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January 26, 2021

Suzanne Steinhauer, Environmental Review Manager
Minnesota Department of Commerce
85 7th Place East, Suite 500
St. Paul, MN 55101

RE: In the Matter of the Applications of Walleye Wind, LLC for a Certificate of Need and Site Permit for the Walleye Wind Project and Associated Facilities in Rock County
PUC Docket Numbers: IP7026/CN-20-269 and IP7026/WS-20-384

Dear Ms. Steinhauer,

On December 18th, 2020, the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (PUC) and the Minnesota Department of Commerce (DOC) issued a Notice of Public Information Meeting and Environmental Report Scoping Meeting on the Certificate of Need and Amended Site Permit Applications for the Walleye Wind, LLC (Applicant) for its proposed 109.2 megawatt (MW) wind generation project in Rock County. The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) has reviewed the applications regarding the proposed project and submits the following comments in response to the Notice.

Based on the information provided in the Site Permit Application, it appears that the project area encompasses portions of I-90 and Trunk Highway (TH) 23. MnDOT requests that the DOC EERA and the PUC consider the following recommendations for site permit conditions as they apply to these affected areas of the State of Minnesota Trunk Highway System:

1. No new access will be allowed from I-90 right-of-way.
2. The turbine layout proposes a gravel access road that connects to MN 23 for Turbine ALT-4 (shown as Turbine 22 on a kmz file provided directly to MnDOT by



the Applicant). Given the proximity to the MN 23/I-90 interchange, the multiple accesses in that area, and the availability of CSAH-17 for access, MnDOT requests that the Applicant connect to CSAH-17. The Applicant should explore this alternate access option or document for the record why alternate access cannot be achieved. Please also note that any access constructed on MN 23 would require a Highway Access Permit prior to construction.

3. The proposed collection lines that cross TH 23 and I-90 are to be buried, a preferred method of installation. If this method should need to be changed to aerial for any reason, it should be known that there is potential for a more restrictive MnDOT permitting process, or that aerial installations/encroachment/pole placement may not be allowed in certain areas. MnDOT appreciates the Applicant's efforts to consolidate collection lines prior to their intersection with the state trunk highway system.

MnDOT District 7 staff remains concerned about shadow flicker and its effects on the traveling public. Particularly, the locations of ALT-7 and T-3 through T-5 turbines, given their southerly locations and proximity to the I-90 mainline. Shadow flicker exposure, and the resulting distraction, could cause high-speed traffic to crash, resulting in serious injury or death. In Section 8.5.3 of the Amended Site Permit Application, it is stated that the Project was designed to minimize shadow flicker exposure of the residences in the area. There seems to be no mention of attempts to minimize the effects of shadow flicker on the traveling public in any wind farm application. Often, local ordinances place restrictions on electronic signage as to not have signs that flicker, rotate or flash. MnDOT District 7 staff is of the opinion that wind turbine shadow flicker falls within this category of distraction and therefore, would like to see shadow flicker analysis and effects on state trunk highways become a standard application component for review on all wind farm projects.

Because MnDOT's highway construction activities could impact the Applicant's plans to haul oversized loads to the proposed site, the Applicant will need to coordinate with MnDOT when planning such loads. MnDOT State Project (SP) 6780-117 has the potential to affect construction of the Walleye Wind Farm. SP 6780-117 is on Interstate 90 from Beaver Creek to Luverne will be under construction during the summer of 2021. The project will include lane closures, as well as two-way/two-lane (head-to-head) traffic on I-90; both with width restrictions of 11 feet. It is currently anticipated that the project will start on June 14,



2021 and completed by October 15, 2021. Additionally, there will be ramp closures on TH 75 for a portion of this time, and the County Road 6 off ramp will not be available for westbound traffic during most of the construction. The applicant should consider alternate routes to deliver turbine components given the timing of and the limitations imposed by construction on I-90.

As stated above and as noted in the Site Permit Application, the Applicant may need to acquire several types of permits from MnDOT including utility accommodation on trunk highway, oversize/overweight hauling and other highway access permitting ([MnDOT Permit Forms](#)). Additionally, it should be noted that applicable MnDOT utility permit applications are reviewed by our Office of Environmental Stewardship as a standard part of our permit review process. This review may result in additional construction criteria and/or a request to move portions of a planned project outside of any given area of concern.

Per MN Statute 360.83, subd.1, “Until a permit therefore has been issued by the commissioner, no person shall erect, or add to the height of any structure at any place in this state which will result in a structure extending more than 500 feet above the highest point of land within one-mile radius from the structure...” an Airspace Obstruction/Tall Tower Permit(s) will be required from MnDOT’s Office of Aeronautics for any proposed turbine greater than 500 feet tall. The Office of Aeronautics reviews permit applications as they are received and can concurrently review applications with other agencies and/or MnDOT offices. The timeframe for starting the application process is entirely incumbent on the Applicant’s submission. Please coordinate such permits with Cedric Williams, MnDOT Office of Aeronautics Principal Planner at cedric.williams@state.mn.us or 651-234-7183.

Should the PUC issue a site permit for the Walleye Wind Project, early coordination with MnDOT staff is strongly encouraged. Any MnDOT permits, apart from Aeronautics, applied for as a part of the Walleye Wind Project will not be issued until the PUC has issued an approved site permit for this project. All applicable permitting, traffic control and construction coordination efforts should be made through Marc Fischer, Engineering Specialist in the District 7B Permits Office at 507-822-2191 or Marc.Fischer@state.mn.us. MnDOT District Specialists should be given the opportunity to participate in pre-construction meetings as they apply to MnDOT owned property.

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MnDOT has a continuing interest in working with the PUC, the DOC and the Applicant to ensure that possible impacts to the entire state trunk highway system, traveling public and environmentally significant areas of concern are adequately addressed.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.

Sincerely,

Stacy Ketch Egstad

Utility Routing and Siting Coordinator
Minnesota Department of Transportation
Office of Land Management

cc: Marc Fischer– MnDOT District 7 Permits

Angela Piltaver – MnDOT District 7 Senior Planner

Cedric Williams – MnDOT Aeronautics Principal Planner

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