



Minnesota Department of Transportation

Office of Land Management

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November 15, 2016

Bill Storm, Environmental Review Manager
Energy Environmental Review and Analysis
Minnesota Department of Commerce
85 7th Place East, Suite 500
St. Paul MN 55101

RE: In the Matter of the Application of Northern States Power Company d/b/a Xcel Energy for a Route Permit for the Black Dog Natural Gas Pipeline Project in Burnsville, Minnesota
PUC Docket Number: G002/GP-16-656

Dear Mr. Storm,

On October 18, 2016, the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (MPUC) and the Minnesota Department of Commerce (DOC) issued a Notice of Public Information Meeting, which includes a public comment period regarding the environmental analysis of the Pipeline Routing Permit Application by Northern States Power Company d/b/a Xcel Energy for a Route Permit for the Black Dog Natural Gas Pipeline Project in Burnsville, Minnesota. The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) has reviewed the application regarding the proposed project and submits the following comments in response to the Notice.

Pipelines may be placed across a trunk highway (TH) pursuant to Minn. Stat. §222.37, subd. 2. The environmental document should address the permit requirements of MnDOT as well as all relevant permits or authorizations the Applicant must obtain from road authorities relating to any pipeline or associated facilities placement that cross a trunk highway. MnDOT has adopted a formal policy and procedures for accommodation of utilities, including pipelines, on the highway rights of way ("Utility Accommodation Policy"). A copy of MnDOT's policy can be found at <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/utility/policy/utilitypolicy.html>. MnDOT's policy seeks to permit utilities to occupy portions of the trunk highway rights-of-way where such occupation does not put the safety of the traveling public or highway workers at risk or unduly impair the public's investment in the transportation system.

Based on the information provided in the Application, MnDOT has three significant concerns about the route and alignment proposed by Xcel. First, Xcel proposes to place the gas pipeline longitudinally within the highway right of way. Second, it is on the opposite side of the highway from an existing pipeline, which constrains any future modifications or repair work to the highway. Third, Xcel proposes to cross TH 13 at a long skewed angle rather than at a right angle, which is ordinarily required of a gas pipeline under a highway.

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MnDOT has met with representatives of Xcel to discuss these concerns. Xcel is aware that MnDOT has a process for approving an exception from its normal requirements when a utility owner can demonstrate that extreme hardship or unusual conditions exist. MnDOT will work with Xcel to assess measures that may be available to mitigate MnDOT's concerns with the proposed alignment. For example, Xcel proposes that the depth of the pipeline could be 20 feet or more at the location where it would cross under the highway. Placing the pipeline at this depth should reduce the prospects that the pipeline would need to be relocated at the time of future highway repair or reconstruction work. MnDOT would also discuss with Xcel locations for the proposed pipeline that are as far from the highway travel lanes and appurtenances as possible.

Permits the Applicant will seek from MnDOT to cross trunk highways will also need to address matters such as construction methods for boring under highways, impact on other utilities, traffic control in construction areas, authorized access points for construction activities, impact on highway traffic, highway drainage, highway vegetation, and other similar concerns.

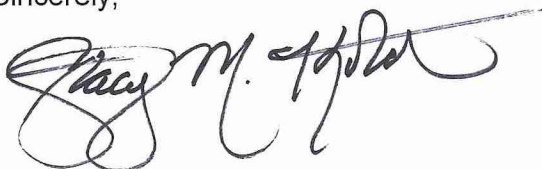
Oversize/Overweight Permits:

There may be highway-related considerations related to oversize/overweight hauling of the pipeline and equipment. Specifically, these large loads of freight are often transported along nearby interregional corridors (IRC) such as I-35. Because MnDOT's highway construction activities could impact the Applicant's plans to haul oversize loads to the proposed site, the Applicant will need to coordinate with MnDOT when planning such loads.

Any pipeline construction work, including delivery or storage of materials or equipment that may affect MnDOT right of way is of concern such that MnDOT should be involved in planning and coordinating such activities. Please note that if work is required within MnDOT right of way for temporary or permanent access, such work should be coordinated with MnDOT Engineering Specialist Senior, Buck Craig, Roadway Regulations & Enforcement at 651-234-7911 or buck.craig@state.mn.us

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.

Sincerely,



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Stacy Kotch
Utility Transmission Route Coordinator
Minnesota Department of Transportation

cc: Buck Craig – MnDOT Metro Permits
Conrad Miller – Senior Engineer, Xcel Energy

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