step of the environmental review
3 process, but that's specific to the EIS versus maybe
4 what Sam was talking about for the route permit.
5 **MS. PATRICIA BOUTA:** Okay. People can
6 comment on the adequacy of the EIS?
7 **MS. JENNA NESS:** Yeah. The best time is
8 to comment during the Draft EIS, which is those
9 meetings you were referring to where edits get made
10 to the document before it becomes the Final EIS
11 based on those comments.
12 **MS. PATRICIA BOUTA:** Um-hmm.
13 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Just one other note on
14 that, too, just for everybody, there are specific
15 comment periods, several throughout this process,
16 and if you have questions outside of a comment
17 period, you're always more than welcome to give us a
18 call and we will try to help you with your
19 questions.
20 **MS. PATRICIA BOUTA:** Okay. So my next
21 question, if I may go on, is on the easement. It's
22 talked about easements and how you get the
23 landowners, whatever. So what if an owner doesn't
24 want to give you an easement?
25 **MR. JASON WEIERS:** Thanks for your

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1 question. We will work diligently with the owners
2 to try to find an area where we can route the
3 transmission line with less impacts with the
4 landowner. That's one of the reasons why we
5 identified the 1000-foot-wide corridor, so we have
6 flexibility of moving the 150 feet we need for the
7 project.
8 To the extent we cannot come to an
9 agreement with the landowner, our last resort would
10 be to enter a legal proceeding and start an eminent
11 domain proceeding to see if there's other ways in
12 which we could get the property for the project.
13 **MS. PATRICIA BOUTA:** Okay. In other
14 transmission lines, has that happened, that you had
15 to do eminent -- not you, but companies had to do
16 eminent domain?
17 **MR. JASON WEIERS:** In my past experience
18 with transmission projects, we have encountered a
19 few of those for past transmission projects.
20 **MS. PATRICIA BOUTA:** Okay.
21 **MR. JASON WEIERS:** Again, it's not our
22 preferred method, we like to work with landowners to
23 find the least impactful route.
24 **MS. PATRICIA BOUTA:** When I hear about
25 easements and getting them, I start thinking and I

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1 Sometimes the land team has more detailed
2 information and we try to incorporate that, but the
3 bases is county tax records for all of those
4 landowners in or adjacent to a proposed route. So
5 all of the route segment options you see shaded on
6 the map, we would include those landowners. And in
7 addition to that, we mail to local officials, state
8 agencies that are required, and then we also put a
9 notice in the newspaper in each county.
10 **MS. PATRICIA BOUTA:** So, like I guess
11 that people that are on my street or road that are
12 within a half mile, they're not getting it because
13 they're not adjacent landowners, I guess. After the
14 last public meeting, I did talk to some neighbors
15 and they had no idea and so I was wondering how it
16 was done.
17 **MS. CHRISTY BRUSVEN:** This process,
18 again, gathers all, potentially, so it's possible
19 that someone at one of these meetings may propose
20 another alternative route and that is studied in the
21 EIS. And we do update additional routes, and routes
22 are added, so we have all the landowners that
23 proposed routes as we move forward in the process.
24 **MS. PATRICIA BOUTA:** But if you're a
25 quarter mile away, you don't get a mailing?

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1 go, like, some people might not like it, okay, and
2 then that's the process you do.
3 My last question is on mailing lists.
4 Now, sometimes I've gotten mailings. I did not get
5 a mailing on this one for this public meeting, but I
6 got some on other ones.
7 My question is, as the process, is
8 what -- and I don't know about my neighbors. So
9 what about, I'd like to know how do you get your
10 mailing list and who do you send it to. Do you send
11 to everybody that's within a certain amount, a
12 certain distance from the possible routes so that
13 everybody on my road would have gotten one or is it
14 just the people --
15 **MS. CHRISTY BRUSVEN:** My name is Christy
16 Brusven and I'm counsel for the project.
17 So there's a couple different mailing
18 lists. The mailing list that we used for this
19 notice are created by taking a 1000-foot route
20 width, so it's a little wider, so all of those
21 shaded areas on the maps. We take all the
22 landowners that are in those route widths and
23 adjacent to it. And we rely on both county property
24 tax records and other available information to make
25 sure we have the most recent addresses for folks.

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1 **MS. CHRISTY BRUSVEN:** That's correct.
2 **MS. PATRICIA BOUTA:** Yeah.
3 Okay. I think that's all. Thank you.
4 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Thank you for your
5 comments.
6 Next is Lori Johnson Warner.
7 **MS. LORI JOHNSON WARNER:** Hello. Thank
8 you for the good information this morning.
9 My name is Lori Johnson Warner, L-O-R-I,
10 J-0-H-N-S-O-N, W-A-R-N-E-R.
11 I am here to speak to the north area of
12 this project, where there are two segments and I
13 would advocate for north route two, and I will
14 follow this up with additional details on my
15 reasoning.
16 And within north route one, which is the
17 one I do not prefer, I anticipate to section
18 alternative route nine, speaking that that,
19 according to your documentation, is less harmful to
20 both human and environmental impacts than proposed
21 Route N-2. I'm looking at the Table 2 comparison to
22 N-9 to N-2, whereas the alternative route has fewer
23 impacts to residences, less impacts to forest land,
24 to agricultural land, and introduces one less water
25 body. Those are environmental and human impacts

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1 that could be mitigated by using route N-9.
 2 So, thank you, those are my comments, and
 3 I will follow up in writing.
 4 **MS. JENNA NESS:** Okay.
 5 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Thank you very much.
 6 The last one I have signed up for
 7 speaking is Nate Runke.
 8 **MR. NATE RUNKE:** Hi. Nate Runke,
 9 N-A-T-E, R-U-N-K-E.
 10 I'm with Local 49 of the International
 11 Union of Operating Engineers. We represent 15,000
 12 heavy equipment operators and stationery engineers
 13 across Minnesota, South Dakota, and North Dakota.
 14 This project in particular doesn't
 15 provide a huge amount of work for our members, but
 16 the projects that it would help to create do. So
 17 that's, I guess, we're in favor of projects like
 18 this because we know there's a need for the
 19 transmission, and we've watched a lot of projects
 20 that would inject millions if not billions of
 21 dollars into these three states and have to sit and
 22 wait and potentially not happen because there's not
 23 transmission carrying the energy where it needs to
 24 go.
 25 So we just ask that the environmental

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1 impact statement include potential benefits of
 2 members like ours because of the potential of
 3 working on projects like this.
 4 So thank you.
 5 **MS. JENNA NESS:** Thank you.
 6 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Thank you very much for
 7 your comment.
 8 I will get that slide back up again so
 9 folks can see what you can view as comments.
 10 With that, I've exhausted the list of
 11 folks who wanted to speak.
 12 Is there anybody else that would like to
 13 say something today? There's an opportunity to do
 14 that right now. And, again, if you're not a public
 15 speaker, that's just fine, you have until January
 16 31st to issue written comments.
 17 Yes, sir. If you could state and spell
 18 your name, please.
 19 **MR. DAVID HOVDE:** My name is David Hovde,
 20 D-A-V-I-D, H-0-V-D-E.
 21 And I'm speaking on the south portion of
 22 the purple route. And I talked to someone from
 23 Otter Tail, and the waterfall project came up, which
 24 is -- I think it's a Fish and Wildlife Service area,
 25 that's right adjacent to the (inaudible) that's on

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1 our farm, so that part has been cleared up. And so
 2 the question is, do those same considerations apply
 3 to CRP, the conservation reserve program.
 4 **MS. JENNA NESS:** Yeah, we always look at
 5 that to see how many are nearby, what's the nearest
 6 one, if it can be avoided, that sort of thing.
 7 **MR. DAVID HOVDE:** Is that based upon the
 8 wishes of the conservation program or based upon the
 9 wishes of the landowner? I ask my question because
 10 we have multiple pieces of CRP here, and there's
 11 four different pieces to it, so to dodge from one to
 12 the other limits some of the preferred routes from
 13 cutting across the farm.
 14 **MS. JENNA NESS:** I'm trying to narrow in
 15 on what you mean specifically by that question. Do
 16 you mean when that ultimate route --
 17 **MR. DAVID HOVDE:** Well, I guess what I'm
 18 saying is, is it the landowner that would be
 19 objecting to crossing the CRP land, or is it the
 20 conservation reserve program people themselves that
 21 will say you can't run a power line over this
 22 wildlife area? Because it wouldn't bother me. You
 23 know, the pheasants, I'm not sure the pheasants
 24 care, but for me it pushes the proposed line into
 25 some places that are less than ideal.

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1 **MS. JENNA NESS:** And I think that's
 2 really important. So make sure that you share that
 3 with the folks here and comment on your property and
 4 impacts. The conservation easements, it depends,
 5 there's a lot of different programs. Some of the
 6 programs allow for structures because it is
 7 intending to protect species, that, you know, are
 8 not bothered by transmissions, and there are times
 9 when we can stand those easements so the
 10 transmission line is over the top and away to look
 11 at it, and easement by easement, or program by
 12 program, and they can come to the site through those
 13 areas to avoid the impacts, so there's a
 14 combination.
 15 **MR. DAVID HOVDE:** And one other, sort of,
 16 I should say, different question from another area,
 17 it's an engineering question. So EMF has already
 18 been spoken of. I see Three Mile Island, some
 19 people say off what the charts say are 20 feet and
 20 some say 50. And I guess it depends on the voltage
 21 only categorically.
 22 But the other question is is there any
 23 research on GPS signals? If I have a, you know, a
 24 planter, and I'm running my whole plant harvest
 25 system on GPS coordinates and you come to a power

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1 line and all of a sudden you get errors and stuff.
2 **MS. JENNA NESS:** Yeah. The short answer
3 to that question is, yes, they talk about both of
4 those in the application for the GPS stuff and
5 that's going to be under agricultural impacts
6 because that's generally where it's happening. And
7 then the EMF itself is based on the application, but
8 also what it's saying about these kinds of
9 transmission lines.
10 **MR. DAVID HOVDE:** So is that an answer
11 that's sort of avoiding the question? Is there
12 knowledge of EMF, or electromagnetic forces will
13 diminish or affect GPS signals?
14 **MS. JENNA NESS:** I mean, I can certainly
15 get back to you on specifics for that. Just off the
16 top of my head, I'm not being helpful.
17 **MR. DAVID HOVDE:** That's a technical
18 question.
19 **MR. JASON WEIERS:** Mr. Hovde, I have a
20 couple comments for your question here regarding GPS
21 interference from transmission lines. We are only
22 aware of a very rare situation where the tower
23 shadowing can temporarily block the GPS signal, but
24 typically that will be mitigated as a pass around
25 the structure where the EMF signals themselves have

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1 roads, we've got the railroad that goes through the
2 area, why aren't those types of areas followed more
3 than, you know, in this case, at least in our
4 township, there's a couple places where it actually
5 splits farms in half. I guess my question is why
6 aren't those followed more closely? It would be
7 less impact, they've got the right of way there
8 already, and it would be basically doubling the use
9 of the existing right of way.
10 **MR. JASON WEIERS:** Thank you for your
11 comment.
12 Certainly, the existing corridor, such as
13 existing roads, section lines, property lines, do
14 offer an opportunity to minimize impacts for
15 landowners so we have factored those into our
16 proposals. But, indeed, if there are other ideas
17 you have, we would encourage you to submit some
18 other alternatives.
19 **MR. MAX RADIL:** As a county, we did
20 submit those comments earlier. We're also worried
21 about what they mentioned -- or you mentioned the
22 GPS. A lot of the farmers now are using GPS for
23 guidance on equipment, and we use it at home, and
24 that, you know, could be an issue for us.
25 Also, kind of like, you know, there is an

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1 not been found to interfere with the GPS signal.
2 It's the shadowing effect of the tall structures
3 that are temporary as you move past the structure.
4 **MR. DAVID HOVDE:** And that's a good
5 answer. Thanks for that.
6 That's all I need. Thank you.
7 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Thank you, sir.
8 And one other comment regarding EMF, but
9 we do have a fact sheet up there that just had some
10 of the most recent studies that have been done.
11 Is there anybody else that would like to
12 speak today publicly? If you would like, you can
13 raise your hand and come up. Otherwise, again,
14 written comments are just as good and that is
15 through January 31st. We've got the slide up here
16 for that.
17 Yes, sir. Please state and spell your
18 name for the record.
19 **MR. MAX RADIL:** Max Radil. R-A-D-I-L,
20 Max. Lake Mary Township.
21 So some things that I guess I haven't
22 gotten any kind of fact on is the township, we made
23 a recommendation, and maybe you can answer this.
24 Why aren't, you know, existing right of
25 ways followed more closely? We've got the state

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1 already existing high voltage line through the area
2 that you don't have to, I assume, want the two
3 magnetic fields, and is that going to be an issue in
4 areas where those two bodies have been crossed? You
5 know, are we talking about magnetic fields from one
6 line now, or you've got two and you'll be
7 multiplying that with two lines. Is there -- is
8 that going to be taken into effect where lines
9 cross?
10 **MS. JENNA NESS:** Yeah, absolutely. I
11 mean, if you want more specifics, we'll look at
12 where alternatives are to what people add to the
13 record and what can possibly conflict with that and
14 look at the worst-case scenario and talk about it
15 that way, and talk about those impacts and also
16 discuss if those can be mitigated. Or if the impact
17 is too high, you know, there's other venues that we
18 would analyze in the EIS.
19 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Thank you, sir, for your
20 comments.
21 Is there any other folks looking to speak
22 publicly today?
23 If we're out of commenters, I'll
24 reiterate how you can comment in writing, and we
25 don't want to take up any more of your time if there

1 aren't any more comments.

2 So going once, going twice? Any last
3 folks?

4 All right. Well, before we end, don't
5 forget, it looks like there's a lot of cookies back
6 there, so help yourself if you want a cookie.

7 Again, if you have any questions, reach
8 out to us. And we do have the virtual meeting on
9 Thursday at 6:00 if you think of anything and you
10 want to attend again.

11 Thank you for coming today and for your
12 comments, they really matter and we appreciate you
13 being here.

14 Thank you all for coming.
15 (Proceeding concluded at 12:00 p.m.)

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In The Matter Of:

Big Stone South to Alexandria - 23-160

Scoping Meeting - Glenwood - 1-14-25

January 14, 2025

Scoping Meeting - 23-160 - Glenwood - 1-14-25

Shaddix & Associates

7400 Lyndale Avenue South

Suite 190

Richfield, MN 55423

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1 SCOPING AND INFORMATIONAL MEETING - 23-160
 2 GLENWOOD - JANUARY 14, 2025 - 6:00 P.M.
 3 BEFORE THE MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
 4 AND DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
 5
 6 In the Matter of the Application for a Route Permit for
 7 the Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission
 8 Project in West-Central Minnesota
 9
 10
 11 MPUC DOCKET NO. E017,ET10/TL-23-160
 12
 13
 14
 15 Lakeside Ballroom
 16 180 South Lakeshore Drive
 17 Glenwood, Minnesota
 18
 19
 20 January 14, 2025
 21
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 23
 24
 25 STENOGRAPHIC COURT REPORTER: Janet Shaddix Elling, RPR

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1 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** All right, folks. Thanks
 2 very much for coming tonight.
 3 My name is Sam Lobby, I'm with the state
 4 Public Utilities Commission.
 5 We're here tonight to have a public
 6 information and environmental review scoping meeting
 7 on the Big Stone South to Alexandria 345 kV
 8 Transmission Project in West-Central Minnesota, PUC
 9 docket 23-160.
 10 So we did have one meeting earlier today
 11 in Alexandria, we've got this one tonight, of
 12 course, and two more tomorrow, and another in-person
 13 on Thursday and a virtual on Thursday evening. All
 14 of the same information is going to be presented at
 15 every meeting. So you're welcome to attend the
 16 virtual meeting if you think of something later, you
 17 can also send us your written comments until the
 18 comment period closes on January 31st.
 19 So the meeting agenda for tonight. I am
 20 Sam Lobby with the Public Utilities Commission and I
 21 will talk about the permit application review
 22 process that the Public Utilities Commission will go
 23 through for this project.
 24 Next, Jason Weiers with Otter Tail Power
 25 Company will be talking about the proposed project

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1 itself.
 2 And then after that, Jenna Ness with the
 3 Department of Commerce will talk about the
 4 environmental review.
 5 So you're going to hear the term
 6 environmental impact statement, that's the technical
 7 jargon for the environmental study that's going to
 8 take place. And so tonight is about getting
 9 feedback from you all on what should be included in
 10 that study.
 11 So you may have questions and comments,
 12 we will do the best we can to answer any questions
 13 you have. And to let you know how this works,
 14 tonight is about getting your feedback on what we
 15 should study, so there might be questions that we
 16 can't answer yet because to get your question
 17 answered we can do the study and later we'll come
 18 back with an answer. So if we can't answer
 19 something, we can certainly look into it.
 20 So this is just my contact information.
 21 If you grabbed a copy of the meeting presentation
 22 you can find it in there. You can contact me at any
 23 time. And the comment period for this part of the
 24 process, this is the very beginning of the process,
 25 so you've come at the right time to give us your

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1 feedback, that comment period ends on January 31st.
2 But even if you have any questions or anything that
3 you want to talk to me about after the comment
4 period you can always reach out to me.
5 So tonight the purpose of the meeting is
6 to provide information about the proposed project
7 itself as well as the state's high voltage
8 transmission line route permit process.
9 We want to provide an opportunity for you
10 all, the public, an opportunity to participate in
11 developing the scope of the environmental impact
12 statement, so that's the study that we're going to
13 be doing and we want your feedback on what we should
14 study. This will include comments on potential
15 impacts of the proposed project, as well as
16 commenting on the minimize, mitigate, and avoid
17 potential impacts. And that can include proposing
18 alternative routes or route segments for
19 consideration.
20 So the maps that you're seeing tonight
21 are proposed, but they're not set in stone. If you
22 have any comments or anything, feedback that you
23 want to get back to us about that route, that's
24 something that Jenna can study in her review.
25 We'll also provide contact information,

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1 but instead of getting your feedback on what to
2 study, the study will be completed and you will have
3 time to react to that and give us your feedback and
4 that meeting will be overseen by a judge who is
5 impartial that and will go into her report.
6 So the Minnesota Public Utilities
7 Commission consists of five commissioners appointed
8 by the governor and confirmed by the Senate. We
9 regulate three service industries, electricity,
10 natural gas, and telephone. Our mission is to
11 ensure safe, adequate, and efficient utility
12 services at fair and reasonable rates. We provide
13 independent professional oversight and regulation of
14 utility service providers in a manner that is
15 consistent with the public interest.
16 So in order for this type of project to
17 get permitted, this is a little bit more jargon
18 here, so I'll try to explain that so it makes sense.
19 The Big Stone South to Alexandria
20 transmission line, in order for it to be constructed
21 it must get a route permit and so this is going to
22 go through the full review process. The full review
23 process is the most rigorous review process there
24 is, and that's required for any high voltage
25 transmission line operating at a nominal voltage of

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1 I've already provided mine, in case you have
2 questions later.
3 So a little bit of context and
4 background.
5 The different government agencies that
6 are involved in this are the Public Utilities
7 Commission, we are the government unit that reviews
8 the applications on route permits in Minnesota, so
9 anybody who wants to build a line has to come
10 through us. We're not for or against any projects.
11 Another governmental unit is the
12 Department of Commerce. Jenna Ness works for the
13 for the Commission and prepares an environmental
14 impact statement on the proposed project.
15 Later in the process, an administrative
16 law judge from the Office of Administrative Hearings
17 will facilitate a public hearing and then provide a
18 report to the Commission setting forth findings of
19 fact, conclusions of law, and recommendations on the
20 proposed project.
21 So to give you a sense of what that would
22 look like tonight in this meeting, we're going to
23 get your feedback on what to study and then I'll
24 talk about the timeline, but many months from now
25 we'll come back here and we'll do the same thing,

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1 200 kilovolts or more and greater than 30 miles in
2 length.
3 Oftentimes when these projects go through
4 there will also be a certificate of need associated
5 with it that we talk about at the same time. In
6 this case, the certificate of need was granted back
7 in October of 2024 for this project, as far as the
8 larger project, the Big Stone South to Alexandria to
9 Big Oaks Transmission Project, the docket number for
10 that was 22-538.
11 If you're interested in looking back on
12 that, if you have a copy of the meeting
13 presentation, you can look it up in our eDocket
14 system, 22-538, and there's instructions in how to
15 access that.
16 So in this case, the certificate of need
17 was already -- has already gone through, and this
18 meeting and this process is just about the route
19 itself, the need has already been granted.
20 So the proposed project, I won't go too
21 deep into this because Mr. Weiers is going to talk
22 more about that. The Applicants are proposing to
23 build a new approximately 91- to 105-mile 345 kV
24 double circuit-capable transmission line. Only one
25 circuit will be installed initially.

1 The proposed 345 kV line will run from
2 the Big Stone South Substation near the Minnesota-
3 South Dakota border to the existing Alexandria
4 Substation near Alexandria, Minnesota.

5 The transmission project is needed to
6 address regional reliability issues on the existing
7 230-kilovolt system in western and central
8 Minnesota.

9 So just to give you a sense of the
10 timeline. If you're here tonight, you're here
11 at the right time to get involved and give us your
12 feedback so we can incorporate your concerns or
13 comments or at least look into those concerns and
14 comments. So we appreciate you being here tonight
15 and taking your time to work through this process.

16 I will say that the five commissioners
17 that are appointed by the governor, they take all
18 public comments very seriously and the feedback that
19 we get from you all that comes in and make a final
20 decision.

21 So the application was initially
22 submitted in October of 2024 and the application was
23 accepted in December of 2024. That third line down,
24 the public information meetings, that's where we're
25 at tonight, so, again, we've got today, tomorrow,

1 So we've got quite a ways to go. There's
2 a number of opportunities for the public to comment
3 and so we do want to hear from you on any feedback
4 that you have. It can be really useful as far as
5 making any decisions.

6 Once again, thanks for coming tonight,
7 and I'm going to hand it over to Jason for his
8 comments.

9 **MR. JAMES WEIERS:** Thank you.

10 All right. Thank you, Sam.

11 As Sam said, I'm Jason Weiers, manager of
12 transmission project development at Otter Tail Power
13 Company and the next few slides will provide a brief
14 overview about the Big Stone South to Alexandria
15 Project.

16 The Big Stone South to Alexandria Project
17 will be jointly owned between Otter Tail and Western
18 Municipal Power Agency. Western Minnesota is being
19 represented in this docket by Missouri River Energy
20 Services.

21 The project that Otter Tail and Western
22 Minnesota are requesting is a route permit for
23 approximately a 100-mile 345 kilovolt high voltage
24 transmission from Otter Tail's Big Stone South
25 Substation just west of Big Stone City, South

1 and Thursday meetings, and then the comment period
2 is until January 31st.

3 Once we get your comments, Jenna is going
4 to incorporate those and make a scoping decision,
5 and so that scoping decision is what should be
6 studied and so your comments tonight will help
7 inform what we study. That will happen in March and
8 April and she will go ahead and do that study, and
9 so nine months from now, it's a very intensive
10 study, that is the draft environmental impact
11 statement that will come out and you'll have time --
12 we'll submit that online so you will have a chance
13 to look at it, like a couple weeks a month or maybe
14 even longer to see what we're interested in.

15 Then I mentioned the judge will come for
16 public hearings, so that's where we come back here
17 again and it will be the same type of meeting, it
18 will look just like this, but instead of what should
19 be studied it will be what did we study and what do
20 you think about that. Did we miss anything? Based
21 on that feedback, Jenna can update the environmental
22 impact statement and then the Final EIS will be
23 issued tentatively in December of 2025. And then
24 the judge will file a report and the Commission will
25 make a final decision tentatively in March of 2026.

1 Dakota, to Western Minnesota's Alexandria Substation
2 on the southwest side of the city of Alexandria.

3 Similar to the existing lines you see
4 along Interstate 94, we are planning to construct
5 this line using double-circuit-capable structures
6 and only install one circuit at this time. Along
7 with expansions at the end point substations, we may
8 also install what we refer to as a fiber optic
9 regeneration station and this will be along the
10 central segment of the project. This fiber optic
11 regeneration station will be used to amplify the
12 communication signals between the two end point
13 substations.

14 As I mentioned earlier, the structures
15 for the transmission line will look similar to those
16 along Interstate 94, with the exception that we do
17 plan to use what we call Cor-Ten steel rather than
18 galvanized steel, so the structures for this project
19 will look to be more of a brown color rather than a
20 gray color.

21 We do expect a typical structure will be
22 between 120 and 180 feet tall. The structures will
23 sit on a concrete foundation and that'll be anywhere
24 between 7 to 14 feet in diameter, and that
25 foundation may be anywhere between 25 and 80 feet

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1 deep, depending on soil conditions. These
2 structures will be between 400 and 1400 feet apart,
3 depending on the route that is selected and the
4 geographic terrain that we will be traversing.
5 Lastly, our typical right-of-way width
6 for a 345 kilovolt transmission line will be 150
7 feet wide, and that includes 75 feet on either side
8 of the centerline of the structures.
9 Sam talked earlier about the certificate
10 of need process in Minnesota, and as Sam mentioned,
11 the Minnesota Commission approved a certificate of
12 need back in October of 2024.
13 The project came from the Midcontinent
14 Independent System Operator, who is the regional
15 transmission organization within this region. And
16 one of their duties is to perform transmission
17 planning studies in this region to identify future
18 transmission needs. They launched a study about
19 four years ago that we call the long-range
20 transmission planning study, and out of that effort
21 came a recommendation for 18 new transmission
22 projects that are needed to help ensure a reliable
23 and resilient transmission system in the Midwest.
24 The Big Stone South to Alexandria Project is shown
25 on this map as project number two. The project is

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1 of gathering feedback from the public, we came
2 forward with the proposed project corridors in
3 October of 2023 during our second round of open
4 houses. We continued to gather information and
5 refine our routes and in February of 2024 we shared
6 our proposed route corridors during our third round
7 of open houses. Finally, in June of 2024, we hosted
8 our fourth round of open houses sharing our proposed
9 route options for the transmission line. We
10 considered feedback from landowners along all the
11 way during all of these open houses and also
12 consulting with several agencies throughout the area
13 to help refine the routes that you see in our route
14 permit application.
15 So our proposed route segments from the
16 route permit application that was filed in October
17 are shown on this slide here. And, again, these
18 start at the Minnesota-South Dakota border and end
19 at the Alexandria Substation.
20 Generally speaking, you'll notice there's
21 two route segment options from the border up to the
22 Alexandria Substation, and these route segments have
23 a full length of between 91 miles and 105 miles for
24 the final route selected for the project.
25 For the ease in analyzing the route

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1 needed to ensure the system maintains reliability.
2 The project will also reduce transmission congestion
3 and help increase access to low-cost energy and also
4 increase resiliency in extreme weather conditions.
5 So given that the certificate of need has
6 already been approved by the Commission, tonight's
7 focus, as Sam mentioned, is the scope of the
8 environmental review related to the route permit
9 application, which Otter Tail and Western Minnesota
10 filed with the state back in October of 2024.
11 Given that this transmission line is
12 located in South Dakota as well, we have also
13 applied for a facility permit from the South Dakota
14 Public Utilities Commission, and we expect to
15 receive a decision on that facility permit
16 application no later than April of this year.
17 We have undertaken an extensive effort
18 over the course of approximately 18 months with four
19 rounds of public open houses to gather information
20 that we considered to identify the proposed routes
21 that appear in our route permit application.
22 Starting in April of 2023, we shared a
23 broad study area at our first round of open houses
24 outlining boundaries where we were considering the
25 proposed routes for the project. Through the course

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1 options as part of this proceeding, we have divided
2 the route segment options into three different
3 areas. There's areas within the south segment shown
4 in the blue color areas, the central segments shown
5 with orange colors, and then the north segments are
6 shown with purple colors. Although we will only
7 need 150 feet of right of way for the transmission
8 line, the route permit application generally
9 includes a right-of-way width of 1000 feet. And we
10 wanted to have some flexibility in working with
11 landowners to identify the optimal location to
12 minimize landowner impacts for the 150 feet, so
13 therefore the 1000-foot corridor on the permit
14 application gives us some flexibility as we enter
15 negotiations with landowners.
16 Zooming in a little closer on the three
17 areas of the proposed routes, starting first with
18 the south route options, the route segments along
19 the south segment are between 39 and 42 miles in
20 length and these again extend from the
21 Minnesota-South Dakota border over to Tara Township
22 in Swift County.
23 The central route segments are between 34
24 and 39 miles in total length and these are from Tara
25 Township in Swift County to Bend Wade Township in

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1 Pope County. And then lastly, the north route
2 segments are between 18 and 25 miles in total length
3 and these again go from Bend Way Township in Pope
4 County up to the existing Alexandria Substation in
5 Douglas County.
6 If you are a landowner along the approved
7 route, slide 21 will give a general construction
8 overview of what you can expect in the future as we
9 build this transmission line.
10 Step one in the overall process here is
11 once we have overall land rights in place, we will
12 start with survey and staking the proposed structure
13 locations. Step two is establishing temporary
14 access roads to get equipment out to the right of
15 way. Step three is installing the concrete
16 foundations. Step four is setting the structures on
17 the foundations. Step five, once the structures are
18 set, we'll then look to string the conductor, and
19 this is typically done with the help of a
20 helicopter. And then lastly, once the conductor is
21 strung, we will work to restore the work area by
22 removing temporary access roads and re-seeding the
23 disturbed areas in coordination with the landowners
24 along the proposed route.
25 Slide 22 has an overall project schedule

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1 or comments or would like additional information
2 following this meeting, you're always welcome to
3 reach out to contact me by phone or email.
4 Alternatively, we do have a project
5 website that has been set up where users are allowed
6 to supply comments, they can also send us an email
7 or leave us a voicemail on our toll-free number.
8 The website email and phone line are checked daily
9 by members of our project team and we do our best to
10 get back to people between 24 and 48 hours.
11 With that, I'll turn it over to Jenna
12 Ness to wrap up the presentation.
13 **MS. JENNA NESS:** Thanks.
14 Hi. Jenna Ness with the Department of
15 Commerce here. Thank you again for taking time out
16 of your day and coming out tonight. I'm the
17 environmental review manager for the project.
18 So briefly here, I will talk about the
19 Department of Commerce's role in the environmental
20 review or creating an environmental impact
21 statement, what it looks like, comments and
22 questions, and then we'll get to the question and
23 comments portion of the meeting after that so you
24 guys can make oral public comments or ask questions.
25 So the Department of Commerce conducts

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1 that we're anticipating for the Big Stone South to
2 Alexandria Project. The Minnesota permitting
3 process is expected to wrap up in the second quarter
4 of 2026. Once we have the Commission decision on
5 the route, we will begin acquiring land rights for
6 the easement that we will need for the project.
7 After the land rights are secured, we
8 will perform field surveys with the help of other --
9 we will perform field surveys to help support
10 permitting efforts with federal, state, and other
11 local agencies, and we expect that those other
12 permits will take approximately two years to
13 acquire. Assuming we obtain all those necessary
14 permits towards the end of the first quarter of
15 2028, we do anticipate starting construction in the
16 spring of 2028 and be wrapped up with the project at
17 the end of 2030.
18 I will mention that this schedule
19 represents the best information we have available
20 today, and that the schedule may change in the
21 future based on a variety of different conditions,
22 such as material lead times, contractor
23 availability, and of course weather conditions.
24 I'll end my slides with sharing my
25 contact information. If you have further questions

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1 environmental reviews for the Commission as a
2 neutral third party. They offer an objective
3 analysis of the project. The goal is to create an
4 information document that can provide the public
5 what they need to know about the project as well as
6 other parties. And some of those parties include
7 other governmental organizations who use that
8 document for informed decision making. Some of the
9 things we talk about are the human health and
10 environmental impacts and ways that we may be able
11 to avoid or mitigate those impacts.
12 Today is the scoping meeting, as you
13 heard. What scoping means is for narrowing in on
14 what that EIS will look like. If you picked up a
15 draft scope at the opening table, that is the
16 proposed outline or table of contents of the
17 environmental impact statement, or EIS. And we're
18 getting public input on that today as the main goal.
19 And that will focus the EIS on the most relevant
20 information as to make an informed decision on the
21 route permit.
22 So on the previous slide it included
23 human and environmental impacts, strategies to
24 mitigate those impacts, and that can also include an
25 alternate route, if you would like to propose

1 something like that. If you do propose an
2 alternative route, in order to get it accepted for
3 environmental review, it must mitigate a specific
4 impact. That would be something as simple as
5 aesthetics. And it must also be specific. What I
6 mean by that is we need to be able to study a
7 specific area, and so just to be able to draw it on
8 a map for me and that works best.

9 There are several ways to comment. Like
10 we said, tonight at this meeting, it's going to be
11 part of the record. You can also submit your
12 comment sheet in the postal mail and that is on the
13 table as well. Otherwise, you can email me
14 directly. If you have a copy of the presentation
15 you have my contact information. You can also go on
16 our website and make a comment. Just a reminder
17 that the comment period closes at the end of the
18 month on the 31st.

19 So for the question and comments portion
20 of the meeting, I would like to emphasize that we
21 only have one speaker at a time. We have a court
22 reporter with us today and so she needs to be able
23 to hear everything to make it part of our record.
24 In that vein, we also need you to state your first
25 and last name and spell it for the court reporter

1 Apologies if I'm mispronouncing your last name.
2 **MR. DAVID EDMUNDS:** That's fine.
3 Hello. Is this about right?
4 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** That's good.
5 **MR. DAVID EDMUNDS:** Okay. My name is
6 David Edmunds.

7 I have a lot of concerns at this hearing,
8 but I won't take up too much time, but maybe this
9 would help other people to think about it.

10 You say different routes would mitigate
11 impacts. Well, I'm guessing most of the electricity
12 is going towards the Minneapolis area because that's
13 where they're connecting it, and so the power line,
14 why don't they just build a nuclear power plant
15 right where it's going to end up at. You don't need
16 any power line, nuclear power, it doesn't take much
17 input, it's not like a coal-fired plant, it's just
18 one of them.

19 And because I'm probably one of the
20 oldest ones here, a lot of you don't remember the
21 first power line in Pope County, and on that one
22 none of it was over government land for some reason
23 and somebody here told me there was a couple spots
24 where it does. But they didn't go over any
25 government land, it's all on private land.

1 before you start giving your comment. And we'll
2 also appreciate if you can direct your comments to
3 the scope of the environmental impact statement or
4 maybe some alternative routes, and I have a reminder
5 slide up here of what that is, the table of
6 contents.

7 And that's all I need to say.

8 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** All right. Thanks for
9 your patience as we went through the presentation.

10 So as Jenna mentioned, we can open up the
11 rest of the meeting for folks to comment if folks
12 want to comment. If you are not a public speaker
13 and don't want to speak tonight, or maybe later on
14 after the meeting you think of something that you
15 wish you would have said, you do have until
16 January 31st to submit written comments. As well as
17 there's also the virtual meeting on Thursday, so if
18 you prefer to speak publicly, you can also do it
19 there.

20 So I will call up -- we have the sign-in
21 sheet and a couple folks who signed up, but I'll
22 call up the first name. And if you would come up to
23 the speaker, to the microphone here, and state and
24 spell your first and last name.

25 So I've got David Edmunds. There we go.

1 Then there was also my mom had
2 Alzheimer's and after the first power line in Pope
3 County, and for some reason she didn't know who I
4 was, she didn't know she was in a car, she didn't
5 know there was a power line there. But whenever we
6 would get between a half and a quarter of a mile
7 from the power line and drive under it in the car,
8 she'd put her head down like this and shake like
9 that. It didn't affect me, I don't know what it
10 affects, I don't know if your house has experienced
11 things like that.

12 **UNIDENTIFIED:** I have not, but I share
13 some of your concerns.

14 **MR. DAVID EDMUNDS:** So I guess I'm
15 concerned about how close it is to houses and
16 buildings. Will it go over solar panels, probably
17 not. Will it go by anybody who has a stake in it
18 and will make a lot of money in this close to their
19 property? I'd like to know if it did.

20 So this is a county for people. I have
21 cattle that will go a couple miles from being right
22 onsite, and I want to look at that and it looks like
23 it will go right between where it could be located
24 right now. So those were just some of the things.
25 Also, how are we going to pay for it?

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1 Environmentalists, for the last one, some got more,
2 some got less. It's probably going to affect your
3 land values and what you can do with the land if
4 you're selling it. The whole time you have it,
5 you're paying real estate taxes on it. Are they
6 going to have a yearly fee besides the one lump sum
7 or how are they going to do this?
8 That is the end of my comments.
9 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Thank you very much for
10 your comments. Thank you very much.
11 All right. Next I have Chuck, is there a
12 Chuck here who wants to speak still? If you don't
13 want to speak, that's fine.
14 **UNIDENTIFIED:** I believe he left.
15 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Thank you very much.
16 The last one I have on my list here, and
17 we can open it up after that, is Troy. Thanks for
18 coming, Troy. State and spell your name for the
19 court reporter, please.
20 **MR. TROY SCHMIDTKE:** Troy Schmidtke, the
21 last name is S-C-H-M-I-D-T-K-E.
22 A little bit of background. I own
23 approximately 400 acres that I purchased in Starbuck
24 for farming and recreation. The CR-2 segment 10
25 runs across the north side and crosses the Little

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1 unfortunate thing for all of us, why take more
2 private land, as the previous speaker said. So I
3 would urge us to try to use right of ways that
4 already exist if we can.
5 Thank you.
6 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Thank you very much for
7 your comments, I appreciate the specificity, that's
8 very helpful for the review process.
9 So that is all the folks that I have on
10 here. So I'll open it up if any other folks who
11 want to speak. I will reiterate that if folks would
12 prefer to do a written comment, that's just fine.
13 Is there anybody else who does want to
14 speak?
15 Yes, sir. Please come up and state and
16 spell your name for the court reporter.
17 **MR. TOM HOUS:** Tom Hous, H-O-U-S.
18 So I have a nice chunk of land and some
19 is very tillable and some is for habitat. I'm on
20 Highway 30 and I think they call it 101, about a
21 mile and a half east of Reno. I'm not sure if it'll
22 go through, but one goes on that property. So my
23 question is what are we going to do to mitigate the
24 habitat destruction for the tillable acreage? If
25 you do take a farmer's property or it crosses a

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1 Chippewa on my property by Bob Hoffman.
2 I've invested over \$100,000 in erosion
3 control to protect the Little Chippewa. I also
4 invested over \$15,000 in restoration. I've also
5 invested over 40 years in the ring line for
6 recreation along the west side of the river that
7 will be severely degraded by CR-10. Central Route 1
8 is the better route for many reasons. CR-1 is
9 approximately \$2800 million less costly and a more
10 direct route. CR-1 has less environmental impacts
11 to existing right of ways and less interference.
12 Most importantly, CR-1 crosses fewer waterways,
13 especially not the Little Chippewa. The Little
14 Chippewa is a key and I hope that it is taken under
15 consideration. We worked hard for multiple lines
16 along the Chippewa to restore that river, and I have
17 a lot of concerns. I'm an engineer, I have a lot of
18 concerns about power lines going across the river.
19 CR-1 also interferes with residences and
20 unfortunately it's still, regardless, it does
21 interfere with residences and that is concerning.
22 Our hope would be that the fewer, the better.
23 And then the last thing is I would urge
24 the PUC to use CR-1. It's the most direct route.
25 It uses existing right of ways. This is the

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1 piece of land, is there going to be compensation?
2 Will there be a right of eminent domain and how is
3 that going to work? I am concerned about the impact
4 of the electromagnetic fields that this will be
5 generating.
6 So there's a lot of unanswered questions.
7 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Anyone else?
8 **MS. JENNA NESS:** I want to reiterate, we
9 are focusing on answering questions and that's kind
10 of what's going on.
11 **MR. TOM HOUS:** And if a landowner or a
12 farmer objects, what happens then? Is it going to
13 be eminent domain? Will it be fair compensation?
14 How is that going to work?
15 **MR. JASON WEIERS:** Thanks for your
16 comments, Mr. Hous. A couple responses from the
17 Applicants here.
18 We talked about the habitat implications
19 of the transmission line route, certainly those are
20 aspects that would be included as part of the
21 application that we've looked at as well as what the
22 EIS will consider as performed by the Department of
23 Commerce.
24 Any sensitive habitat that's found could
25 likely be requiring some mitigation requirements by

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1 the Applicants as we get the permit for this
2 transmission line. And certainly I will want to
3 have you take a look at that Draft EIS that comes
4 out and any possible stipulations or conditions
5 placed upon that permit to make sure proper
6 mitigations are in place.
7 So we definitely want to work with
8 landowners to ensure that we minimize the
9 disruptions to the existing habitat.
10 Regarding EMF concerns, I'll mention that
11 the application did include calculations for the
12 electric and magnetic fields expected from this
13 transmission line, and you will notice in the
14 application that we actually showed the intensity of
15 those electric fields and how they diminish very
16 quickly as we get to the edge of the right of way.
17 What you'll find in the application is that the
18 electromagnetic fields that are generated by the
19 power line are very minimal levels by the time you
20 get to the edge of the right of way. And actually
21 this again will be evaluated as the Department
22 performs the EIS.
23 Oh. And then there was a question about
24 compensation for landowners. So we do not have
25 compensation values determined at this time for

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1 Again, the Department actually has a
2 really nice handout for right-of-way acquisition,
3 which includes the eminent domain process. As
4 Mr. Weiers said, it's a court proceeding, and you
5 can find when the proceedings begin that often we're
6 still able to reach a settlement. But there is a
7 separate body that will give compensation awarded in
8 that process and, of course, the Applicants will
9 abide by the outcome of the proceedings.
10 **MR. TOM HOUS:** I agree with the last
11 speaker, that what he said is the best route.
12 **MS. CHRISTY BRUSVEN:** I missed that.
13 **MR. TOM HOUS:** I agree with the last
14 speaker, that what he said is the best route instead
15 of meandering east or west.
16 **MS. CHRISTY BRUSVEN:** I appreciate your
17 comment.
18 Thank you.
19 **MR. TOM HOUS:** Yeah.
20 **MS. JENNA NESS:** The more specific, and
21 you don't have to do it orally, you can email me or
22 whatever, but about the specific habitat on specific
23 property, the more it can be less generalized and
24 talk about that specifically and look at that
25 mitigation, and if you want that, I have it here and

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1 landowners along the approved route. What we would
2 do to identify the compensation for landowners is
3 perform a land-based study looking at recent sales
4 in the area, and we'd be offering landowners a price
5 per acre based on the type of land that we're
6 crossing on each particular parcel. We may look at
7 pasture land separate from ag land and separate from
8 wooded land, because there are different values for
9 different types of properties.
10 We do want to work with landowners as
11 closely as we can to try to find a route that
12 minimizes impacts for landowners and our focus is we
13 can come to a resolution with landowners to identify
14 that 150-foot wide easement we need for the
15 transmission line.
16 To the extent that we are not successful
17 in getting an easement with the landowner, there is
18 a possibility that we could pursue a process through
19 a separate legal court proceeding called eminent
20 domain.
21 **MR. TOM HOUS:** And if it goes to eminent
22 domain, does it go to trial and you have to pay, or
23 just the usual landowner and (inaudible).
24 **MS. CHRISTY BRUSVEN:** This is Christy
25 Brusven.

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1 actually Ms. Brusven has one, too.
2 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Thank you, sir, for your
3 comments. We appreciate it.
4 So I'll open it up again if there's any
5 other folks who would like to speak. And, again, if
6 you would like to comment other than verbally, you
7 can grab a comment sheet at the front and put a
8 stamp on that and mail it to us. You can comment
9 online by going to this website, or you can mail it
10 to Jenna or email it to Jenna, I guess.
11 Would you like to speak again?
12 **MR. TROY SCHMIDTKE:** Yes.
13 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Please come up to the
14 microphone so the court reporter can hear you.
15 **MR. TROY SCHMIDTKE:** Troy Schmidtke
16 again.
17 Can you tell us a little bit about who is
18 on your team? Do you have biologists, a lot of
19 specialists, someone that can look at ag land? And
20 who is on your team that you can share with us?
21 **MS. JENNA NESS:** Absolutely. Thanks for
22 the question. It is a very large team working on
23 the EIS. I am the main project manager making sure
24 that the EIS is correct and looking at all impacts.
25 Yes, we are working with consultants and internally

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1 with EERA people who have expertise. So we do have
2 someone who looks at those things that I previously
3 heard you mention, waterfowl and biologists, yes, we
4 have people who have worked in wetlands, but, yes,
5 our two consultants we are able to pull in as needed
6 if we need to focus on a certain subject matter.
7 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** And I'll just add to that
8 that during the permitting process there's many
9 other state and federal agencies and local agencies
10 that can and will submit comments. So the DNR and
11 the PCA, those are two of many, and those are some
12 of the agencies that will make comments that are
13 directly experts on both those issues that you're
14 raising, as well as if there's any sort of permits
15 or requirements that they have, because if they get
16 a permit, they also have to follow the rules of
17 other state agencies.
18 So that's a great question. I appreciate
19 your question.
20 Would anybody else like to speak tonight?
21 **UNIDENTIFIED:** I would.
22 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Thanks again for your
23 questions.
24 **MR. DAVID EDMUNDS:** David Edmunds.
25 A couple of them take that route that's

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1 **MR. JAMES WEIERS:** Thanks for your
2 comments, Mr. Edmunds.
3 The plan for the Applicants is for the
4 one-time upfront payment for the easement. And I
5 will also mention that as you think about the
6 easement that we are looking to acquire for the
7 project, we are still allowing landowners to do the
8 things they do on the land today, such as farming.
9 You're still allowed to farm along the easement, and
10 they're also able to till it and farm as you are.
11 I do want to also mention that as you
12 think about the line built back in the 1970s
13 compared to the lines you see here today, we have
14 obviously changed the structure design to take up a
15 much smaller footprint than what was previously
16 built, and if you look at the foundation diameter of
17 7 to 14 feet at its max, it's a much, much smaller
18 footprint than previously used on a power line back
19 in the '70s. So we are doing our best to minimize
20 impacts to landowners.
21 **MR. DAVID EDMUNDS:** So on a higher scale,
22 the ones that are promoting this, but working
23 underneath it and farming right next to it, do you
24 think they will be allowed to do that? I don't
25 think so. Does it go on anybody's property that's

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1 north of Lowry; is that correct? For me that would
2 be something, throughout route two, south of Lowry,
3 so it doesn't go right next to my house and at least
4 it will be in my field.
5 Then because I have documents from the
6 first power line that went through, the estimated
7 market value and damages to the land, and there was
8 just a one-time payment, okay, when that was taken,
9 and today the land is worth a little bit more and
10 every year we pay taxes on it. I think it should be
11 not only a first-time payment, but payments every
12 year, because it takes value. And I'm going to rent
13 that to somebody and I got to pay for that every
14 year. It's not like, oh, okay, get I paid one time
15 and that's for the rest of my life.
16 **COURT REPORTER:** I can't hear him when he
17 turns around.
18 **MR. DAVID EDMUNDS:** That's what they're
19 doing, and the whole time it's there, and this other
20 one is still there. So I keep track of some of this
21 stuff. If you have to live underneath it or farm
22 under it, I had a neighbor who found it messed
23 things up. And how do you do stuff with a one-time
24 payment? So do you think there would be more than
25 one payment for this?

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1 for near a station at the top of the headquarters,
2 the CEO of the company, does it go on any of their
3 property?
4 **MR. JASON WEIERS:** We do evaluate a
5 variety of different factors when evaluating the
6 routes for the transmission line and balance a lot
7 of those factors in our best attempt to identify
8 least impactful routes for the transmission line.
9 If there are alternatives that should be considered,
10 we certainly are willing to entertain those through
11 this process.
12 **MR. DAVID EDMUNDS:** And can you also tell
13 me if any of the power line will be going on any
14 government property of any sort? The last one
15 didn't.
16 **MR. JAMES WEIERS:** We have evaluated both
17 the public and private land for the routes and we do
18 have federal and state parcels involved in some of
19 these proposed routes. We have been in touch the
20 Fish and Wildlife and the Minnesota DNR and are
21 evaluating the alternatives and plan on continue
22 engaging with them as we work through this process.
23 **MR. DAVID EDMUNDS:** Hopefully someone has
24 some things that I missed.
25 Thank you.

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1 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Thank you, sir.
2 Is there any other folks that would like
3 to speak publicly tonight? Again, I'll remind you
4 that if you prefer to have written comments, you can
5 follow those instructions.
6 Is there anybody else that would like to
7 speak?
8 Yes, sir. Please state and spell your
9 name.
10 **MR. JASON SAFFERT:** Jason Saffert,
11 S-A-F-F-E-R-T.
12 Can you elaborate on the 1000-foot
13 corridor that you commented on earlier on the
14 easement?
15 **MR. JAMES WEIERS:** Thank you for your
16 comment, Mr. Saffert.
17 The route permit application does include
18 a 1000-foot-wide corridor width, and actually it
19 gets a little wider than that in some areas where we
20 have some constraints that we have to deal with, and
21 at other places it gets a little narrower. But,
22 yes, generally a 1000-foot corridor is intended to
23 allow for some flexibility so that once we get an
24 approved route from the Commission we have the
25 ability to move the location for the easement.

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1 **MR. JAMES WEIERS:** In that 1000-foot-wide
2 easement we would limit it to 150 feet wide. And we
3 would engage with the landowners and have it be
4 acceptable to both landowners involved.
5 **MR. JASON SAFFERT:** Okay. That's all I
6 got for now.
7 Thank you.
8 **MR. JAMES WEIERS:** Thank you.
9 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Thank you, sir.
10 Appreciate your comments.
11 Is there anyone else who would like to
12 speak publicly tonight? And, again, if there isn't,
13 you can send in written comments until January 31st.
14 So those are weighted just the same as public
15 comments. So if you think of something later on,
16 please do that.
17 I'll open it up again here. And if you
18 don't have anything else, have a good evening.
19 But is there a last call for comments?
20 Does anyone else want to speak?
21 All right. If we don't have any more, we
22 want to thank you again very much. So thanks for
23 taking the time to come, and stay warm and have a
24 safe drive home.
25 And please reach out to Jenna or I with

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1 **MR. JASON SAFFERT:** So basically it'll
2 still be a 150-foot easement, but maybe right now
3 your defined lines are on a fence line and it would
4 be a 75-foot easement on each side and it actually
5 could go across somebody's land and they'd have a
6 whole 150-foot easement. So then is it 500 feet in
7 each direction from there where you have flexibility
8 to change your route?
9 **MR. JAMES WEIERS:** Typically, yes, we do
10 have the flexibility to move that 150-foot-wide
11 easement area.
12 **MR. JASON SAFFERT:** I'm thinking that
13 you're having a 75-foot easement to having a full
14 150-foot easement across your whole route, in
15 theory?
16 **MR. JAMES WEIERS:** That's possible, as we
17 continue to coordinate with landowners, after the
18 permitting process is complete.
19 **MR. JASON SAFFERT:** Is this something
20 that would be defined before the easements are even
21 offered? Because how do you offer somebody an
22 easement when you're paying for 75 and you're
23 actually paying for more? Is that what you're
24 doing? Are you trying at 1000 and saying we're only
25 taking 150 feet of it?

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1 more questions if you have any.
2 Thanks, everybody.
3 (Proceeding concluded at 6:56 p.m.)
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In The Matter Of:

Big Stone South to Alexandria - 23-160

Scoping Meeting - Benson - 1-15-25

January 15, 2025

Scoping Meeting - 23-160 - Benson - 1-15-25

Shaddix & Associates

7400 Lyndale Avenue South

Suite 190

Richfield, MN 55423

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1 SCOPING AND INFORMATIONAL MEETING - 23-160
 2 BENSON - JANUARY 15, 2025 - 6:00 P.M.
 3 BEFORE THE MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
 4 AND DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
 5
 6 In the Matter of the Application for a Route Permit for
 7 the Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission
 8 Project in West-Central Minnesota
 9
 10 MPUC DOCKET NO. E017, ET10/TL-23-160
 11
 12
 13 Benson Northside Elementary School
 14 1800 Nevada Avenue
 15 Benson, Minnesota
 16
 17 January 15, 2025
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 20
 21
 22
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 24
 25 STENOGRAPHIC COURT REPORTER: Janet Shaddix Elling, RPR

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1 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Good evening, folks.
 2 Thanks very much for coming tonight. We're at 6:00.
 3 So if you'd like to take a seat here, we'll get
 4 started in a minute.
 5 All righty. We appreciate all you taking
 6 time out of your evening to come here and learn
 7 about the project and offer comments about the
 8 project. My name is Sam Lobby. I'm with the
 9 Minnesota Public Utilities Commission.
 10 And we're here tonight to talk about the
 11 public information and environmental review scoping
 12 meeting for the Big Stone South to Alexandria
 13 345-kilovolt transmission project, and that's under
 14 Docket Number 23-160.
 15 This is our fourth meeting. We have six
 16 total, which includes one virtual. We had two
 17 yesterday. This is our second one today. We have
 18 one more tomorrow in Ortonville, and then we have
 19 the virtual online. Every meeting is covering the
 20 exact same thing. So if you come to one, you're
 21 getting the same information. Sometimes folks do,
 22 you know, come to the first meeting, they think of
 23 something, and they want to comment at the virtual
 24 meeting later. If you want to comment publicly, you
 25 can do that, but the written comments are looked at

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1 the same way. You can submit those through January
 2 31st, and I'll repeat some of that as we go through
 3 the presentation.
 4 So just a quick introduction: Again, I'm
 5 Sam Lobby with the Public Utilities Commission. I'm
 6 going to go over the permit application review
 7 process. After that, Mr. Jason Weiers with Otter
 8 Tail Power Company will talk a little more about the
 9 project itself.
 10 And, then, Jenna Ness with the Department
 11 of Commerce will talk about the environmental study.
 12 And so that study is one of the main things that
 13 tonight is about, is to get your feedback on what to
 14 study, which includes potential alternative routes.
 15 So I'll just put that up for a second.
 16 That's my contact information. If you're here
 17 tonight, you are at the very beginning of this
 18 process. You got involved at the right time. You
 19 can offer your comments. This is going to be a long
 20 process. It'll take over a year to complete this
 21 process, so you're getting involved at the right
 22 time.
 23 For this particular stage in the process,
 24 the comment period will go through January 31st.
 25 I'll keep saying that just so folks remember that,

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1 but this is a little plug, even if it's outside of a
2 comment period, you can always reach out to me if
3 you have questions.
4 The state isn't affiliated with the
5 project, in terms of being for or against it. We're
6 just the agency that they apply to. So if you ever
7 have any questions or you want to, you know, give
8 feedback about the environmental review or anything,
9 you can contact myself or Jenna.
10 So the purpose of tonight's meeting is,
11 first, to provide information about the proposed
12 project, as well as the state's high-voltage
13 transmission line route permitting process. We also
14 want to -- one of the main parts of tonight is we
15 want to provide an opportunity for you, the public,
16 to participate in developing the scope of the
17 environmental impact statement, which we'll refer to
18 as the EIS. So "environmental impact statement" is
19 kind of the jargon term for the environmental study
20 that's going to take place. So the scope of that
21 study, what we look at, that's going to be
22 influenced by any comments that you might have.
23 So as far as the sort of comments you
24 might have, we're particularly interested in
25 comments on potential impacts of the proposed

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1 project. That's the, kind of, legalese way of
2 saying that they will look at your comments, review
3 those things, look at legal standards, and then
4 provide a final report.
5 So just another note with the
6 Administrative Law Judge, tonight is -- as I said,
7 is about getting your feedback on what we should be
8 studying for this project. So that later in the
9 process -- I'll go through a timeline in a minute,
10 but it will be around September or October -- we'll
11 come right back here. We'll do a very similar
12 meeting, but at that point we will be talking about
13 the study what was done based on the comments we had
14 tonight. And so at that point, you'll have an
15 opportunity to react to that, and then let us know,
16 did we study what you thought we should study?
17 A little background on the Minnesota
18 Public Utilities Commission: It consists of five
19 Commissioners, appointed by the Governor and
20 confirmed by the Senate. We regulate three service
21 industries: Electricity, natural gas, and
22 telephone. The mission is to ensure safe, adequate,
23 and efficient utility services at fair and
24 reasonable rates, and we provide independent,
25 professional oversight in regulation of utility

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1 project, as well as comments on methods to minimize,
2 mitigate, and avoid potential impacts, and that
3 includes proposing alternative routes or route
4 segments for consideration.
5 We'll have our contact information up
6 again. You can also grab a copy of the presentation
7 upfront, so that you can reach out to us if you have
8 questions later on.
9 So a little bit of background: There's
10 three main government units that will be involved in
11 this process. The first is the Public Utilities
12 Commission. We're the government unit that reviews
13 the applications and issues site and route permits
14 in the state of Minnesota.
15 Next, is the Department of Commerce.
16 They manage the environmental review process for the
17 Commission, and they prepare the environmental
18 impact statement, which is the study on the proposed
19 project.
20 Also, an Administrative Law Judge from
21 the Office of Administrative Hearings will
22 facilitate a public hearing later on in the process,
23 and then they will provide a report to the
24 Commission, setting forth findings of fact,
25 conclusions of law, and recommendations on the

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1 service providers in a manner that is consistent
2 with the public interest.
3 So in order for the Big Stone South to
4 Alexandria transmission line project to be
5 constructed, the Commission has to issue -- what is
6 another jargon term -- a route permit, and is going
7 through the full review process. So the full review
8 process is the most rigorous process for evaluating
9 these permits. And that is for any high-voltage
10 transmission line operating at a nominal voltage of
11 200 kilovolts or more and greater than 30 miles in
12 length.
13 So tonight we're just here to talk about
14 the route permit. Sometimes if you've been -- I've
15 talked to folks who have been to other similar
16 meetings, and so you may have even been to earlier
17 meetings related to this process for the certificate
18 of need. Often the route permit and certificate of
19 need go together.
20 In this case, the certificate of need was
21 granted in October of 2024 for this project as part
22 of the larger project, Big Stone South to Alexandria
23 to Big Oaks transmission project. So you may have
24 come to one of those meetings. That was for the
25 certificate of need. That has been granted, so

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1 tonight we're here to talk about the route permit.
 2 If you are interested in looking at that larger
 3 project, the docket number of that is 22-538. If
 4 you grab a copy of the presentation, that's in there
 5 so you don't have to memorize that.
 6 I won't get too deep into the project
 7 itself because Mr. Weiers will talk more about that,
 8 but a quick overview is the applicants are proposing
 9 to build a new, approximately, 91- to 105-mile,
 10 345-kilovolt double-circuit capable transmission
 11 line. Only one circuit will be installed initially.
 12 The proposed 345-kV line will run from the Big Stone
 13 South substation near the Minnesota-South Dakota
 14 border to the existing Alexandria substation near
 15 Alexandria, Minnesota.
 16 This transmission project is needed to
 17 address regional reliability issues on the existing
 18 230-kilovolt system in western and central
 19 Minnesota.
 20 So this timeline gives you an idea of
 21 what to expect coming up. Like I said, it's a long
 22 process, and this is the beginning, so you're
 23 getting involved at the right time. The application
 24 was submitted back in October of 2024, and the
 25 Commission accepted the application on December 3rd,

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1 March of 2026 is, tentatively, going to make a final
 2 decision on this project.
 3 So I just want to thank you all, again,
 4 very much for coming tonight. Your feedback really
 5 does matter. It's important for the planning
 6 process. So thank you for taking the time out of
 7 your evening, and I'll hand it over to Mr. Weiers.
 8 **MR. JASON WEIERS:** All right. Thanks,
 9 Sam.
 10 And thanks, everyone, for being here
 11 tonight. As Sam mentioned, my name is Jason Weiers,
 12 the manager of transmission project development at
 13 Otter Tail Power Company, and tonight I'm here to
 14 represent the applicants.
 15 The applicants in this docket are Otter
 16 Tail Power Company and Western Minnesota Municipal
 17 Power Agency. Otter Tail and Western Minnesota will
 18 co-own the Big Stone South to Alexandria project.
 19 Through this proceeding, Western Minnesota is being
 20 represented by Missouri River Energy Services.
 21 The project that Otter Tail and Western
 22 Minnesota are requesting a route permit for
 23 involves, approximately, a hundred-mile,
 24 345-kilovolt transmission line from Otter Tail's Big
 25 Stone South substation just west of Big Stone City

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1 2024.
 2 That third line down, "public information
 3 meetings," that's where we're at tonight. As I
 4 mentioned, this is our fourth of six meetings.
 5 Based on the feedback that we get from you all, as
 6 far as what will be included in the environmental
 7 study, in March to April, Jenna will make a scoping
 8 decision. So it would all be included and, again,
 9 that incorporates your comments.
 10 She will then do that study. It's a very
 11 rigorous study. It will take several months, so
 12 that draft would come out around September,
 13 tentatively, of 2025. Then, we'll release the
 14 draft, so that you all have several weeks, a month
 15 or so maybe, to review that and look at it and react
 16 to it, and that's when we come back here. I
 17 mentioned that there would be an Administrative Law
 18 Judge. So at that time, the Judge will take your
 19 comments about the project: Did we study what you
 20 thought we should study?
 21 Then, after that, Jenna will also
 22 incorporate those comments, and then issue a final
 23 EIS, which is tentatively scheduled to be in
 24 December of 2025. And later on in 2026 is when the
 25 Commission is tentatively scheduled to make -- in

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1 in South Dakota to Western Minnesota's Alexandria
 2 substation on the southwest side of the city of
 3 Alexandria.
 4 Similar to the transmission line you see
 5 along Interstate-94, we're planning to construct
 6 this line using double-circuit capable structures,
 7 but initially we will only be installing one
 8 circuit.
 9 Along with the expansions at the endpoint
 10 substations and the transmission line itself, we may
 11 also install what we call a fiber-optic regeneration
 12 station along the central section of the
 13 transmission line. This fiber-optic regeneration
 14 station is needed to amplify the communication
 15 signals between the endpoint substations.
 16 As I mentioned earlier, the transmission
 17 structures that we plan to use for this project will
 18 look similar to what you see along Interstate-94,
 19 with the exception that we plan to use COR-TEN steel
 20 rather than galvanized steel. So what this means is
 21 that the structures will have more of a brown color
 22 to them rather than a gray color.
 23 We do expect that the typical structure
 24 will be between 120 and 180 feet tall. The
 25 structure will sit upon a concrete foundation,

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1 between 7 feet and 14 feet in diameter. And that
2 concrete foundation may be anywhere between 25 and
3 80 feet deep, depending on the soil conditions.
4 Structures will be between 400 and 1,400 feet apart,
5 and that depends upon the approved route, along with
6 the geographic terrain for the route that is
7 approved.
8 Lastly, I'll mention that our typical
9 right-of-way for our 345-kilovolt transmission line
10 is 150 feet wide, and that is 75 feet on either side
11 of the centerline of the structure, so a total width
12 of 150 feet.
13 Sam talked earlier about the need for the
14 project, and that need was previously approved by
15 the Commission back in October of 2024. The need
16 was based on a study that was performed by the
17 Midcontinent Independent System Operator, or MISO.
18 MISO is the regional transmission
19 organization that oversees the planning of the
20 transmission system in this region and identifies
21 future needs for transmission. In July of 2022,
22 MISO approved a portfolio of 18 new transmission
23 projects in the Midwest region. One of those is the
24 Big Stone South to Alexandria project, shown as
25 project number 2 on the map on the slide.

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1 of a study area where we were considering to route
2 the transmission project. We gathered information
3 from landowners and other interested stakeholders
4 and came back for a second round of public meetings
5 in October of 2023 where we shared our proposed
6 project corridors.
7 In February of 2024, we had come back for
8 a third round of open houses, and we shared route
9 corridors with the public. We continued to gather
10 information, and, ultimately, in June of 2024, we
11 held our fourth round of public open houses, which
12 then included our proposed route options for
13 inclusion in the route permit application.
14 We did consider feedback extensively from
15 the landowners that have participated in these past
16 open houses, along with a lot of consultation with
17 the agencies, to come up with the proposed route
18 that you will find in our permit application.
19 Slide 17 has our proposed routes between
20 the border -- the South Dakota-Minnesota border and
21 the Alexandria substation. Generally speaking,
22 you'll notice two route options from the North
23 Dakota -- I'm sorry, from the Minnesota-South Dakota
24 border to the Alexandria substation.
25 As Sam mentioned earlier, we're generally

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1 So the Commission previously approving
2 the need for the project, today's focus is a
3 discussion around the scope of the environmental
4 review related to the route permit application that
5 we filed with the Minnesota Commission on October
6 22nd of 2024.
7 Given that part of this project does
8 include some length in South Dakota, we also have
9 applied for a facility permit from the South Dakota
10 Public Utilities Commission. We have been going
11 through that process since April of 2024, and we
12 expect a decision from the South Dakota Public
13 Utilities Commission no later than April of this
14 year.
15 If you attended some of the previous open
16 houses in this area for the project, you may be
17 aware that we have undertaken a very extensive
18 effort over the course of the last 18 months with
19 four different rounds of open houses along the
20 proposed corridors for the project. And these open
21 houses were used to gather information that we
22 considered when we identified the proposed routes in
23 our permit application.
24 We started back in April of 2023 with our
25 first round of open houses, that included an outline

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1 looking at a total distance between 91 miles and 105
2 miles in Minnesota, and that depends on the route
3 option that is selected through this process.
4 For ease in analyzing these route
5 options, we have broken these route options into
6 three different areas. There's a south area that
7 are shown in blue colors, a central area shown in
8 orange colors, and then a north area that's shown
9 with purple colors.
10 Although we'll only need 150 feet of
11 right-of-way for the new 345-kilovolt transmission
12 line, you'll notice in our application that we
13 generally included a route corridor width of 1,000
14 feet. And this gives us some flexibility to work
15 with landowners to identify the optimum location for
16 the centerline of the transmission line so we can
17 minimize impacts for landowners.
18 The south segments that are included in
19 our route permit application are anywhere between 39
20 and 42 miles in total length. And, again, these
21 start at the Minnesota-South Dakota border, and they
22 end in Tara Township in Swift County.
23 The central route segment options are
24 between 34 and 39 miles of length from Tara Township
25 in Swift County up to Ben Wade Township in Pope

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1 County. And then, lastly, the north route segments
2 are between 18 and 25 miles from Ben Wade Township
3 up to the Alexandria substation in Douglas County.
4 If you are a landowner along the approved
5 route, this slide explains a general construction
6 overview of what you can expect on your property.
7 Once we have the land rights in place, we start with
8 surveying and staking the proposed structure
9 locations. Next, we will establish temporary access
10 roads to get to the right-of-way. The third step in
11 the process is installing the concrete foundations.
12 After the foundations are installed, we
13 will set the structures on the foundation. And
14 after the structures are set, we will string the
15 conductor generally with the use of a helicopter.
16 And then, lastly, we will restore that work area by
17 removing any temporary access roads and reseeding
18 disturbed areas of the construction in coordination
19 with the landowners.
20 Sam talked briefly about the permitting
21 process and the anticipated schedule. As we look at
22 the larger body schedule, considering that we'll
23 have the Minnesota permitting process hopefully
24 wrapped up in the second quarter of 2026, based on
25 that assumption, we look forward to additional land

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1 toll-free number. We do have members of our project
2 team monitoring each one of these media channels
3 each day, and we do our best to respond to comments
4 within 24 to 48 hours with that.
5 I'll turn it over to Jenna for the next
6 presentation.
7 **MS. JENNA NESS:** Hi. I'm Jenna with the
8 Department of Commerce. I am the environmental
9 review manager for this project. That means I'm
10 managing the EIS, the environmental impact
11 statement. I appreciate your time coming here
12 tonight. I'll briefly go over the Department of
13 Commerce's role in the environmental review and what
14 creating that EIS looks like. We'll talk about all
15 the different ways you can comment, and then we'll
16 get into the oral public comment part of the meeting
17 and you'll be able to ask questions as well.
18 So the Department of Commerce conducts
19 the environmental review for the Commission, and
20 they offer objective analysis of the project, which
21 means that we are making a fact-based document and
22 offering information for the project and its impacts
23 for the public and other parties. And that can be
24 used for informed decision-making, which essentially
25 is any governmental unit or another party that will

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1 rights outreach starting after we get the route
2 permit application decision from the Commission. We
3 will begin that acquisition process with landowners
4 to acquire the 150 feet of right-of-way that we need
5 for the project.
6 After the land rights are secured, we
7 will perform field surveys to help support our
8 efforts to obtain other federal, state, and local
9 permits. We expect the acquisition of those
10 additional permits to take approximately two years,
11 which will get us into the early part of 2028.
12 Assuming we have all those permits in
13 place, we anticipate we'll start construction in the
14 spring of 2028 and wrap up construction by the end
15 of 2030. This is our best estimate of the schedule
16 at this time, but it is subject to change based on a
17 number of factors such as material lead times,
18 contractor availability, and weather conditions.
19 If you have further questions or would
20 like additional information following this meeting,
21 you're always welcome to contact me by phone or
22 email. My contact information is shown here on
23 slide 23. Alternatively, you are always welcome to
24 visit our project website and leave us comments,
25 send us an email, or leave us a voicemail on our

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1 be issuing things about the permit.
2 The main things we do in this document is
3 evaluate the potential human health and
4 environmental impacts of the project, and
5 identifying ways to potentially avoid or mitigate
6 those impacts.
7 So today we're at the scoping part of
8 this process, and the scope of the EIS is,
9 essentially, the table of contents. If you grabbed
10 a copy of the draft scope on the way in, it looks
11 like this (indicating). That is our proposed layout
12 of the EIS.
13 So the EIS needs to be focused on the
14 most relevant information needed to make those
15 informed decisions, and that's part of this process
16 in getting public comment to make sure we're
17 including everything in the EIS that we need to.
18 So another thing that is included in this
19 public process is alternate routes that can be
20 suggested tonight and -- or in public comment as
21 well. And if you'd like to suggest an alternative
22 route, it will need to mitigate a potential impact.
23 That impact can be a range of things, including
24 something as simple as a disturbance to your
25 viewshed.

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1 It must also be specific and
2 identifiable, and all I mean by that is I need to
3 know the area that needs to be studied. So if you
4 can draw it on a map, I can do a good job looking at
5 the impacts of that area.
6 So there's several ways to comment. The
7 oral comments that will be coming up soon in the
8 meeting, we have a court reporter with us tonight,
9 so those will be a part of the record. You can also
10 complete the comment sheets that you may have seen
11 on your way in. They look like this (indicating).
12 You can hand them into me tonight, or you can send
13 them in in the postal mail. My address is on the
14 back there.
15 You can also email me directly, and my
16 email is on the PowerPoint presentation. Or you can
17 go online to this link, and there will be a "submit
18 a comment" button. And just a reminder that the
19 comment period ends January 31st, the end of this
20 month.
21 Okay. So moving into the oral public
22 comments, we need to go over some rules. We need
23 one speaker at a time so our court reporter can
24 accurately document what you're saying. We also
25 need you to state and spell your name for the

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1 Is there anybody who would either like to
2 make a comment or ask a question?
3 Yes, sir. If you could come up, or we
4 could bring the microphone to you. Whatever is
5 easiest.
6 **MR. GEORGE DUCKWITZ:** That would be
7 easier.
8 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Okay. Thanks, Christy.
9 **MR. GEORGE DUCKWITZ:** My name is George
10 Duckwitz, D as in David, U-C-K-W-I-T-Z. I'm a
11 resident of Fairfield Township in western Swift
12 County, and I live south of your proposed route
13 number 2 on -- right along County Road 22.
14 Please pardon me, four months ago I
15 suffered a very acute stroke. I've pretty much got
16 control of my speech, but if my speech gets out of
17 control or you don't understand me, please let me
18 know and I'll try to slow down a little bit. And
19 also, too, I cannot control my -- I would say called
20 (inaudible), but I'll try my best.
21 **A little background about myself:** Many,
22 many years ago, probably about close to 45, I
23 received a bachelor of arts degree from the
24 University of Minnesota, majored in biology,
25 geology, and chemistry. I also earned a master's of

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1 record, your first and last name for the court
2 reporter.
3 And I think we have a good-sized turnout,
4 so we generally ask to limit your comments to a few
5 minutes, but we can always come back around, and you
6 can come up as many times as you would like.
7 And it's most helpful if you can direct
8 your comments at the scope of the environmental
9 impact statement, but we're also answering questions
10 tonight if you would like to directly ask us
11 anything.
12 So with that, I'm just going to put this
13 reminder slide up about what the scope of the EIS
14 means. We're looking for comments on any human and
15 environmental impacts we may have missed, strategies
16 to mitigate those, and, of course, alternatives to
17 the proposed route that mitigate impacts as well.
18 Thank you.
19 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Thank you, Jenna.
20 So that's our presentation. We want to
21 open up the rest of the night for folks to speak.
22 When I last checked right before I came up here, I
23 didn't see that anybody signed up to speak. Which
24 is just fine, we can -- we'll still give you all an
25 opportunity.

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1 science in geology from Oklahoma State University.
2 My comments tonight are regarding the
3 proposed route number 2 on -- along County
4 Road/Highway 22. One thing that I'm having a hard
5 problem with this here is: I don't trust you all.
6 And four times in my lifetime I've been involved in
7 situations similar to this where a proposed project
8 was ran through, and the end result devastated the
9 area that they put the proposed project in.
10 And we've seen private sectors with a lot
11 of money pushed in, and we have people like the
12 Public Utilities Commission and Department of
13 Commerce sitting there, and then they -- I'll say
14 that they were bought off, that's just my opinion.
15 I'll give you an example. About 1980s,
16 we -- well, back in the 1960s, I lived along the
17 Pomme de Terre River, and I remember as a kid
18 catching the fish, watch the walleye, the northern
19 pike, grab the fish out of the clear water. And
20 river systems had a -- have a pool and the rapid
21 areas, and the rapid area was full of chunks of
22 gravel. In the summer days, the gravel sparkled
23 like gold.
24 Then, we started seeing the water quality
25 deteriorate. So we went to our local units of

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1 government, Swift County commissioners for this area
2 here, and they have -- they got in coordination with
3 the other six -- other five counties with
4 geopolitical boundaries that lie within the Pomme de
5 Terre watershed and formed the Pomme de Terre River
6 Association. And we thought we had something that
7 was really helpful there, and then Doug Rasmussen
8 was appointed chairman of that commission. And
9 after about four years, he announced his retirement.
10 And he says, I apologize to you people
11 along the river. The purpose of this association
12 was to set you people up in the watershed district.
13 We found out there was -- a lot of money came from,
14 not only the landowners, whose mentality was, once
15 the water is off my land, it's not my problem
16 anymore, to bankers, tile companies, seed companies,
17 implement companies to prevent drainage of the
18 waters of the wetland.
19 So, anyway, what's basically happened now
20 is the Pomme de Terre River is now the fifth most
21 polluted river in the state of Minnesota. And,
22 ironically, the people that did not want us to do
23 anything to maintain the quality of that water,
24 their grandchildren are swimming in the river and
25 they're wondering why their grandkids are getting

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1 to know what values were you using to arrive at the
2 reduction of 399 metric tons, which is listed in
3 chapter four of that report. How did you come up
4 with those -- how did you come up with that number?
5 **MS. JENNA NESS:** Are you talking about
6 the numbers in the application?
7 **MR. GEORGE DUCKWITZ:** In that Big Stone
8 to Alexandria transmission report that was filed.
9 It was listed in chapter four.
10 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** I don't want to sound
11 evasive, but I don't know the answer to that because
12 that's part of a previous project. So I don't
13 have -- I don't have that information in front of
14 me. I apologize.
15 **MR. GEORGE DUCKWITZ:** Well, the reason
16 why I ask that question is I looked at the records
17 listed in that report, and in the last report that
18 came out, the state of Minnesota lost over 100,000
19 acres of farm/cropland due to urban sprawl,
20 transmission poles, wind farms, solar farms were all
21 included in that.
22 In that report it lists that
23 approximately 1,700 acres of agricultural land is
24 going to be taken out of production for this project
25 to go through, of which 900 and some acres is

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1 sick.
2 The second thing is, in the report that
3 you all submitted, it talks about wind turbines and
4 those types of energy. This company called Apex, I
5 learned, is -- wants to build wind turbines in
6 western Swift County, and they want to throw in
7 \$30 million to Swift County and a million dollars to
8 each township to allow them to build wind turbines
9 in -- in the area.
10 For the few of us in this room that are
11 Christians know that it's written in the bible in
12 the book of Proverbs, Chapter 29, Verse 4 is where
13 it basically said: The king established the lands,
14 and the one that accepts a bribe destroys it.
15 And those of you that remember the story
16 of the Trojan Horse, how the Greeks made the Trojan
17 Horse because they could not break the walls of the
18 city of Troy down, and the Trojan Priest Laocoöm,
19 L-A-0-C-0-0-M, said I fear the Greeks when they bear
20 gifts. So, anyway, that's kind of the background
21 why I don't trust you all.
22 So what I wanted to talk about is in that
23 report for the certificate of need for the Big Stone
24 South to Alexandria, you list how much carbon
25 emissions this project will be reducing. I'd like

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1 considered private farmland. What this is doing is
2 forcing us farmers to find additional land to farm.
3 So what we're doing is we're tearing out fence
4 lines, that are -- are known carbon sequesters.
5 We're tearing out abandoned build sites. We're
6 tearing down the trees, which is also known as
7 carbon sequesters, and turning it into cropland,
8 which is now a carbon emitter.
9 One of the things that I was surprised to
10 learn in the report was that there -- when I wrote
11 my master's thesis, I referenced a model by
12 Dr. Robert Cleary, C-L-E-E-R-Y [sic], a geoscientist
13 from the University of São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil;
14 and a civil engineer at Princeton University.
15 And I had a chance to have a face-to-face
16 meeting with him. And if you don't remember back in
17 the '70s and early '80s, there was such an unknown
18 horror about deforestation of the Brazilian tropical
19 rainforests. And then, of course, my
20 conversation -- even though the model that I used of
21 his was not associated with climate models, I did --
22 my face-to-face meeting, I asked him some questions
23 about that.
24 And he replied back, he said, where you
25 live is the Prairie Pothole Region, your people are

1 essentially draining the wetlands. The data clearly
 2 shows it. Your people's activities have a greater
 3 impact on climate change than my -- than Brazilian
 4 people cutting down a few trees. And I think
 5 there's a lot of truth to that statement after years
 6 of seeing it.

7 And also, too, you did not reference any
 8 of Dr. Don Reicosky, R-E-I-C-O-S-K-Y, a researcher
 9 from the US Department of Agriculture, North Central
 10 Research Lab, and agricultural researcher
 11 (indiscernible) on Morris, Minnesota. He did
 12 extensive research on how much carbon -- us farmers
 13 in different tillage practices and different
 14 conservation practices, how much carbon has been
 15 released or sequestered.

16 And none of your research stated
 17 reference to any of his work that he's done on what
 18 carbon methods we farmers can reduce, and projects
 19 like this will enhance us to emit more carbon into
 20 the atmosphere instead of sequester it.

21 So I was wondering, do you propose to
 22 include these values in your matrix when you
 23 calculate how many tons of carbon is being mitigated
 24 by this proposed project?

25 **MS. JENNA NESS:** I might have to ask a

1 we farmers have to find to replace the land that's
 2 been removed by the project.

3 **MS. JENNA NESS:** Okay. Yeah, I'll have
 4 to talk with my team about that. I know a lot of
 5 times people can still farm within the right-of-way.
 6 So we'd have to find a way to calculate how much
 7 room that is and do the math, but it's certainly
 8 something we'll look into.

9 **MR. GEORGE DUCKWITZ:** It's very important
 10 to look into, because I think from the data that I
 11 looked at in Reicosky's reports that I just skimmed
 12 over and looked at, one calculation was that 399
 13 metric tons that's referenced in that report will
 14 probably be negated. So then there's no benefit to
 15 carbon sequestration by building this power line.

16 **MS. JENNA NESS:** Okay. We'll look into
 17 that. I'm glad you were so specific about which one
 18 it was so I can look back at the record and make
 19 sure it's incorporated in the EIS.

20 **MR. GEORGE DUCKWITZ:** All right. Thank
 21 you. I've got a couple more comments to make, if I
 22 may.

23 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Just real quick, is there
 24 any other folks that would like to speak? We just
 25 want to make sure everyone has an opportunity. Are

1 few questions back and forth to make sure I
 2 understand. I think you referenced the study out of
 3 the U of M, Morris; is that correct?

4 **MR. GEORGE DUCKWITZ:** No, it's the US
 5 Farm and Agriculture, Agricultural Researchers,
 6 North Central Soils Lab out of Morris, Minnesota.

7 **MS. JENNA NESS:** Okay. So now that's in
 8 the record, I will definitely be able to reference
 9 it and see what kind of values they're using. I
 10 mean, if they're within the state of Minnesota,
 11 that's definitely a study I would want to look at.

12 We do verify greenhouse gas calculations.
 13 They provided some in the application, and I --
 14 could you restate your question about carbon
 15 sequestration with the crops?

16 **MR. GEORGE DUCKWITZ:** When we do
 17 different tillage practices, we release carbon into
 18 the atmosphere. It's also carbon crops, CRB, three
 19 claims that are known carbon sequesters that take
 20 the carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere and put it
 21 into the ground.

22 **MS. JENNA NESS:** Okay. So are you asking
 23 us to include that in the calculation for the
 24 farmland that is removed because of the project?

25 **MR. GEORGE DUCKWITZ:** The farmland that

1 there any other folks that are interested in
 2 speaking? And if you are, we can also wait until
 3 after.

4 It doesn't look like it.

5 **MR. GEORGE DUCKWITZ:** Okay. The next
 6 thing that comes up, one thing I didn't mention that
 7 was when I went to school to get degrees in geology
 8 and did work in the mineral industry, my main love
 9 was farming. And -- but I want to come back to --
 10 so what I'm getting at there was, besides farming, I
 11 also worked as a crop insurance adjuster and
 12 maintained the records for the compliance department
 13 of that.

14 In the course of my work there, I had an
 15 interesting conversation with a couple farmers who
 16 farm land that the -- that these transmission towers
 17 that you're proposing to build, the shadow that is
 18 cast onto the ground, they noticed on their combine
 19 yield markers that the yield of their crop was
 20 slightly less than with crop in the areas that is
 21 not shadowed. And I didn't find any research on
 22 that part either to establish that these wind --
 23 these transmission towers now -- laid over on the
 24 crop, that may actually be reducing the yield, but
 25 that's the conversations I had with some these

1 farmers. They maintain their load with their
2 combine yield markers, a reduced yield.
3 And a couple of them -- a few of them
4 also said they had -- the land alongside the wind
5 turbines, they also noticed reduced yields --
6 slightly reduced yields. So -- and I'm not aware of
7 any study that has researched that yet or not.
8 That's something else you might want to consider,
9 too.

10 **MS. JENNA NESS:** Okay. Thank you.

11 **MR. GEORGE DUCKWITZ:** The last thing is
12 along the Pomme de Terre River, along your route
13 number 2, you got -- there's a tributary called Dry
14 Wood Creek -- that is a confluence with the Pomme de
15 Terre River -- is two miles north of this
16 transmission line. A half-mile south is the
17 confluence of a waterway, which is -- drains from
18 the east, and mile and a half south is the Lake
19 Oliver confluence that drains to the west. This
20 land area of these three small tributaries is about
21 the size of Minneapolis-St. Paul.

22 Before you -- before we had 911, the way
23 people -- a lot of people used to navigate,
24 especially the Native Americans, was -- where these
25 tributaries were, they would follow them. And in

1 for your comment there. I will mention that we have
2 done our best in the application to include a review
3 of cultural resources from publicly-available
4 sources by performing a desktop review of what
5 available information is out there.

6 I will also mention that before we start
7 construction, we will be performing additional
8 surveys along the approved route to identify the
9 presence of any Native American artifacts.

10 **MR. GEORGE DUCKWITZ:** See, like my dad, a
11 few years ago found an oblong stone. I was going to
12 bring it along with me tonight, but I decided it was
13 too much to lug around. What's interesting is that
14 stone, where that stone -- that piece of granite, it
15 came from the Native Falls, St. Croix River area.
16 So how did that get from out there to over here in
17 Fairfield Township? That's the things that Mr. Nord
18 wanted to research and document, but the Native
19 Americans did not give him permission to do so.

20 So another -- and then the other thing
21 is, there's another gentleman, his name is Charlie
22 Hanson, he passed away years ago, but in my
23 conversations with him, the same thing. He
24 identified a lot of these sites along Artichoke Lake
25 where you're running this power through. That's all

1 Fairfield Township, we have several Native American
2 sites. One thing that was not mentioned in your
3 report was the history of Swift County that lists
4 the locations of some of the Indian burial mounds
5 and campsites on it.

6 Now, the University of Minnesota, Morris,
7 campus started out as an Indian boarding school, and
8 right now the Native Americans are worried that
9 maybe some of the Native children there might
10 have been -- that die were buried in unmarked
11 graves.

12 Swift County did not include all the
13 burial sites. When the University of Minnesota was
14 established, a professor named Bruce Nord wanted to
15 examine these burial sites and also the encampments
16 that the Native Americans had along the Pomme de
17 Terre River that were not documented yet in the
18 history of Swift County, but the Native Americans
19 would not grant permission to him.

20 So that's -- I did not see anything that
21 you had contact with the tribal people about
22 disturbing any of these Native American sites that
23 are located in Fairfield Township along the Pomme de
24 Terre River.

25 **MR. JASON WEIERS:** Thanks, Mr. Duckwitz,

1 I'm referring to is that Mr. Hanson has said the
2 same thing also, too, in that area.

3 I'm not aware about any sites along
4 Highway 12, the southern route that you want to do,
5 but I know along the -- in Fairfield Township,
6 running through there, if you counted that, and then
7 further west over by Artichoke Lake.

8 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Just one comment on that
9 as far as route permits. For all route permits,
10 there are conditions in the permit about if cultural
11 resources are discovered, and that's going to be
12 taken into account. And if anything is discovered,
13 it's not like construction just blazes right through
14 it.

15 **MS. JENNA NESS:** I would also want to
16 mention that we require applicants to contact every
17 single tribe in the state of Minnesota before they
18 submit their application and include proof of that
19 in the application.

20 And as soon as the Department of Commerce
21 gets an application, we reach out to all the tribal
22 historic preservation offices. So they are aware of
23 the project, and they at least get the heads-up and
24 can start looking into the area for any resources
25 they know of that, like you said, aren't documented

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1 in normal venues.
2 **MR. GEORGE DUCKWITZ:** I do have two more
3 things, if I may.
4 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Just real quick, are
5 there any other folks that are interested speaking?
6 I'm sorry. We need the court reporter to
7 be able to hear you.
8 We can come back to you, Mr. Duckwitz, if
9 that works.
10 **MR. GEORGE DUCKWITZ:** That's fine.
11 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Thank you, sir.
12 Sir, if you could please state and spell
13 your name for the record.
14 **MR. ALLEN MURN:** Yeah, Allen Murn
15 (phonetic).
16 It shows a picture of the high-line right
17 along the road, that's 94 up there. Why do they
18 have to go out in the field here? They're right
19 along that, all the way up to Moorhead there. Why
20 do you have to put it out in the middle of the field
21 here?
22 **MR. JASON WEIERS:** Thanks for your
23 comment. We have looked at the possibility of
24 following existing infrastructures, such as existing
25 roadways. And in areas where there's opportunities

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1 question.
2 Before we turn it back to Mr. Duckwitz,
3 are there any other folks that are interested in
4 speaking?
5 **MR. KIRBY MARQUART:** Kirby Marquart, Tara
6 Township. M-A-R-Q-U-A-R-T.
7 You have it on here, and I -- now I've
8 lost it. You have a -- what is it? A regeneration
9 site. We were wondering -- I was kind of wondering
10 where you're possibly going to put that. You know,
11 is that going to be a couple acres, or could you
12 explain more about what that could possibly be?
13 **MR. JASON WEIERS:** Certainly. Thanks for
14 your question, Mr. Marquart. We don't have an exact
15 location for the fiber-optic regeneration station at
16 this time. Ideally, we'd like to place it as close
17 to the middle of the line as we can, but without
18 knowing the specific route at this point, we don't
19 have a specific location for the fiber-optic
20 regeneration station.
21 What I will mention is that our goal was
22 to place that regeneration station within the
23 permitted corridor that's been identified as part of
24 the permit application, so somewhere within that
25 thousand-foot corridor.

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1 to parallel existing roads, we will work with
2 landowners and the proper road authorities to
3 determine the appropriate location of the
4 structures.
5 **MR. ALLEN MURN:** You can't hardly
6 work/spray behind them or anything.
7 **MR. JASON WEIERS:** Sure. In past
8 applications or past projects, I will mention that
9 we have hugged the structures approximately 20 feet
10 from the edge of road right-of-way. So
11 ultimately -- I mean, in those situations, we may
12 not need the full 150 feet of right-of-way. We
13 could get by with 20 feet on the one side of the
14 structure and 75 feet on the other side of the
15 structure. So in that case, 95 feet of easement
16 would be possible when we can parallel existing
17 roads.
18 **MR. ALLEN MURN:** I was just wondering
19 because I go up there quite a bit and the poles are
20 just right on the edge, and that makes it better for
21 the farmers.
22 **MR. JASON WEIERS:** And, certainly, we'll
23 coordinate with the landowners as best we can and
24 work with the appropriate road authorities.
25 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Thank, sir, for your

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1 The fiber-optic regeneration station will
2 look similar to a substation to the general public.
3 The anticipated space would probably be somewhere in
4 the footprint of about a hundred feet wide by a
5 hundred feet long, and that would be completely
6 surrounded with a fence.
7 And then there will also be a small
8 shelter building in that fenced area that houses the
9 communication equipment needed to handle the live
10 signal between the two endpoint substations. That
11 small shelter is anticipated to be about 15 feet
12 wide, 20 feet -- 25 feet long, and about 15 feet
13 tall.
14 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** All righty. Did you have
15 more follow-up questions or anything?
16 **MR. KIRBY MARQUART:** (Shakes head.)
17 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** All right. Is there any
18 other folks before we turn it back to Mr. Duckwitz?
19 And just a real quick reminder, too, I'll
20 just put it up here. If you don't want to speak
21 publicly, too -- or even if you do want to speak
22 publicly -- you can always also offer written
23 comments, which need to be in by January 31st, and
24 here's some information on that.
25 So if there's no one else, I will just

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1 return the microphone to Mr. Duckwitz. Thank you.
2 **MR. GEORGE DUCKWITZ:** Thank you.
3 As you know, the Native Americans regard
4 the bald eagle as a sacred, powerful bird. I was
5 always wondering why these bald eagles made their
6 nest on my land, a mile and a half south of this
7 transmission site.
8 And given what I told you earlier about
9 the burial mounds and campsites and stuff they've
10 got, this nest is right smack dab in the middle of a
11 two-mile radius of this area I was talking about
12 located in Fairfield Township where you want to run
13 this line through.
14 You referenced the Bald Eagle and Golden
15 Eagle Protection Act in your report. And it states
16 that the penalties for killing or disturbing, likely
17 to cause an injury, to the bald eagle for
18 individuals is \$100,000 and one year in prison. For
19 an organization, the fine is double.
20 Many of us farmers in this area are our
21 own organization, such as a corporation, an LLC,
22 partnership, trust, et cetera. If any of our
23 harvesting or tillage equipment would accidently
24 kill a bald eagle, we're looking double that fine.
25 Whereas, the entities that are owning

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1 University and Dr. Peter Marra, M-A-R-R-A. Loss is
2 L-O-S-S. And it was a research paper published in
3 2014. You used a research paper published in '26
4 [sic] about bird kills mitigation. So your report
5 is using outdated information that was -- that I'm
6 referencing. It appears that the remediation
7 measures are not reflected -- and this is bird
8 kills.
9 The other thing besides the bald eagles
10 coming through on my farm, I have witnessed several
11 times Trumpeter Swans coming through. And they're
12 part of somebody's research project because they
13 either have an orange collar with a number on their
14 neck or a black collar with a number on their neck,
15 the Trumpeter Swans that are coming through along
16 the Pomme de Terre River in Fairfield Township.
17 And then, also, the report mentions, you
18 know, that some of remediation measures reduces bird
19 kills. There are enough birds killed by domestic
20 animals and buildings, why do we need to kill more?
21 The point I'm getting at is it looks like
22 we've got a two-tiered type of justice system here,
23 where it's guys like you from Otter Tail Power, you
24 don't have to face the same penalties as we
25 residents who live out there. So -- and you don't

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1 this transmission line, that are known to kill and
2 disturb bald eagles, are most likely to be exempt
3 from penalties because they put some things on the
4 wire or try some mitigation methods to prevent the
5 bird kills, migratory birds.
6 This report referenced the Fish and
7 Wildlife, that work within 660 feet of the nest is
8 okay, and I did not find that 660 feet in that
9 report when I read through it. But I was surprised
10 to learn that the report did not mention the 2024
11 Eagle Rule for your mitigations on bird kills and
12 stuff.
13 Just so you should know, that there's
14 been several times in the spring of the year I've
15 seen as many as nine bald eagles on my farm,
16 immature to mature adult. The nest that's on my
17 farm, some years have one eaglet, some years have
18 two eaglets, so it makes it a total of four eaglets.
19 You have a different set of permitting processes to
20 go through for -- regarding the 2024 Rule. Hope
21 you're aware of that.
22 The other thing, too, that I was
23 surprised, we talked about avian mitigation that was
24 referenced in that report, you did not reference it,
25 a report by Dr. Scott Loss from the Oklahoma City

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1 live out there, but we do.
2 So how can we get away from the
3 two-tiered justice system with regard to bird kills
4 from what we do out there? That's something you
5 need to consider in your final assessment report so
6 we don't have a two-tiered justice system.
7 You know, basically, in summary, it
8 appears that my fears of you destroying what we
9 have, the way the county commissioners did by
10 accepting bribes to the Pomme de Terre River
11 Association, and then also, too, what I'm seeing on
12 the wind turbine farms, like the Grand Meadow
13 incident, where if you get rid of the turbine
14 blades, landfills are rejecting wind turbine blades.
15 I don't know, the wind farm is coming right behind
16 this transmission line over here you guys are
17 putting in, there's a number of easements
18 developing. And I, too, have been approached to --
19 if I want to consider getting an easement to put a
20 wind turbine up on my farm, and I turned them down.
21 It's kind of a joke. You know, last year
22 when the legislature had the state seal redesigned,
23 the individual that was barefoot and walking behind
24 a walk plan should be changed to transmission lines,
25 wind turbines, and solar panels. And the Indian

1 riding off on a horse in a sunset should be joined
2 by a farmer in four-wheel drive tractor and bald
3 eagles flying off into the sunset. It's
4 absolutely --
5 **MS. JENNA NESS:** We're getting off the
6 scope of the meeting today. So if you could please
7 stay on the scope of the environmental impact
8 statement or ask questions about the project, I'd
9 appreciate it.
10 **MR. GEORGE DUCKWITZ:** So, in summary, I'd
11 like you to consider other types of green energy,
12 such as fuel cells that use ethanol, and employ them
13 while you have time to meet the 2022 legislative
14 mandate before you have created a large, more costly
15 ecological disaster than what we currently are
16 dealing with, as I mentioned earlier. Share equally
17 the liability regarding the penalties for killing
18 eagles. And also include in your research how much
19 additional carbon are you forcing us farmers to emit
20 in your calculation of carbon reduction? Respect
21 the Native cultural sites, respect our community by
22 not destroying --
23 **COURT REPORTER:** Can you please slow
24 down?
25 **MR. GEORGE DUCKWITZ:** Okay. Sorry about

1 Written comments are accepted through January 31st,
2 and the information is up there. You can grab a
3 comment sheet on the way out, if you didn't already.
4 There's a place where you can write in your comments
5 and then put a stamp on it. You can go to the
6 website listed, or mail, fax, or email a comment to
7 Jenna.
8 I'll ask one more time if there's any
9 folks interested in commenting. If not, we'll
10 conclude the meeting, and folks can stick around and
11 ask a few more questions informally if you're
12 interested. Any other folks want to speak tonight?
13 All right. It doesn't look like we have
14 anybody else who wants to speak. So I just want to
15 thank you all once again for coming out and being
16 here tonight. Your feedback is very much
17 appreciated. And if you have any questions later
18 on, you can always reach out to us.
19 Have a great night, everybody, and a safe
20 drive home. Thank you.
21 (Public comment concluded.)
22
23
24
25

1 that.
2 Now is a good time to pause and consider
3 other types of green energy, such as fuel cells that
4 use ethanol, and employ them while you have time to
5 meet the 2022 legislative mandate of 100 percent
6 carbon-free electricity generation before you have
7 to create a large, more costly ecological disaster
8 than what we currently are dealing with, as
9 mentioned earlier.
10 Share equally in the liability regarding
11 the penalty for killing eagles. Also, include how
12 much carbon you are forcing us farmers to emit in
13 your calculation of carbon reduction. Respect the
14 Native cultural sites. Respect our community by not
15 destroying by false money, erecting (indiscernible),
16 pit neighbor against neighbor. Remember, the one
17 who accepts the bribe destroys the land, and beware
18 of the companies bearing gifts.
19 That's all I have. Thank you.
20 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Thank you for your
21 comments.
22 All right. We'll open it back up. Are
23 there any other folks that would like to make
24 comments or ask questions? And, again, if you don't
25 feel like speaking publicly, that is just fine.

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In The Matter Of:

*Big Stone South to Alexandria - 23-160
Scoping Meeting - Hancock - 1-15-25*

*January 15, 2025
Scoping Meeting - 23-160 - Hancock - 1-15-25*

*Shaddix & Associates
7400 Lyndale Avenue South
Suite 190
Richfield, MN 55423*

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1 SCOPING AND INFORMATIONAL MEETING - 23-160
 2 HANCOCK - JANUARY 15, 2025 - 11:00 A.M.
 3 BEFORE THE MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
 4 AND DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
 5
 6 In the Matter of the Application for a Route Permit for
 7 the Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission
 8 Project in West-Central Minnesota
 9
 10
 11 MPUC DOCKET NO. E017,ET10/TL-23-160
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 14
 15 Hancock City Hall
 16 662 6th Street
 17 Hancock, Minnesota
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 20 January 15, 2025
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 25 STENOGRAPHIC COURT REPORTER: Janet Shaddix Elling, RPR

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1 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Good morning, folks.
 2 My name is Sam Lobby, I'm with the
 3 Minnesota Public Utilities Commission.
 4 We have a full house today. We really
 5 appreciate all of you coming out today. Your
 6 comments and feedback are really useful for this
 7 project.
 8 And as far as we'll talk a little bit
 9 more today about what the state's role is. A big
 10 part of that is getting feedback from you all on
 11 this project, including route alternatives and
 12 things like that, so your participation is greatly
 13 valued and that makes a really big difference once
 14 an actual permit decision is made further down the
 15 line, and we'll get into that.
 16 So today we are here to talk about the
 17 public information and environmental review scoping
 18 meeting for the Big Stone South to Alexandria 345
 19 kilovolt Transmission Project. If you're looking it
 20 up online, it is docket 23-160.
 21 So just to give you an idea of what we're
 22 going to be covering here. We're going to buzz
 23 through our presentation and then open it up for
 24 comments.
 25 First, I'm Sam again, and I'm with the

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1 Public Utilities Commission, and I'm going to talk
 2 about the permit application review process.
 3 Next, Jenna with -- excuse me.
 4 Jason Weiers with Otter Tail Power will
 5 talk about the project itself.
 6 Then next, Jenna with the Department of
 7 Commerce will talk about the environmental study
 8 that's going to be done. And so that study is a big
 9 part of what we want to get your feedback on today,
 10 on what we should be studying, and then we'll open
 11 it up for questions and comments.
 12 So this is just my information. If
 13 you're here today, you're at the very beginning of
 14 the process, so you're coming at the right time to
 15 offer your comments so we can look at things and
 16 study things. But with that said, our comment
 17 period goes until January 31st, but after that, even
 18 if it's outside of a formal comment period, you can
 19 always reach out to me with questions and so you've
 20 got my information, my phone number and email, so
 21 feel free to give me a call.
 22 So the purpose of today's meeting is to
 23 provide information about the project itself as well
 24 as to provide information about the state's high
 25 voltage transmission line route permitting process.

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1 We want to today provide an opportunity for the
2 public to participate in developing the scope of the
3 environmental impact statement.
4 So the environmental impact statement, or
5 EIS, is kind of the jargon term for the study that
6 we're going to be doing. So what we're looking for
7 from you are comments on potential impacts of the
8 proposed project as well as comments on how to --
9 and methods of how to minimize, mitigate, or avoid
10 potential impacts, and that can include proposing
11 alternative routes or route segments for
12 consideration.
13 I've already provided my contact
14 information, but will provide everybody's again in
15 case you have questions or comments later.
16 So a little bit of background context on
17 this. There's three main government units that
18 oversee this process.
19 The first is the Minnesota Public
20 Utilities Commission who I work for. We're the
21 government unit that reviews applications and we
22 issue both site and route permits in Minnesota.
23 Next is the Department of Commerce. They
24 manage the environmental review process for the
25 Commission and they prepare the environmental impact

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1 Commission consists of five commissioners that are
2 appointed by the governor and confirmed by the
3 Senate. We regulate three service industries,
4 electricity, natural gas, and telephone. Our
5 mission is to ensure safe, adequate, and efficient
6 utility services at fair and reasonable rates. And
7 we provide independent professional oversight in the
8 regulation of the utility service providers in a
9 manner that is consistent with the public interest.
10 So today the Public Utilities Commission and
11 Commerce, we're not for or against the project, we
12 just want your feedback on what to study and then
13 later on in the process your comments can help
14 inform the Commission's decision-making process.
15 So there's some project requirements in
16 order for this to go through. The Big Stone South
17 to Alexandria transmission line, in order for it to
18 be constructed, the Commission needs to issue a
19 route permit. And this case is going through the
20 full process, so the full process is the most
21 rigorous review process there is, and that's
22 required for any high voltage transmission line
23 operating at a nominal voltage of 200 kilovolts or
24 more and greater than 30 miles in length.
25 I talked with some folks here who it

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1 statement for the study on the proposed project.
2 They're not here today, but later in the
3 process we'll have an administrative law judge from
4 the Office of Administrative Hearings who will
5 facilitate a public hearing later on in the process,
6 and then they will provide a report on the legal
7 findings, the findings of fact, the conclusions of
8 law, and recommendations on the proposed project.
9 And so that they will be taking all of your comments
10 and reviewing those and incorporating that into a
11 formal report, so just to give you kind of a sense
12 of what that's all about with the judge.
13 Today is the first meeting. We haven't
14 done the study yet, so we want to get your feedback
15 on what we should study. And then around September,
16 and I'll go over a timeline in a minute, but in the
17 September to October time period we'll come back to
18 this same place, the same type of meeting, except
19 the judge will be running it and at that point we
20 will have a draft of the environmental study, so
21 that gives you time to react to it and then look at
22 it and let us know did we study what you wanted us
23 to study. I'll talk a little bit more about that in
24 a minute.
25 So the Minnesota Public Utilities

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1 sounds like you've been in these processes before so
2 you might be familiar with this. You maybe have
3 seen a different process before where a route permit
4 and a certificate of need were associated together
5 and both were done at the same time. For this
6 process, we're just doing the route permit. The
7 certificate of need was already granted by the state
8 back in October of 2024, and that was for the larger
9 Big Stone South to Alexandria to Big Oaks
10 Transmission Project that's under docket number
11 22-538. So you may have come to some of those
12 meetings as well. That was the bigger part of it,
13 and so today is just about the route permit, so the
14 certificate of need has already been granted.
15 I won't get too deep into this part of it
16 because Mr. Weiers with the company will tell you
17 more about the project, but the quick overview is
18 that the Applicants are proposing to build a new
19 approximately 91- to 105-mile 345 kilovolt
20 double-circuit-capable transmission line, and only
21 one circuit will be installed initially. The
22 proposed 345 kV line will run from the Big Stone
23 South Substation near the Minnesota-South Dakota
24 border to the existing Alexandria Substation near
25 Alexandria, Minnesota.

1 This transmission project is needed to
2 address regional reliability issues on the existing
3 230 kilovolt system in western and central
4 Minnesota.
5 So just to give you kind of a sense of
6 what to expect here moving forward. As I mentioned,
7 you're at the beginning of the process so there's a
8 a long time left, there's going to be many other
9 opportunities for you all to comment and nothing at
10 this point is set in stone. So if you're here today
11 to offer your comments, you're here at the right
12 time, you're getting involved at the right time and
13 we really appreciate your participation.
14 So the application was originally
15 submitted in October of 2024 and it was accepted in
16 December. The third line down there, the public
17 information meetings, that's what we're doing here
18 today. So yesterday we held two meetings, one in
19 Alexandria and one in Glenwood. Today we've got
20 this one this morning here in Hancock and later
21 we've got one this evening in Benson. Tomorrow then
22 we have one in Ortonville and then we have a virtual
23 meeting. All of those are going to be the same
24 thing, so if you go to one you got all the
25 information.

1 administrative law judge. So that's the opportunity
2 where you tell us did we study what you thought we
3 should have.
4 Then based on the feedback that Jenna
5 gets from that meeting, she will then issue a Final
6 EIS, which would come out in December of 2025,
7 tentatively. And then the final Commission meeting
8 is tentatively scheduled for March of 2026, so quite
9 a ways off. There's nothing -- again, nothing is
10 set in stone at this point, we want to get your
11 comments and feedback, and there's plenty of
12 opportunity to do that throughout this process.
13 So thanks again for coming today and I
14 will go ahead and hand it over to Jason.
15 **MR. JASON WEIERS:** All right. Thank you,
16 Sam, and good morning, everybody. Thank you for
17 coming here today.
18 I am Jason Weiers, I'm manager of
19 transmission project development at Otter Tail and
20 speaking today on behalf of the Applicants for the
21 project. The Applicants include both Otter Tail and
22 Western Municipal Power Agency. Otter Tail and
23 Western Minnesota will co-own this project and
24 therefore we are co-Applicants in this application.
25 Western Minnesota is represented in this docket

1 You're more than welcome to come to
2 multiple meetings, including the virtual meeting, so
3 if you think of something later on, you can come and
4 speak publicly, which we're going to give you an
5 opportunity to do here, too, although a lot of folks
6 don't like to do that or speak publicly. Or even if
7 you think of something later, there is that comment
8 period, the written comment period that goes through
9 January 31st, and Jenna will talk a little bit more
10 about that.
11 So the public information meetings, those
12 will be done tomorrow and then we will take all that
13 feedback and Jenna will incorporate that into the
14 EIS scoping decision, so what ultimately what is
15 going to get studied from March or April. And this
16 is a very rigorous study, it will take several
17 months to do, so the draft of that will come out in
18 September, roughly, tentatively for now.
19 And so once that draft comes out, we'll
20 post that online and then you'll have several weeks
21 to review that, to look at it, did we incorporate
22 the things that you were wanting us to study, are
23 there other things that you think should be studied,
24 and then that's when we will come back in September,
25 October for the public hearings with the

1 through Missouri River Energy Services.
2 The project that Otter Tail and Western
3 Minnesota are requesting is a route permit for
4 approximately a 100-mile 345 kilovolt transmission
5 line that will go from Otter Tail's Big Stone South
6 Substation and it'll end at Western Minnesota's
7 Alexandria Substation on the southwest side of the
8 city of Alexandria. Similar to the transmission
9 line that you may have seen along Interstate 94, we
10 are planning to construct this line using
11 double-circuit-capable structures and one of those
12 circuits will be installed initially.
13 Along with the expansions that we'll need
14 to perform at each end point substation, we will
15 also install a fiber-optic regeneration station
16 along the central segment of the project. And this
17 fiber-optic regeneration station will be needed to
18 amplify the communication signals between two end
19 point substations.
20 As I mentioned earlier, structures for
21 the transmission line will appear similar to those
22 you see along Interstate 94, with the exception that
23 we do plan to use Cor-Ten steel rather than
24 galvanized steel. So what that means is that the
25 structures themselves will be more of a brown color

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1 rather than the silver color that you see along 94.
2 We do expect the structures will range in height
3 anywhere between 120 and 180 feet tall. The
4 structures will sit upon a concrete foundation that
5 could be anywhere between 7 and 14 feet in diameter,
6 and those concrete foundations could be anywhere
7 between 25 and 80 feet deep depending on the soil
8 conditions. Distance between the structures could
9 be anywhere between 400 feet apart to 1400 feet
10 apart, and this again would depend on the route
11 that's approved, and then ultimately the geographic
12 terrain that we're traversing.
13 Lastly, I do want to also share that the
14 typical right of way that we'll need for this 345
15 kilovolt line will be 150 feet wide, we'll be
16 seeking to acquire 75 feet on each side of the
17 centerline of the structures for a total width of
18 150 feet.
19 Sam talked about the certificate of need
20 being approved by the Commission back in October of
21 2024. That need proceeding really went through why
22 this project is needed and who identified the
23 project. It actually came from a study performed by
24 the Midcontinent Independent System Operator, or
25 MISO. MISO is the regional transmission

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1 leading to the route permit application that we
2 filed in October. And many of you may have
3 previously attended some of those open house
4 meetings.
5 Starting back in April of 2023 we shared
6 a study area in our first round of open houses
7 identifying the boundaries of which we're trying to
8 site the transmission project. We gathered feedback
9 from the open houses and refined the study area into
10 proposed project corridors. And we came back and
11 shared in a second round of public open houses in
12 October of 2023. We continued to refine the
13 corridors and came back for a third round of open
14 houses in February of 2024 where we shared the
15 proposed route corridors. And then most recently
16 back in June of 2024, we held our fourth round of
17 public open houses which shared our proposed route
18 options between that round of open houses. We did
19 consider information gathered from each round of
20 public open houses and used that to inform the
21 proposed routes that we included in our route permit
22 application.
23 So our proposed routes in the route
24 permit application are shown on slide 17 here.
25 You'll see that these routes start at the

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1 organization that oversees the planning of the
2 transmission system in this area. And in July of
3 2022, MISO approved a portfolio of 18 new
4 transmission projects needed to ensure a reliable
5 system in the future. One of those projects was the
6 Big Stone South to Alexandria Project that continues
7 down to Big Oaks shown as project 2 on this map
8 here.
9 So with the Commission previously
10 approving the need for the projects, we are here
11 today to talk about the scope of the environmental
12 review related to the route permit application that
13 the Applicants submitted to the Commission on
14 October 22nd of 2024. Given that part of this
15 transmission line does also traverse into South
16 Dakota, we also have applied for a facility permit
17 from the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission.
18 That process is currently underway and we expect a
19 decision from the South Dakota Public Utilities
20 Commission later in April of this year.
21 We have undertaken an extensive effort to
22 identify the routes that you see in the route permit
23 application. We have been participating in public
24 input sessions over the course of approximately 18
25 months, starting back in April of 2023, ultimately

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1 Minnesota-South Dakota border and end at the
2 Alexandria Substation. Generally speaking, there
3 are two different route segment options from the
4 border to the Alexandria Substation, and as Sam
5 mentioned earlier, these route options vary in
6 length between 91 miles long to 105 miles long
7 depending on which route option is selected.
8 For the ease in reference and as we look
9 to analyze these during the upcoming environmental
10 impact statement, we have divided the route segment
11 options into three different areas. We have the
12 south area that's shown here in blue. We have the
13 central area that's shown in the orange color. And
14 the north area is shown in the purple colors.
15 Although we will only need 150 feet of right of way
16 for the easement required for the 345 kilovolt
17 transmission line, our route permit application
18 generally included a 1000-foot-wide corridor to
19 allow some flexibility to adjust that alignment
20 based on future landowner discussions.
21 The south route segments here are
22 proposed to be anywhere between 39 and 42 miles in
23 length, and these start at the Minnesota-South
24 Dakota border and they proceed east, generally, in a
25 direction towards Tara Township in Swift County.

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1 The central route options vary anywhere
2 between 34 miles long to 39 miles long and these go
3 from Tara Township in Swift County up to Ben Wade
4 Township in Pope County.
5 And lastly, the north route segments are
6 anywhere between 18 and 35 miles in total length
7 from Ben Wade Township in Pope County up to the
8 existing Alexandria Substation in Douglas County.
9 So if you are a landowner along the
10 approved route, slide 21 gives a general
11 construction overview of what you can expect to
12 happen on your property along the right of way.
13 Starting first in the upper left-hand
14 corner, once we have land rights in place, we will
15 start with surveying the area and staking the
16 structure locations. Next we will establish
17 temporary access roads to get to the right of way.
18 The third step here, we will next install the
19 concrete foundations. After the foundations are
20 installed, we will then set the structures on those
21 concrete foundations. After the structures are set,
22 then next is stringing the conductor in place. When
23 we string the conductor we commonly use a helicopter
24 to aid in that installation of the conductor. And
25 then lastly we will restore our work areas and

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1 estimating in late 2030.
2 My contact information is included here
3 on this slide. If you have further questions or
4 would like additional information, feel free to
5 contact me by phone or email. We also have a
6 project website we have set up with the opportunity
7 for people to leave us a comment, send us an email,
8 or you can also leave us a voicemail on our
9 toll-free number. Our website comments, voicemails,
10 and emails are monitored by a member of our project
11 team and we do our best to respond to questions and
12 comments within 24 to 48 hours.
13 With that, I'll turn it over to Jenna to
14 wrap us up.
15 **MS. JENNA NESS:** Hi. Jenna Ness with the
16 Department of Commerce. Thank you for taking time
17 out of your day and coming here today.
18 I'm the environmental review manager for
19 the project so I will be managing the environmental
20 impact statement.
21 I will briefly go over the Department of
22 Commerce's role in creating the environmental impact
23 statement, what that will look like. We'll discuss
24 how you can comment on this project today and then
25 we'll move into the oral comment period of the

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1 remove the temporary access roads and re-seed those
2 areas that have been disturbed by construction in
3 coordination with the landowners.
4 Slide 22 includes an estimated schedule
5 for the overall project. We do expect the Minnesota
6 permitting process to wrap up in the second quarter
7 of 2026.
8 After the Commission makes a decision on
9 the route, we will begin acquiring land rights for
10 the easements that we will need along the right of
11 way. We expect that process will take approximately
12 two years. Once we acquire land rights and have
13 permission to enter the property, we will start
14 performing our surveys to help support the other
15 permits that we need for this project from other
16 federal, state, and local agencies and will obtain
17 those permits towards the end of the first quarter
18 in 2028. And that would lead us to start of
19 construction in the spring of 2028 and we will be
20 wrapped up with construction by the end of 2030.
21 Granted, this schedule could change going
22 forward, there are a variety of different factors
23 that could play into that schedule, such as material
24 lead times, contractor availability, and weather
25 conditions, but the current time frame we're

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1 meeting.
2 So the Department of Commerce conducts
3 environmental review for the Public Utilities
4 Commission as a neutral third party. We don't
5 advocate for or against a project, we just state the
6 facts. That's one of the purposes of the
7 environmental impact statement, or the EIS, as I'll
8 refer to it. It's a decision-making document with
9 the information needed for that information. And
10 one of the biggest things it does is evaluates the
11 potential human and environmental impacts as well as
12 ways we could maybe avoid or mitigate those impacts.
13 So today we're in the scoping process.
14 And this is a scoping meeting, which means we're
15 getting public input on what is basically the table
16 of contents for this document. So if you got a
17 draft scope as you walked in the front door, it
18 looks like this, and that is the proposed table of
19 contents for this document. And we're taking your
20 comments today on anything we may have missed in
21 there that you want us to look more specifically at.
22 The EIS is meant to focus in on the most
23 relevant information for the project to make those
24 informed decisions such as a potential route permit.
25 And that includes any proposed alternative routes

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1 which you may have heard of today talking to people
2 around here. If you do suggest an alternative
3 route, for it to be accepted it has to mitigate a
4 potential impact. That could be a host of things,
5 including something as small as aesthetics, and it
6 must be specific and identifiable, which means I
7 have to be able to study it. So if you can draw on
8 a map that's the easiest way for me to pinpoint what
9 area you're looking at and what areas you want me to
10 look at.
11 So we'll move into the oral comment
12 portion shortly. That's a verbal comment you can
13 make on the record today. We have a court reporter,
14 so that's one way to get your voice and comments
15 into the record. You can also complete and submit a
16 comment sheet that was available at the front table,
17 it looks like this. This can be folded up and sent
18 to me in the postal mail. There is also a link on
19 there if you prefer to go on our website, or you can
20 email me directly. And just a reminder that the
21 comment period ends January 31st, at the end of this
22 month.
23 So I'm going to go over really quick here
24 that we can only have one speaker at a time because,
25 as I said, we have a court reporter here who needs

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1 much about you. If you would like to come up and
2 speak publicly either to offer a comment or ask
3 questions. So there was a sign-in sheet here when
4 you walked in. Not too many folks signed up, so
5 I'll start with this, and if other folks, once I get
6 through this list, if other folks want to come up
7 and speak you can come up and do that one at a time
8 kind of thing.
9 The first one, actually the only one who
10 for sure indicated they wanted to speak was Lee
11 Hanson.
12 Thank you, Mr. Hanson. If you could
13 please state and spell your name for the court
14 reporter.
15 **MR. LEE HANSON:** I thought everybody
16 would want to talk.
17 Lee Hanson, L-E-E, H-A-N-S-O-N. My
18 address is 1010 West St. Germane Street, St. Cloud,
19 Minnesota.
20 I'm here today on behalf of a number of
21 irrigators in the Hancock, Morris, and Glenwood
22 area. We have had several meetings already with the
23 Big Stone representatives and we are supporting
24 alternate number two, and I'm here just to say that
25 publicly, and we will be intervening in the project.

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1 to be able to hear everything so she can get it in
2 the record. You also have to state your first and
3 last name for her and spell it.
4 And then we have quite a few people here,
5 so I will ask that you limit your initial comments
6 to a few minutes. We can always come back to you
7 once we get through the first round of people. And
8 you can be most helpful if your comments are
9 directed at the scope of the document. And, of
10 course, we're also here for questions. We have a
11 lot of representatives here and this is a good time
12 for you to ask any questions you have about the
13 project.
14 So this is just a reminder slide of what
15 the scope of the EIS is, which we're looking for
16 comments on any human and environmental impacts we
17 need to know about that we missed and it wasn't
18 specific enough, you know, anything specific about
19 the properties, and that's really helpful. As well
20 as any mitigation that you would want to see on
21 those impacts and then alternative routes.
22 So with that, I'll turn it over to Sam.
23 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** All right. That was the
24 presentation.
25 So the rest of the meeting here is pretty

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1 **MS. JENNA NESS:** Thank you.
2 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** All right. There was one
3 other person who signed up but did not say if they
4 wanted to speak or not. Carter Charles, did you
5 want to speak?
6 **MR. CARTER CHARLES:** No. Go ahead.
7 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Sounds good, thank you,
8 sir.
9 With that, that was my list here.
10 I see a hand raised. Yes, sir, come on
11 up to the microphone, please, and state and spell
12 your name for the record.
13 **MR. MIKE REESE:** Mike Reese, 24520 400th
14 Avenue, 56244. M-I-C-H-A-E-L, R-E-E-S-E.
15 I will make a couple comments just to
16 reiterate the irrigation issue. The company has
17 been responding adequately to some of those issues,
18 but I wanted to make sure it gets on the record for
19 the Public Utilities Commission.
20 The irrigator situation, it's not
21 necessarily impacting a 150-foot right of way, it's
22 impacting quarters of land, 160 acres of land. And
23 if the irrigators are blocked by the transmission
24 poles, the transmission lines, it greatly reduces
25 the value of the land and productivity of the land

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1 so it goes beyond a value in productivity level of
2 say \$10,000 per acre, it's cut in half to \$5,000 an
3 acre.
4 So this is really impactful for the
5 farmers that have irrigators. And the original plan
6 was to cut through the center of of these center
7 pivot irrigators that go through a field in a
8 circle. It also impacts the corners that are
9 irrigated sometimes. So that's a big issue and we
10 would appreciate just having that come forward for
11 the Public Utilities Commission to, you know,
12 information for them to review of this project.
13 And, again, the parties have been responding
14 adequately to that.
15 The second part I would like to comment
16 on is the prime farmland from an environmental and
17 EIS standpoint. You know, I think sometimes we take
18 that for granted and impacting the farmland is, in
19 this part of the country, even more important. And,
20 you know, impacting DNR and US Fish and Wildlife
21 land and that kind of thing. And I happen to notice
22 that in the route planning those routes are avoided,
23 the public environmental lands.
24 And this is a shared, you know, this is
25 for the shared good of the state and so I really

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1 comments, are looked at just the same as verbal
2 comments, so you don't get more points for speaking
3 in front of a crowd, and so you're more than welcome
4 to submit written comments.
5 Is there any other folks that would like
6 to speak?
7 **MR. JIM WINK:** Maybe some comments.
8 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Yes, sir. Please state
9 and spell your name for the court reporter.
10 **MR. JIM WINK:** Jim Wink, spelled the same
11 way as wink, W-I-N-K, (indicating), which is the
12 corny way to help you remember.
13 Just general comments. I think, first of
14 all, our quest to provide power for electric
15 vehicles, which I don't think is going to work in
16 this part of the country, and also we're building
17 windmills and these power lines and also solar
18 panels.
19 One interesting thing I've learned is
20 that \$40,000 of solar panels on a house in Arizona,
21 desert floor, Chandler, to be exact. From the
22 longest days of the year to the shortest days, so I
23 know shadow over anyone's house, exactly how that
24 was affecting it. Location. There was about a 20
25 percent between the high wall of panels that fall

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1 would appreciate the EIS and the Public Utilities
2 Commission to understand that why are farm lands
3 being considered for this route and the DNR and
4 other environmental lands are being avoided, when it
5 is a shared, good for the state, so I would like
6 that be considered in the EIS.
7 That, you know, if you're using a portion
8 of those DNR and US Fish and Wildlife lands, it's
9 not really that impactful because it's usually along
10 the roadway and it is very impactful if there is
11 irrigators across the road on the farm site, so
12 please keep that in mind too.
13 Thank you.
14 **MS. JENNA NESS:** Thank you.
15 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Thank you. We appreciate
16 those comments, especially the specificity. It is
17 really helpful for us to have that level of
18 specificity, so thank you very much.
19 Are there any other folks that would like
20 to come up and speak today?
21 And just a reminder, too, if you don't
22 want to speak today, that's just fine. Written
23 comments, those can come through January 31st, and
24 I'll go back to the slide on that. So all comments,
25 including the written comment forms, written

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1 into a shadow versus the ones higher on the house,
2 there were 52 of them, by the way.
3 I think what floored me the most is
4 during that two weeks of longest days of the year to
5 the two weeks with the shortest days of the year
6 down there, and these panels are about 2012 models,
7 I don't know how much they've been improved, but it
8 just absolutely floored me that from the longest
9 days of the year to the shortest days of the year
10 down there, it cut production by 48 percent. You
11 gotta take a couple weeks so you can kinda get the
12 average.
13 I think a big mistake for me here in my
14 lifetime has been the fact that we didn't continue
15 with nuclear power. Big mistake. We're making
16 mistakes by scattering this stuff. We're going to
17 have a bunch of solar fields out there in 20 years
18 that are going to fall back on the landowners, as I
19 understand it they just want to lease the land.
20 Some of these comments are just not specific to this
21 line and there are general things to think about. I
22 can go on to more things about, but I'm going to let
23 somebody else comment. But I think it's something
24 that we've all made mistakes in what we're looking
25 at doing. And we dropped A bombs on Japan and they

1 did survive and we sure learned something from that,
2 but I'm not so sure we have.
3 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Thank you, sir, for your
4 comments, I appreciate that.
5 Are there any other folks that would like
6 to offer any comments or have questions for today?
7 I'm not seeing anybody chomping at the
8 bit for that.
9 So just a reminder that there are these
10 other ways to comment, this is not your only
11 opportunity. If there aren't any other comments,
12 then we'll conclude this part of the meeting. If
13 you have other questions for folks one-on-one,
14 that's just fine.
15 So I'll just put it out to the floor one
16 more time.
17 Any other folks want to speak?
18 All right. Well, with that, I just want
19 to thank you one final time, very much appreciate
20 you coming out here today, your comments and
21 anything that you submit to us is going to be looked
22 and the Commissioners do read all the comments, so
23 we appreciate your time.
24 There are still some cookies and coffee
25 over there, so help yourself on the way out.

1 Thanks, again, folks. I hope you all
2 have a great day.
3 (Proceeding concluded at 11:36 a.m.)
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In The Matter Of:

Big Stone South to Alexandria - 23-160

Scoping Meeting - Ortonville - 1-16-25

January 16, 2025

Scoping Meeting - 23-160 - Ortonville - 1-16-25

Shaddix & Associates

7400 Lyndale Avenue South

Suite 190

Richfield, MN 55423

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1 SCOPING AND INFORMATIONAL MEETING - 23-160
 2 ORTONVILLE - JANUARY 16, 2025 - 11:00 A.M.
 3 BEFORE THE MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
 4 AND DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
 5
 6 In the Matter of the Application for a Route Permit for
 7 the Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission
 8 Project in West-Central Minnesota
 9
 10 MPUC DOCKET NO. E017, ET10/TL-23-160
 11
 12 Sioux History Pavilion
 13 1073 Lake Shore Drive
 14 Ortonville, Minnesota 56278
 15
 16
 17 January 16, 2025
 18
 19
 20
 21
 22
 23
 24
 25 STENOGRAPHIC COURT REPORTER: Janet Shaddix Elling, RPR

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1 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** All right. Well, it
 2 looks like folks are getting settled in here, so
 3 I'll go ahead and get the meeting started.
 4 Thank you all very much for being here
 5 today. My name is Sam Lobby. I'm with the
 6 Minnesota Public Utilities Commission.
 7 And today we are here to have a public
 8 information and environmental review scoping meeting
 9 on the Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV
 10 Transmission Project. If you want to look this
 11 project up online, you can go into Google. If you
 12 go to type in "eDockets," it'll bring you to the
 13 website for Minnesota, and the docket number you're
 14 looking for is 23-160. And if you grab a copy of
 15 the presentation here, that's all written on here.
 16 So today we're having our fifth in-person
 17 meeting. We had two on Tuesday, two yesterday, we
 18 have this one this morning in person, and we have a
 19 virtual meeting this evening. Every meeting is
 20 covering the exact same stuff. So if you're at this
 21 meeting, you're not missing anything that you would
 22 get at another one.
 23 So, with that, so what we're going to be
 24 covering today. Again, I'm Sam Lobby with the
 25 Public Utilities Commission. I'm going to go over

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1 the permit application review process.
 2 Then I will hand it over to Mr. Jason
 3 Weiers with Otter Tail Power, and he will talk about
 4 the proposed project itself.
 5 Then, after that, Jenna Ness with the
 6 Department of Commerce will talk about the
 7 environmental review, which also will be referred to
 8 as environmental impact statement. So that's kind
 9 of the jargon term for the study that's going to be
 10 done in this project. So if you see EIS or
 11 environmental impact statement, that's the study,
 12 and that's what we're looking for today is feedback
 13 from you about what to study. Nothing is set in
 14 stone here, so we want to hear from you all today.
 15 And so after we get through this
 16 presentation, we will open up the floor for
 17 questions and comments. And as we mentioned to most
 18 folks at the front as we had a chance to talk with
 19 you, you're more than welcome to comment publicly
 20 today. It will go on the record with our court
 21 reporter here. But if you are not a public speaker
 22 or don't want to comment or just don't think of
 23 anything right away, you have until January 31st to
 24 submit written comments. There's a comment form up
 25 there, and we'll give you some information about

Page 5

1 other ways to submit a comment.
2 So as I just mentioned, if you do offer
3 written comments, you have through January 31st for
4 this part of the process. You're at the very
5 beginning of this process. So there's going to be
6 other opportunities at different points throughout
7 the project where you can comment.
8 But just as an aside, even if you're
9 outside of the comment period, you're always welcome
10 to reach out to Jenna or myself. We're both with
11 the state. So we are not for or against the
12 project, we're just doing the permitting process.
13 So if you ever just want to reach out and ask us any
14 questions, you're more than welcome to do that.
15 So the purpose of today's meeting is,
16 first, to provide information about the proposed
17 project, as well as the state's high-voltage
18 transmission line route permitting process. And the
19 main point of the meeting is that we want to provide
20 you all, members of the public, an opportunity to
21 participate in the development of the scope of the
22 environmental impact statement. So what we should
23 study, we want to get your feedback on that.
24 So that's going to include comments on
25 potential impacts of the proposed project, as well

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1 months. I think it's around September that it will
2 actually come out. So it's going to take eight,
3 nine months to do. It's a very rigorous study.
4 And, then, at that point we will release
5 the study, the draft of that, so you all have a
6 chance to react to it. Then, we come back here.
7 Same exact type of setup as this, but at that time
8 we will have an Administrative Law Judge who is
9 going to -- who is impartial and who will be
10 listening to all your comments and writing a report
11 based on your comments. And, then, you can tell us,
12 did we study what you thought we should study? So
13 that's what that's all about. I'll talk a little
14 bit more about that in a second.
15 Just a little more information on the
16 Minnesota Public Utilities Commission: The
17 Commission consists of five Commissioners that are
18 appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the
19 Senate. We regulate three service industries:
20 Electricity, natural gas, and telephone.
21 The mission is to ensure safe, adequate,
22 and efficient utility services at fair and
23 reasonable rates. And we provide independent,
24 professional oversight in regulation of utility
25 service providers in a manner that is consistent

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1 as comments on methods to minimize, mitigate, and
2 avoid potential impacts, and that includes proposing
3 alternative routes or route segments for
4 consideration. We'll provide all of you our contact
5 information in case you have questions later.
6 **A little bit of background context:** So
7 the government units that are going to be involved
8 in this process are, first, the Public Utilities
9 Commission, who I work for. We're the government
10 unit that reviews applications, and we issue site
11 and route permits in Minnesota.
12 Next, is the Department of Commerce.
13 They manage the environmental review process for the
14 Commission, and they prepare an environmental impact
15 statement on the proposed project.
16 Lastly, an Administrative Law Judge from
17 the Office of Administrative Hearings will
18 facilitate the public hearing later on in the
19 process, and provide a report to the Commission
20 setting forth findings of fact, conclusions of law,
21 and recommendations on the project.
22 So that's a little bit wordy, but kind of
23 to give you an idea of what that actually means, so
24 today we're getting your feedback on what we should
25 be studying. That study is going to take several

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1 with the public interest.
2 So with that, the project requirements:
3 So what is needed if this does get a permit? Before
4 the Big Stone South to Alexandria transmission line
5 project can be constructed, the Commission must
6 issue a route permit, and in this case, that is
7 going to be going through the full review process.
8 So the full review process is the most
9 rigorous process that there is in order --
10 evaluating whether or not a line will be permitted,
11 and that's required for any high-voltage
12 transmission line operating at a nominal voltage of
13 200 kV or more and greater than 30 miles in length.
14 Oftentimes with these transmission lines
15 you'll see a route permit and a certificate of need
16 going together. In this case, the certificate of
17 need was granted back in October of 2024, and that
18 was for part of the larger Big Stone South to
19 Alexandria to Big Oaks transmission project.
20 So if you've heard of a project that was
21 similar to this or maybe you went to some other
22 meetings like a year or so ago, that's what that was
23 about. That was just for the certificate of need,
24 and so that was when it was determined that there
25 was a need for this type of line. So that part is

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1 over. Then, today is about the route permit, about
2 if the line is constructed, where it would go. So
3 that's the feedback we're looking for today.
4 So I won't get too deep into the details
5 of the project because Jason will be talking a
6 little bit more about that. The applicants are
7 proposing to build a new, approximately, 91- to
8 105-mile 345-kV double-circuit capable transmission
9 line. Only one circuit will be initially installed.
10 The proposed 345-kV line will run from the Big Stone
11 South substation near the Minnesota-South Dakota
12 border to the existing Alexandria substation near
13 Alexandria, Minnesota.
14 This transmission project is needed to
15 address the regional reliability issues on the
16 existing 230-kV system in western and central
17 Minnesota.
18 So, again, just to give you a little more
19 clear shot of what to expect here moving forward:
20 You are at the very beginning of this process. So
21 we really appreciate you being here to comment and
22 get your feedback. That can help shape what
23 actually comes out of this.
24 So there's plenty of time, there's a
25 number of other comment periods. There's lots of

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1 you'll have a chance to react to that, and then
2 about a month later, we'll come back. We'll have
3 another meeting just like this. A judge will run
4 that meeting, and then we'll get your feedback on,
5 did we study what you think we should have studied?
6 And then based on that feedback, then
7 Jenna will go back, look at the EIS again, and
8 finalize it. And that would come out in,
9 tentatively, December of 2025. So then the final
10 Commission decision is tentatively scheduled for
11 March of 2026.
12 So there's quite a long time before
13 anything actually happens. Again, nothing is set in
14 stone, and nothing's going to happen really fast.
15 And everything will be transparent for you, and,
16 again, you're more than welcome to reach out to us
17 if you ever have questions.
18 So with that, I will pass it off to Jason
19 with the company.
20 **MR. JASON WEIERS:** All right. Thank you,
21 Sam.
22 As Sam mentioned, my name is Jason
23 Weiers. I'm from Otter Tail Power Company. I'm the
24 manager of transmission project development, and
25 today I'm speaking on behalf of the applicants in

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1 time to learn more and give us more feedback. So
2 you're getting involved at the right time.
3 The application was initially submitted
4 in October of 2024, and then accepted in December of
5 2024. That third line down is the public
6 information meetings, and so that's where we're at
7 today. As I mentioned, we've held five of them,
8 including this one, in person, and we have a virtual
9 meeting tonight.
10 Then, the next step is to take your
11 feedback from these meetings, and then Jenna will
12 incorporate that into the scoping decision. So the
13 scoping decision is what would be studied. Then,
14 that will come out in March or April of 2025,
15 tentatively.
16 Then, once she's made that scoping
17 decision, then she will do that study. So as I
18 mentioned, it's a very rigorous study. It takes
19 several months. She really digs into detail on the
20 environmental impacts and on proposed alternative
21 routes that you might give us.
22 And then once she's finished with that,
23 the draft of that will come out in September,
24 roughly, of 2025. And so that's what I was
25 mentioning earlier where the draft will come out,

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1 this proceeding. And the applicants are Otter Tail
2 Power Company and Western Minnesota Municipal Power
3 Agency. Otter Tail and Western Minnesota will
4 co-own the project, and through this proceeding,
5 Western Minnesota is being represented by Missouri
6 River Energy Services.
7 The project that Otter Tail and Western
8 Minnesota are requesting a route permit for is an
9 approximately hundred-mile, 345-kilovolt
10 high-voltage transmission line from Otter Tail's Big
11 Stone South substation, just west of Big Stone City
12 in South Dakota, to Western Minnesota's Alexandria
13 substation on the southwest side of the city of
14 Alexandria.
15 If you've ever traveled the interstate
16 between the Twin Cities and Minneapolis -- I'm
17 sorry, between the Twin Cities and Fargo, you may
18 have noticed transmission structures along
19 Interstate 94. The structures we're proposing for
20 this project will look very similar to that. They
21 will be double-circuit capable structures, and at
22 this time, we are only planning to install one
23 circuit.
24 Along with the expansions at each
25 endpoint substation, we may also install what we

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1 call a fiber-optic regeneration station, and this
2 will be located somewhere along the central segment
3 of the line. This fiber-optic regeneration station
4 is needed to amplify the communication signals
5 between the two endpoint substations.
6 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Sorry for the pause.
7 Folks, we'll just be a second.
8 **MR. JASON WEIERS:** We'll continue here.
9 As I mentioned earlier, the structures that we plan
10 for this transmission line will look similar to
11 those along Interstate 94, with the exception that
12 we plan to use what we call COR-TEN steel rather
13 than galvanized steel. So as shown on this picture
14 here, the structures are planning to have a brown
15 color to them rather than a gray color.
16 The typical structures will be between
17 120 and 180 feet tall, and they will sit upon a
18 concrete foundation. That's expected to be anywhere
19 between 7 to 14 feet diameter, and that concrete
20 foundation could be anywhere between 25 and 80 feet
21 deep depending on the soil conditions. The
22 structures will be between 400 and 1,400 feet apart
23 depending on the route and geographic terrain that
24 we cross with the transmission line.
25 Lastly, I'll also point out that the

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1 facility permit from the South Dakota Public
2 Utilities Commission, and we expect the decision on
3 the facility permit application no later than April
4 of this year.
5 We have undertaken an extensive effort
6 over the course of the last 18 months with four
7 rounds of open houses to gather information that we
8 considered in identifying the proposed routes
9 included within our route permit application.
10 Starting back in April of 2023, we hosted
11 our first round of open houses where we shared a
12 study area that included an outline of the area that
13 we were considering for routing this transmission
14 project. In October of 2023, we hosted our second
15 round of open houses, and we narrowed that study
16 area into proposed project corridors and shared
17 that, again, through our second round of open
18 houses.
19 In February of 2024, we came forward with
20 proposed route corridors during our third round of
21 open houses. And, finally, in June of 2024, we had
22 our fourth round of open houses where we shared our
23 proposed route options for inclusion in our route
24 permit application.
25 During each round of public open houses,

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1 right-of-way that we will be seeking for the project
2 will be 150 feet wide, and that will include 75 feet
3 on either side of the centerline of these
4 structures.
5 Sam talked earlier about the need for the
6 project being previously approved by the Minnesota
7 Commission back in October of 2024. The need
8 actually came from a study performed by the
9 Midcontinent Independent System Operator, or MISO.
10 They performed a long range transmission planning
11 study between 2020 and 2022, and the result of that
12 study was the identification of 18 new transmission
13 projects across the Midwest that will help ensure a
14 resilient and reliable transmission system into the
15 future. One of those transmission projects was the
16 Big Stone South to Alexandria project, shown as
17 project number two on this map.
18 So with the Commission previously
19 approving the need for the project, today we are
20 here to discuss the scope of the environmental
21 review within the route permit application that
22 Otter Tail and Western Minnesota submitted to the
23 Commission back in October of 2024.
24 Given that part of this project is also
25 located in South Dakota, we have also applied for a

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1 we gathered information from landowners, and during
2 the same time, we also consulted with several of the
3 agencies to identify the proposed routes you see in
4 the application.
5 So slide 17 has our proposed route
6 segments from the route permit application, and,
7 again, these start at the Minnesota-South Dakota
8 border and end at the Alexandria substation.
9 Generally speaking, as you look at these two routes,
10 you'll see that there's two route segment options,
11 and they have a varying length between 91 miles and
12 105 miles depending on which route option is
13 selected through this process.
14 For the ease in analyzing these route
15 options, we have divided these route segment options
16 in the three different areas. We have the south
17 segment shown in blue, the central segment shown in
18 orange, and then the north segments that are shown
19 in purple.
20 Although we only need 150 feet of
21 right-of-way for this 345-kilovolt transmission
22 line, our corridor -- our route permit application
23 generally included -- a 1,000-foot-wide corridor to
24 give us flexibility in locating the transmission
25 line after we engage with landowners.

1 The south route segments vary in length
2 between 39 miles and 42 miles from the
3 Minnesota-South Dakota border to a point in Tara
4 Township in Swift County. The central route
5 segments vary in length between 34 and 39 miles in
6 total length from Tara Township up to Ben Wade
7 Township in Pope County. And, finally, the north
8 route segments vary in length between 18 and 25
9 miles, and these go from Ben Wade Township in Pope
10 County up to the existing Alexandria substation in
11 Douglas County.

12 If you are a landowner along the approved
13 route, slide 21 includes a general construction
14 overview of what you can expect on your property.
15 The first step after we have land rights in place is
16 to perform surveys, and through this survey process,
17 we would stake the proposed structure locations.
18 Next, we would establish temporary access roads to
19 get our equipment out to the right-of-way. The
20 third step here is installing the concrete
21 foundations.

22 After the foundation is installed, we
23 would set the structures on the foundation. The
24 structures are hauled to the structure site,
25 assembled, and then lifted into place with a crane.

1 different assumptions at this time, but is based on
2 the best information we know as of today.

3 My contact information is listed on the
4 next slide. If you have further questions or would
5 like additional information following this meeting,
6 you're always welcome to reach me by phone or email.
7 I would also like everyone to know that we have a
8 project website that's been set up, and on this
9 website, there's opportunities for interested
10 stakeholders to provide comments.

11 They can send us an email, or they could
12 even call our toll-free hotline or the phone number
13 that we have set up and leave a message. We do have
14 representatives of our project team monitoring each
15 one of these channels each day, and we do our best
16 to respond to comments and questions within 24 to 48
17 hours.

18 And with that, I'll turn it over to Jenna
19 to wrap up the presentation.

20 **MS. JENNA NESS:** Hi. I'm Jenna Ness with
21 the Department of Commerce. Thank you for taking
22 time out of your day to come to our public meeting
23 today. I'm the environmental review manager for the
24 project, which means I will be managing the EIS.
25 I'll briefly go over the Department of Commerce's

1 After the structure is set, we will then string the
2 conductor, typically with the help of a helicopter.
3 And the last step in the construction process is to
4 restore the work area, and this includes removing
5 the temporary access roads and then reseeded those
6 disturbed areas in coordination with the landowners.
7 Sam shared the permitting schedule on an
8 earlier slide, and this slide shows more of the
9 overall project schedule. Sam talked about the
10 Minnesota permitting process to wrap up in the March
11 timeframe of 2026. After a Commission decision of a
12 route, we will begin acquiring land rights for the
13 150-foot of right-of-way that we need for this
14 project.

15 After the land rights are secured, we
16 will perform field surveys, and this information we
17 gather from the field surveys will be used to help
18 support other federal, state, and local permits that
19 we need to construct the project. We expect these
20 additional permits could take an additional two
21 years to obtain.

22 We anticipate starting construction in
23 the spring of 2028, and have construction wrapped up
24 by the end of 2030. The schedule shown on this
25 slide is subject to change based on a number of

1 role and what creating that EIS looks like. Also,
2 how you can comment. There's many ways to comment,
3 and then we'll get into the oral comment portion of
4 the meeting.

5 The Department of Commerce conducts
6 environmental review on behalf of the Commission.
7 We are offering an objective analysis of the
8 project. We offer just the facts. It's an
9 information-gathering document. The goal is to
10 provide that information of the project to the
11 public and other interested parties, and also to
12 help decision-makers -- such as the Public Utilities
13 Commission -- make decisions with, such as a route
14 permit.

15 The main things we'll be doing in the EIS
16 will define strategies to avoid and mitigate
17 impacts, as well as identifying all the human health
18 and environmental impacts that could occur from the
19 project.

20 Today we're in a scoping meeting, which
21 means we are trying to narrow in the EIS to focus on
22 the most relevant issues. The scope of the EIS is
23 essentially the table of contents. To put it
24 simply, if you grabbed a draft scope on the way in,
25 it looks like this (indicating). That is a general

1 overview of what the EIS is proposed to go with.
2 And, again, that's the human and environmental
3 impacts, and strategies to mitigate those impacts.
4 As well as proposed routes, and any that you may
5 want to propose that are different than what you
6 have seen today.
7 If you want to propose an alternative
8 route for consideration in the EIS, it must mitigate
9 a potential impact. That can be something as simple
10 as a disturbance to your viewshed. And it must also
11 be specific and identifiable. And what I mean by
12 that is that I need to be able to study the specific
13 area, and so it's best if you can draw on a map
14 physically so I can see what you're talking about
15 and make sure I study the correct area.
16 So there's many ways to comment. When we
17 move into the oral public comment portion of the
18 meeting today, the court reporter will take down
19 your comment, and that will get in the record.
20 There was also comment sheets on your way in that
21 look like this (indicating). You can fill those out
22 and hand them into me directly before the end of the
23 meeting today.
24 Or my postal address is also on the back
25 of that, and you can mail that into me by the 31st,

1 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** All righty. Thank you
2 very much for your patience as we went through the
3 presentation. With that, I will open the floor up
4 here. So we have the sign-in sheet. I've only got
5 a couple of folks that signed up, so I'll start with
6 them. But once we get through them, if other folks
7 want to come up and speak, you're more than welcome
8 to.
9 And just a reminder, as Jenna just said,
10 if you don't want to speak, there are a bunch of
11 other ways: Either the written comment forms in the
12 back or email or online, and you have until January
13 31st for that.
14 So our first person signed up was
15 Ron Schmidt. Would you like to come and speak, Ron?
16 And if you could please state and spell your name
17 for the court reporter. Thank you.
18 **MR. RON SCHMIDT:** Yeah. My name is Ron
19 Schmidt, S-C-H-M-I-D-T.
20 And, first of all, I'd would like to say
21 I wrote a five-page letter sent to the state, given
22 the few different areas here today, and I would
23 encourage every one of you out there to do the same
24 thing. Tell them your concerns and hardships in all
25 of the above.

1 that's the end of the comment period. If you have
2 an alternative route, if you could staple it to your
3 comment form so it doesn't get separated, that would
4 be very helpful.
5 We also have a link online if you prefer
6 to go there. If you have a copy of the
7 presentation, you have that link. And then my
8 personal information is on here as well. You can
9 just send me an email. That's also a comment if you
10 would like it to be.
11 So before we move into your comments, I
12 just want to go over some things. We can only have
13 one speaker at a time so the court reporter can get
14 everything accurately into the record. In that same
15 vein, we need you to state your first and last name
16 and spell it for the court reporter.
17 And if you could direct your comments to
18 the scope of the EIS, that is the most helpful.
19 We're also here today to answer questions if you
20 would like that. It's a good opportunity to do so
21 because we have all the representatives in one room.
22 So with that, I'll hand it to Sam. I've
23 got a reminder slide up here about what the scope of
24 the EIS means and the kind of comments we're looking
25 for. Thank you.

1 The project, I think you can see by here,
2 a lot of us here are against this project. If they
3 want all that power in Minneapolis, in the big
4 cities, put the solar farms and wind turbines and
5 the things down closer to Minneapolis, and don't
6 come out here and destroy us landowners and our
7 farmers' way of life.
8 To start out with, the first meetings
9 they had, they mentioned it will not impact any
10 farmland, farmers' hardship, or anything like that.
11 It would stay on the existing easements and so
12 forth. Well, as we have seen in maps in the
13 proposal, that's kind of a lie. Now, they're going
14 right through a lot of middle-of-farmers' land and
15 making it a real hardship that way.
16 You're talking about the big poles and so
17 forth. I mean, they're huge. They're big and huge.
18 And I would like to know why the DNR, the Fish and
19 Wildlife, and so forth, how can they be God, judge,
20 and jury? They won't let any structures or
21 easements go through any of their land, why should
22 we, as farmers, landowners, let you do the same
23 thing? Now, we'd like to have those -- this area
24 here, we would like to see the project go north, but
25 those landowners have the same feelings as we have

Page 25

1 here.

2 And if you can explain to me why in the

3 past all the health concerns from static electricity

4 and stuff for humans and for livestock, the

5 scientists, the engineers, the government, they

6 can't tell us why the stray voltage and so forth has

7 an effect on humans and livestock.

8 And I'd also like to propose to the

9 officials, let's say, Minneapolis or the big cities,

10 the organization, we want to put a bike trail or

11 walking trail in the area, let's go right through

12 the middle of your backyard. How would they feel to

13 destroy their backyard, their evenings, and so

14 forth?

15 Now, you talked about the concerns and so

16 forth that we have as landowners and farmers.

17 Something like this is going to devalue our farm

18 property, our land tremendously.

19 A few years ago, I was in the process of

20 putting irrigation in. Well, with the ROI, I

21 couldn't justify it at that time. Well, for those

22 of you who don't know what ROI is, it's return on

23 investment. So that's on hold right now.

24 What about farmers getting big equipment,

25 farming equipment? 12-, 24-, 36-, and even 48-row

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1 You talk about an easement. The word

2 "perpetual," most people think it's a hundred years,

3 or 99 years. We're talking perpetual easement for

4 the life of the earth, the life of the land. How

5 can you justify coming in and destroying our way of

6 life, our way of farming, and so forth?

7 One of the brochures I looked at, it

8 had -- after the route is taken, whichever it is,

9 north, south, wherever this goes, if they do, the

10 capital gains that you're going to have to pay on

11 this land, whatever the price that they settle on.

12 How do you come up with a fair market value on

13 something like this when it's a perpetual lifetime

14 easement? You're talking -- you're talking

15 thousands and thousands of dollars.

16 And whatever figure they're going to come

17 up with, you take that times many, many times,

18 because this is the future of the land of our rural

19 area of farming out here. There's no way you can

20 put a fair market value on something like this.

21 Okay. And, also, when your settlement --

22 or whatever it may be, is it a one-time deal? Is it

23 over -- so much per year, whatever that deal is?

24 And the capital gains that we're going to have to

25 pay on this, use whatever figure you want, use

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1 corn planters and equipment, and they're getting

2 bigger as time goes on. How are we supposed to

3 manipulate about that -- aerial spraying, fungicide,

4 and so forth -- when the corn gets four, five feet

5 tall? Airplanes can only go so close to the power

6 lines. We have the 100 feet, 150 feet under the

7 power lines, how are you going to get an applicator

8 to come in and spray five, six, seven acres at one

9 time? You know, it's just not possible. It's a

10 big, big inconvenience.

11 Now, what about the interference with all

12 the electronics and stuff? We have GPS, cell

13 phones, two-way radios, even drones and stuff that's

14 coming into the industry right now. All the

15 mapping, all the soil gridding and so forth they

16 have.

17 So when you have all these things come

18 near your property, your farm setup, the middle of

19 your farm, I'm thinking about, I probably won't be

20 here, but I'm looking at my future generation, my

21 kids, the trust. And you had mentioned earlier, for

22 right now one line is proposed. What's going to

23 stop you coming back 10, 15 years from now and doing

24 it over again and putting another one in with an

25 easement that you're going to do?

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1 \$50,000, \$100,000, 50 percent of that is going to go

2 to the government for taxes depending on what taxes

3 you're in. 40 percent maybe. 35, 40 percent,

4 whatever tax bracket you're in. It will also

5 increase your -- us people over 65, our Medicare,

6 our drug policy. It might put you into the next

7 bracket, and that's going to increase your monthly

8 fee as you go along.

9 I talked to my kids on this. There's --

10 we talked about this a lot. They're devastated by

11 the fact that they will own this land some day.

12 They'll be farming it or renting it out, whatever

13 the case may be. They're going to have to deal with

14 all this, and they don't want nothing to do with it.

15 So as you can tell, I'm not very happy

16 with the whole situation. Because we have built --

17 we worked our whole life for building up our farms,

18 our environment out here, and you're going to come

19 in. How can you justify destroying our way of life

20 out here?

21 Now, after today -- I didn't realize

22 this, but I'll be submitting a couple more forms of

23 different routes, you know, my suggestions. It's

24 just a suggestion. But how can the impact from the

25 government come out and destroy our way of living

1 and farming?
2 So with that, thank you.
3 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Thank you, Mr. Schmidt,
4 for your comments.
5 Our next speaker on the list here,
6 Dalen Roe, do you still want to speak?
7 **MR. DALEN ROE:** Yes, sir.
8 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Please -- I'm sorry if I
9 mispronounced your name at all. If you could state
10 and spell your name for the record, please.
11 **MR. DALEN ROE:** Yeah. My name is Dalen
12 Roe, and it's D-A-L-E-N, R-O-E.
13 And, yeah, just, there's kind of the two
14 proposed routes, like, that go by. One of them is
15 right across the road from me, and the other one is
16 a half-mile north. And I think I've got some
17 neighbors here, too, that have the same feeling.
18 You know, going along 430th Street, the proposal is
19 to, kind of, jump back and forth across the road to
20 avoid residents along there.
21 And it was just -- I was just looking at,
22 you know, if they're going to pay on 150 feet and
23 they're across the road, it looks like, my
24 calculation, they're going to pay me 32 feet. And
25 am I correct that you wouldn't pay anything to the

1 map and look at it with one of our representatives
2 and talk about what it may look like there. Because
3 there's a couple of different scenarios for overlap
4 or being adjacent to the road right-of-way.
5 **MR. DALEN ROE:** Okay. Well -- and the
6 route that I'm talking about by my place is, kind
7 of, an alternative, half-mile north. And that's,
8 you know, through cropland, and it's kind of on
9 property lines. Some of it goes through landowners'
10 fields.
11 But another concern I had was, you know,
12 you mentioned putting up the line with a helicopter,
13 and I have cattle, you know, in that pasture pretty
14 much all the time. And what kind of effect -- do
15 you move the cattle during that time? Or -- because
16 I can't imagine they would stay in the fence with
17 the helicopter overhead.
18 **MR. JASON WEIERS:** Thank you, Mr. Roe.
19 Actually, when it comes to the construction
20 activities, we will be in very close communication
21 and coordination with the landowners to ensure that
22 you can be aware of what we're working on when we're
23 working on it, so that we can coordinate as best we
24 can to minimize impacts to your operations there.
25 So if there's opportunities to move them to a

1 township for the right-of-way? Is that why you're
2 proposing that to avoid -- do you pay right-of-way
3 fees to the township?
4 **MS. CHRISTY BRUSVEN:** I can answer that.
5 Thanks. Christy Brusven.
6 We would typically not have the
7 facilities in the road right-of-way because they're
8 pretty narrow road right-of-ways that the township
9 has. So we would be paying the private landowners
10 adjacent to the township right-of-way.
11 We'll work with the townships on road
12 agreements for the use of the road to make sure that
13 they're maintained, and that if there is any damage
14 related to construction, that that road is returned
15 as good or better than before. But that would be
16 the typical interaction we have with the townships.
17 **MR. DALEN ROE:** So the right-of-way that
18 you would pay would be -- you would go further out
19 into the private property to avoid the township
20 right-of-way, is that what you're saying?
21 **MS. CHRISTY BRUSVEN:** There may be cases
22 where it could be overlapped with the private and
23 the public, if there's overhang, for example. But I
24 think if you have a specific property that you're
25 looking at, it's probably most helpful to go to a

1 different pasture for a duration of time, we'd want
2 to coordinate with you on that.
3 **MR. DALEN ROE:** Okay. Also, you know,
4 you talk about easements, I was -- I don't know who
5 I was talking to, but they said they basically do a
6 present market value, and they'll pay 100 percent on
7 the 150 feet. And, then -- but, like, I think Ron
8 mentioned, you know, what is the value of land? You
9 know, 30 years ago, there was -- the Fish and
10 Wildlife was buying easements really cheap, and I
11 think maybe in some cases there was some hardship,
12 you know. People needed the money to exist, so they
13 took them up on it, and they've regretted it ever
14 since.
15 And, you know, it was my dream to have a
16 hobby farm. I work in town, but, you know, having
17 power lines across the road from me would really
18 diminish what I have there.
19 And I also wonder about the long-term
20 effect. Like, my house would still be, you know,
21 fairly close to these wires and the constant humming
22 of the lines. And, also, the effects on, you know,
23 livestock being -- you know, grazing right up to the
24 road. And, I guess, I would prefer the north route.
25 So I think that's all I have. Thank you.

1 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Thank you, sir.
2 All right. Those are the only folks that
3 actually checked the box to speak. Are there any
4 other folks that are interested in speaking publicly
5 today?
6 Yes, sir. If you could please come up to
7 the microphone, and state and spell your name.
8 **MR. ALAN WEBSTER:** Thanks for hearing me.
9 My name is Alan Webster, A-L-A-N; Webster,
10 W-E-B-S-T-E-R.
11 Mr. Schmidt said a mouthful there, but
12 I'm at the beginning of it. Once we get passed the
13 Ortonville lagoon, so Dalen is right there. These
14 lines would be, maybe, 250 feet from his house. And
15 then the line would go through on the southern --
16 more southern route.
17 Then, the line goes through the area
18 where I calf 270 cows in the springtime. Then,
19 you're going to jump back across the road, go behind
20 the next neighbor, Dennis Buescher. Then, you're
21 going to jump back across the road and go in front
22 of Jeff McMahon's. Then, you're going to stay on
23 that side of the road, jump across the road, and go
24 in front Brett Huizenga. And then you keep going
25 down the line, and run into Jackie -- in front of

1 So that's all I had to say. Thank you.
2 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Thank you, sir, for your
3 comments. I appreciate that.
4 Are there any other folks that want to
5 speak publicly?
6 And just a reminder, too, I'll put this
7 slide up so folks have it. If you don't want to
8 speak publicly, you can offer written comments.
9 Those are looked at exactly the same. So you have
10 until January 31st to provide those.
11 Any other folks that want to speak today?
12 Yes, sir. If you could please state and
13 spell your name for the record.
14 **MR. MARLOWE KLEPEL:** Marlowe Klepel.
15 That's M-A-R-L-O-W-E, K-L-E-P-E-L.
16 Now, if you -- when Al just mentioned if
17 this power line has to be, I am on the east side of
18 21, and my son and I own land there. And we
19 proposed a different route, which I see is on here,
20 and that would completely take out a lot of line
21 running across tillable acres, destroying people's
22 ability to farm, and it also is -- doesn't affect
23 any homeowners as far as I know.
24 So that would be -- if it has to be, that
25 would be the route that -- when it gets east of 21,

1 Jackie Maas's house.
2 Then, you've got to jump back across the
3 road again to get past Duane Hillman. So you're
4 bouncing back and forth over the road, but you're
5 still just a few feet, in perspective, for how high
6 they are versus how far away from the houses that
7 you are.
8 So I just want to state that if this line
9 has to be, okay, through our area, a much better --
10 and I don't mean to -- I don't mean to -- because
11 now I'm getting a little closer to Kathy over here,
12 but I can't think of her last name. But, anyways,
13 it would be halfway between Kathy and Dalen would be
14 the northern route. The south end -- the north side
15 of the south end.
16 Okay. So, anyways, excuse me. If the
17 line has to be, you would affect far less people and
18 it would be a straight shot through some boundary --
19 property boundary lines. There would be some water
20 that you've got to mitigate, but you would be
21 affecting so many fewer people by being on that
22 northern route instead of the southern part of it.
23 So, like I say, if it has to be, then it has to be.
24 But let's look at going north instead of down where
25 you're going to affect everybody else.

1 that would be the northern part of that route. So,
2 okay, thank you.
3 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Thank you, sir. I
4 appreciate that.
5 Any other folks that want to speak
6 publicly?
7 Yes, sir.
8 **MR. JAMES WAGAR:** My name is James Wagar,
9 W-A-G-A-R.
10 And I guess I just have a question, if
11 there's been studies done on water impacts. A lot
12 of people around here have their own wells, and
13 those foundations go pretty deep. I don't know what
14 all chemicals are used in them to harden the
15 concrete and things like that. I'd like to make
16 sure that there's a proper study done on that.
17 **MS. JENNA NESS:** Thank you. So we do
18 discuss how deep the transmission poles are going to
19 go and what the concrete -- I'm not going to use the
20 right word -- casing on the bottom is composed of.
21 And we look at that in relation to how deep the
22 aquifer may be, and talk about how groundwater can
23 transfer and eventually make it to the aquifer. So
24 we do look at groundwater impacts and how
25 construction is related to that.

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1 As far as specific studies, we've always
2 looked for the most recent information. But we do
3 include those in our EIS, and we have footnotes to
4 those if you ever want to double check our sources.
5 **MR. JAMES WAGAR:** Thank you.
6 **MS. JENNA NESS:** Yeah.
7 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Also, just to add on to
8 that a little bit, too, you folks in the area, you
9 know the area the best, and so if there are things
10 that you want to offer comments on, you know, we use
11 databases and we talk to other agencies and stuff,
12 but there are things that you might know about that
13 you can offer us in your written comments that Jenna
14 can look into for studying. So that's where your
15 comments can be very useful for determining those
16 kinds of impacts. So thank you for your comment.
17 Are there other folks that might like to
18 speak publicly? And just a reminder, too, that you
19 can do written comments. So any other folks?
20 Yes, if you would like to come up.
21 **MS. ANN HOLME:** It's not a comment, but a
22 question. Does that still need to be up here?
23 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Yeah. You need to state
24 and spell your name, please.
25 **MS. ANN HOLME:** My name is Ann Holme.

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1 of those proposals, along with other proposals
2 proposed through this process as part of that
3 environmental impact statement being prepared.
4 Ultimately, the Minnesota Commission will
5 decide which route option is selected. It could be
6 one of these two; it could be an alternative. And
7 lot of that would be based upon the upcoming process
8 that Sam talked about.
9 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Thank you very much for
10 that question.
11 Any other folks have any questions or
12 comments they would like to offer?
13 I'll keep repeating the same thing, that
14 if you do want to comment, there are other ways
15 that you don't have to speak. You can grab a
16 comment form on your way out. I'll open it up one
17 more time here, and if we don't have any other
18 comments, then we can conclude the meeting. And you
19 can hangout for a little bit and ask more questions
20 one-on-one, if that's helpful.
21 Are there any other folks that would like
22 to speak?
23 All right. I think, not seeing
24 anybody -- oh, yes, sir. You're more than welcome
25 to offer a second comment.

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1 A-N-N, last name is H-O-L-M-E.
2 I'm a little bit -- my husband, Peter,
3 and I are a little farther east on this project, but
4 I was wondering if Mr. Wires -- or Weiers could take
5 some time and explain the blue -- light blue/dark
6 blue. I'm trying to get an understanding from
7 everyone else here just exactly how you are making
8 that determination, or why the two different routes
9 are looked at and how you're going to determine
10 that.
11 **MR. JASON WEIERS:** Thank you, Ms. Holme.
12 **MS. ANN HOLME:** Slide 18, I guess.
13 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** All right.
14 **MR. JASON WEIERS:** On the route permit
15 application that we have submitted, we do have two
16 route segment options in the south area of the
17 project, and we've included both route options for
18 evaluation by the EERA, the Department, to take a
19 look at the environmental differences between those
20 two route options. And through the upcoming study
21 that Jenna and her team will be performing, they
22 will identify the benefits and detriments of each
23 option.
24 So at this point in time, either option
25 is being considered, and we'll learn more about each

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1 **MR. ALAN WEBSTER:** Al Webster, again.
2 So on the well side of things, my well
3 will be just a tick less than a half mile from
4 wherever there may be a tower put. So my well is 93
5 feet deep, and then it bottoms out on granite. So I
6 can't imagine that right around me there's too many
7 with any much deeper wells or anything like.
8 Some of these cement towers are 70 feet
9 deep, something like that, roughly. So even though
10 my well is, like, 93 feet deep, I only have to go
11 down 35 feet for water. There's a lot of water in
12 that. Okay. So if you're going to go down 73 feet
13 with this cement, you're going to be -- there again,
14 one of the closest places to any of these towers
15 would be Dalen's place. I'm not sure how deep his
16 well is, but, there again, if you're down 70 feet,
17 73 feet for these cement pillars, whatever, you're
18 down into his aquifer, per se, maybe even mine,
19 maybe even Dennis's, something like that.
20 That's really something that needs to be
21 looked at for your study. Whereas, if we were to
22 follow the more northern route on this project, we
23 would be, roughly, half-mile from any well,
24 something like that. So just the well situation.
25 Thank you.

1 **MR. JASON WEIERS:** Mr. Webster, if I
2 could just offer a quick comment on that. As part
3 of the process for building this project, once we
4 have an approved route and landowner permissions, we
5 will be performing a geo-tech investigation on a
6 structure-by-structure basis. And we'll be looking
7 at soil conditions to determine the depth of the
8 necessary foundation.

9 And as we talked about earlier, those
10 foundations could vary anywhere from 25 feet deep,
11 the most extreme cases we'd see, maybe, 80 feet
12 deep, but it sounds like in this situation it would
13 be much less than that. But I did want to assure
14 you that we will design each foundation based on the
15 specific soil conditions at that location.

16 **MR. ALAN WEBSTER:** So you kind of drill
17 down for core sampling and things like that?

18 **MR. JASON WEIERS:** Correct.

19 **MS. JENNA NESS:** And I'd also like to
20 mention -- and correct me if I'm wrong -- these
21 foundations are generally composed of nonhazardous
22 material. So it's not like hazardous waste is going
23 to flow into the aquifer from the foundation.

24 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Thank you very much for
25 that comment, and I also just appreciate your

1 So I'll ask one more time, and if not,
2 then we'll conclude the meeting. Any other folks
3 interested in speaking?

4 All right. Well, with that, I just want
5 to thank you one last time for taking time out of
6 your day to be here. We really appreciate you being
7 here and participating in the process. Your
8 comments are very much valued by the Commission and
9 Commerce in terms of doing the studies and making
10 any final decisions, so thank you very much. And,
11 again, always feel free to reach out if you have
12 questions.

13 Have a great day, and feel free to grab
14 some cookies and coffee on your way out if you
15 haven't already. Thanks, folks.

16 (Proceeding concluded at 11:56 p.m.)

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1 specificity with that, too. That makes it easier
2 for us to look into the study.

3 So, Mr. Schmidt, if you could restate
4 your name, please.

5 **MR. RON SCHMIDT:** Yeah, Ron Schmidt.
6 R-O-N, S-C-H-M-I-D-T.

7 Talking about water level, our wells in
8 my area and quite a few of my neighbors sitting back
9 here, we're down 15 to 18 feet. We got
10 water-bearing sand. So we don't have to go very
11 deep, which we're fortunate that we've got all the
12 water we need right there. So I just wanted to put
13 that into the comments.

14 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Thank you for that, sir.

15 All right. Any other folks? We had a
16 little jolt there at the end. Any other folks that
17 would like to speak, you're more than welcome to
18 come and do that now.

19 All right. Maybe that was the last of
20 it. You're more than welcome to still speak here if
21 you'd like, but, once again, I'll just put the slide
22 up here. We'll leave this up just so you have that.
23 And there's also information about how to comment at
24 the front, including the comment form, which you can
25 just put a stamp on and mail to us.

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In The Matter Of:

Big Stone South to Alexandria - 23-160

Scoping Meeting - Virtual - 1-16-25

January 16, 2025

Scoping Meeting - 23-160 - Virtual - 1-16-25

Shaddix & Associates

7400 Lyndale Avenue South

Suite 190

Richfield, MN 55423

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1 SCOPING AND INFORMATIONAL MEETING - 23-160
 2 VIRTUAL - January 16, 2025 - 6:00 P.M.
 3 BEFORE THE MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
 4 AND DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
 5
 6 In the Matter of the Application for a Route Permit for
 7 the Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission
 8 Project in West-Central Minnesota
 9
 10 MPUC DOCKET NO. E017, ET10/TL-23-160
 11
 12 Meeting held remotely via:
 13 Webex and Telephone
 14
 15
 16 January 16, 2025
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 25 STENOGRAPHIC COURT REPORTER: Christine Simons, RMR, RPR

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1 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** All right. Folks, we
 2 have 6:00, so we will go ahead and get the meeting
 3 started, stay on time. And I just really appreciate
 4 everybody's time tonight. We know that this is an
 5 extra thing for you in the evening, and just very
 6 much appreciate you being here. Your comments are
 7 really useful and important for any sort of
 8 decision-making that the PUC is going to make
 9 regarding this project.
 10 So my name is Sam Lobby. I'm with the
 11 Public Utilities Commission, and tonight we are
 12 going to be talking about the public information and
 13 environmental review scoping meeting, which is the
 14 topic of tonight, for the Big Stone South to
 15 Alexandria 345-kV transmission project.
 16 If you look this up online, you can -- if
 17 you want to follow everything that's in the record,
 18 you can go to Minnesota eDockets. If you just type
 19 "eDockets" into Google, that's a real easy way to
 20 get there, and then you type in in the search bar
 21 "23-160," which is the docket number.
 22 So this is the last of six meetings that
 23 we've done so far this week. We did five in person,
 24 and then there's this virtual meeting. So if you
 25 are just attending the virtual, you weren't able to

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1 make any of the in-person, you aren't -- you're not
 2 getting anything different as far as what we're
 3 going to be presenting and talking about at this
 4 meeting. The main difference between the in-person
 5 and the virtual was that there were maps and stuff
 6 available, and an opportunity to talk with the
 7 company and get map printouts, things like that.
 8 But since we're virtual, you can just
 9 reach out to any of us: Myself, Mr. Jason Weiers
 10 with Otter Tail Power, or Ms. Jenna Ness with the
 11 Department of Commerce. If you reach out to any of
 12 us, then we can help you with any mapping questions
 13 in terms of where your property is in relation to
 14 the transmission line or any questions you might
 15 have.
 16 So, once again, thank you for coming
 17 tonight. So just a quick agenda of what to expect
 18 for tonight. I am -- again, I'm Sam Lobby with the
 19 Public Utilities Commission. I'm going to talk
 20 about the permit application review process. Next,
 21 Jason Weiers with Otter Tail Power Company will talk
 22 about the proposed project itself, and then Jenna
 23 Ness with the Department of Commerce will talk about
 24 the environmental review piece.
 25 So as I mentioned just a minute ago, if

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1 you have any questions about mapping or anything
2 like that, any questions at all, you can reach out
3 to me. That's my contact information, and I can get
4 you set up with the right people to get that
5 information.
6 So the purpose of tonight's meeting is,
7 first, to provide information about the proposed
8 project, as well as the State's high-voltage
9 transmission line route permitting process. And
10 another big piece of the evening is to provide you
11 all, the public, an opportunity to participate in
12 developing the scope of the EIS.
13 So what that means is, the EIS is a
14 jargon term for environmental impact statement, and
15 basically what that means is it's a study of the
16 project before anything is done. So just so folks
17 understand how this is working, we're talking about
18 the route permitting process tonight, but this route
19 is not set in stone. We want to get your feedback,
20 and so myself and Jenna, both with the State, we are
21 not advocating for or against the project. We just
22 want to get your feedback on the project to know
23 what you think about it.
24 So the things that we're looking for for
25 comments are comments on potential impacts of the

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1 fact, conclusions of law and recommendations on the
2 proposed project. So just a little bit more
3 background on that last one, with the Administrative
4 Law Judge. Basically, tonight we're at the very
5 beginning of this process. So if you're here for
6 the meeting, you're getting involved at the right
7 time.
8 So we want to get your feedback on things
9 about what we should study in the environmental
10 review, and that includes alternative routes. And
11 so we're going to -- we will take that feedback, and
12 then several months from now, kind of, third to
13 fourth quarter of the year, we will do a study that
14 incorporates a lot of what you're going to tell us
15 you think should be studied.
16 And then we'll do that study, we'll
17 release the study, and give you all time to react to
18 it. And then we'll have another meeting just like
19 this, except it will be run by the Administrative
20 Law Judge, and then we will get your feedback on if
21 the study looked at the things that you thought we
22 were proposed to look at or things like that. And
23 I'll explain a little bit more about the timeline in
24 a minute.
25 So a little more background on the PUC,

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1 project, as well as commenting on methods to
2 minimize, mitigate, and avoid potential impacts, and
3 that includes proposing alternative routes or route
4 segments for consideration. And Jenna will talk a
5 little bit more about that in a couple of minutes.
6 So I did just provide my contact
7 information; both Jason and Jenna will provide
8 theirs as well. So if you have questions after the
9 meeting, you can reach out to us, and you'll be able
10 to find this online as well if you go back to the
11 docket.
12 So the government units that are involved
13 in this project are, first, of course, the Public
14 Utilities Commission, who I work for. We are the
15 government unit that reviews applications and issues
16 site and route permits in Minnesota. Next, is the
17 Department of Commerce, who Jenna works for, and
18 they manage the environmental review process for the
19 Commission and prepare an environmental impact
20 statement, which is the study we're seeking feedback
21 on on the proposed project.
22 An Administrative Law Judge from the
23 Office of Administrative Hearings will facilitate a
24 public hearing later on in the process, and provide
25 a report to the Commission setting forth findings of

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1 the agency consists of five Commissioners appointed
2 by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. We
3 regulate three service industries:
4 electricity, natural gas, and telephone. Its
5 mission to provide safe, adequate, and efficient
6 utility services at fair and reasonable rates. And
7 we provide independent, professional oversight and
8 regulation of utility service providers in a manner
9 that is consistent with the public interest.
10 So in order for a project like this to
11 get permitted, the Big Stone South to Alexandria
12 transmission line project needs to have, in this
13 case, a permit granted by the Commission, and that
14 permit is a route permit. So as you can see
15 there -- route permit -- this is going through the
16 full review process. That's the most rigorous
17 process that there is for permitting, and that's
18 required for any high-voltage transmission line
19 operating in a nominal voltage of 200 kilovolts or
20 more and greater than 30 miles in length.
21 For this project, the certificate of need
22 process, sometimes you will see the certificate of
23 need and route permit go through at the same time.
24 In this case, the certificate of need process
25 already happened and was granted back in October of

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1 2024, and that was part of the larger Big Stone
2 South to Alexandria to Big Oaks transmission
3 project. You may have participated in some of those
4 meetings, either in person or virtual. So if some
5 of this sounds familiar, that's why, because that
6 part of the process, the need was already granted,
7 and so that part of the process is already complete.
8 If you are interested in looking back at
9 anything related to the certificate of need, you can
10 go to that same eDockets website. So that's -- you
11 know, just type "eDockets" into Google is the
12 easiest way to get there, and then the docket number
13 for that project was 22-538.
14 So in this case, tonight we are just here
15 to talk about the route permit, and so we want to
16 get feedback from you about the route that is being
17 proposed for this project.
18 I won't get too deep into the proposed
19 project itself because Jason with the company will
20 talk more about that. But the short version is that
21 the applicants are proposing to build a new,
22 approximately, 91- to 105-mile, 345-kV
23 double-circuit-capable transmission line. Only one
24 circuit will be installed initially.
25 The proposed 345-kV line will run from

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1 about what should be included in the environmental
2 review, and that includes looking at alternative
3 routes. And so once we take that feedback, Jenna
4 will look at your feedback, and then she'll come up
5 with an EIS scoping decision. So that means, based
6 on your comments, she will decide what is going to
7 be actually studied in the environmental review, and
8 she'll make that decision tentatively in March to
9 April of 2025.
10 Then, she will go ahead and do that
11 study, and so it's a very rigorous study. It will
12 take several months for her to complete. She looks
13 very in depth at everything that you're concerned
14 about, and then she will release a draft
15 environmental impact statement, tentatively, in
16 September of 2025.
17 And so once that draft is issued, you
18 will have several weeks to look at that and react to
19 it and digest it. So you'll have plenty of time to
20 see what we put together. And then after that, then
21 we'll come back to do a meeting just like this.
22 This is the point where I mentioned with the
23 Administrative Law Judge, and so we'll have public
24 hearings. It will be the same thing. We'll do five
25 in person and one virtual, and that will be,

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1 the Big Stone South substation near the
2 Minnesota-South Dakota border to the existing
3 Alexandria substation near Alexandria, Minnesota.
4 This transmission project is needed to address
5 regional reliability issues on the existing 230-kV
6 system in western and central Minnesota.
7 So I said that I'd give you an idea of
8 the timeline, so, again, we appreciate you being
9 here tonight and getting involved because this is
10 the very beginning of the process. This is the
11 first opportunity to comment on the project through
12 the formal permitting process. So we very much
13 appreciate you being here and participating.
14 The application was submitted in October
15 of 2024, and then it was accepted in December of
16 2024. That third line down, the public information
17 meeting, that's where we're at right now. So I
18 mentioned that we already had five in-person
19 meetings. We had them in Alexandria, Hancock,
20 Benson, Ortonville, and now we're doing the virtual
21 tonight -- and Glenwood. Excuse me, also Glenwood,
22 and then the virtual tonight, so a total of six
23 meetings.
24 So as part of these meetings, as I
25 discussed earlier, we want to get your feedback

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1 tentatively, in September to October of 2025.
2 And then after those hearings, a final
3 EIS will be issued. So Jenna will take your
4 comments from that second hearing and update the EIS
5 based on that, as needed, and so the final EIS would
6 be, tentatively, issued in December of 2025. And,
7 then, a final decision by the Commission would be
8 coming, tentatively, in March of 2026.
9 So with that, I will go ahead and hand it
10 over to Jason with the company. Thank you very
11 much, once again, for coming, and we very much
12 appreciate you being here.
13 **MR. JASON WEIERS:** All right. Thank you,
14 Sam.
15 And good evening, everyone. As Sam
16 mentioned, my name is Jason Weiers. I am from Otter
17 Tail Power Company, and I am currently the manager
18 of transmission project development here at Otter
19 Tail.
20 Tonight I am representing the applicants
21 that have filed a route permit application. The
22 applicants in this proceeding are Otter Tail Power
23 Company and Western Minnesota Municipal Power
24 Agency. Western Minnesota Municipal Power Agency is
25 represented by Missouri River Energy Services in

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1 this proceeding.
2 The project that Otter Tail and Western
3 Minnesota are requesting a route permit for involves
4 the construction of an approximately 100-mile,
5 345-kilovolt transmission line that will go between
6 Otter Tail's Big Stone South substation, just west
7 of Big Stone City, South Dakota, to Western
8 Minnesota's Alexandria substation on the southwest
9 side of the city of Alexandria.
10 Similar to the transmission structures
11 that you may have noticed along Interstate 94, we
12 are planning to construct this line using
13 double-circuit-capable structures, and only install
14 one circuit at this time.
15 Along with the expansions needed at each
16 of the endpoint substations, the project also
17 includes a fiber-optic regeneration station that we
18 expect will be installed along the central segment
19 of the project. This fiber-optic regeneration
20 station is needed to amplify the communication
21 signals between the two endpoint substations.
22 As I mentioned earlier, the structures
23 for the project will look similar to those along
24 Interstate 94, with the exception that we plan to
25 use what we call COR-TEN steel rather than

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1 future needs in the transmission system. And in
2 July of 2022, MISO approved a portfolio of 18 new
3 transmission projects across the Midwest that are
4 needed to help ensure a reliable and resilient
5 transmission system. As you'll see on this map, the
6 Big Stone South to Alexandria project is part of
7 project number two.
8 So with the Commission previously
9 approving the need for the project, today we are
10 here to discuss the scope of the environmental
11 review related to the route permit application that
12 was filed by Otter Tail and Western Minnesota in
13 October of 2024.
14 Given that part of this project does go
15 into South Dakota, we have also applied for a
16 facility permit from the South Dakota Public
17 Utilities Commission, and we expect to have a
18 decision from the South Dakota Public Utilities
19 Commission no later than April of this year.
20 We have undertaken an extensive effort
21 over the course of the last 18 months with four
22 rounds of open houses to gather information that we
23 considered in developing the routes that appear in
24 our route permit application. Starting back in
25 April of 2023, our first round of open houses

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1 galvanized steel. And the main difference is that
2 the structures will appear to be a brownish color
3 rather than a gray color.
4 We do expect the typical structures will
5 be anywhere between 120- and 180-feet tall. The
6 structure will sit on a concrete foundation that may
7 be anywhere between 7 and 14 feet in diameter, and
8 has a foundation depth anywhere between 25-feet to
9 80-feet deep depending on soil conditions.
10 The structures are anticipated to be
11 anywhere between 400 and 1,400 feet apart, depending
12 on the route and the geographic terrain that will be
13 traversed by the transmission line.
14 Our typical right-of-way for a
15 345-kilovolt transmission line is 150 feet wide.
16 That involves 75 feet on each side of the center
17 line of the structures.
18 Sam talked about the certificate of need
19 proceeding on a previous slide, and that need
20 proceeding was concluded and the need was approved
21 by the Commission back in October of 2024. But just
22 for background, the project was identified by the
23 Midcontinent Independent System Operator, or MISO
24 for short. About four years ago, they launched a
25 long-range transmission planning study looking at

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1 included a study area that included an outline of
2 the area we were considering for routing this new
3 transmission line.
4 We gathered feedback from the public, and
5 came back for a second round of open houses in
6 October of 2023, where we had reduced the size of
7 the study area down to the project corridors.
8 Continuing to gather feedback from landowners, we
9 continue to further refine those corridors into
10 route corridors, and came back for a third round of
11 open houses in February of 2024.
12 Through additional comments and
13 refinement of those corridors, we held a fourth
14 round of open houses in June of 2024, where we
15 shared our proposed route options for the
16 transmission line.
17 We gathered feedback not only from
18 landowners but other interested stakeholders and
19 agencies throughout this process to help identify
20 the proposed routes that appear in our route permit
21 application.
22 Is everyone else's slide blank?
23 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Oh, is it blank for you?
24 I can see it on my end. Here, I'll go back one.
25 Can you see that?

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1 **MR. JASON WEIERS:** No, I'm just seeing
2 white, but I'll continue with my slides here. So on
3 slide 17, Sam?
4 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Yeah, I'm on slide 17.
5 **MR. JASON WEIERS:** Okay, perfect.
6 Our proposed route segments from the
7 route permit application are shown on slide 17.
8 And, again, these start at the Minnesota-South
9 Dakota border and end at the Alexandria substation.
10 Generally speaking, you'll see two route
11 segment options from the Minnesota-South Dakota
12 border over to the Alexandria substations, and these
13 route segment options represent a cumulative length
14 anywhere between 91 miles in length to 105 miles in
15 length depending on which route option will be
16 chosen or selected throughout this process.
17 For ease in reference, we have analyzed
18 the route options in different segments. The south
19 segments are shown in blue, the central segments
20 here are shown in orange, and the north segments are
21 shown in purple.
22 Although we will only need 150 feet for
23 the right-of-way for this new 345-kilovolt
24 transmission line, our route permit application
25 generally included a corridor width of 1,000 feet to

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1 Sam.
2 Slide 18 shows the south route segment
3 options. These vary in length between 39 miles and
4 42 miles in total length, and these go from the
5 Minnesota-South Dakota border to Tara Township in
6 Swift County.
7 The central route segments are anywhere
8 between 34 and 39 miles in total length, and these
9 go from Tara Township in Swift County up to Ben Wade
10 Township in Pope County. And the north route
11 segments vary in length from 18 miles and 25 miles
12 in length, and they go from Ben Wade Township up to
13 the Alexandria substation in Douglas County.
14 If you are a landowner along the approved
15 route for the project, slide 21 shows a general
16 construction overview of what you can expect on your
17 property. Starting first in the upper left-hand
18 corner, once we have the land rights in place, we
19 will start with surveying and staking the proposed
20 structure locations. Next, we will establish
21 temporary access roads for equipment to get out to
22 the right-of-way.
23 Next, we will install the concrete
24 foundations. After the foundations are installed,
25 we will set the structure on the foundation. The

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1 allow us some flexibility in moving the center line
2 of the transmission line once we get into the
3 negotiations with landowners.
4 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Just one second here,
5 Jason.
6 Hey, Jenna, are you able to see the
7 slides at all?
8 **MS. JENNA NESS:** I can see slide 17.
9 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Okay. Are you able to
10 see it now, Jason?
11 **MR. JASON WEIERS:** It's still blank on my
12 end, but let's proceed.
13 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Okay. I'll go to slide
14 18.
15 And just a quick note for folks online
16 who are watching, if you're not able to see the
17 slides, I can understand that that would be pretty
18 frustrating. So I will get these posted onto the
19 eDockets website right away so that you are able to
20 go back and review what we talked about in case you
21 aren't able to see them. So sometimes Webex has
22 some glitches like this, so we very much apologize
23 if you are having trouble seeing them.
24 All right. Sorry, Jason. Back to you.
25 **MR. JASON WEIERS:** All right. Thanks,

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1 structures are actually hauled out to site in three
2 pieces, installed at the structure location site,
3 and then raised into place with a crane. After the
4 structures are set, we will then string the
5 conductor, typically with the use of a helicopter.
6 And, lastly, once we have the conductor
7 in place, we will restore the work area by removing
8 the temporary access roads and reseeding the
9 disturbed areas in coordination with the landowners.
10 Sam covered the permitting schedule that
11 is expected over the next, roughly, year or so here.
12 As we fit that in with the overall project schedule,
13 you'll notice that we do expect the permitting
14 schedule in Minnesota to wrap up in Q2 of 2026.
15 After a Commission decision of a route, we will
16 begin acquiring land rights for the 150 feet of
17 right-of-way that we need for the transmission line.
18 After land rights are secured, we will
19 perform field surveys that will help support other
20 federal, state, and local permits that are needed
21 for the project. We expect this process will take
22 approximately two years. Under the current
23 schedule, we do anticipate starting construction in
24 the spring of 2028 and wrapping up by the end of
25 2030. The schedule, of course, is subject to change

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1 based on a variety of different factors such as
2 material lead times, contractor availability, and
3 weather conditions.
4 If you have any questions or would like
5 any additional information following this meeting,
6 feel free to contact me by phone or e-mail. My
7 contact information is shown here on slide 23.
8 Alternatively, we have also set up a project website
9 where interested stakeholders are able to view the
10 latest information for the project, as well as leave
11 us a comment, send us an e-mail, or leave us a
12 voicemail on our toll-free number. The website
13 comments, the e-mail comments, and the voicemails on
14 our hotline are monitored by a member of our project
15 team, and we try to get back to messages within 24
16 to 48 hours.
17 With that, I'll turn it over to Jenna
18 from the Department to cover the next part of the
19 presentation. Thank you.
20 **MS. JENNA NESS:** Thanks.
21 Hi, my name is Jenna Ness. I'm with the
22 Department of Commerce, and I'm the environmental
23 review manager. I will be managing the
24 environmental impact statement, or the EIS, for this
25 project. I'll be using that acronym quite a bit

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1 that could occur because of the project.
2 Next slide, please.
3 So today we are at the scoping meeting,
4 which means we're getting our public input on the
5 table of contents of the EIS, and that's so we can
6 focus the EIS on the most relevant information
7 that's needed to make informed decisions, such as
8 that route permit.
9 That also includes alternatives that
10 people can offer to the proposed route that could
11 mitigate impacts. So you can offer an alternative
12 route into the record before the end of the comment
13 period. In order for that to be accepted and issued
14 in the scoping decision, it needs to mitigate a
15 potential impact, and that can be anything, a whole
16 range of human or environmental impacts and
17 something as simple as a disturbance to the
18 viewshed.
19 And, second, it needs to be specific and
20 identifiable, and what we mean about that is that I
21 need to know the area to study. So the easiest way
22 to get that information to me is to draw it on a map
23 what your alternative route is so I can go in on the
24 specific area that you drew in and make sure that
25 it's as accurate as possible.

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1 throughout the presentation. And I just also want
2 to thank you everybody for taking time out of their
3 night to meet with us.
4 Next slide, please.
5 So the Department of Commerce's role is
6 what we'll go over partially in the agenda here.
7 We'll also talk about what creating the EIS looks
8 like, all the different ways you can comment during
9 this public comment period, and then we'll get into
10 the questions and oral public comments portion of
11 tonight's meeting.
12 Next slide, please.
13 So the Department conducts environmental
14 reviews on behalf of the Commission, and we offer
15 objective analysis on the project. So we don't
16 advocate for or against the project. We just
17 outline the facts, and that -- the goal then is to
18 make an information-gathering document which will
19 ultimately be used so that the public can understand
20 the project and its impacts. As well as, provide
21 that information to any decision-makers, such as the
22 Public Utilities Commission will be looking at
23 issuing a route permit. The EIS will be looking at
24 ways to avoid or mitigate those impacts, and that --
25 those are human health and environmental impacts

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1 Next slide, please.
2 So, shortly, we'll begin the oral public
3 comment part of today's meeting. That will go into
4 the record. We do have a court reporter on the call
5 today, so all of this is being recorded. You can
6 also comment online at this link. I can put it in
7 the chat so it is easier to access than typing it
8 from this presentation.
9 My contact information is on here as well
10 if you prefer to write out a letter and send it in
11 the postal mail. I will also place that in the
12 chat. And my e-mail address is here, and if -- you
13 can submit a comment to my e-mail. I'd ask if you
14 do that to please include the docket number, 23-160,
15 and I will put all that in the chat as well. Just a
16 reminder that the comment period ends the end of
17 this month, January 31st.
18 Next slide, please. And the next one.
19 This is just a reminder of what the scope
20 of the EIS means. As we're about to begin taking
21 public comments, if you could narrow in your
22 comments on the scope, that is the most helpful.
23 And that's any potential human and environmental
24 impacts you want to make sure get covered.
25 We do cover a host of topics, so feel

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1 free to ask us questions tonight, everybody.
2 There's representatives from each party here, so
3 this is your best time to ask questions. And then,
4 also, any strategies you want us to include to
5 mitigate those potential impacts. Those are the
6 most helpful comments.
7 So I'll hand it off to you, Sam.
8 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Thank you, Jenna.
9 So we are concluded with the presentation
10 piece, so the rest of the evening will be to take
11 your questions and comments. So it looks like we've
12 already got one person who figured out how to do it:
13 Brian.
14 So, Brian, you'll be first.
15 I'll just explain here in just a second
16 how folks can do this. So if you are online, you
17 can either do the raise-hand function. There's --
18 the blue circle on this picture is circling about
19 where that is, or you can type in the chat box that
20 you would like to say something.
21 Although, if you're going to use the chat
22 box, we don't want to take your comments in the chat
23 box because the court reporter isn't able to monitor
24 both verbal comments and the chat. So if you do
25 want to use that, just let me know, and then I can

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1 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Can you hear me, Brian?
2 Is anybody else able to hear Brian?
3 **MS. JENNA NESS:** I cannot.
4 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Okay. Yeah. Brian, I'm
5 not able to hear you. Are you -- I suppose, maybe
6 if you can type in the chat if you're able, maybe if
7 there's audio issues or something like that. If you
8 needed to, you could maybe -- sometimes Webex is not
9 the easiest.
10 Oh, he doesn't have anything. Gotcha.
11 Okay. Thank you, Brian. Appreciate that. No
12 worries at all. All right. I will re-mute you
13 again.
14 Sometimes Webex has some glitches. So I
15 never know if it's working right or not. It's not
16 always the smoothest program, but that's what we
17 have.
18 So I am not seeing any other folks
19 raising their hands. So I'll just say, I'll give it
20 a little bit longer in case anybody does want to
21 speak or if they're just trying to figure out how.
22 So, again, here, if you're using a phone, you can
23 press *3. If you are online, you can use the
24 raise-hand or chat function.
25 And just, once again, real quick, too, I

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1 call on you.
2 If you're calling in on the phone, it
3 looks like we do have a few phone callers, you can
4 just press *3. And that will indicate that you want
5 to speak, and I will call on people in the order
6 that they have raised their hands. So that's the --
7 that's how you can participate in the public
8 speaking portion.
9 If you are not somebody that likes to
10 speak publicly, Jenna already mentioned those ways
11 to comment. So your verbal comments are going to be
12 looked at exactly the same as any written comments
13 that you submit. Again, those are due by January
14 31st. So you've got plenty of time to think about
15 if you do want to, or, you know, if you think of
16 something after this meeting that you didn't get a
17 chance to say, there's still plenty of time for you
18 to let us know. And I'll repeat that information
19 again, too.
20 So with that, we'll go with our first
21 question or comment, and that's coming from Brian.
22 So, Brian, I just unmuted you. If you could please
23 state and spell your first and last name for the
24 record.
25 (No response.)

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1 will put Jenna's slide back up again here as far as
2 how to comment. So if you -- if you do want to
3 comment but public speaking isn't your thing, that's
4 totally fine. We want to accommodate everybody.
5 Oh, we do have someone who just raised
6 their hand. I will just go ahead and leave this up
7 so that you have that information while we're
8 listening to the next commenter.
9 So I've got a caller, 612-309. If you
10 could please state and spell your name for the
11 record, I have you unmuted.
12 **MR. JAMES SMITH:** Sure. The name is
13 James Smith.
14 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** All right.
15 **MR. JAMES SMITH:** And hopefully you
16 can --
17 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Yeah, we can hear you.
18 **MR. JAMES SMITH:** Okay. Great. I joined
19 late. Apologies.
20 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** No worries.
21 **MR. JAMES SMITH:** So on the last -- on
22 the last route map that I believe I have, there were
23 two alternatives: One, a northern kind of a route,
24 and then a southern kind of a route. What's the
25 timeline for putting all that and submit -- and

1 picking one over the other?
2 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** As far as the permitting
3 timeline is concerned, that's -- this is the very
4 beginning of the process. So as far as that is
5 concerned, this is really the first opportunity to
6 offer comments. So those two routes are not --
7 nothing has been decided yet, and there are still
8 opportunities for you to suggest any sort of
9 alternatives or alternative segments or things like
10 that. So you're getting involved at the right time.
11 There will be a number of other opportunities for
12 you to comment throughout this whole process.
13 But as far as your question about how
14 long it will take, a tentative decision for this by
15 the Commission for the permitting piece would be
16 March of 2026. So it's quite a ways out. So,
17 again, nothing's set in stone, and any comments you
18 have as far as what the route looks like on the maps
19 that you have, you can submit that to Jenna, and she
20 can study those.
21 I'm not sure if any other folks want to
22 respond to his question on any other pieces. Jenna
23 or Jason, do you have anything you wanted to add?
24 **MR. JASON WEIERS:** Mr. Smith joined a
25 little bit late. I'm not sure what point he joined,

1 any other questions?
2 **MR. JAMES SMITH:** No, that's all I -- all
3 I needed to know. Thank you.
4 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Great, thank you.
5 And just as a heads-up, I'm not -- I'm
6 assuming since you're calling in, you can't see
7 what's on the slide, but if you do have any --
8 **MR. JAMES SMITH:** I have -- I now have
9 both the phone and the Webex running, so I can see
10 your slide.
11 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Oh, okay. Great. Sounds
12 good.
13 If there's anyone else on the line that
14 can't see the slides and you're wondering about
15 contact information, worst-case scenario is you go
16 online to the PUC website and reach out. Just
17 reference this project, and whoever you reach out
18 to, just ask them to please forward them to the
19 person in charge of this project. And -- which is
20 me -- Sam Lobby -- and we can get through to you
21 that way.
22 All right. Thank you, Mr. Smith. I'm
23 going to go ahead and mute you.
24 So, now, I'm not seeing any other hands
25 raised. I'll give another little bit here in case

1 but if he has any questions about the project
2 schedule, I'd be happy to repeat that as well.
3 Just as a quick refresher, once we have
4 the route permit decision from the Commission, we
5 would start our land rights efforts, and we expect
6 that will be, approximately, a two-year time frame.
7 In that two-year time frame, we'll be performing
8 field surveys, and that will be used to support
9 obtaining other federal, state, and local permits we
10 need for the project. Assuming that everything goes
11 well, we would start construction in the spring of
12 2028 and have the project completed by the end of
13 2030.
14 **MR. JAMES SMITH:** Got it. Thank you
15 much.
16 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Oh, go ahead, Jenna.
17 **MS. JENNA NESS:** The only other thing I
18 have to add is if we could go to the timeline
19 slide -- well, I guess it's a call-in user, they
20 might not be able to see that. But if you can see
21 in the chat, I did put a link in there, and there is
22 an interactive map on that link if you want to zoom
23 in on your property, if that's helpful.
24 **MR. JAMES SMITH:** Thank you.
25 **MR. SAM LOBBY:** Yes, sir. Did you have

1 any other folks do want to speak, if it takes you a
2 second to figure out where to -- what button to hit.
3 And just a reminder, with this slide that
4 is up right now, that's another way that you can
5 comment. It's looked at exactly the same. Public
6 speaking isn't weighted higher than the written
7 comments or anything. So you're more than welcome
8 to use those methods as well. And, also, as Jenna
9 mentioned, she did put all of that information in
10 the chat as well.
11 Are there any other folks that would be
12 interested in speaking tonight?
13 I'm still not seeing anyone. So with
14 that, I'll just kind of recap one more time, and
15 just give you one more minute here if there is
16 someone that's trying to figure out how to speak.
17 So we just want to thank you, once again,
18 for coming tonight. We really appreciate your
19 participation, and your participation does really
20 matter. So that is very important for the
21 decision-making process and for helping Jenna to do
22 her environmental study. So we understand it's
23 taking time out of your night, but it really does
24 count for something. So thank you very much for
25 your participation.

1 And I'm still not seeing any other hands.
2 So with that, we will go ahead and conclude the
3 meeting. Thank you all, again, so much for coming,
4 and always feel free to reach out to us later on
5 with questions. I hope you all have a great night,
6 and we will talk to you later.

7 **MS. JENNA NESS:** Thanks.

8 **MR. JASON WEIERS:** Thanks, everybody.

9 (Proceeding concluded at 6:39 p.m.)

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	19:13	3:25		commenter (1) 28:8
*	allow (1) 18:1	audio (1) 27:7	C	commenting (1) 6:1
*3 (2) 26:4;27:23	along (5) 13:11,15,18,23;19:14	availability (1) 21:2	call (4) 13:25;24:4;26:1,5	comments (20) 3:6;5:25,25;11:6;12:4; 16:12;21:13,13;22:10; 24:21,22;25:6,11,22,24; 26:11,12;29:6,17;32:7
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120- (1) 14:5	4			
14 (1) 14:7	400 (1) 14:11			
150 (3) 14:15;17:22;20:16	42 (1)			

From: [PAM MAAS](#)
To: [Ness, Jenna \(COMM\)](#)
Subject: Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project Scoping Comment 23-159
Date: Friday, January 31, 2025 3:02:36 PM

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Please respond to let me know you received this email.

- I own land on proposed route S11.
- People should be the main concern when making routing decisions. I am concerned about the negative effect on the value of my property.
- The S3 route has 6 less homes along the 4 mile stretch of these two route segments. The S3 route would avoid more homes and people. There are 2 homes missing on the S11 route on the map.
- The S11 route has approximately 12 turns to avoid certain areas on both sides of the road. The S3 route has zero turns and would make more economic sense. The number of times the line would have to cross 430th Street would add substantial unneeded costs to the project.
- The groundwater aquifer is a major concern, especially along S11. With sandy soil and possible deep foundations on structures, it could be a direct path for pollutants to get into our drinking water. It could change the routing of the veins as well.

I WOULD PREFER YOU FOLLOW THE EXISTING POWER LINE ON 715TH. SECONDARY CHOICE, RUN ALONG 435TH AVOIDING THE AL AND JACKIE WEBSTER FARMSITE.

If you have questions, let me know.

Thanks.

Pam Rehn
701-741-7349

Please respond to let me know you received this email.

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If you have questions, let me know.

Thanks.

Pam Rehn
701-741-7349



Mail Delivery Subsystem



Mail Delivery Subsystem

From: [PAM MAAS](#)
To: [Ness, Jenna \(COMM\)](#)
Subject: Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project Scoping Comment 23-159
Date: Wednesday, February 19, 2025 4:56:25 PM

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Hi Jenna,
Attached please find pics of route segments 34 & 33. The proposed alternative route is highlighted in orange.

Proposed route would start in route segment 34 where the current S #2 proposed route starts by the SD/MN border. It would continue straight East until 710th Ave, then angle NE through section 24. It would continue straight East (reflected on route segment 33 map) all the way to County Rd 21 where it would head north and reconnect with the initial proposed Line 2 route.

Please confirm receipt and thank you for your time and consideration.

Pam Rehn

ROUTE SEGMENTS



ROUTE SEGMENTS

33



Please provide your contact information. This information and your comments will be publicly available.

Name: RODNEY DAVIS Phone: 320-760-0317

Street Address: 24019 176TH ST.

City: Blenwood State: MINN. ZIP: 56334

Email: RODNEY.DAVIS@AOL.COM

Share your comments as specifically as possible on the EIS that will be prepared for the Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project.

- What potential human and environmental impacts of the proposed project should be considered in the EIS?
- Are there any methods to minimize, mitigate, or avoid potential impacts of the proposed project that should be considered in the EIS?
- Are there any alternative routes or route segments that should be considered in the EIS to address or mitigate potential impacts associated with the proposed project? **If so, please provide a map with the proposed route drawn** and a description of the proposal.
- Are there any unique characteristics of the proposed project that should be considered in the EIS?

DEAR JENNA THIS IS ROD DAVIS ASKING YOU TO TAKE A LOOK AT THE LEGISLATION THAT WAS PASSED IN JUNE OF 2024 REGARDING USE OF HIGHWAY RIGHT-OF-WAY FOR NEW HIGH VOLTAGE LINES. THIS WOULD MAKE THE MOST SENSE AND THE LEAST AMOUNT OF STRESS ON THE LAND OWNERS AND HOME OWNERS, THE PEOPLE ARE SO UPSET WITH THE PLACEMENT OF THE LINE AS PROPOSED. I ASK YOU TO PLEASE LOOK, AND EXCUSE MY WRITING.

THANK YOU

RODNEY DAVIS
Rodney Davis

TOPIC - LINE PLACEMENT
ALONG HWY 59



Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Division of Ecological and Water Resources
500 Lafayette Road
St. Paul, MN 55155-4040

January 31, 2025

Jenna Ness
Minnesota Department of Commerce
85 7th Place East, Suite 280
St. Paul, MN 55101

RE: In the Matter of the Application for a Route Permit for the Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project in West-Central Minnesota
PUC Docket Number: E017, ET10/TL-23-160

Dear Jenna Ness,

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has reviewed the application for a Route Permit for the Big Stone South to Alexandria 345 kV Transmission Line (BSSA Project) in Big Stone, Swift, Stevens, Pope, and Douglas counties, submitted by Otter Tail Power Company and Western Minnesota Municipal Power Agency through its agent, Missouri River Energy Services (Applicants). Our agency offers the following comments:

Preferred Routes and Recommendations on Routes

North Segment

The DNR prefers the use of the North 2 route with alternative route N11.

Central Segment

The DNR prefers to use a combination of the Central 1 and Central 2 routes following C1, C2, C8, C4, C11, C10, and C6 segments.

South Segment

The DNR prefers the use of South 1 route segments S2, S3, S12, and S15.

Segment S10

Route Segment S10 has the potential to impact multiple rare features and state recreational trails. Project details such as infrastructure placement, site prep, staging areas, laydown yards, access roads, and ROW maintenance are all critical information needed to assess potential impacts on this ecologically sensitive area. Given the severity of potential impacts, it is prudent these details are addressed in the EIS.

S10 Environmental Considerations:

- Designated Rare Natural Community
- Sedimentary Bedrock Outcrop
- Bedrock Outcrop Native Plant Community
- State-listed threatened and endangered species
- MBS Site of High Biodiversity Significance
- MBS Site of Moderate Biodiversity Significance
- New Minnesota River Crossing (State Water Trail)
- New Minnesota River State Trail Crossing

The Natural Heritage letter (MCE 2024-00481), page 3, thoroughly discusses impacts, avoidance, and minimization measures.

Segment S11

Route segment S11 passes through the border of Odessa 19-1 Native Prairie Bank (NPB) at the Stony Run Creek crossing. The NPB is not included in Appendix D-1 -2 Detailed Route Maps of South Segment and is not addressed in the application. Impacts to the NPB need to be addressed in the EIS.

As such, the DNR highly encourages avoiding the use of route segments S10 and S11 as they have the potential to impact multiple rare resources, state recreation trails, and conservation land.

Minnesota River Crossing

The DNR strongly prefers South 1 route segment S2 which uses an existing crossing over the Minnesota River. The alternative South 2 route segment S10 would create a new crossing. This would involve unnecessary additional vegetation clearing and fragmentation of riparian habitat. For general planning purposes, utilizing side-by-side pole structures for Minnesota River crossings are preferable to stacked line pole structures, due to there being fewer vertical planes resulting in potential bird impacts.

Impact Mitigation

Natural Heritage Reviews

Two Natural Heritage Reviews (MCE 2024-00481 and MCE 2024-00815) have been completed for this project. The EIS should refer to both letters and the steps listed in them to minimize or avoid impacts to state-listed species and other rare resources. This includes, but is not limited to, the following:

Calcareous Fens

Multiple calcareous fens have been documented in the vicinity of the project. The DNR requests a special permit condition, similar to TL-23-159, that the Applicant must work with the DNR to determine if any impacts will occur during the project. If the project is anticipated to impact any calcareous fens, the applicant must develop a Calcareous Fen Management Plan in coordination with the DNR, as specified in Minn. Stat. § 103G.223.

MBS Sites of Biodiversity Significance and DNR Native Plant Communities

The EIS should address Minnesota Biological Survey (MBS) Sites of Biodiversity Significance and DNR Native Plant Communities and the measures to avoid or minimize impacts to these ecologically significant resources. Of particular concern, the project has the potential to impact multiple native prairie and rock outcrop native plant communities. A prairie protection plan may be needed as the project will likely cross some areas of native prairie. These habitats contain multiple state-listed species. Refer to the Natural Heritage Review letters for specific avoidance and minimization measures.

State-listed Species

We request that the PUC include permit conditions that require the applicant to complete coordination regarding rare species, including the Takings Permit process if needed, prior to the initiation of project activity such as vegetation removal. This includes, but is not limited to, the following:

Plant Species

Multiple state-listed plant species, including species that are exclusively found in rare remnant native prairie and rock-outcrop habitats, have been documented in the vicinity of the project, and avoidance measures are required. The EIS must address all of the avoidance measures required in the letters.

Bird Species

Loggerhead Shrikes and Henslow's Sparrow have been documented in the vicinity of the project and avoidance measures are required. The EIS must address all of the avoidance measures required in the letters.

Prairie Butterflies

Dakota skippers have been documented in the vicinity of the project and avoidance measures are required. The EIS must address all of the avoidance measures required in the letters.

Coordination with the USFWS

We recommend that coordination with USFWS regarding avoidance and permitting of federally protected species on the selected route be included as a permit condition.

Avian Flight Diverters

To prevent avian collisions attributed to visibility issues, the DNR recommends including a special permit condition that the Applicant will coordinate with the DNR to determine appropriate locations for avian flight diverters after the route is finalized. Generally, the avian flight diverters will be needed at river crossings, fragmented forested patches, and near lakes and wetlands. The use of avian flight diverters minimizes the number of bird collisions with the transmission lines. Standard transmission line design shall incorporate adequate spacing of conductors and grounding devices in accordance with Avian Power Line Interaction Committee standards to eliminate the risk of electrocution to raptors with larger wingspans that may simultaneously come in contact with a conductor and grounding devices. Proposed routes intersect Waterfowl Production Areas, public waters, and wetlands and run parallel to the Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge. The EIS should identify areas with a high risk of collision.

Vegetation Removal

Floodplain

Vegetation clearing within a floodplain, especially tree removal, can greatly destabilize the area and make it more prone to ongoing erosion and sediment issues, and can also destabilize the riverbank further contributing to water quality issues. Once the soil within a floodplain and along the riverbank is destabilized, it can lead to pole stability issues and create long-term maintenance challenges.

Winter Tree Clearing

The DNR supports winter tree clearing for the project. Winter tree clearing ensures that nesting birds and roosting bats are not directly impacted by construction. Our agency recommends that the final EIS include a commitment from the Applicant for winter tree clearing. Additionally, the route permit should require this best management practice as a special condition.

Wildlife Management Areas

Wildlife management areas (WMAs) are part of Minnesota's outdoor recreation system and are established to protect those lands and waters that have a high potential for wildlife production, public

hunting, trapping, fishing, and other compatible recreational uses. They are the backbone to the DNR's wildlife management efforts in Minnesota and are key to protecting wildlife habitat for future generations; providing opportunities for hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching; and promoting wildlife-based tourism. For areas within the right-of-way and route width, potential recreational impacts and the state's ability to manage the land for its intended purpose, such as constraints on prescribed fire for habitat management, should be addressed. The EIS should also include a discussion on avoidance measures. If avoidance is not possible, a robust discussion on impact minimization should be included.

Facility Lighting

The DNR recommends including a special permit condition, similar to TL-23-159, to utilize downlit and shielded lighting and minimize blue hue to reduce harm to birds, insects, and other animals. Potential project impacts related to illuminated facilities can be avoided or minimized by using shielded and downward facing lighting and lighting that minimizes blue hue.

Dust Control

The DNR recommends including a special permit condition, similar to TL-23-159, to avoid products containing calcium chloride or magnesium chloride, which are often used for dust control. Chloride products that are released into the environment do not break down and instead accumulate to levels that are toxic to plants and wildlife.

Wildlife-Friendly Erosion Control

Due to entanglement issues with small animals, the DNR recommends including a special permit condition, similar to TL-23-159, that erosion control blankets be limited to "bio-netting" or "natural netting" types, and specifically not products containing plastic mesh netting or other plastic components. Hydro-mulch products may contain small synthetic (plastic) fibers to aid in their matrix strength. These loose fibers could potentially re-suspend and make their way into waterways.

Water Appropriation

A DNR Water Appropriation Permit is required for dewatering activities during construction if the water pumped exceeds 10,000 gallons in a day and/or one million gallons in one year. The DNR General Permit for Temporary Appropriation, with its lower permit application fee and reduced time for review, may be used for the dewatering if the dewatering volume is less than 50 million gallons and the time of the appropriation is less than one year. Minnesota Water Permitting and Reporting System (MPARS), the DNR's online permitting system, can be used to apply for a DNR Water Appropriation Permit.

Public Waters

Public waters are designated as such to indicate which lakes, wetlands, and watercourses over which DNR Waters has regulatory jurisdiction. A license to cross public waters will be required in multiple locations. The EIS should discuss transmission tower placement in relation to river and stream banks and floodplains, setbacks from stream banks, and minimizing the number of crossings over the same public water. The EIS should include a robust discussion of methods to avoid, minimize, or mitigate potential impacts to public waters.

The DNR appreciates the opportunity to comment on the construction and operation of the proposed Big Stone South to Alexandria 345 kV Transmission Line Project. Please contact me if you have questions about our agency's comments.

Sincerely,

Samantha Bump
Energy Projects Planner
Samantha.Bump@state.mn.us
651.259.5999

Attached: Natural Heritage Review Letters (MCE 2024-00481 and MCE 2024-00815)

CC: Haley Byron
Owen Baird

Equal Opportunity Employer



Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Division of Ecological & Water Resources
500 Lafayette Road, Box 25
St. Paul, MN 55155-4025

August 22, 2024

Katie Lueth
HDR Inc

RE: Natural Heritage Review of the proposed **OTP/MRES BSSA**,
Big Stone, Douglas, Pope, Stevens, Swift Counties

Dear Katie Lueth,

For all correspondence regarding the Natural Heritage Review of this project please include the project ID **MCE-2024-00481** in the email subject line.

As requested, the [Minnesota Natural Heritage Information System](#) has been reviewed to determine if the proposed project has the potential to impact any rare species or other significant natural features. Based on the project details provided with the request, the following rare features may be impacted by the proposed project:

Ecologically Significant Areas

- Multiple calcareous fens have been documented in the vicinity of the proposed project. A calcareous fen is a rare and distinctive peat-accumulating wetland that is legally protected in Minnesota. The Wetlands Conservation Act (WCA), authorized by Minnesota Statutes, section 103G.223, states that calcareous fens may not be filled, drained, or otherwise degraded, wholly or partially, by any activity, except as provided for in a management plan approved by the commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources. Many of the unique characteristics of calcareous fens result from the upwelling of groundwater through calcareous substrates. Because of this dependence on groundwater hydrology, calcareous fens can be affected by nearby activities or even those several miles away. For more information regarding calcareous fens, please see the [Calcareous Fen Fact Sheet](#). To minimize stormwater impacts, please refer to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's [General Principles for Erosion Prevention and Sediment Control](#) in the Minnesota Stormwater Manual. Please note that calcareous fens are "Special Waters" and a [buffer zone](#) may be required.

Calcareous fens may be impacted by activities within the fen, activities that affect surface water flows (e.g., stormwater flow, erosion), or activities that affect groundwater hydrology (e.g., groundwater pumping, contamination, discharge, or excavation). **To ensure compliance under WCA, please contact the Calcareous Fen Program Coordinator, Keylor Andrews (Keylor.Andrews@state.mn.us)**

- **Artichoke Lake**, a Lake of *Moderate* Biological Significance, may be impacted by the proposed project. [Lakes of Biological Significance](#) are high quality lakes based on the aquatic plant, fish, bird, or amphibian communities present within the lake. The lake is assigned a biological significance of *Outstanding*, *High*, or *Moderate* based on the community with the highest quality. Given the ecological significance of this lake, disturbance should be minimized during construction, operation, and maintenance activities. Actions to avoid or minimize disturbance include, but are not limited to, the following recommendations:
 - Avoid lakebed disturbance / span waterbodies.
 - Avoid the removal of shoreline vegetation.
 - Implement stringent/redundant erosion prevention and sediment control practices.
 - Prevent the spread of invasive species.
 - Use only herbicides approved for application within shoreline/riparian areas.
 - Minimize use of fertilizer.
- The Minnesota Biological Survey (MBS) has identified **25** Sites of Biodiversity Significance within the vicinity of the proposed project ranked as *High* or *Moderate*. MBS Sites have varying levels of native biodiversity and are ranked based on the relative significance of this biodiversity at a statewide level. Factors taken into account during the ranking process include the number of rare species documented within the site, the quality of the native plant communities in the site, the size of the site, and the context of the site within the landscape. Additionally, there are **21** areas within the vicinity of the proposed project ranked as *Below*; these areas do not meet the minimum biodiversity threshold for statewide significance but may have conservation value at the local level as habitat. **The DNR recommends avoidance of MBS Sites of Biodiversity Significance ranked *High* or *Outstanding*.** Please see your MCE-generated Conservation Planning Report for a comprehensive list of MBS Sites of Biodiversity Significance.

There are **58** mapped DNR Native Plant Communities (NPC) that have been documented within the vicinity of the proposed project. DNR NPC types are given a Conservation Status Rank that reflects the relative rarity and endangerment of the community type in Minnesota. Conservation Status Ranks range from S1 (critically imperiled) to S5 (secure, common, widespread, and abundant). *Native plant communities with a Conservation Status Rank of S1 (critically imperiled), S2 (imperiled), or S3 (vulnerable to extirpation) are considered rare in the state.* **The DNR recommends avoidance of rare NPCs (ranked S1, S2, or S3).** Please see your MCE-generated Conservation Planning Report for a comprehensive list of native plant communities in your

proposed project area. Of particular concern are project impacts to prairie communities and rock outcrop communities.

- *Prairie Communities*: More than 99% of the prairie that was present in the state before settlement has been destroyed, and more than one-third of Minnesota's endangered, threatened, and special concern species are now dependent on the remaining small fragments of Minnesota's prairie ecosystem. **To avoid incidental take, all native prairie remnants should be avoided.** If avoidance is not feasible, further consultation will be needed to ensure compliance with state law. **If any native prairie remnants are crossed by the final project design, a native prairie protection plan may be needed.** You may contact the Regional Ecologist for details on developing a native prairie protection plan.
- *Rock Outcrop Communities*: Rock Outcrops contain dry, rather sparsely vegetated communities on exposures of granitic bedrock. Vegetation on these outcrops typically occurs as a complex growing on bare rock surfaces, in rock crevices, and in shallow soils less than a couple of feet deep between and around exposures. Plant species in rock outcrop communities are adapted to greater environmental extremes than species in surrounding terrestrial communities. Several threatened and endangered species rely on this rare habitat.
 - We are especially concerned about impacts to Ortonville 22 *High* MBS Site in Big Stone County (T121N R46W Section 22) and recommend avoiding the site entirely to avoid incidental take and to comply with the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA, see more information below). Ortonville 22 *High* MBS Site contains Crystalline Bedrock Outcrop (Prairie), Minnesota River Subtype (ROs12a1), an imperiled (S2) NPC which provides habitat for state-protected plant species such as [ball cactus](#) (*Coryphantha vivipara*), [larger water starwort](#) (*Callitriche heterophylla*), and [waterhyssop](#) (*Bacopa rotundifolia*). For ball cactus, one of the rarest species in Minnesota, impacts to Ortonville 22 *High* MBS Site would likely result in a deleterious effect on its population as thousands of plants have been documented at the site. **To prevent degradation of this ecologically significant area, we strongly recommend that another route is chosen.** Please consider the Alternative Route Requests proposed by Regional Environmental Assessment Ecologists Haley Byron and Owen Baird during project coordination.

The DNR recommends that the project be designed to avoid impacts to these ecologically significant areas. Actions to avoid or minimize disturbance include, but are not limited to, the following recommendations:

- As much as possible, operate within already-disturbed areas.
- Avoid MBS Sites and native plant communities ranked S1, S2, or S3.
- Retain a buffer between proposed activities and the MBS Site.

- Confine construction activities to the opposite side of the road from MBS Sites. If this is not feasible, confine construction activities to the existing road rights-of-way.
- Minimize vehicular disturbance in the MBS Site (allow only vehicles/equipment necessary for construction activities).
- Do not park equipment or stockpile supplies in the MBS Site.
- Do not place spoil in the MBS Site or other sensitive areas.
- If possible, conduct the work under frozen ground conditions.
- Use effective erosion prevention and sediment control measures.
- Inspect and clean equipment prior to operation and follow recommendations to [prevent the spread of invasive species](#).
- Revegetate disturbed soil with [native species suitable to the local habitat](#) as soon after construction as possible.
- Use only weed-free mulches, topsoils, and seed mixes. Of particular concern are birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) and crown vetch (*Coronilla varia*), two invasive species that are sold commercially and are problematic in prairies and disturbed open areas.

MBS Sites of Biodiversity Significance and DNR Native Plant Communities can be viewed using the Explore page in [Minnesota Conservation Explorer](#) or their GIS shapefiles can be downloaded from the [MN Geospatial Commons](#). Please contact the [NH Review Team](#) if you need assistance accessing the data. Reference the [MBS Site Biodiversity Significance](#) and [Native Plant Community](#) websites for information on interpreting the data. To receive a list of MBS Sites of Biodiversity Significance and DNR Native Plant Communities in the vicinity of your project, create a [Conservation Planning Report](#) using the Explore Tab in [Minnesota Conservation Explorer](#). **I have uploaded the MCE-generated Conservation Planning Report to the MCE project page.**

- If the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) is applicable to this project, please note that native plant communities with a Conservation Status Rank of S1 through S3 or wetlands within *High* or *Outstanding* MBS Sites of Biodiversity Significance may qualify as Rare Natural Communities (RNC) under WCA. Minnesota Rules, part 8420.0515, subpart 3 states that a wetland replacement plan for activities that modify a RNC must be denied if the local government unit determines the proposed activities will permanently adversely affect the RNC. If the proposed project includes a wetland replacement plan under WCA, please contact your [DNR Regional Ecologist](#) for further evaluation. Please visit [WCA Program Guidance and Information](#) for additional information, including the [Rare Natural Communities Technical Guidance](#).
 - There are several designated Rare Natural Communities in Ortonville 22 *High* MBS Site in Big Stone Co. (T121N R46W Sect. 22).
 - There are several potential Rare Natural Communities in:
 - Ortonville 21 *Moderate* MBS Site in Big Stone Co. (T121N R46W Sect. 21)
 - Odessa 29 *Moderate* MBS Site in Big Stone Co. (T121N R45W Sect. 29)

- Odessa 28 *Moderate* MBS Site in Big Stone Co. (T121N R45W Sect. 27 & 28)
- Tara 31 *Moderate* MBS Site in Swift Co. (T122N R41W Sect. 31)
- Swift Co. WPA *Moderate* MBS Site in Swift Co. (T122N R41W Sect. 17 & 20)
- Little Chippewa River *Moderate* MBS Site in Pope Co. (T125N R39W Sect. 30 & 31)
- Starbuck WPA *Moderate* MBS Site in Pope Co. (T125N R39W Sect. 30)
- Reno 36 *Moderate* MBS Site in Pope Co. (T126N R38W Sect. 35)
- Cattail Marsh (Prairie) (MRp83b) critically imperiled (S1) NPC in Pope Co. (T126N R37W Sect. 30)
- Southern Seepage Meadow/Carr (WMs83) imperiled (S2) NPC in Douglas Co. (T127N R37W Sect. 22)

State-listed Species

- Many state-listed threatened and endangered plant species have been found within the vicinity of the proposed project and within the project area. This project may impact potential habitat and result in take of threatened or endangered species. Minnesota’s Endangered Species Statute (*Minnesota Statutes*, section 84.0895) and associated Rules (*Minnesota Rules*, part 6212.1800 to 6212.2300 and 6134) prohibit the take of threatened or endangered species without a permit.

The table below lists state-listed plant species within the project vicinity; species found within the proposed project area are marked with an asterisk (*). **All known occurrences of state protected plant species and all potential habitats must be avoided.** If this is not feasible, a qualified surveyor will need to (1) resurvey known occurrences and (2) conduct a habitat assessment to determine if suitable habitat exists within the activity impact area and, if so, conduct a rare plant survey prior to any project activities. The goal of the habitat assessment is to identify potential locations where endangered (END) and threatened (THR) species may occur to help formulate an avoidance plan. Species of special concern (SPC) are also rare and an important component of Minnesota’s natural heritage; we strongly encourage project alternatives that avoid or minimize impacts to known occurrences of these species as well.

Surveys must be conducted by a qualified surveyor and follow the standards contained in the [Rare Species Survey Process](#) and [Rare Plant Guidance](#). Visit the [Natural Heritage Review](#) page for a list of certified surveyors and more information on this process. Project planning should take into account that any botanical survey needs to be conducted during the appropriate time of the year, which may be limited. Please consult with the NH Review Team at Review.NHIS@state.mn.us if you have any questions regarding this process.

MN Status	Common Name	Scientific Name	Habitat	Water Regime
END	Ball Cactus *	<i>Coryphantha vivipara</i>	Rock Outcrop	terrestrial
END	Eared False Foxglove	<i>Agalinis auriculata</i>	Upland Prairie, Lowland Prairie	terrestrial
END	Hairy Waterclover	<i>Marsilea vestita</i>	Rock Outcrop	wetland
END	Prairie Quillwort	<i>Isoetes melanopoda</i>	Rock Outcrop	wetland
END	Wolf's Spikerush	<i>Eleocharis wolfii</i>	Rock Outcrop, Upland Prairie, Savanna, Wet Meadow/Carr	wetland
THR	Hair-like Beak Rush	<i>Rhynchospora capillacea</i>	Non-forested Rich Peatland	wetland
THR	Larger Water Starwort *	<i>Callitriche heterophylla</i>	Marsh, Rock Outcrop, Littoral Zone of Lake	aquatic
THR	Short-pointed Umbrella Sedge	<i>Cyperus acuminatus</i>	Rock Outcrop	wetland
THR	Stream Parsnip	<i>Berula erecta</i>	Wet Meadow/Carr, Small Rivers and Streams, Non-forested Rich Peatland	aquatic, wetland
THR	Waterhyssop *	<i>Bacopa rotundifolia</i>	Marsh, Rock Outcrop	aquatic, wetland
SPC	Cutleaf Ironplant	<i>Xanthisma spinulosum var. spinulosum</i>	Upland Prairie	terrestrial
SPC	Dwarf Spikerush	<i>Eleocharis coloradoensis</i>	Lake Shore	wetland
SPC	Few-flowered Spikerush *	<i>Eleocharis quinqueflora</i>	Lake Shore, Lowland Prairie, Non-forested Acid Peatland, Non-forested Rich Peatland	wetland
SPC	Hill's Thistle *	<i>Cirsium pumilum var. hillii</i>	Savanna, Upland Prairie	terrestrial
SPC	Missouri Milk-vetch	<i>Astragalus missouriensis var. missouriensis</i>	Upland Prairie	terrestrial
SPC	Mudwort *	<i>Limosella aquatica</i>	Lowland Prairie, Rock Outcrop	aquatic, wetland
SPC	Oregon cliff fern	<i>Woodsia oregana ssp. cathcartiana</i>	Rock Outcrop, Talus, Cliff	terrestrial
SPC	Prairie Mimosa *	<i>Desmanthus illinoensis</i>	Lake Shore, Upland Prairie	terrestrial
SPC	Sea Naiad	<i>Najas marina</i>	Littoral Zone of Lake	aquatic
SPC	Slender Milk-vetch *	<i>Astragalus flexuosus var. flexuosus</i>	Upland Prairie	terrestrial
SPC	Small White Lady's-slipper *	<i>Cypripedium candidum</i>	Lowland Prairie, Upland Prairie, Wet Meadow/Carr	terrestrial, wetland
SPC	Spiral Ditchgrass	<i>Ruppia cirrhosa</i>	Littoral Zone of Lake	aquatic
SPC	Three-stamened Waterwort *	<i>Elatine triandra</i>	Littoral Zone of Lake, Rock Outcrop	aquatic
SPC	Tumble Grass	<i>Schedonnardus paniculatus</i>	Rock Outcrop	terrestrial

* = Known to occur within the project area. Please see your license agreement (2022-034) for specific locations.

- [Loggerhead shrikes](#) (*Lanius ludovicianus*), a state-listed endangered bird, have been documented in the vicinity of the project site. Loggerhead shrikes use grasslands that contain short grass and scattered perching sites such as hedgerows, shrubs, or small trees. They can be found in native prairie, pastures, shelterbelts, old fields or orchards, cemeteries, grassy roadsides, and farmyards. Minnesota's Endangered Species Statute (Minnesota Statutes, section 84.0895) and associated Rules (Minnesota Rules, part 6212.1800 to 6212.2300 and 6134) prohibit the take of endangered or threatened plants or animals, including their parts or seeds, without a permit. Given the potential for this species to be found in the vicinity of the project, **tree and shrub removal is required to be avoided during the breeding season, April through July.**

Please contact Review.NHIS@state.mn.us to confirm that the above avoidance measure will be implemented or to inform us that avoidance is not feasible. If avoidance is not feasible, a qualified surveyor needs to conduct a survey for active nests before any trees or shrubs will be removed. Requirements for surveys and lists of DNR certified lists of surveyors can be found at the [Natural Heritage Review website](#).

- [Henslow's sparrow](#) (*Centronyx henslowii*), a state-listed endangered bird species, has been documented in the vicinity of the proposed project. Suitable nesting habitat for this species includes uncultivated and unmowed grasslands and old fields with standing, dead vegetation, and a substantial litter layer. This species nests on the ground, at the base of grass clumps. As such, initial disturbance in these areas should not occur during their breeding season, between May 15th and July 15th. **If avoidance during breeding season is not feasible, areas that will be disturbed that contain suitable nesting habitat will need to be surveyed for active nests prior to any project disturbance.**

Please contact Review.NHIS@state.mn.us to confirm that the above avoidance measure will be implemented or to inform us that avoidance is not feasible. If avoidance is not feasible, the project area will need to be surveyed for active nests prior to any project disturbance. Requirements for surveys and lists of DNR certified lists of surveyors can be found at the [Natural Heritage Review website](#).

- [Burrowing owl](#) (*Athene cunicularia*), a state-listed endangered species, was documented in the vicinity of the proposed project in Stevens County. Burrowing owls use open, grazed pastures or native prairies populated by burrowing mammals. Areas of intensive agricultural use are usually, but not always, avoided. Burrowing owls are now extremely rare in Minnesota, and we don't know of any regularly occurring breeding populations in the state. However, burrowing owls are most likely to use prairie habitats occupied by [Richardson's ground squirrel](#) (*Spermophilus richardsonii*), a state-listed species of special concern, which has been documented in Ortonville 22 High MBS Site in Big Stone County (T121N R46W Sect. 22) and in Pope County (T124N R40W Sect. 29 & 30) within the footprint of the proposed project. **Please report any sightings using the [Quick Species Observation Form](#).**

- [Dakota skipper](#) (*Hesperia dacotae*), a federally listed threatened and state-listed endangered species, has been documented within the vicinity of the proposed project. The Dakota skipper is a small butterfly found exclusively on remnant native prairie habitats. This rare butterfly is sensitive to several types of artificial and natural disturbances and are almost always absent from remnant prairies that are overgrazed or otherwise degraded. Dakota skipper populations have declined historically due to widespread conversion of native prairie for agriculture and other uses and are now threatened, in part, due to the isolation of remaining populations. Remaining Dakota skipper populations are generally so small and isolated that they are subject to genetic drift, which is likely to further reduce their genetic viability. Additionally, [regal fritillary](#) (*Argynnis idalia*) and [Pawnee skipper](#) (*Hesperia leonardus pawnee*), both butterfly species of special concern, have been documented in the footprint of the proposed project in Shible 9 Moderate MBS Site in Swift County (T121N R43W Sect. 9) and several MBS sites in Big Stone County (T121N R46W Sect. 21 & 22). To protect the Dakota skipper and other prairie obligate butterfly species, **it is imperative that the destruction and disturbance of native prairie be avoided.**
- [Elktoe](#) (*Alasmidonta marginata*), a state-listed threatened mussel species has been documented in the Pomme de Terre River. [Black sandshell](#) (*Ligumia recta*) and [creek heelsplitter](#) (*Lasmigona compressa*), both state-listed species of special concern, have been documented in the Chippewa River. As such, effective erosion prevention and sediment control practices must be implemented and maintained near these rivers throughout the duration of the project and incorporated into any stormwater management plan. If project details change and these rivers are expected to be impacted in any way, contact Review.NHIS@state.mn.us as further action may be needed.
- [Big brown bat](#) (*Eptesicus fuscus*), a state-listed species of special concern, has been documented in the vicinity of the proposed project. During the active season (approximately April-November) bats roost underneath bark, in cavities, or in crevices of both live and dead trees. Tree removal can negatively impact bats by destroying roosting habitat, especially during the pup rearing season when females are forming maternity roosting colonies and the pups cannot yet fly. To minimize these impacts, **the DNR recommends that tree removal be avoided from June 1 through August 15.**
- [American white pelican](#) (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*), a state-listed species of special concern, has been documented at Marsh Lake, Artichoke Lake, and several lakes in Pope County within the vicinity of the proposed project. This migratory species typically nests in colonies on bare islands, isolated from predators and humans. Marsh Lake, which is located on the borders of Big Stone, Lac qui Parle, and Swift counties approximately 3.5 miles from the proposed project, is the largest known colony in North America. **The DNR recommends installing avian flight diverters on power cables near waterbodies to reduce bird collisions with power cables.**

- [Trumpeter swan](#) (*Cygnus buccinator*), a state-listed species of special concern, have been documented nesting in the vicinity of the proposed project. During the breeding season, trumpeter swans select small ponds and lakes with extensive beds of cattails, bulrush, sedges, and/or horsetail. Ideal habitat includes about 100 m of open water for take-off, stable levels of unpolluted water, emergent vegetation, low levels of human disturbance, and the presence of muskrat (*Ondatra zibethicus*) houses and American beaver (*Castor canadensis*) lodges for use as nesting platforms. If any of the wetlands on site provide suitable habitat, swans may choose to nest in these wetlands. **The DNR recommends avoiding construction activities late April through early June near suitable nesting habitat and installing avian flight diverters on power cables near waterbodies to reduce bird collisions with power cables.**
- [Short-eared owl](#) (*Asio flammeus*), a species of special concern, has been documented in the vicinity of the proposed project in Swift County (T121N R42W Sect. 14, 15, 22, 23). This species nests on the ground in open areas such as grasslands, marshes, and peatlands. **Minimize disturbance as much as feasible to nesting habitat during nesting season, May through June.**
- [Great Plains toad](#) (*Anaxyrus cognatus*), a state-listed species of special concern, was documented in the vicinity of the proposed project along U.S. Highway 75 in Big Stone County. This species is found in remnant prairies and grasslands in Western Minnesota. They breed from May to July in highly ephemeral water-filled prairie depressions and have adapted to breed in flooded agricultural fields. **Given the presence of these rare toads, the DNR recommends that the use of erosion control mesh, if any, be limited to [wildlife-friendly materials](#).**
- Please visit the [DNR Rare Species Guide](#) for more information on the habitat use of the species mentioned above and recommended measures to avoid or minimize impacts. For further assistance with these species, please contact the appropriate [Regional Ecologist](#).

Federally Protected Species

- Dakota skipper is a federally threatened species. **To ensure compliance with federal law, conduct a federal regulatory review using the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) online [Information for Planning and Consultation \(IPaC\) tool](#).** For additional information on this species, see the [USFWS Dakota Skipper Information Page](#). For information on conservation measures for this species, including habitat preservation and restoration, see the [USFWS Dakota Skipper Conservation Guidelines](#).

Environmental Review and Permitting

- We understand that the planning for this project was not finalized when this Natural Heritage Review was conducted. Given the presence of rare ecologically significant areas and state-protected species with the current route, further Natural Heritage Review will be needed for alternate routes and/or the finalized route. Resubmission will ensure compliance with state

statute and rules. Please reference this project (2024-00481) when submitting alternate routes and/or the finalized route for future Natural Heritage Review.

- Please include (1) a copy of this review letter, (2) the MCE-generated Conservation Planning Report, and (3) the MCE-generated Final Project Report in any state or local license or permit application. The Public Utilities Commission (PUC) Route Permit Application should address potential impacts to the above rare features and identify avoidance or mitigation measures that will be implemented. Please note that measures to avoid or minimize disturbance to the above rare features may be included as restrictions or conditions in any required permits or licenses.

The Natural Heritage Information System (NHIS), a collection of databases that contains information about Minnesota's rare natural features, is maintained by the Division of Ecological and Water Resources, Department of Natural Resources. The NHIS is continually updated as new information becomes available, and is the most complete source of data on Minnesota's rare or otherwise significant species, native plant communities, and other natural features. However, the NHIS is not an exhaustive inventory and thus does not represent all of the occurrences of rare features within the state. Therefore, ecologically significant features for which we have no records may exist within the project area. If additional information becomes available regarding rare features in the vicinity of the project, further review may be necessary.

For environmental review purposes, the results of this Natural Heritage Review are valid for one year; the results are only valid for the project location and project description provided with the request. **If project details change or the project has not occurred within one year, please resubmit the project for review within one year of initiating project activities.**

The Natural Heritage Review does not constitute project approval by the Department of Natural Resources. Instead, it identifies issues regarding known occurrences of rare features and potential impacts to these rare features. Visit the [Natural Heritage Review website](#) for additional information regarding this process, survey guidance, and other related information. For information on the environmental review process or other natural resource concerns, you may contact your [DNR Regional Environmental Assessment Ecologist](#).

Thank you for consulting us on this matter and for your interest in preserving Minnesota's rare natural resources.

Sincerely,

Molly Barrett

Natural Heritage Review Specialist

Molly.Barrett@state.mn.us

Cc: [Owen Baird](#), Regional Environmental Assessment Ecologist, Northwest (Region 1)

Cc: [Becky Marty](#), Regional Ecologist, Northwest (Region 1)

Cc: [Haley Byron](#), Regional Environmental Assessment Ecologist, South (Region 4)

Cc: [Megan Benage](#), Regional Ecologist, South (Region 4)

Cc: [Jennie Skancke](#), Wetlands Program Coordinator

Cc: [Kaylor Andrews](#), Calcareous Fen Program Coordinator



Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Division of Ecological & Water Resources
500 Lafayette Road, Box 25
St. Paul, MN 55155-4025

December 6, 2024

Katie Lueth
HDR Inc

RE: Natural Heritage Review of the proposed **OTP/MRES BSSA Supplemental Areas**,
Big Stone, Douglas, Pope, Stevens, Swift Counties

Dear Katie Lueth,

For all correspondence regarding the Natural Heritage Review of this project please include the project ID **MCE-2024-00815** in the email subject line.

As requested, the [Minnesota Natural Heritage Information System](#) has been reviewed to determine if the proposed project has the potential to impact any rare species or other significant natural features. Based on the project details provided with the request, the following rare features may be impacted by the proposed project:

Ecologically Significant Areas

- Multiple calcareous fens have been documented in the vicinity of the proposed project in Big Stone County. A calcareous fen is a rare and distinctive peat-accumulating wetland that is legally protected in Minnesota. The Wetlands Conservation Act (WCA), authorized by Minnesota Statutes, section 103G.223, states that calcareous fens may not be filled, drained, or otherwise degraded, wholly or partially, by any activity, except as provided for in a management plan approved by the commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources. Many of the unique characteristics of calcareous fens result from the upwelling of groundwater through calcareous substrates. Because of this dependence on groundwater hydrology, calcareous fens can be affected by nearby activities or even those several miles away. For more information regarding calcareous fens, please see the [Calcareous Fen Fact Sheet](#). To minimize stormwater impacts, please refer to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's [General Principles for Erosion Prevention and Sediment Control](#) in the Minnesota Stormwater Manual. Please note that calcareous fens are "Special Waters" and a [buffer zone](#) may be required.

Calcareous fens may be impacted by activities within the fen, activities that affect surface water flows (e.g., stormwater flow, erosion), or activities that affect groundwater hydrology (e.g., groundwater pumping, contamination, discharge, or excavation). **To ensure compliance under WCA, please contact the Calcareous Fen Program Coordinator, Keylor Andrews (Keylor.Andrews@state.mn.us)**

- The Minnesota Biological Survey (MBS) has identified **9** Sites of Biodiversity Significance within the vicinity of the proposed project ranked as *High* or *Moderate*. MBS Sites have varying levels of native biodiversity and are ranked based on the relative significance of this biodiversity at a statewide level. Factors taken into account during the ranking process include the number of rare species documented within the site, the quality of the native plant communities in the site, the size of the site, and the context of the site within the landscape. Additionally, there are **3** areas within the vicinity of the proposed project ranked as *Below*; these areas do not meet the minimum biodiversity threshold for statewide significance but may have conservation value at the local level as habitat. **The DNR recommends avoidance of MBS Sites of Biodiversity Significance ranked *High* or *Outstanding*.** Please see your MCE-generated Conservation Planning Report for a comprehensive list of MBS Sites of Biodiversity Significance.

There are **8** mapped DNR Native Plant Communities (NPC) that have been documented within the vicinity of the proposed project. DNR NPC types are given a Conservation Status Rank that reflects the relative rarity and endangerment of the community type in Minnesota. Conservation Status Ranks range from S1 (critically imperiled) to S5 (secure, common, widespread, and abundant). *Native plant communities with a Conservation Status Rank of S1 (critically imperiled), S2 (imperiled), or S3 (vulnerable to extirpation) are considered rare in the state.* **The DNR recommends avoidance of rare NPCs (ranked S1, S2, or S3).** Please see your MCE-generated Conservation Planning Report for a comprehensive list of native plant communities in your proposed project area. Of particular concern are project impacts to prairie communities.

- *Prairie Communities:* More than 99% of the prairie that was present in the state before settlement has been destroyed, and more than one-third of Minnesota's endangered, threatened, and special concern species are now dependent on the remaining small fragments of Minnesota's prairie ecosystem. **To avoid incidental take, all native prairie remnants should be avoided.** If avoidance is not feasible, further consultation will be needed to ensure compliance with state law. **If any native prairie remnants are crossed by the final project design, a native prairie protection plan may be needed.** You may contact the Regional Ecologist for details on developing a native prairie protection plan.

The DNR recommends that the project be designed to avoid impacts to these ecologically significant areas. Actions to avoid or minimize disturbance include, but are not limited to, the following recommendations:

- As much as possible, operate within already-disturbed areas.
- Avoid MBS Sites and native plant communities ranked S1, S2, or S3.
- Retain a buffer between proposed activities and the MBS Site.
- Confine construction activities to the opposite side of the road from MBS Sites. If this is not feasible, confine construction activities to the existing road rights-of-way.
- Minimize vehicular disturbance in the MBS Site (allow only vehicles/equipment necessary for construction activities).
- Do not park equipment or stockpile supplies in the MBS Site.
- Do not place spoil in the MBS Site or other sensitive areas.

- If possible, conduct the work under frozen ground conditions.
- Use effective erosion prevention and sediment control measures.
- Inspect and clean equipment prior to operation and follow recommendations to [prevent the spread of invasive species](#).
- Revegetate disturbed soil with [native species suitable to the local habitat](#) as soon after construction as possible.
- Use only weed-free mulches, topsoils, and seed mixes. Of particular concern are birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) and crown vetch (*Coronilla varia*), two invasive species that are sold commercially and are problematic in prairies and disturbed open areas.

MBS Sites of Biodiversity Significance and DNR Native Plant Communities can be viewed using the Explore page in [Minnesota Conservation Explorer](#) or their GIS shapefiles can be downloaded from the [MN Geospatial Commons](#). Please contact the [NH Review Team](#) if you need assistance accessing the data. Reference the [MBS Site Biodiversity Significance](#) and [Native Plant Community](#) websites for information on interpreting the data. To receive a list of ecologically significant areas in the vicinity of your project, create a [Conservation Planning Report](#) using the Explore page in MCE. **I have uploaded the MCE-generated Conservation Planning Report to the MCE project page.**

- If the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) is applicable to this project, please note that native plant communities with a Conservation Status Rank of S1 through S3 or wetlands within *High* or *Outstanding* MBS Sites of Biodiversity Significance may qualify as Rare Natural Communities (RNC) under WCA. Minnesota Rules, part 8420.0515, subpart 3 states that a wetland replacement plan for activities that modify a RNC must be denied if the local government unit determines the proposed activities will permanently adversely affect the RNC. If the proposed project includes a wetland replacement plan under WCA, please contact your [DNR Regional Ecologist](#) for further evaluation. Please visit [WCA Program Guidance and Information](#) for additional information, including the [RNC Technical Guidance](#).

State-listed Species

- Many state-listed threatened and endangered plant species have been found within the vicinity of the proposed project and within the project area. This project may impact potential habitat and result in take of threatened or endangered species. Minnesota's Endangered Species Statute (*Minnesota Statutes*, section 84.0895) and associated Rules (*Minnesota Rules*, part 6212.1800 to 6212.2300 and 6134) prohibit the take of threatened or endangered species without a permit.

The table below lists state-listed plant species within the project vicinity; species found within the proposed project area are marked with an asterisk (*). **All known occurrences of state protected plant species and all potential habitats must be avoided.** If this is not feasible, a qualified surveyor will need to (1) resurvey known occurrences and (2) conduct a habitat assessment to determine if suitable habitat exists within the activity impact area and, if so, conduct a rare plant survey prior to any project activities. The goal of the habitat assessment is to identify potential locations where endangered (END) and threatened (THR) species may occur to help formulate an avoidance plan. Species of special concern

(SPC) are also rare and an important component of Minnesota’s natural heritage; we strongly encourage project alternatives that avoid or minimize impacts to known occurrences of these species as well.

Surveys must be conducted by a qualified surveyor and follow the standards contained in the [Rare Species Survey Process](#) and [Rare Plant Guidance](#). Visit the [Natural Heritage Review](#) page for a list of certified surveyors and more information on this process. Survey proposals should be submitted to Reports.NHIS@state.mn.us prior to initiating survey work. Project planning should take into account that any botanical survey needs to be conducted during the appropriate time of the year, which may be limited. Please consult Review.NHIS@state.mn.us if you have any questions regarding this process.

MN Status	Common Name	Scientific Name	Habitat	Water Regime
END	Ball Cactus *	<i>Coryphantha vivipara</i>	Rock Outcrop	terrestrial
END	Hairy Waterclove	<i>Marsilea vestita</i>	Rock Outcrop	wetland
END	Prairie Quillwort	<i>Isoetes melanopoda</i>	Rock Outcrop	wetland
THR	Larger Water Starwort *	<i>Callitriche heterophylla</i>	Marsh, Rock Outcrop, Littoral Zone of Lake	aquatic
THR	Waterhyssop	<i>Bacopa rotundifolia</i>	Marsh, Rock Outcrop	aquatic, wetland
SPC	Missouri Milk-vetch *	<i>Astragalus missouriensis var. missouriensis</i>	Upland Prairie	terrestrial
SPC	Mudwort *	<i>Limosella aquatica</i>	Lowland Prairie, Rock Outcrop	aquatic, wetland
SPC	Narrow-leaved Water Plantain	<i>Alisma gramineum</i>	Littoral Zone of Lake	aquatic
SPC	Prairie Mimosa	<i>Desmanthus illinoensis</i>	Lake Shore, Upland Prairie	terrestrial
SPC	Sea Naiad	<i>Najas marina</i>	Littoral Zone of Lake	aquatic
SPC	Slender Milk-vetch	<i>Astragalus flexuosus var. flexuosus</i>	Upland Prairie	terrestrial
SPC	Small White Lady's-slipper	<i>Cypripedium candidum</i>	Lowland Prairie, Upland Prairie, Wet Meadow/Carr	terrestrial, wetland
SPC	Three-stamened Waterwort *	<i>Elatine triandra</i>	Littoral Zone of Lake, Rock Outcrop	aquatic
SPC	Tumble Grass *	<i>Schedonnardus paniculatus</i>	Rock Outcrop	terrestrial

* = Known to occur within the project area. Please see your license agreement (2022-034) for specific locations.

- [Loggerhead shrikes](#) (*Lanius ludovicianus*), a state-listed endangered bird, have been documented in the vicinity of the project site. Loggerhead shrikes use grasslands that contain short grass and scattered perching sites such as hedgerows, shrubs, or small trees. They can be found in native prairie, pastures, shelterbelts, old fields or orchards, cemeteries, grassy roadsides, and farmyards. Minnesota’s Endangered Species Statute (Minnesota Statutes, section 84.0895) and associated Rules (Minnesota Rules, part 6212.1800 to 6212.2300 and 6134) prohibit the take of endangered or threatened plants or animals, including their parts or seeds, without a permit. Given the potential for this species to be found

in the vicinity of the project, **tree and shrub removal is required to be avoided during the breeding season, April through July.**

Please contact Review.NHIS@state.mn.us to confirm that the above avoidance measure will be implemented or to inform us that avoidance is not feasible. If avoidance is not feasible, a qualified surveyor needs to conduct a survey for active nests before any trees or shrubs will be removed. Requirements for surveys and lists of DNR certified lists of surveyors can be found at the [Natural Heritage Review website](#).

- [Burrowing owl](#) (*Athene cunicularia*), a state-listed endangered species, was documented in the vicinity of the proposed project in Stevens County. Burrowing owls use open, grazed pastures or native prairies populated by burrowing mammals. Areas of intensive agricultural use are usually, but not always, avoided. Burrowing owls are now extremely rare in Minnesota, and we don't know of any regularly occurring breeding populations in the state. However, burrowing owls are most likely to use prairie habitats occupied by [Richardson's ground squirrel](#) (*Spermophilus richardsonii*), a state-listed species of special concern, which has been documented in Ortonville 22 High MBS Site in Big Stone County (T121N R46W Sect. 22). **Please report any sightings using the [Quick Species Observation Form](#).**
- [Dakota skipper](#) (*Hesperia dacotae*), a federally listed threatened and state-listed endangered species, has been documented within the vicinity of the proposed project. The Dakota skipper is a small butterfly found exclusively on remnant native prairie habitats. This rare butterfly is sensitive to several types of artificial and natural disturbances and are almost always absent from remnant prairies that are overgrazed or otherwise degraded. Dakota skipper populations have declined historically due to widespread conversion of native prairie for agriculture and other uses and are now threatened, in part, due to the isolation of remaining populations. Remaining Dakota skipper populations are generally so small and isolated that they are subject to genetic drift, which is likely to further reduce their genetic viability. Additionally, [regal fritillary](#) (*Argynnis idalia*), a butterfly species of special concern, has been documented in the footprint of the proposed project in several MBS sites in Big Stone County (T121N R46W Sect. 21 & 22). To protect the Dakota skipper and other prairie obligate butterfly species, **it is imperative that the destruction and disturbance of native prairie be avoided.**
- [Black sandshell](#) (*Ligumia recta*) and [creek heelsplitter](#) (*Lasmigona compressa*), both state-listed species of special concern, have been documented in the Chippewa River. As such, effective erosion prevention and sediment control practices must be implemented and maintained near the river throughout the duration of the project and incorporated into any stormwater management plan.
- [American white pelican](#) (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*), a state-listed species of special concern, has been documented at Marsh Lake and several lakes in Pope County within the vicinity of the proposed project. This migratory species typically nests in colonies on bare islands, isolated from predators and humans. Marsh Lake, which is located on the borders of Big Stone, Lac qui Parle, and Swift counties approximately 3.5 miles from the proposed project, is the largest known colony in North America. **The DNR recommends installing avian flight diverters on power cables near waterbodies to reduce bird collisions with power cables.**

- [Short-eared owl](#) (*Asio flammeus*), a species of special concern, has been documented in the vicinity of the proposed project in Swift County (T121N R42W Sect. 14, 15, 22, 23). This species nests on the ground in open areas such as grasslands, marshes, and peatlands. **Minimize disturbance as much as feasible to nesting habitat during nesting season, May through June.**
- [Great Plains toad](#) (*Anaxyrus cognatus*), a state-listed species of special concern, was documented in the vicinity of the proposed project along U.S. Highway 75 in Big Stone County. This species is found in remnant prairies and grasslands in Western Minnesota. They breed from May to July in highly ephemeral water-filled prairie depressions and have adapted to breed in flooded agricultural fields. **Given the presence of these rare toads, the DNR recommends that the use of erosion control mesh, if any, be limited to [wildlife-friendly materials](#).**
- The Natural Heritage Information System (NHIS) tracks bat roost trees and hibernacula plus some acoustic data, but this information is not exhaustive. Even if there are no bat records listed nearby, all of Minnesota's bats, including the federally endangered northern long-eared bat ([Myotis septentrionalis](#)), can be found throughout Minnesota. During the active season (approximately April-November) bats roost underneath bark, in cavities, or in crevices of both live and dead trees. Tree removal can negatively impact bats by destroying roosting habitat, especially during the pup rearing season when females are forming maternity roosting colonies and the pups cannot yet fly. To minimize these impacts, **the DNR recommends that tree removal be avoided from June 1 through August 15.**
- Please visit the [DNR Rare Species Guide](#) for more information on the habitat use of the species mentioned above and recommended measures to avoid or minimize impacts. For further assistance with these species, please contact the appropriate [Regional Ecologist](#).
- Please report incidental sightings of state-listed species using the [Quick Species Observation Form](#).

Federally Protected Species

- Dakota skipper is a federally threatened species. **To ensure compliance with federal law, conduct a federal regulatory review using the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) online [Information for Planning and Consultation \(IPaC\) tool](#).** For additional information on this species, see the [USFWS Dakota Skipper Information Page](#). For information on conservation measures for this species, including habitat preservation and restoration, see the [USFWS Dakota Skipper Conservation Guidelines](#).

Environmental Review and Permitting

- We understand that the planning for this project was not finalized when this Natural Heritage Review was conducted. Given the presence of rare ecologically significant areas and state-protected species with the current route, further Natural Heritage Review will be needed for alternate routes and/or the finalized route. Resubmission will ensure compliance with state statute and rules. Please reference the original project (2024-00481) and this project (2024-00815) when submitting alternate routes and/or the finalized route for future Natural Heritage Review.

- Please include (1) a copy of this review letter, (2) the MCE-generated Conservation Planning Report, and (3) the MCE-generated Final Project Report in any state or local license or permit application. The Public Utilities Commission (PUC) Route Permit Application should address potential impacts to the above rare features and identify avoidance or mitigation measures that will be implemented. Please note that measures to avoid or minimize disturbance to the above rare features may be included as restrictions or conditions in any required permits or licenses.

The Natural Heritage Information System (NHIS), a collection of databases that contains information about Minnesota's rare natural features, is maintained by the Division of Ecological and Water Resources, Department of Natural Resources. The NHIS is continually updated as new information becomes available and is the most complete source of data on Minnesota's native plant communities, rare species, and other rare features. However, the NHIS is not an exhaustive inventory and does not contain the locations of all rare features in the state. Therefore, ecologically significant features for which we have no records may exist within the project area. If additional information becomes available regarding rare features in the vicinity of the project, further review may be necessary.

For environmental review purposes, the results of this Natural Heritage Review are valid for one year; the results are only valid for the project location and project description provided with the request. **If project details change or the project has not occurred within one year, please resubmit the project for review within one year of initiating project activities.**

The Natural Heritage Review does not constitute project approval by the Department of Natural Resources. Instead, it identifies issues regarding known occurrences of rare features and potential impacts to these rare features. Visit [Natural Heritage Review](#) for additional information regarding this process, survey guidance, and other related information. For information on the environmental review process or other natural resource concerns, please contact your [DNR Regional Environmental Assessment Ecologist](#).

Thank you for consulting us on this matter and for your interest in preserving Minnesota's rare natural resources.

Sincerely,

Molly Barrett

Natural Heritage Review Specialist

molly.barrett@state.mn.us

Cc: [Owen Baird](#), Regional Environmental Assessment Ecologist, Northwest (Region 1)

Cc: [Becky Marty](#), Regional Ecologist, Northwest (Region 1)

Cc: [Haley Byron](#), Regional Environmental Assessment Ecologist, South (Region 4)

Cc: [Megan Benage](#), Regional Ecologist, South (Region 4)

Cc: [Jennie Skancke](#), Wetlands Program Coordinator

Cc: [Keylor Andrews](#), Calcareous Fen Program Coordinator

Please provide your contact information. This information and your comments will be publicly available.

Name: Thomas Erickson Phone: 320-808-7302

Street Address: 8454 Co RD 87 SE

City: Alexandria State: MN ZIP: 56308

Email: kubs630@gmail.com

Share your comments as specifically as possible on the EIS that will be prepared for the Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project.

- What potential human and environmental impacts of the proposed project should be considered in the EIS?
- Are there any methods to minimize, mitigate, or avoid potential impacts of the proposed project that should be considered in the EIS?
- Are there any alternative routes or route segments that should be considered in the EIS to address or mitigate potential impacts associated with the proposed project? **If so, please provide a map with the proposed route drawn** and a description of the proposal.
- Are there any unique characteristics of the proposed project that should be considered in the EIS?

~~_____~~

I included a map with the petroleum Pipeline labeled on it. This pipeline will cross the powerline multiple time on my property. What effects would the powerline have on the pipeline?

I also labeled an Irrigation path. I have plans to build two Irrigators on my farmlands. powerline structures in the field would cause problems with the path of the irrigators.

I also labeled an alternate route which crosses wildlife land which has no structures and is state owned. Seems like a much more logical route.

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SAINT PAUL MN 550

29 JAN 2025 PM 7 L



JAN 31 2025

MAILROOM

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
ATTN: JENNA NESS
85 7TH PLACE EAST, SUITE 280
SAINT PAUL MN 55101-2198

Comment Period Closes Friday, January 31, 2025, at 4:30 p.m.

Comments must be post-marked or received electronically by the comment deadline.

How to comment:

- Mail comments to the address on this form or submit this form at today's meeting.
- Use the online comment form: <https://mn.gov/commerce/energyfacilities/#comment>
- Email comments to the Environmental Review Manager: jenna.ness@state.mn.us

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THANK YOU for participating in the permitting process! By commenting you are helping inform the Public Utilities Commission's decision regarding this project.



Scan QR code to view project webpage.
Data rates apply.

**Environmental Impact Statement
Scoping Comment Period**

*Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project
Docket No. E017, ET10/TL-23-160*

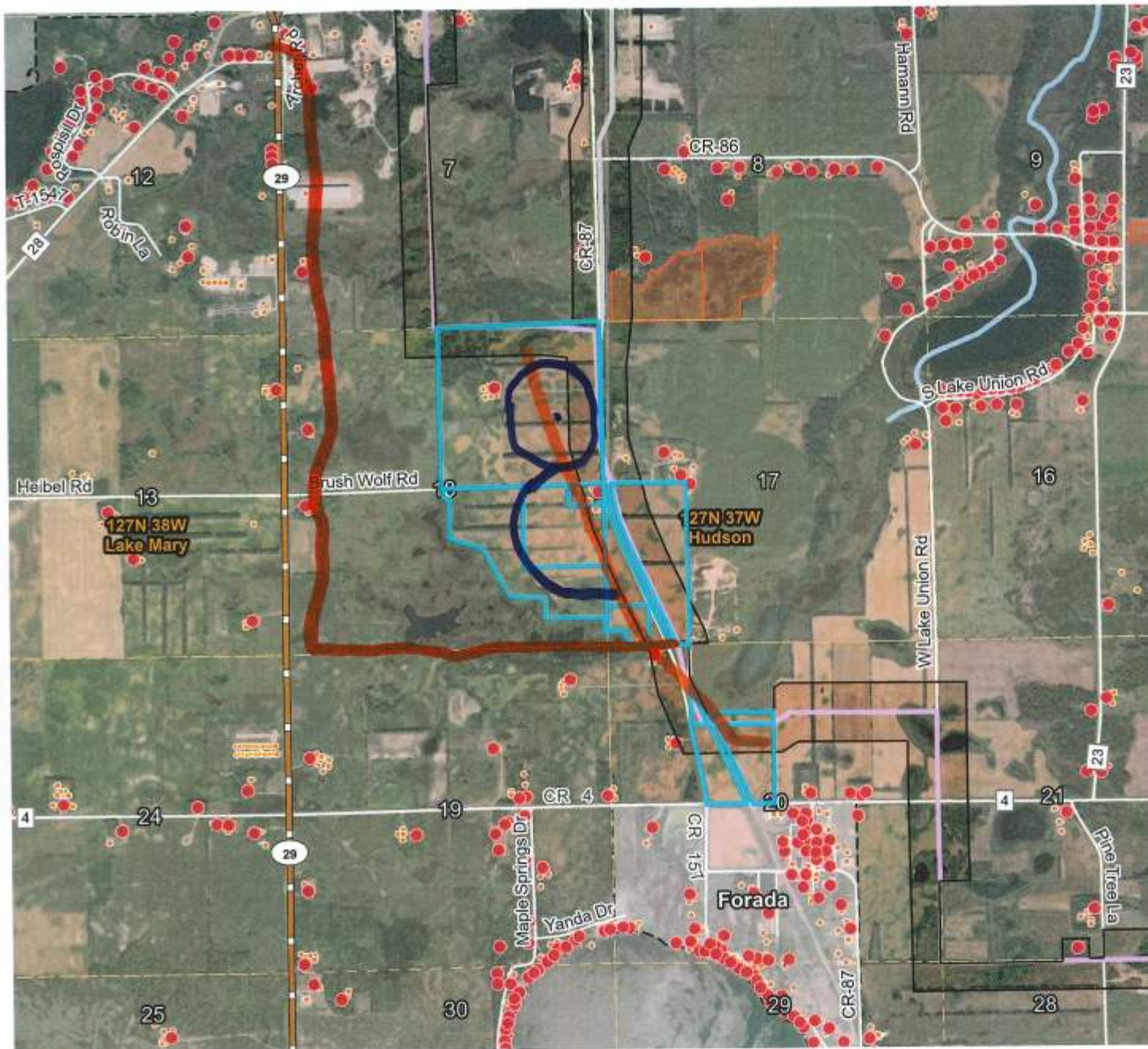
Scan QR code to view project map.
Data rates apply.



The applicants propose to construct over 90 miles of new transmission line from Big Stone South, South Dakota to Alexandria, Minnesota along portions of Big Stone, Swift, Stevens, Pope, and Douglas Counties to connect the existing substations in Big Stone South and Alexandria.

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- Route Option**
- North 2
 - Segment Alternative
 - Route Width
- State Lands**
- State Conservation Easement (BWSR)
 - Home
 - Other Structure
 - MN DOT Scenic Byways
 - Rivers and Streams (MN Natural Resources)
 - Parcels selection
 - Parcels selection Gull
- Petroleum Pipeline
- Irrigation path
- Alternate Route



Please provide your contact information. This information and your comments will be publicly available.

Name: James Wink Phone: 320-424-0835

Street Address: 36230 210th Street

City: Cyrus State: MN ZIP: 56323

Email: rosie.g.77@live.com

Share your comments as specifically as possible on the EIS that will be prepared for the Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project.

- What potential human and environmental impacts of the proposed project should be considered in the EIS?
- Are there any methods to minimize, mitigate, or avoid potential impacts of the proposed project that should be considered in the EIS?
- Are there any alternative routes or route segments that should be considered in the EIS to address or mitigate potential impacts associated with the proposed project? If so, please provide a map with the proposed route drawn and a description of the proposal.
- Are there any unique characteristics of the proposed project that should be considered in the EIS?

There are 6 people living here.
 3 adults & 3 kids ages 7, 8 & 9
 Some major concerns about having the
 power line so close to our house are

childhood leukemia, individual sensitivity
 migraines, fatigue, can heighten stress
 sleep disorders, muscle pain and
migraines

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JAN 10 2025

MAILROOM

Please provide your contact information. This information and your comments will be publicly available.

Name: Brett Huizenga Phone: 320-305-2032

Street Address: 169900 430th St

City: Odessa State: MN ZIP: 56276

Email: BHuizenga@hotmail.com

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I am writing in regards of the proposed transmission power line along 430th St near Odessa. I am concerned that your set backs from residents building sites is not far enough away. Having transmission lines of this size so close to peoples homes is not a good idea. Lines of this size will produce Electro magnetic Fields "EMFs" and needs to be considered when determining how far they are away from building sites. These lines will effect the landscape for many years to come and I ask that you consider routes that are not just the most cost effective but have the least impact on people and property along the way.

Please provide your contact information. This information and your comments will be publicly available.

Name: Ronald Krogsrud Phone: 220 284-2607

Street Address: 238 E Reuss Ave

City: Appleton State: MI ZIP: 56208

Email: _____

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I have 2 sons and families that farm and live along proposed route. This project will be very detrimental to their living and farming by losing land and communication.

A different route needs to be found

If you can't put this near USFW & DNR land you shouldn't be able to put it on farmers land

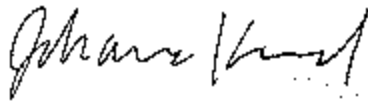
January 29, 2025

Re: Scoping Comment 23-160
Docket Number 23-160
Attn: Jenna Ness

To Whom It May Concern,

I'm from a multi-generation small farming family and have stake in some of the land that may be impacted by this initiative. My two brothers currently farm. This would be disruptive and inefficient for them (and all impacted farmers), is very likely a health risk, and has no direct benefit to them, the owners of the land. A one-time easement payment (which would likely be insignificant compared to the cost and value of the land) is not an acceptable payment. If this plan moves forward, an alternative and less disruptive path for the power poles needs to be taken (suggest government owned land and prairie/non-tillable land). Additionally, an adequate, agreed upon perpetual annual payment (increased annually based on the greater of CPI or an agreed upon percentage) should be paid to the owners of the impacted property to account for the cost of the inefficiency and decreased value of the land regardless of owner (in addition to the one-time easement payment). I'm strongly opposed to this power line plan.

Sincerely,



Johanna Krogsrud

Docket# 23-160

To whom it may concern:

I am a farmer and landowner who owns, partially owns and rents numerous pieces of land that are along the proposed BSS to Alexandria route/routes. I live southwest of Artichoke Lake a few miles.

First of all I would like to start with some questions.

1. Is this power line going to offer me better electrical service and/or cheapen my electric rates or any towns around here?
2. How many people employed by the MN Department of Commerce, MN Public Utilities, Ottertail Power Company and Missouri River Energy Services are vested in tillable agricultural land in Western Minnesota?
3. Why is it that there wasn't a flyer sent out to landowners along the proposed routes to see if there are land owners that would be willing to sign up to have poles placed on their property?
4. Why does the proposed route not go through any public lands (United States Fish and Wildlife and MN DNR)?
5. How can you even begin to think you can purchase a perpetual easement on land when you have no idea what land will be valued at in 5, 10, 20, 50 or 100 years?
6. If the metro areas are where all this electricity is supposed to be going, why don't I see all the buildings with solar panels and wind mills when I am in the bigger towns?
7. Can I get information about adverse effects to health, live stock, wild life, radio cell phone and two-way radio transmissions?
8. Is there a decommissioning of the line when it isn't used anymore and does the easement go away then?

I think this proposed route is terribly unjust. I feel we people that live and farm in the land of rocks and cows shouldn't even be asked to forfeit lands bought and paid for by myself and past generations. It terribly undervalues the land by running power poles across this area to bring electricity to the metro areas. I don't think people realize the hardships of having poles and wires running through our fields will cause. No one wants to steer around poles in wide open fields with multiple pieces of equipment multiple times a year. Also it might make our aerial applicators put us to the bottom of their custom work lists because it is very dangerous for them. Farmers have invested millions in land improvements for productivity and ease of farming. Not for a power company to run a line through a farm just for us to go around. I am against any power line coming through this area but if it is really needed I propose an alternate route. Somewhere in the vicinity of the Minnesota River bottom to Highway 7 from Ortonville to Appleton for a few reasons:

A) It is poorer land so it will be cheaper for easements and public land that really should require no compensation for easements.

B) A lot of pasture and grass land minimal impact to row cropped land.

C) Less people reside there so it is less of an eye sore for people.

Marcus Krogsrud
61649 410th Street
Correll, MN 56227
mkrogsrud55@gmail.com
320-413-0459

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FEB 03 2025

MAILROOM

Please provide your contact information. This information and your comments will be publicly available.

Name: ROBERT EVANS DAVIS Phone: 320 769-0817

Street Address: 2400 North St

City: Hammond State: MO ZIP: 64020

Email: ROBERTEVANS@GMAIL.COM

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- New Prairie 11-125-40

- Highway 59 Corridor should be looked at as a possible route. It would have less of a negative affect on private landowners.

- Gov. Walz adopted policy in June of 2024 that allows high-voltage transmission lines to be built in all state and federal High-way Corridors. This would cut costs without all of the dead end farms.

- Pole placement has to be a priority to keep land farmable. Use of existing Hwy infrastructure makes the most sense.

Affix
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FEB 03 2025

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ATTN: JENNA NESS
85 7TH PLACE EAST, SUITE 280
SAINT PAUL MN 55101-2198

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Environmental Impact Statement
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Big Stone South to Alexandria 345-kV Transmission Project
Docket No. E017, E110/11-23-160

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From: [brian hamann](#)
To: [Ness, Jenna \(COMM\)](#); [George H. Vinson](#)
Subject: questions,comments on public comments made under edocket ID 20252-214966-01, Big Stone to Alex line.
Date: Friday, February 7, 2025 1:35:04 PM

This message may be from an external email source.

Do not select links or open attachments unless verified. Report all suspicious emails to Minnesota IT Services Security Operations Center.

Please acknowledge you got this email.

To whom it may concern:

I am writing this letter regarding the public comment submitted by Bruce Freske, District Manager of the Morris wetland district office. The eDocket is dated Feb 2nd, document ID 20252-214966-01 for the proposed 345kw Big Stone to Alexandria transmission line. He has a concern with the northern part of the south 2 route in Artichoke twp. His proposed new route will cross another property that I farm and is owned by family. I am wondering what the procedure is on doing such a drastic change to the route, will it even be considered? If so, do the new, possibly affected, landowners get a chance to make a public comment on this new route?

I am also curious why the MN DNR/US fish and wildlife have so much say in it? If this project is truly for the betterment of the people it should be ran on as much public and existing ROW land as possible since there shouldn't be the need to buy easements as it is already owned by the government. Why not just do eminent domain like you are talking about doing to the private landowners that don't agree with the chosen route. There is going to be a great deal of unnecessary cost and miles added to the line project just to make sure we avoid any and all DNR/US fish and wildlife ground. There are a lot of private landowners being negatively affected in a large way by this proposed powerline. The amount of compensation that you are proposing doesn't come close to the economic loss and loss of value on the land. I am including a map of the new proposed route from the DNR and another map with a route that I feel makes more sense.

Thanks

Brian Hamann

Ortonville MN