

1 SCOPING AND INFORMATIONAL MEETING - 23-200 & 08-1474

2 WEBEX - DECEMBER 11, 2023 - 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 Certificate of  
7 Need for the Proposed 345 kV Brookings County, Lyon  
County and Helena County Hampton Second Circuit Project

8 In the Matter of the Application for a Minor Alteration  
9 of the CapX2020 Brookings - Hampton Route Permit to Add  
the Brookings County - Lyon County and Helena - Hampton  
Second Circuit Project

10 MPUC DOCKET NOS. E-002/CN-23-200  
11 E-002/TI-08-1474

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14 Meeting held remotely via:

15 Webex and Telephone

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19 DECEMBER 11, 2023

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25 STENOGRAPHIC COURT REPORTER: Christine Simons, RMR, RPR

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1 MR. MICHAEL KALUZNIAK: All right. Good  
2 evening, everybody. Thank you for showing up here  
3 in our virtual meeting. My name is Michael  
4 Kaluzniak. I'm a staff person with the Minnesota  
5 Public Utilities Commission.

6 This is a public information and  
7 environmental report scoping meeting for the  
8 Brookings-to-Hampton transmission line second  
9 circuit project. We're joined virtually tonight.  
10 We'll be in Marshall at the Everspring Hotel and  
11 Event Center at 6:00 p.m. tomorrow, if you care to  
12 join us.

13 This meeting is about a second circuit  
14 stringing on a portion of the previously-permitted  
15 Brookings-to-Hampton line. I won't go too deeply  
16 into the project itself. Mr. Tim Rogers from Xcel  
17 will be explaining that more after I finish my  
18 presentation here.

19 There's a requirement for a certificate  
20 of need for the project, and as well as a minor  
21 alteration that I'll talk to you about in a second  
22 here. The meeting here is to provide you an  
23 opportunity to ask questions and provide any  
24 comments that you might have about the need for the  
25 project, its potential impacts, and any methods that

1 we might use to mitigate, minimize, and avoid any of  
2 those potential impacts.

3 After I turn it over to Tim, then Suzanne  
4 Steinhauer from the Department of Commerce will be  
5 moderating the remainder of the seminar during the  
6 Q-and-A after a presentation about their role in the  
7 project.

8 The Public Utilities Commission is a  
9 five-member body. I'm a staff person at the  
10 Commission. We do all of our business publicly.  
11 All of our official meetings and hearings are public  
12 and available for anybody to attend. We do have all  
13 of our record docket information, applications,  
14 presentations, and so forth online here.

15 Let's see, this proposed transmission  
16 line is a project that requires a certificate of  
17 need because it is a transmission line that's over  
18 1,500 feet, capable of operating at more than 200  
19 kilovolts.

20 As I mentioned, this line that runs from  
21 Brookings to Hampton -- basically the South Dakota  
22 border to south of the Twin Cities -- was previously  
23 permitted by the Commission in 2012, if I remember  
24 correctly. And a portion of that was strung with a  
25 second circuit at the time of construction, or

1       shortly thereafter, and, currently, the remainder of  
2       it would be used for a second circuit. So the  
3       existing structures would be used for that second  
4       circuit for the most part. There's a couple changes  
5       we have as well.

6               A certificate of need process is reviewed  
7       under a comment -- a formal comment and review  
8       process that's included in the statutes and rules  
9       here that I've cited. As I mentioned, copies of  
10      this presentation will be made available online.

11             The project also requires a minor  
12      alteration for the portions that will be modified  
13      under our minor alteration process. A minor  
14      alteration is one that does not result in  
15      significant change in human or environmental impact  
16      of the facility.

17             The Commission authorized preparation of  
18      an environmental report in its October 10th Order  
19      accepting the application as complete. That  
20      acceptance does not constitute an approval in any  
21      sense. It's just -- it's a determination that  
22      there's sufficient information in the applications  
23      to go on.

24             Going forward with the process, the  
25      Commission will -- after doing these meetings will

1 have the Department of Commerce prepare an  
2 environmental report for the certificate of need,  
3 and any comments you may have, they may include in  
4 that.

5 After that time, we'll be back in the  
6 project areas again. Basically repeating these  
7 meetings, once again, both in the project area and  
8 remotely via the Webex platform here, to collect  
9 your information if you have comments or questions  
10 about the project itself and the environmental  
11 report.

12 Let's see here, after that time, we will  
13 have an Administrative Law Judge report summarizing  
14 the project to-date and the hearing comments,  
15 including your comments here tonight, and we do  
16 appreciate receiving all of those. Once the ALJ  
17 report -- the Administrative Law Judge report --  
18 comes in, I'll do a briefing paper, and then the  
19 Commission will decide shortly thereafter on the  
20 project and include any permit requirements as they  
21 deem necessary.

22 Let's see here, we anticipate having the  
23 public hearing sometime around March of next year,  
24 of 2024.

25 And we should be good there.

1 I should note that the comments for the  
2 environmental report scoping are due January 3rd.  
3 So if you carry away nothing from tonight's meeting,  
4 please remember that the comments are due at that  
5 time. So we'd appreciate hearing from you.  
6 Suzanne's presentation has more information about  
7 how to do that, how to submit comments.

8 The notice of this meeting was posted to  
9 the Commission's website, our eDockets that you can  
10 find via our website, MN.gov/PUC. We also have our  
11 contact information here. If you care to reach us  
12 at any time, please feel free to do so. My phone  
13 number and e-mail are there. Jacques Harvieux is  
14 the public advisor for the Commission on this  
15 matter, and the Commission's website is here as  
16 well. And I'll try to upload this presentation as  
17 soon as I can after the meeting here.

18 So with that, I think I will turn it over  
19 to Mr. Rogers who will have some information about  
20 the project itself. Thank you for coming out.

21 MR. TIM ROGERS: Thank you, Mike.

22 Hi. I'm Tim Rogers. I'm manager in the  
23 siting and land rights group at Xcel Energy. My  
24 group takes care of the permitting and land control  
25 for our projects. I'm also joined by Tony Wendland,

1 our project manager for this project.

2 Xcel Energy, we are the lead utility. We  
3 are leading the application for this project, but I  
4 do want to note that there are other CapX owners on  
5 this line that you can see on the screen there.

6 We're here to ask approval from the  
7 Commission to install a second-circuit 345-kilovolt  
8 line on the existing structures that are capable of  
9 that second circuit already. There's two distinct  
10 segments to this project: An eastern and a western  
11 segment. In total, it's about a 98-mile project.

12 We'll let Mike -- very good.

13 The western segment goes from Brookings  
14 County substation -- which is in White, South  
15 Dakota -- to the Lyon County substation in Milroy,  
16 Minnesota. The eastern segment goes from  
17 New Prague, Minnesota, to Hampton, Minnesota.

18 So in 2012, I think, the Commission  
19 approved us to build these structures with the  
20 second set of davit arms already in place. So when  
21 the time comes to hang a second circuit, we won't  
22 have to do as much construction. It will all be set  
23 for us.

24 However, at the time we needed -- we need  
25 to hang that second circuit, the Commission asked



1 the owners to come back with data showing is --  
2 showing the time -- or the need for -- is it the  
3 right time to put on that second circuit? So the  
4 time is now. We have been experiencing congestion  
5 on this line, which has been inhibiting us from  
6 delivering the renewable energy to our customers.  
7 So that's what this is all about, is getting in  
8 front of the Commission to show that now is the  
9 time. We have a need for this second circuit.

10 Here are some more details on the actual  
11 project. You can see the segments on each end in  
12 red. That's the two segments that we need to hang  
13 that second circuit on. You'll notice in the middle  
14 is a purple segment. The Commission allowed the  
15 owners to build and operate a double-circuit 345-kV  
16 line in that middle section. So we're just kind  
17 of -- we're completing this project. Once it's  
18 done, we'll have a double-circuit 345-kilovolt line.

19 We plan to use a helicopter to install  
20 the second set of conductors. All the work will be  
21 within the existing easements. We will have some  
22 areas where we'll need the crews to, you know, use a  
23 bucket truck to get up to those structures. So in  
24 those areas, we will have some temporary impacts  
25 from the access routes and the work areas around

1 those structures. Any impacts to crops will be  
2 reimbursed.

3 You can -- let's see, what you have  
4 now is -- you can back up there, Mike. Yeah.  
5 Thanks.

6 So that's that -- the western segment.  
7 Those little areas in red are the areas where we'll  
8 have some temporary impacts. We'll have some access  
9 routes in the work areas. The construction on the  
10 western segment is expected to begin Quarter 2 of  
11 next year, of 2024.

12 And there's going to be one structure  
13 we'll have to put a new -- put an additional  
14 structure in when this line cuts into that Steep  
15 Bank Lake substation.

16 Next slide, Mike.

17 Here's the eastern segment. It's pretty  
18 much the same situation: Helicopter install, all  
19 within existing easements. There will be newer --  
20 new structures that have to be installed, about 11  
21 or so. And that's, again, because we have to cut  
22 into the Chub Lake substation, that will need one or  
23 two new structures. And then you can see south of  
24 this airport lake -- Airlake Airport, we have to  
25 have some lower-profile, shorter structures, and so

1           that will cause us to, kind of, move about ten or --  
2           nine or ten structures.

3                     The eastern segment, we're expecting to  
4           begin construction in 2025.

5                     And I think that's it, Mike.

6                     The next slide has got -- if you need any  
7           more information on the project or you need to  
8           contact us, the information is here.

9                     And with that, I will turn it over to  
10          Suzanne.

11                    MS. SUZANNE STEINHAUER: Thanks, Tim.

12                    Good evening. My name is Suzanne  
13          Steinhauer. I'm here with the Minnesota Department  
14          of Commerce, Energy Environmental Renew and Analysis  
15          Division.

16                    And you can go to the next slide.

17                    The Department of Commerce has a number  
18          of responsibilities, most of which fall under the,  
19          sort of, general area of consumer protection. We  
20          have an insurance fraud division, rate paper -- I'm  
21          sorry, ratepayer advocacy, and also weights and  
22          measures.

23                    Our role at the EERA is to act as  
24          technical advisors to the Commission in order to  
25          provide neutral, third-party analyzes of potential

1 human and environmental impacts for projects that  
2 are seeking a permit from the Commission. We don't  
3 advocate. We try to focus on the facts and make  
4 those available to the Commission and to all  
5 participants. The goal is informed decision-making  
6 by the Commission and information for all  
7 participants.

8 You can move ahead.

9 So I think we covered this. The project,  
10 as proposed, needs two approvals from the  
11 Commission: The certificate of need and the minor  
12 alteration.

13 Moving ahead, with respect to my  
14 responsibility, which is environmental review, the  
15 difference is that the certificate of need  
16 proceedings require an environmental report;  
17 whereas, the minor alteration doesn't have a  
18 separate environmental review document. The review  
19 is incorporated into the process.

20 Next slide.

21 So the environmental report describes the  
22 proposed project and system alternatives. System  
23 alternatives to the proposed project are related to  
24 the size, type, and timing to meet the identified  
25 need for the project. We will assess the potential

1 human and environmental impacts from the proposed  
2 project and system alternatives, and identify  
3 strategies to avoid and mitigate those impacts.

4 So any infrastructure project is going to  
5 have impacts on humans and the environment, and the  
6 job of the environmental report is to put those in  
7 perspective. So one of the alternatives will be not  
8 building the project, which will also have  
9 environmental and human impacts.

10 Next slide, please.

11 So the environmental report will look at  
12 a number of things. It will look at the  
13 alternatives, including a no-build; transmission  
14 lines of a different size or type; why can or can't  
15 you do generation instead of transmission; and it  
16 will look for all of those identified alternatives.  
17 It will look at the impacts of mitigation measures  
18 to natural resources, which includes air quality,  
19 greenhouse gases, vegetation, wildlife, geology,  
20 soils and water; human settlement, including  
21 aesthetics, noise, socioeconomics, cultural  
22 resources, public services, communications, health  
23 and safety, and environmental justice; and then  
24 land-based economies, including agriculture, and to  
25 the extent practicable, forestry, mining,

1 recreation, and tourism.

2 Next slide, please.

3 So with that in mind, the public comments  
4 help us focus and develop the alternatives and  
5 inform the analysis for the proposed project in the  
6 environmental report. We use this scoping process  
7 to move from the "general" to the "specific." What  
8 is it about this particular project in this  
9 particular place? And we use that also to inform  
10 our recommendations as to permit conditions that  
11 could minimize or avoid those impacts.

12 Next slide, please.

13 So with that, sort of, general background  
14 in mind, I'd ask that you try to, to the extent  
15 possible, focus the scoping comments on potential  
16 impacts, human and environmental; strategies to  
17 avoid, minimize, or mitigate the potential impacts;  
18 other ways that the need for the project could be  
19 met; unique characteristics of the proposed route or  
20 the project; items that are missing or  
21 mischaracterized in either of the applications; and  
22 then, just generally, other project-related issues  
23 or concerns.

24 Next slide, please.

25 So we're taking comments this afternoon.

1 We're taking verbal comments today. There is a  
2 court reporter, so we'll have a record of that. And  
3 then as Mike mentioned, we have a meeting in  
4 Marshall tomorrow night, and those are the three  
5 opportunities to provide oral comments.

6 Comments -- written comments, we're  
7 accepting through January 3rd, those go to me. You  
8 can comment online on the Commerce website. There's  
9 a fillable form. You can mail, fax, or e-mail a  
10 comment to me, and as long as I get it by the end of  
11 day on January 3rd, that will be part of the record.

12 So in just a minute we'll open comments  
13 up, but I want to go over, real briefly, just some  
14 of the -- so the ground rules. As I mentioned, we  
15 have a court reporter. It's really important that  
16 we have an accurate record of who's speaking, so  
17 we'll ask one speaker at a time. We'll ask the  
18 speaker to state and spell your name for the court  
19 reporter.

20 Try to direct your comments and questions  
21 to the scope of the ER, but there's also an  
22 opportunity to ask questions. If you have questions  
23 about the project, I'd recommend -- I'd advise you  
24 to do that tonight. We have people here who should  
25 be able to answer your question. We'll limit the

1 initial comments to five minutes or less. It  
2 doesn't look like there's a whole lot of people, so  
3 we want to get to everybody. And then, finally,  
4 maintain respect for others. People can have  
5 different opinions on the same project.

6 So that said, I will open it for  
7 comments.

8 MR. MICHAEL KALUZNIAK: Just a reminder,  
9 if you care to speak or have a comment, please raise  
10 your hand using the hand feature, or press \*3 on  
11 your phone, and we can line you up for a comment.

12 We don't seem to have anybody who's got  
13 their hand raised for comments.

14 Once again, while we're sitting here, on  
15 the left-hand side of this screen there is a survey  
16 that the Commission has started using at all of our  
17 public meetings and hearings, and there's a QR code  
18 there that you can scan. Otherwise, you can find  
19 it at the URL that's listed here, and then it's just  
20 six questions about the format of these meetings and  
21 if you find them useful and things that we could  
22 improve. We'd love to hear from you.

23 Once again, if you have questions, please  
24 raise your hand. There's a raise-your-hand  
25 function, and also you can use \*3 if you are calling



1 in. You can also chat using the chat icon and send  
2 a message to us to let us know you'd like to speak.

3 MS. SUZANNE STEINHAUER: So I'm going to  
4 rely on you, Mike and Jacques, but I don't see  
5 anybody. I want to make sure people have an  
6 opportunity and can figure out the technology to get  
7 our attention.

8 MR. JACQUES HARVIEUX: Yeah. I've got  
9 both of those open right now, and I'm not seeing  
10 anybody.

11 MS. SUZANNE STEINHAUER: Okay. So I'll  
12 go through comments. Comments are going once --  
13 I'll go slow -- comments are going twice.

14 MR. JACQUES HARVIEUX: We've got one  
15 person.

16 MS. SUZANNE STEINHAUER: Okay. Yeah.

17 MR. JACQUES HARVIEUX: George Vinson.

18 MS. SUZANNE STEINHAUER: State and spell  
19 your name, please, for the court reporter.

20 MR. GEORGE VINSON: Can you guys hear me?

21 MS. SUZANNE STEINHAUER: Yes.

22 MR. GEORGE VINSON: I just wasn't sure  
23 if -- I think you guys said that there was no one  
24 here, but I'm here. I don't have any questions or  
25 comments, but I just wanted to see if there was an

1 error in the --

2 MR. JACQUES HARVIEUX: No, I -- what I  
3 meant to say -- I didn't have anybody, I meant  
4 nobody had their hand raised.

5 MR. GEORGE VINSON: Oh, thanks.

6 MS. SUZANNE STEINHAUER: Yeah. We do  
7 have, I think, it shows seven attendees, but I'm not  
8 seeing anybody.

9 Jacques, Mike?

10 MR. JACQUES HARVIEUX: No, I don't got  
11 anybody right now.

12 MS. SUZANNE STEINHAUER: Okay. So once  
13 again, I'll give you three opportunities before we  
14 close the comment portion of the meeting. Comments  
15 are going once, going twice, going three times. I  
16 want to make sure everybody has had an opportunity.

17 So I want to make sure that you're --  
18 just remember that we are accepting written comments  
19 through January 3rd. Those can be addressed to me.  
20 Please feel free to give me a call, and I'll try to  
21 answer your questions. You should just know that  
22 that won't be part of the official record.

23 So that said, I will close the comment  
24 portion of the meeting, and thanks very much for  
25 your time. I appreciate it.

1 MR. MICHAEL KALUZNIAK: Thank you,  
2 everyone, for being here, and once again, we'll have  
3 all of this information available online at the  
4 Commission's website and the eDockets system.

5 Additionally, we have another opportunity  
6 tomorrow at the Mankato -- Everspring Hotel and  
7 Event Center in Marshall, Minnesota.

8 So, once again, thanks for your comments.  
9 Please remember to get them in by January 3, 2024.

10 Thanks very much. Good night.

11 (Public comment concluded.)  
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