

## **Appendix J**

### **Comment Response Document**

## ***Introduction***

This appendix provides a summary of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) public meetings, explains the methodology for receiving and organizing DEIS comments, and provides responses to comments received.

The DEIS for the Bemidji-Grand Rapids Transmission Line Project was published on February 23, 2010. Notice of the availability of the DEIS was sent to those persons on the Office of Energy Security's project contact list, and published in the Environmental Quality Board Monitor and newspapers of local circulation.

The OES distributed copies of the DEIS to cooperating agencies, those persons requesting individual copies, local libraries, and to additional federal, state, and local agencies identified on the Project distribution list.

Public meetings on the DEIS were held at the Hampton Inn in Bemidji, MN (March 16, 2010, two meetings); American Legion Vets Club in Deer River, MN (March 17, 2010); Blackduck Senior Center in Blackduck, MN (March 17, 2010); and at the Leech Lake Tribal College in Cass Lake, MN (March 18, 2010). Based on sign-in sheets, the DEIS meetings were attended by approximately 200 individuals. OES and RUS staff led the presentations and presided over the public meetings. The public was encouraged to provide oral comments at the public meetings and to submit written comments to the OES or RUS by April 26, 2010. A court reporter was present at the public meetings to ensure that all oral comments were recorded accurately.

## ***Methodology***

In preparing the Final EIS, the OES Energy Facility Permitting (EFP) and RUS staff considered all comments to the extent practicable. An identification number was assigned to each commenter, including those who expressed comments orally at the public meeting. Individuals who submitted comments in multiple separate submissions were assigned a separate commenter number for each submission. Each specific comment by the same commenter was assigned a sequential comment number; for example, Comment 41-3 refers to the 3<sup>rd</sup> comment by the commenter assigned as number 41.

Based on the comments received on the Draft EIS, the OES EFP and RUS prepared responses and modified the EIS where appropriate. The EIS was also revised based on RUS's and OES EFP's internal technical and editorial review of

the DEIS (i.e., changes made to the EIS that were not in response to a comment received).

Oral comments at the public meetings, as well as scanned images of the original comment documents in order by assigned commenter number, are included in their entirety in this chapter. The commenters and their comments are identified and labeled on each document image beginning with the public meeting oral comments. All comment documents on the DEIS, as well as any supporting attachments, have been entered into the administrative record for this docket. Individual responses for each comment are provided on the right side of each page in close proximity to the corresponding comment. In cases where subsequent comments address the same issue, references are made to the earlier comment number for appropriate responses.

Oral comments were given by 38 individuals at the DEIS public meeting; OES and RUS received written comments from 13 agencies/ organizations and written comments from 55 individuals during the comment period. Several agencies and individuals submitted more than one set of written comments. Comments on the DEIS were also submitted by the Applicants. The table below provides a listing of the commenters, their assigned identification numbers, and their affiliations.

Commenter Number	Commenter Name	Affiliation
<b>Oral Comments Received at DEIS Public Meetings</b>		
1	Ludtke, Richard	Citizen
2	Wagner, Bob	Citizen
3	Lish, Mike	Citizen
4	Dingman, Benita	Citizen
5	Johnson, Jay	Citizen
6	Ludtke, Richard	Citizen
7	Haack, Jim	Citizen
8	Bohn, Barbara	Citizen
9	Winans, Carol	Citizen
10	Frost, Jack	Citizen
11	West, Dave	Citizen
12	Haack, Jim	Citizen
13	Anderson, Barbara	Citizen
14	Clemens, Cameron	Citizen
15	Johnson, Jane	Citizen
16	Leif, Tom	Citizen
17	Anderson, Barbara	Citizen
18	Solheim, Jerry	Citizen
19	Pomprening, Keith	Citizen
20	Hiltz, Lester	Citizen
21	Bjerke, Doug	Citizen
22	Robinson, John	Citizen

**COMMENT RESPONSE DOCUMENT**

23	Guggenheimer, Peter	Citizen
24	Dingman, Scott	Citizen
25	Wakonabo, Gabriel	Citizen
26	Petrowske, Frederick	Citizen
27	Lundquist, Lloyd	Citizen
28	Helmer, Terry	Citizen
29	Abbott, Greg	Citizen
30	Frits, Garry	Citizen
31	Hanson, Norley	Citizen
32	Helmer, Terry	Citizen
33	Berbee, George	Citizen
34	Ikola, Kay	Citizen
35	Helmer, Terry	Citizen
36	Snell, Janet	Citizen
37	Johnson, Clarence	Citizen
38	Morine, Rich	Citizen
39	Sedgwick, Dean	Citizen
40	Morine, Rich	Citizen
41	Beighley, Vernon	Citizen
42	Sorheim, Greg	Citizen
43	Beighley, Vernon	Citizen
44	Sedgwick, Sally	Citizen
45	Sedgwick, Dean	Citizen
46	Beighley, Vernon	Citizen
47	Sorheim, Greg	Citizen
48	Haws, Katie	Citizen
49	Sedgwick, Dean	Citizen
50	Sedgwick, Sally	Citizen
51	Michalek, Mark	Citizen
52	Beighley, Vernon	Citizen
53	Michalek, Mark	Citizen
54	Sedgwick, Dean	Citizen
55	Beighley, Vernon	Citizen
56	Magoon, Darrell	Citizen
57	Mitchell, Kenn	Citizen
58	Sherman, Elizabeth	Citizen
59	Howard, Vikki	Citizen
60	Young, Shirley	Citizen
61	Babcock, Barry	Citizen
62	Chester, Greg	Citizen
63	Knowles, Becky	Citizen
64	Griep, Steven	Citizen
65	Beauliao, Nicole	Citizen
66	Young, Shirley	Citizen
67	Green, John	Citizen
68	Sherman, Elizabeth	Citizen
69	Knowles, Becky	Citizen
70	Harper, Sydney	Citizen
71	Indieke, Susan	Citizen

**COMMENT RESPONSE DOCUMENT**

72	Green, John	Citizen
73	Young, Shirley	Citizen
74	Sherman, Elizabeth	Citizen
<b>Written Agency Comments</b>		
75	Bois Forte Tribal Historic Preservation Officer	Bois Forte
76	Chippewa National Forest - Correspondence to Administrative Law Judge	Chippewa National Forest
77	City of Cohasset	City of Cohasset
78	Greater Bemidji Area Joint Planning Commission	Greater Bemidji Area Joint Planning Commission
79	Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, Division of Resource Management - Correspondence to Administrative Law Judge	Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, Division of Resource Management
80	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
81	Minnesota Department of Transportation	Minnesota Department of Transportation
82	Minnesota Pollution Control Agency	Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
83	Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota	Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota
84	Santee Sioux Nation	Santee Sioux Nation
85	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
86	U.S. Department of the Interior	U.S. Department of the Interior
87	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
<b>Written Individual Comments</b>		
88	Alisha	Citizen
89	Anderson, Ashley	Citizen
90	Asfoor, Jeff	Citizen
91	Avery, Phillip	Citizen
92	Bathen, Linda	Citizen
93	Becca	Citizen
94	Bedeau, Mary	Citizen
95	Beighley, Vernon	Citizen
96	Berbee, George	Citizen
97	Berg, Don	Citizen
98	Burlage, Lisa	Citizen
99	Burnette, Dale	Citizen
100	Carlson, Denny and Jane	Citizen
101	Cloud, Dawn	Citizen
102	Comstock, Paul	Citizen
103	Dingman, Scott and Benita	Citizen
104	Evans, Harriet	Citizen
105	Frederick, Mark	Citizen
106	Gladen, James	Citizen
107	Gooch, David	Citizen
108	Gorhan, Jim	Citizen
109	Grasdalen, Jane and Dale	Citizen

COMMENT RESPONSE DOCUMENT

110	Greenside, Dean	Citizen
111	Guggenheimer, Peter	Citizen
112	Hansen, Norley	Citizen
113	Herfindahl, Richard	Citizen
114	Hiltz, Lester	Citizen
115	Howard, Vern	Citizen
116	Jarv, Roger	Citizen
117	Lafermiere, Noel	Citizen
118	Lightfeather, Dylan	Citizen
119	Lightfeather, Sonia	Citizen
120	Lindahl, Steven	Citizen
121	LLBO Member Petition	Citizens, Leech Lake Band Members
122	Magoon, Darrell	Citizen
123	McLaughlin, Carol	Citizen
124	Michalek, Mark	Citizen
125	Nelson, Judy	Citizen
126	Pike, Gregg	Citizen
127	Plath, Diane and Ernest	Citizen
128	Richardson, Winona	Citizen
129	Richter, Nathan	Citizen
130	Schedin, Larry	Citizen
131	Schmid, Mike	Citizen
132	Siegel, Samantha	Citizen
133	Turtle River Watershed Association	Turtle River Watershed Association
134	Wagner and Enblom	Citizen
135	Wahnschaffe, Ken	Citizen
136	Way, Joyce	Citizen
137	Way, Dallas and Joyce	Citizen
138	Wernberg, Russell	Citizen
139	West, Dave	Citizen
140	West, David	Citizen
141	White, Adam	Citizen
142	White, Coody	Citizen
143	White, Zachary	Citizen
144	Worms, Charles and Mary	Citizen
145	Wyman, Brett	Citizen
<b>Written Comments Received from the Applicants</b>		
146	Otter Tail Power Company, Minnesota Power Company, and Minnkota Power Cooperative, Inc.	Applicants
147	Otter Tail Power Company, Minnesota Power Company, and Minnkota Power Cooperative, Inc.	Applicants

As discussed in Section 1.3.1 of the EIS, high voltage transmission lines require a public contested-case hearing. Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) Eric Lipman has been assigned to preside over the contested case hearing. Combined public and evidentiary hearings on the Project were held between April 21 and April 23, 2010 at locations in Blackduck, Bemidji, Cass Lake, and Deer River. Comments

to ALJ Lipman were due May 3, 2010. Because the hearings and comment period overlapped with the DEIS comment period, they are included here. To the extent that these comments relate to information contained in the DEIS, responses have been provided. In many cases the comments express a routing preference, or other issue not directly related to the information contained in the DEIS and no response is provided.

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PUBLIC COMMENTS

TUESDAY, MARCH 16, 2010  
1:00 p.m.

In the Matter of the Application for a Route Permit for  
the Bemidji-Grand Rapids 230 kV Transmission Project

PUC Docket Number: E017, E015, ET6/TL-07-1327

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I N D E X

SPEAKER	PAGE
Stephanie Strength	11
Richard Ludtke	15
Bob Wagner	18
Mike Lish	19
Diane Plath	20
Benita Dingman	21
Jay Johnson	22
Richard Ludtke	23
Jim Haack	24
Barbara Bohn	25
Carol Winans	26
Jack Frost	27
Dave West	28
Jim Haack	29
Barbara Anderson	32
Cameron Clemens	34
Jane Johnson	36
Jay Johnson	36
Tom Leif	37
Diane Plath	37
Barbara Anderson	37

1 MS. STEINHAUER: Good afternoon. Can  
2 people hear me? I'm not used to a mic.

3 Thank you very much for coming. We're at  
4 the draft -- the public involvement meeting for the  
5 draft environmental impact statement on the proposed  
6 Bemidji-Grand Rapids 230 kV transmission line.

7 My name is Suzanne Steinhauer. I'm with  
8 the Minnesota Office of Energy Security. We were  
9 the lead state agency on the -- preparing the draft  
10 environmental impact statement. With me today is  
11 Stephanie Strength. She's from the U.S. Department  
12 of Agriculture, Rural Utilities Service, serving as  
13 the lead federal agency in the preparation of the  
14 DEIS.

15 I also have -- there are a number of  
16 people from the applicants here. Jamie MacAlister,  
17 who you may have seen at the sign-in table, is also  
18 with me and she's filling in as public advisor for  
19 the Minnesota Office of Energy Security. And we  
20 have Meghan Sweeney and Greg Poremba, also, from  
21 ERM. They're the consultants who helped us prepare  
22 the environmental impact statement.

23 My role in the project -- the proposed  
24 transmission line has been proposed by three  
25 utilities. For transmission lines of this size in

1 Minnesota, it needs a permit from the Minnesota  
2 Public Utilities Commission. My role is to help  
3 develop the record that the Commission can make that  
4 decision on, and the EIS, or environmental impact  
5 statement, is one very important piece, but it's not  
6 the only one.

7 The purpose of the meeting this afternoon  
8 is to provide an opportunity for the public to ask  
9 questions and provide comment on the completeness  
10 and accuracy of the draft environmental impact  
11 statement.

12 I realize that most people are here  
13 because there are lines on a map and, again, I want  
14 to try to focus, to the extent possible, the  
15 comments on the information and the accuracy and  
16 completeness in the environmental impact statement.

17 In about a month, October 21st through  
18 23rd (sic), there will be another set of public  
19 meetings up here called contested case hearings.  
20 Those are required for transmission lines of this  
21 size. They'll be presided over by an administrative  
22 law judge. In those hearings, the applicants will  
23 advocate for what they prefer to have as a route.  
24 There will also be an opportunity for people to ask  
25 questions and also to advocate for what your

1 preferences may be as a route.

2           Depending on the route selected, the  
3 proposed project is between 68 and 113 miles.  
4 Again, it's a 230 kilovolt transmission line. The  
5 transmission line would extend from the Wilton  
6 Substation, which is located just west of here, to  
7 the Boswell Substation in Cohasset. Depending on  
8 the route selected, the project may also include  
9 either a new Cass Lake substation or improvements to  
10 the existing Cass Lake Substation and possibly a  
11 breaker station in Nary.

12           For transmission lines of this size, as I  
13 mentioned earlier, require the -- a permit, a high  
14 voltage transmission line route permit from the  
15 Minnesota Public Utilities Commission. The  
16 transmission line can be constructed only along a  
17 route approved by the Public Utilities Commission.

18           For the purposes of definition, a high  
19 voltage transmission line is anything over  
20 100 kilovolts. I think most of the things that you  
21 see around here are 69 kilovolts or less. There are  
22 some higher voltage lines coming into Wilton.

23           And the rules for the Power Plant Siting  
24 Act are found in Minnesota Rules 7850.

25           I know many of you were here quite some

1 time ago, it was 15 or 18 months ago, in the summer  
2 of 2008 for scoping meetings on the project. The  
3 applicants, Minnkota Power, Otter Tail, Minnesota  
4 Power, applied to the Public Utilities Commission  
5 for a route permit in the beginning of June 2008.  
6 The Commission accepted that application as complete  
7 at the end of June.

8           We had scoping meetings in the project  
9 area, including here in Hampton -- at the  
10 Hampton Inn to gather public input on what should  
11 be -- what routes should be considered in the  
12 environmental impact statement and what effects need  
13 to be evaluated.

14           Based on that information, based on the  
15 advisory task force that was comprised of local  
16 governmental units along the transmission lines, and  
17 then agency comments, we released -- the state, the  
18 Minnesota Office of Energy Security, released a  
19 scoping decision in March of 2009.

20           We spent the intervening, approximately,  
21 year developing the draft environmental impact  
22 statement, which is a large three-volume set. There  
23 are review copies available, if you'd like to look  
24 at that. There are some located outside.

25           And that brings us to the public

1 meetings. And as I mentioned earlier, the purpose  
2 of these meetings is to gather comments on the  
3 information contained in the draft environmental  
4 impact statement.

5 As I also mentioned earlier, there will  
6 be what's referred to as a contested case hearing to  
7 further develop the record and to begin developing  
8 the record for a preferred route. Based on the  
9 information, the EIS will be entered into that  
10 record. The applicants will also enter their  
11 information and their preferred route.

12 One thing that I do want to make clear,  
13 and I understand it's confusing -- it may be  
14 confusing to people, the EIS evaluated three routes.  
15 It did not identify a preferred alternative. The  
16 purpose of the contested case hearing is to develop  
17 a record for the Commission on where the route  
18 should go and what conditions should be attached to  
19 the permit.

20 I'm sorry. I need to back up. Based on  
21 the -- any comments that we receive here orally this  
22 afternoon or in the next couple of days, also in  
23 writing, will be included and addressed in the final  
24 environmental impact statement. We will take oral  
25 comments this afternoon. Some people have signed up

1 to speak on registration cards.

2 You don't feel -- need to feel  
3 constrained by that. You can also provide written  
4 comments, you can turn those in to us those today if  
5 you have them. As long as we receive them by  
6 April 26th, they will be included in the final EIS  
7 and addressed there.

8 So we can move on to the next slide.  
9 Those are some of the milestones and the purpose of  
10 the meeting today. As I mentioned earlier, the  
11 comment period ends on April 26th. Moving forward,  
12 again, the contested case hearings will be held at  
13 the end of April, just before the end of the comment  
14 period.

15 The draft EIS evaluated three route  
16 alternatives represented in the -- the map shown at  
17 the front of the room in yellow, red, and blue,  
18 along with 20 segment alternatives. The applicants  
19 request a route of approximately 1,000 feet, within  
20 which they would locate a right-of-way. The  
21 right-of-way would be the cleared area and the area  
22 that needs to be maintained clear. The applicants  
23 have requested a right-of-way of 125 feet.

24 So within all of those routes and those  
25 segment alternatives, the EIS looked at what

1 we asked the applicants and worked with the  
2 applicants to develop is what we refer to as a  
3 feasible 125-foot right-of-way. That does not mean  
4 that's where the final route would go, but it  
5 provides a way to compare the routes across all the  
6 21 different issue areas and -- between the routes.  
7 And those routes are perhaps shown a little bit more  
8 clearly in the map located at the front of the room.

9 The draft EIS looks at 21 different  
10 factors. The Commission, in their final decision,  
11 needs to weigh a number of different factors.  
12 They're identified as aesthetics, air quality,  
13 geology, water resources, floodplains, wetlands,  
14 biological resources, species of special concern --  
15 threatened and endangered species, in other words --  
16 cultural resources, land use, socioeconomics,  
17 environmental justice, recreation and tourism,  
18 agriculture, forestry and mining, community  
19 services, utility systems, traffic, safety and  
20 health, and noise.

21 There are, as I mentioned, review copies  
22 of the draft EIS located outside. We have a limited  
23 number of CDs, if that's something you'd be  
24 interested in. There also hard copies available at  
25 libraries in the project area, and it's also

1 available on our website.

2 Again, we would like to try to focus the  
3 comments today on the information contained in the  
4 draft environmental impact statement, specifically  
5 the accuracy and completeness of the data. And I'd  
6 like to go over some of the ground rules. I'm sure  
7 these are very familiar to anybody that's been to a  
8 public meeting.

9 A couple people filled out the green  
10 speaker cards, and we'll taking those speakers  
11 first. We'd like you to come up to the table. We  
12 have a microphone here, and please state and spell  
13 your name clearly. Christine is the court reporter,  
14 she will be taking your comments.

15 Please be respectful of other people.  
16 Everybody, I believe, in this room probably has an  
17 opinion and some issues that they hold very dear to  
18 them and we need to acknowledge that. Please limit  
19 your comments to five minutes to allow everyone to  
20 speak.

21 The court reporter will be preparing  
22 transcripts, and comment sheets are available if you  
23 prefer not to speak or if something comes to you  
24 later. I know I am an introvert. I don't think  
25 very quickly on my feet. Sometimes I'll go home and

1 think about things and wonder about questions that  
2 people ask. So as long as we receive those comments  
3 by April 26th, they are a part of the record.

4 I just want to say, we'll call on the  
5 people who preregistered to speak first and then  
6 we'll just open it up for a show of hands and go  
7 through, provide everybody with a chance to speak  
8 today.

9 There is -- at the registration table  
10 there are comments sheets. You don't need to use  
11 this sheet to provide written comments, but you may  
12 want to take one just to give it to your neighbors  
13 because it does provide contact information and the  
14 deadline and the location for the comments to go.

15 Our website does also allow you to just  
16 comment directly. There's a toggle button, and you  
17 can comment directly. If those are received as an  
18 e-mail, they get logged as a comment. And, again,  
19 comments need to be received by April 26th.

20 And I'll turn this over to Stephanie.

21 MS. STRENGTH: And how do I switch this  
22 (indicating)?

23 Okay. Can everyone hear me?

24 UNIDENTIFIED: Yeah.

25 MS. STRENGTH: I'm Stephanie Strength.

1 I'm with the USDA, Department of Agriculture, Rural  
2 Utilities Service. I am an environmental protection  
3 specialist. I am out of Washington, D.C.

4 We're involved in this project because  
5 the borrower, Minnkota in this case, has approached  
6 our agency for possible financing for their portion  
7 of the transmission line. When that happens, it's  
8 considered what we call a federal action and we have  
9 to look at the impacts to the environment, to  
10 people, and all those -- basically the 21 factors  
11 that Suzanne went over earlier.

12 For this project, because of the state,  
13 the role they're doing with the preparation of the  
14 environmental impact statement, we are preparing the  
15 document jointly. So rather than reviewing two  
16 documents that large and commenting in two sets of  
17 meetings, we're putting it all together and doing  
18 one.

19 We have three what we'll call agencies,  
20 one is actually the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, and  
21 then the Corps of Engineers and Forest  
22 Service - Chippewa National Forest, who are  
23 operating in this EIS as a cooperating agency.  
24 Meaning, they're doing the review of the document,  
25 they're having input into the document, review all

1 the comments received to make sure that we meet  
2 their needs as well. Each of those agencies has a  
3 permit that they have to issue if the transmission  
4 line were to be allowed and constructed.

5 So, let's see, as I went through,  
6 Minnkota Power Cooperative has come to our agency  
7 for possible financing. We do not make any decision  
8 on financing until we've assessed the impacts,  
9 that's the very first thing. There're some  
10 different regulations that play into how an EIS is  
11 developed, and then it goes to the cooperating  
12 agencies.

13 Go to the next screen.

14 Okay. So the comments that are received,  
15 as she mentioned, by April 26th, what they basically  
16 do is they go into -- we've put out a draft of what  
17 we think the impacts are, it's the draft  
18 environmental impact statement. We receive  
19 comments, that lets us know other information that  
20 we might need to add, some other areas we might to  
21 look at to help us determine which of these routes  
22 might be the preferred or the best or the one that  
23 would go forward. So all those comments will feed  
24 into what then comes out in the final environmental  
25 impact statement.

1 After that stage, there's a public  
2 comment period, but the state and the federal  
3 process differ a little bit. At that point, rather  
4 than a hearing process, the federal agencies have to  
5 establish what's called a record of decision. So  
6 that would be in the newspapers where you saw the  
7 notices for this meeting, it will also be in the  
8 Federal Register.

9 And that record of decision will  
10 basically say, for each agency, what our decision is  
11 on the permit, where it will be located, what sort  
12 of conditions we would want for like the  
13 construction or where it's located and things like  
14 that. So your input in the meeting is important so  
15 that we make the best decision possible.

16 One other comment on this is that in  
17 addition to NEPA, which really gets at the 21  
18 factors that Suzanne went through, we have another  
19 requirement through Section 106, which is getting at  
20 cultural resources. So any comments that we receive  
21 or that Suzanne receives will be shared with all of  
22 the agencies and will help us in satisfying our  
23 requirements and making our decision on the cultural  
24 impacts of the project as well through Section 106.

25 I think that's about it. So we also have

## Commenter 1 – Richard Ludtke

15

1 a website that has this document listed on it. It  
2 has my contact information. There are all the  
3 notices, there are all the preliminary documents,  
4 all of that stuff.

5 Suzanne also has that in even more detail  
6 on their agency's website, so you can go here as  
7 well if you want to see directly what's posted on  
8 the agency website. And if you do want to comment  
9 directly to the federal agency, especially Section  
10 106, the cultural resources, that becomes a little  
11 bit more important that we give you that option.  
12 But we will be sharing comments through all the  
13 agencies, whether it's state or federal.

14 And so my contact information is on those  
15 handouts that were at the entrance if you want that  
16 in addition to Suzanne's.

17 And then I'll hand it over to you and  
18 we'll start the comment period. Thank you.

19 MS. STEINHAUER: The first person I have  
20 is Richard Ludtke. If you could please come to the  
21 front and spell your name so that the reporter has  
22 an accurate record. Thank you.

23 MR. LUDTKE: Should I use the mic?

24 MS. STEINHAUER: Yes.

25 MR. LUDTKE: Like that (indicating)?

## Responses

**Commenter 1 – Richard Ludtke**

16

1 MS. STEINHAUER: Yes. You can stand -- I  
2 do want the reporter to be able to see you, also.

3 MR. LUDTKE: My name is Richard Ludtke.  
4 Richard, R-I-C-H-A-R-D, Ludtke, L-U-D-T-K-E. And I  
5 was going to compliment you on creating a cure for  
6 insomnia. The report is very long and very  
7 detailed, and as a result, my comments make me  
8 nervous that I probably missed something as I was  
9 trying to read the report.

10 But I have both comments and questions,  
11 and maybe they merge together. The first  
12 question -- or first issue I have is on whether or  
13 not there would be a Cass Lake Substation. A  
14 substation was noted as being missing or absent  
15 under Route 3 and present in Route 1 and 2.

16 But then on table 2.4, the table shows a  
17 2.2-acre substation expansion under Route 3. That  
18 seems to be in contradiction to part of the balance  
19 of the report. I think that's a critical issue,  
20 because my interpretation is that the absence of a  
21 substance puts a cap on power available for economic  
22 development in the Cass Lake area.

23 The second issue I would like to raise is  
1-2 24 the issue of the carbon footprint, and this may be,  
25 again, in the report. The 113-miler, the long route

**Responses**

**Comment 1-1**

Tables ES-1 and 2-1 have been edited to correct the noted error. A Cass Lake substation expansion would not be required if Route Alternative 3 were selected.

**Comment 1-2**

A discussion of carbon footprints and the Project's potential impact on climate change appears in Section 3.2.2.2 of the EIS. Text in this Section has been supplemented with information on the reduction of annual emissions with the Project relative to the currently operating transmission system.

**Commenter 1 – Richard Ludtke**

**Responses**

1-2  
(cont.)

17  
1 to the north, results in a significant energy loss  
2 in transmission. I would like to know how that  
3 impacts the carbon footprint over time for the  
4 project. I didn't see that in the report and, to  
5 me, that is a significant element.

1-3

6 Route 3 also has a large proportion of  
7 poorly drained soils or wetlands. And not being an  
8 expert in this, I was at a loss to interpret how  
9 that should be interpreted or translated into  
10 difficulty for the project or permanent impact on  
11 the environment. I would like to see that  
12 clarified, if possible, in the report.

1-4

13 And lastly, on the population and  
14 residential densities, there was an argument made  
15 that the residential densities in the northern route  
16 were lesser. And in looking for the data on that, I  
17 ended up in the maps that were in the appendices.  
18 The maps use a yellow dot in the legend to signify a  
19 residence. And the central corridors going --  
20 paralleling Highway 2 had tons of yellow dots, but  
21 there were no yellow dots in the northern route,  
22 where I know there are residences because they're  
23 ours. So I would like to see that examined. I was  
24 worried that that may have overstated the  
25 difference.

**Comment 1-3**

A discussion of the potential impacts of the Project on saturated soils appears in Section 3.3.2.2, paragraph 3, of the EIS. Potential mitigation measures to reduce impacts on saturated soils are included in Section 3.3.3 of the EIS.

**Comment 1-4**

The maps displayed in Appendix D of the EIS have been modified to represent the homes located along Route Alternative 3.

## Commenter 2 – Bob Wagner

18

1           So those are the comments that I have at  
2           this time.

3           MS. STEINHAUER: Thank you. I will note  
4           your comments. I'll have to look at the information  
5           on the substation. In all -- you're correct, in  
6           Route 3 there would not be a substation in Cass  
7           Lake, and I need to look at that table again. The  
8           Boswell Substation would be expanded, so I'm not  
9           sure what is reflected in the table.

10          But I certainly take your comments on the  
11          apparent lack of residences in Route 3, and I regret  
12          that we included that dot layer that came over from  
13          the applicants in their application. We  
14          hand-counted the homes in the northern area, we did  
15          not put dots, and that's why there are no dots on  
16          the maps that you have seen. So I certainly take  
17          that to heart. Thank you.

18          The next person is Bob Wagner.

19          MR. WAGNER: Thank you. I'll make this  
20          real quick. I'm here representing Turtle River  
21          Watershed Association. And I simply want to  
22          document that we originally submitted a statement of  
23          our -- which was unanimous approval of 50 members  
24          present at the watershed meeting to reject the  
25          northern corridor route, which in the handout I

2-1

## Responses

### Comment 2-1

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS.

**Commenter 2 – Bob Wagner; Commenter 3 – Mike Lish**

**Responses**

2-2

19

1 think was number three and I think it's numbered one  
2 out there. So I think the numbers are kind of  
3 confusing, but if I say northern corridor, you know  
4 the one I'm talking about.

5 What I want to submit here is that we've  
6 updated our original letter against the northern  
7 corridor. We've added some additional information.  
8 Particularly, information on census data from Ducks  
9 Unlimited Waterfowl, Audubon bird count, and DNR,  
10 both game and nongame, census data and how power  
11 lines and support structures kill migrating  
12 waterfowl, spring and fall, particularly during  
13 night flights, bad weather. The northern route,  
14 which is double the length, would have double the  
15 kill, and other information.

16 So, give this to you or give it to her?  
17 MS. STEINHAUER: I can take that.  
18 MR. WAGNER: There you are.  
19 MS. STEINHAUER: Thank you.

20 The next person who's preregistered is  
21 Mike Lish.

22 MR. LISH: Okay. My name is Mike Lish,  
23 that's M-I-K-E, L-I-S-H. And my main concern is, I  
24 guess I don't understand why -- Mr. Wagner is not  
25 going to like this, but anyway, why they don't take

3-1

**Comment 2-2**

Text in Section 3.7.2.3 has been supplemented with information on the potential impact of Route Alternative 3 on fauna compared with Route Alternatives 1 and 2. A description of biological resources and species of concern identified for Route Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 appears in Sections 3.7 and 3.8 of the EIS.

**Comment 3-1**

The Applicants evaluated alternative locations for Route Alternative 3 prior to developing the route described in the EIS. During the evaluation it was determined that extending Route Alternative 3 east from the Wilton Substation to Highway 71 would require siting the Project through a high density residential development. Extending Route Alternative 3 north of Bemidji along Highway 71 would require siting the Project through additional residential and commercial developments, which are located north of Bemidji and near Turtle River, Ten Strike, and Blackduck. In addition, the Bemidji Airport is located in proximity to Highway 71 and may have been affected by a potential Route Alternative along the highway.

**Commenter 3 – Mike Lish**

**Responses**

3-1  
(cont.)

3-2

20

1 the trunk highway north on 71 and go around that  
2 loop rather than going south through where the more  
3 populated areas are?

4 And another item I have a question about  
5 is, on that last mailing I had received from you  
6 people, you showed some deviations from Route 1 and  
7 you talked about going along by the Enbridge  
8 pipeline up at Division Street, which is just west  
9 of Bemidji, and then going back onto the regular  
10 route again.

11 And I guess if you was to go that way,  
12 why don't you just go along the highway bypass? If  
13 you have problems with the lines, they're easy to  
14 get to. And also, along that southern route,  
15 there's a lot of homes there, and I'm not -- not a  
16 happy camper.

17 MS. STEINHAUER: Thank you.

18 The next person I have is Diane Plath or  
19 Plate (phonetic).

20 MS. PLATH: I did not have the  
21 understanding that things could be submitted via  
22 e-mail or whatever, and I have some e-mail comments  
23 from concerned individuals and my own statement, so  
24 I will submit those --

25 MS. STEINHAUER: Okay. Thank you.

**Comment 3-2**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS.

## Commenter 4 – Benita Dingman

21

1 MS. PLATH: -- otherwise.

2 MS. STEINHAUER: Thank you.

3 Those are the only people that have  
4 preregistered to speak, but I want to open it up  
5 now. And if you'd like to speak, if you could raise  
6 your hand and we'll just make sure that everybody  
7 has an opportunity to do that.

8 I just want you to know we are meeting  
9 again tonight. There are also meetings tomorrow and  
10 Thursday, and the written comments can be submitted  
11 in writing by mail, by fax, or by e-mail until  
12 April 26th. So I encourage comments now, but if you  
13 can't think of something or if you want to take some  
14 time, there remains plenty of opportunity.

15 Well, gosh, I want to be respectful of  
16 people's time, but I want to leave the option open  
17 for people to comment. We will be around later,  
18 both Stephanie and I, and also representatives from  
19 the applicant to answer question. But I want to  
20 make sure people feel like they have an opportunity.

21 MS. DINGMAN: I have a question. You  
22 mentioned there's going to be public hearings, are  
23 we going to be getting notification in the mail or  
24 do we have to read the paper? How do we find out  
25 about this public hearing?

4-1

## Responses

### Comment 4-1

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment.

Commenter 4 – Benita Dingman; Commenter 5 – Jay Johnson

Responses

1 MS. STEINHAEUER: If you could identify  
2 yourself, please.

3 MS. DINGMAN: My name is Benita Dingman.

4 MS. STEINHAEUER: And the question was to  
5 the public hearings. Yes, you will be getting a  
6 notice in the mail and they will also be published  
7 in the local papers, and those will be the 21st  
8 through 23rd. I don't know the locations yet, but  
9 when we figure those out we'll notify people.

10 I want to clarify, we will -- the state  
11 will notify people who have registered on the  
12 project mailing list maintained by the state. So if  
13 you received a -- I believe the applicants sent out  
14 a notice of these meetings with a cover letter. If  
15 you received that notice in addition without a cover  
16 letter, then you are on the project mailing list.  
17 You can also indicate that on the sign-in sheets and  
18 we'll make sure that you're updated.

19 But to answer your question, yes, you  
20 will receive direct mail notice if you're on the  
21 project comment list and there will be notice in the  
22 paper.

23 Yes.

24 MR. JOHNSON: Jay Johnson. You answered  
25 this question out in the lobby there, kind of, but

**Commenter 5- Jay Johnson; Commenter 6 – Richard Ludtke**

**Responses**

5-1

23

1 when will people know if they're going to have a  
2 tower within sight of their house or close by, when  
3 will they have time to object to that if they think  
4 it's too close, or how?  
5 MS. STEINHAUER: I can answer that  
6 question in two parts. First of all, there is no  
7 preferred route now. Once the Commission selects a  
8 route, then the applicants will start to work with  
9 landowners to determine -- in some -- based on the  
10 comments that we receive here, and perhaps even more  
11 specifically in the contested case comment -- in the  
12 contested case hearing, we will develop a permit.  
13 In some areas, that permit may be very  
14 specific about where the route can go and the width  
15 of the route. In some areas, it may provide more  
16 latitude. In any case, once the Commission permits  
17 a route, the utilities will contact those landowners  
18 and start working with them on the placement of the  
19 route, including the placement of the poles.  
20 Yes.  
21 MR. LUDTKE: I apologize for being quiet,  
22 Richard Ludtke. Could you explain the Buy the Farm  
23 law that was referred to in this?  
24 MS. STEINHAUER: The question was about  
25 the Buy the Farm law. There are two things. First

6-1

**Comment 5-1**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment. A discussion of the easement acquisition process appears in Section 2.4.3 of the EIS.

**Comment 6-1**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment. A discussion of the acquisition process and "Buy the Farm" provision appears in Sections 2.4.3, 3.11.2, and 3.11.3.6 of the EIS.

**Commenter 7 – Jim Haack**

24

1 of all, whatever route the Commission permits, the  
2 utilities then have the right of eminent domain. By  
3 determining the route, the Commission has determined  
4 that the project is in the public interest.

5 Eminent domain doesn't mean that they can  
6 just show up and start digging holes and put the  
7 pole in your property. They will begin to negotiate  
8 with landowners. If you -- if the landowner and the  
9 utility are unable to reach an agreement about the  
10 conditions of the easement, then the utility can  
11 seek to condemn your property, which means it goes  
12 to adjudication as to the compensation that you  
13 receive for the easement. The easement is a  
14 right-of-way, easement and right-of-way I think are  
15 used interchangeably, that needs to be maintained clear  
16 for the transmission line.

17 For transmission lines over 200 kilovolts  
18 in Minnesota, there's a statute referred to as Buy  
19 the Farm. And that means that if your property is  
20 along the route selected you can request the utility  
21 not to buy an easement, but buy the property  
22 outright. So that is an option available to  
23 landowners.

24 Yes.

25 MR. HAACK: Does that just include the

7-1

**Responses**

**Comment 7-1**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment. A discussion of the acquisition process and "Buy the Farm" provision appears in Sections 2.4.3, 3.11.2, and 3.11.3.6 of the EIS.

**Commenter 7 – Jim Haack; Commenter 8 – Barbara Bohn**

**Responses**

7-1  
(cont.)

25

1 right-of-way or the total piece of property?  
2 MS. STEINHAUER: I'm sorry. Can you  
3 please identify yourself so the reporter has a  
4 record.  
5 MR. HAACK: Jim Haack, H-A-A-C-K.  
6 MS. STEINHAUER: That is for the entire  
7 parcel.  
8 MR. HAACK: So they would have yo buy --  
9 MS. STEINHAUER: The Buy the Farm  
10 provision is for the entire parcel, which may be  
11 land, it may include structures.  
12 Yes.  
13 MS. BOHN: Barbara Bohn, B-A-R-B-A-R-A,  
14 B-O-H-N.  
15 The comments that are given today or the  
16 ones that have been written, are they available for  
17 us to read online?  
18 MS. STEINHAUER: Yes. They will be  
19 available. I think that probably what we'll do is  
20 consolidate them and organize them, that's what we  
21 have done for the scoping comments so that people  
22 can find them and make sure that their comments are  
23 included.  
24 MS. BOHN: Okay. Which website do we  
25 look at to do that?

8-1

**Comment 8-1**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment.

**Commenter 9 – Carol Winans**

1 MS. STEINHAUER: I would look at the OES  
2 website, which is on the longer handout, the  
3 multi-page handout.  
4 MS. BOHN: Okay. Thank you.  
5 MS. STEINHAUER: Yes.  
6 MS. WINANS: My name is Carol Winans, and  
7 it's W-I-N-A-N, S as in Sam.  
8 And the questions I have is, I was under  
9 the impression, there was something in the Pioneer  
10 that the Otter Tail Power notified the people in the  
11 area that they were opting out of this, and this is  
12 information -- or this is electric power coming  
13 from -- or needed in South Dakota.  
14 And why it coming all the way across  
15 where it's coming? I don't quite understand, if  
16 it's needed in South Dakota, why you're using it  
17 coming -- I mean, couldn't you do something else,  
18 couldn't there be a better way to provide this  
19 electricity without doing the power in this huge  
20 line?  
21 MS. STEINHAUER: I can't comment on the  
22 article that was in the Pioneer, I have not seen it.  
23 There's no generation associated with this project.  
24 The project that the Commission determined the need  
25 on was based on reliability for the project area.

9-1

**Responses**

**Comment 9-1**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment. A discussion of the purpose and need for the Project appears in Section 1.1 of the EIS.

**Commenter 10 – Jack Frost**

**Responses**

1           So there's no -- with some transmission,  
2           it's associated with new generation. That's not the  
3           case for this project. And I can't comment, I  
4           haven't seen the article in the Pioneer, but that's  
5           not part of this project.

6           Yes.

7           MR. FROST: I'm Jack Frost, F-R-O-S-T.  
8           Beltrami County Commissioner. I was on the scoping  
9           initiative in 2008, a past board member of Beltrami  
10          Electric. And in representing the board, we of  
11          course would like the least invasive routing and  
12          alignment. And it seems to make sense if it can  
13          incorporate an existing right-of-way already, that  
14          that would seemingly make sense.

15          I know that there can be specific causes,  
16          but overall, and since 2008, I've got a lot of  
17          respect and admiration for all the agencies and the  
18          oversight that has been given to this initiative.  
19          Obviously, we need more and more power and we depend  
20          so much on electricity and it's very important to  
21          our way of life.

22          And I have, again, a lot of good faith  
23          that we will get those good outcomes and do the  
24          right thing and provide the least invasive means of  
25          providing power to our constituents out here.

**Comment 10-1**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS.

10-1

**Commenter 10 – Jack Frost; Commenter 11 – Dave West**

**Responses**

28

1                   And I appreciate this opportunity that  
2                   people can come and voice their opinions and  
3                   concerns and have an open forum. And there will be  
4                   a public hearing coming up after afterwards. And I  
5                   think sometimes you get involved in all the process  
6                   and all the introspection in looking at and  
7                   measuring outcomes and what impacts could be, but I  
8                   really think that that is well thought out and well  
9                   provided for. I applaud you in your efforts.

10                   MS. STEINHAUER: Thank you.

11                   Yes.

12                   MR. WEST: Dave West, W-E-S-T. When you  
13                   were answering that gentleman's questions in the  
14                   front row there (indicating), it sounded -- unless I  
15                   misunderstood your answer, it sounded like you were  
16                   saying that you would approve the applicants' route  
17                   without them being specific as to exactly where  
18                   their tower is going. Is that correct?

19                   MS. STEINHAUER: That is correct, for the  
20                   most part.

21                   MR. WEST: Correct. So the applicant  
22                   doesn't have to tell you or us exactly where this  
23                   route is and we won't know until they start digging;  
24                   is that correct?

25                   MS. STEINHAUER: For the most part, I

**Comment 11-1**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment.

11-1

Commenter 11 – Dave West; Commenter 12 – Jim Haack

Responses

1 would expect that the route will not identify  
2 individual tower locations.  
3 MR. WEST: So we won't know until they  
4 start digging where they're going?  
5 MS. STEINHAUER: The applicant -- when  
6 you are negotiating an easement with them, you  
7 should ask them where the towers will be.  
8 MR. WEST: Okay. So maybe it's not on  
9 your property -- it's not on your property, but just  
10 outside your boundary line, the answer to my  
11 question from you, then, is that we don't know where  
12 it's going?  
13 MS. STEINHAUER: I don't know where the  
14 individual towers are going, that is correct.  
15 MR. WEST: Okay.  
16 MS. STEINHAUER: I want to provide  
17 another opportunity --  
18 Yes.  
19 MR. HAACK: This is Jim Haack, again.  
20 The existing right-of-way, is there a reason they  
21 can't use the existing right-of-way along the  
22 pipeline for the power?  
23 MS. STEINHAUER: Transmission and  
24 pipeline right-of-way cannot -- you can't build --  
25 the direct answer to your question is you can't

12-1

**Comment 12-1**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment.

## Commenter 12 – Jim Haack

## Responses

30

1 build a transmission line directly over the pipeline  
2 right-of-way. Both of them require a cleared area  
3 for safety. There may be some opportunity to  
4 slightly overlap along the edges, but that is  
5 correct.

6 MR. HAACK: Well, does that transmission  
7 line affect the pipeline at all as far as any, you  
8 know, electrical-type deals?

9 MS. STEINHAUER: There is opportunities  
10 for interference, and we did review that in the  
11 utilities section of the environmental impact  
12 statement. So there's more detail included on that.

13 MR. HAACK: So just to complete that,  
14 then, there is -- the power lines will have an  
15 effect on the pipeline, you know, as far as power  
16 and EMF and all that good stuff, is that what you're  
17 saying?

18 MS. STEINHAUER: There is a reason why  
19 the power line cannot be constructed directly over  
20 the pipeline.

21 MR. HAACK: And is that the same  
22 reason -- might be why there's a limitation for a  
23 distance between the power line and houses?

24 MS. STEINHAUER: The distance between the  
25 transmission line and houses, there are different

**Commenter 12 – Jim Haack**

12-2

1 effects. The pipeline is metal and has to be  
2 grounded, and there is a distance requirement  
3 between pipelines and houses, and that's part of  
4 what the right-of-way is designed to accomplish.  
5 MR. HAACK: But you're saying that it  
6 affects the -- therefore, there is a distance --  
7 minimum distance from existing structures or  
8 existing houses that you will have to run the line?  
9 MS. STEINHAUER: There can be no  
10 structures within the right-of-way.  
11 MR. HAACK: Well, what about in close  
12 proximity?  
13 MS. STEINHAUER: There can't be any  
14 structures within the right-of-way, what is -- there  
15 can be structures outside of the right-of-way.  
16 MR. HAACK: But that property owner  
17 doesn't have any say as to if the right-of-way goes  
18 within certain distances of his dwelling?  
19 MS. STEINHAUER: The state maintains a  
20 safe -- the state maintains a safe distance and  
21 there are industry standards, and that's part of  
22 what the right-of-way is designed to accomplish.  
23 Beyond that, there is -- that would be a negotiation  
24 between the property owner and the utility.  
25 MR. HAACK: So we don't know what the

**Responses**

**Comment 12-2**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment. A discussion of safety and health appears in Section 3.20 of the EIS. The intent of a ROW is to allow for operation and maintenance of a transmission line in a way that ensures the safety of residents, transmission line maintenance personnel, and other members of the public. ROW width varies by the type of transmission structure and the surrounding environment. The Applicants have requested a ROW of 125 feet, or 62.5 feet on either side of the centerline using the H-frame structures they propose. In some areas, single-pole structures with ROW of approximately 75 feet, or 37.5 feet on either side of the centerline, could be used. No building structures would be allowed within the ROW.

Commenter 12 – Jim Haack; Commenter 13 – Barbara Anderson

Responses

1 distance is between the house or the dwelling and  
2 the high voltage line, the minimum distance?  
3 MS. STEINHAUER: I will be clear, the  
4 minimum distance is the edge of the right-of-way. I  
5 cannot tell you what the distance would be between  
6 the transmission line and your home.  
7 MR. HAACK: That's my point. Thank you.  
8 MS. STEINHAUER: I want to -- yes.  
9 MS. ANDERSON: Barbara Anderson, S-O-N.  
10 First of all, you might want to change  
11 your minutes there where she was talking in the  
12 beginning about the next hearing, she said  
13 October 21st to 23rd, she meant April.  
14 When we made the comments during the  
15 scoping period, which for some of us was very much  
16 in length and depth, will that be incorporated at  
17 this point, or do we have to do all of that all over  
18 again to get it into the EIS?  
19 MS. STEINHAUER: The question is the  
20 comments that were received during scoping, are they  
21 incorporated in the EIS? They are not incorporated  
22 individually. There is a table in the back where we  
23 tried to summarize the comments, and that is the --  
24 and where we think that we address them.  
25 So that's how they're incorporated in the

13-1

Comment 13-1

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment.

**Commenter 13 – Barbara Anderson**

**Responses**

1 draft EIS. The comments are part of the state's  
2 record and also part of the federal record. But  
3 they're addressed -- they're not included as an  
4 appendix specifically in the draft EIS.

13-1  
(cont.)

5 MS. ANDERSON: Do we then have to repeat  
6 them at this point to have them be a part of the  
7 record, is what I'm saying, if they were sent in in  
8 2008? You mentioned that comments needed to be in  
9 by April 26th, do we have to repeat those that were  
10 sent in during the scoping period?

11 MS. STEINHAUER: Well, I think what I  
12 would respond to that is we've received the scoping  
13 comments and we tried to address them in the  
14 information contained in the draft environmental  
15 impact statement.

16 If you don't believe that that  
17 information addresses your comments, then yes, you  
18 should submit them -- your comments and what you  
19 believe needs to be included in the final  
20 environmental impact statement.

13-2

21 MS. ANDERSON: I have one other question,  
22 what is the Minnesota law for -- is it just the  
23 75 feet, then, that is considered safe for humans?  
24 I mean, if you give it 125 and you're at one side or  
25 the other of the easement, what -- each state is

**Comment 13-2**

A discussion of state and international standards for EMF exposure appears in Section 3.20.1.1 of the EIS. Ms. Steinhauer's response below should be corrected to state that Minnesota has an 8 kV/m standard for electric fields, but no standard for magnetic fields.

**Commenter 13 – Barbara Anderson;  
Commenter 14 – Cameron Clemens**

**Responses**

13-2  
(cont.)

34

1 different. I can show you where California wants  
2 you 300 meters, somebody else is different, other  
3 countries are different, what is the Minnesota  
4 requirement?  
5 MS. STEINHAUER: Minnesota has a minimum  
6 requirement for magnetic fields, and that's eight  
7 gauss per meter. Minnesota does not have a standard  
8 for electric fields. I would direct your attention  
9 then to, I believe it's section 3.20, which is  
10 public health and safety effects, and that's where  
11 we include information and our assessment on the  
12 information available on electromagnetic fields and  
13 potential health effects.  
14 Yes.  
15 MR. CLEMENS: My name is Cameron Clemens.  
16 The last name is C-L-E-M-E-N-S. I live in an area  
17 which is on the northern route. And I'm looking at  
18 the map and I'm wondering, is there a cost --  
19 substantial cost differential that would be needed  
20 to put the line up to Blackduck and over east from  
21 there as compared to the other two lines which kind  
22 of follow the Highway 2 corridor?  
23 MS. STEINHAUER: Thank you for your  
24 comment. To answer your question, yes, there is a  
25 cost difference. The costs are -- it's, I believe,

14-1

**Comment 14-1**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer and Mr. Poremba that appears directly below the comment.

## Responses

35

1 in the table in the executive summary. It's also in  
2 either Chapter 1 or 2, I can't recall the exact  
3 table.

4 But there a number of factors that go  
5 into the cost, and obviously length is one of them.  
6 So I can't tell you the exact cost -- the cost  
7 differential between the routes, but there is a  
8 differential and the northern route is more  
9 expensive as far as capital cost.

10 MR. POREMBA: Suzanne, do you want me to  
11 give them? I've got the table.

12 MS. STEINHAUER: Sure.

13 MR. POREMBA: The cost for --

14 MS. STEINHAUER: Could you identify  
15 yourself?

16 MR. POREMBA: Yeah. So this is on the  
17 executive summary table, number one, the cost for  
18 Route 1, which is the southernmost, is roughly \$63  
19 to \$65 million. The cost for Route 2 is roughly 66  
20 million -- I'm rounding these off -- and the cost  
21 for Route 3 is about 99 million.

22 UNIDENTIFIED: 99?

23 MR. POREMBA: Yeah.

24 MS. STEINHAUER: Could you identify  
25 yourself again?

**Commenter 15 – Jane Johnson; Commenter 5 – Jay Johnson  
(continued from earlier)**

**Responses**

15-1

36

1 MS. JOHNSON: Jane Johnson, S-O-N. This  
2 question may be for Stephanie. I'm just curious as  
3 to why there are so many different regulations for  
4 different states concerning environmental impact?  
5 MS. STRENGTH: I would say in part  
6 because it's decided at the state level, there's not  
7 a national standard. So each state can have their  
8 own political process for deciding things like that.  
9 What we look to is what is the industry  
10 standard, what has been put out there as far as  
11 what's required for safety. And there are different  
12 requirements through the electric industry that are  
13 published on that, and some of that information is  
14 in the DEIS. But as far as the states, they can  
15 make their own decision, so some might be more  
16 inclusive than others.  
17 MS. STEINHAUER: Yes.  
18 MR. JOHNSON: It's Jay Johnson again. Is  
19 it not true that alternating current does not have  
20 an electromagnetic field around it, or am I wrong  
21 about that?  
22 MS. STEINHAUER: Alternating current does  
23 have an electromagnetic field.  
24 MR. JOHNSON: Oh, it does.  
25 MS. STEINHAUER: Comments? Going once --

5-2

**Comment 15-1**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Strength that appears directly below the comment.

**Comment 5-2 (continued from Commenter 5 earlier)**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment.

**Commenter 16 – Tom Leif; 17 – Barbara Anderson**

**Responses**

16-1

37

1           yes.

2                       MR. LEIF: Tom Leif. Based on the

3 colored routes up there, where do we find

4 specifically what properties are affected?

5                       MS. STEINHAUER: There are more detailed

6 route maps in the --

7                       MR. LEIF: I can see the yellow dots and

8 I've gone to the computer and looked at the yellow

9 dots. And it's from a distance and they blend in.

10 But I'm interested in specifically the properties

11 that are affected.

12                       MS. STEINHAUER: I would refer you to the

13 utilities. They have that information, we do not

14 have individual property information. And the

15 answer is, we don't know what properties are

16 ultimately affected until there's a route decision.

17 I want to be truthful about that.

18                       Ms. Plath.

19                       MS. PLATH: It's been answered. Thank

20 you.

21                       MS. STEINHAUER: Yes.

22                       MS. ANDERSON: I simply wanted to say

23 something in comment to what he said. Cindy Kuismi

24 with Otter Tail Power has been very helpful in

25 either e-mailing or sending very site-specific

17-1

**Comment 16-1**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment.

**Comment 17-1**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS.

**Commenter 17 – Barbara Anderson**

**Responses**

17-1  
(cont.)

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enlargements of any portion of these routes to us and to other people. If you were to contact Otter Tail, she's their information officer. There are plenty of dots and you can even see the house, the trees, everything.

MS. STEINHAUER: I don't see any more hands. I'm going to say going once, going twice, going three times.

Thank you very much for your time and your interest in the project. And we'll be available later and try to answer questions. Thank you very much.

(Public comment concluded.)

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PUBLIC COMMENTS

TUESDAY, MARCH 16, 2010  
6:00 p.m.

In the Matter of the Application for a Route Permit for  
the Bemidji-Grand Rapids 230 kV Transmission Project

PUC Docket Number: E017, E015, ET6/TL-07-1327

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I N D E X

SPEAKER	PAGE
Stephanie Strength	13
Jerry Solheim	18
Keith Pommprening	19
Lester Hiltz	22
Doug Bjerke	23
John Robinson	24
Peter Guggenheimer	25
Scott Dingman	26
Gabriel Wakonabo	28
Frederick Petrowske	30

1 MS. STEINHAUER: Thank you for coming out  
2 this evening. This is the public information and  
3 public comment meeting for the proposed  
4 Bemidji-Grand Rapids 230 kV transmission line, and  
5 the purpose of this meeting is to take comments on  
6 the draft EIS.

7 My name is Suzanne Steinhauer. I'm with  
8 the Minnesota Office of Energy Security. We're the  
9 lead federal -- I'm sorry, the lead state permitting  
10 agency for the project and the lead on the  
11 environmental impact statement.

12 Also here tonight is Stephanie Strength.  
13 She's with the USDA Rural Utilities Service, and  
14 they're the lead among several federal agencies that  
15 have prepared the EIS.

16 I also have Jamie MacAlister, who you may  
17 have met at the sign-in table. She's also from OES  
18 and able to help people with some of the public  
19 participation aspects. There are a couple folks  
20 here from the forest service, Cathy Thompson and --

21 MS. BROWN: Christine Brown.

22 MS. STEINHAUER: Christine Brown, thank  
23 you. Also with me tonight are Greg Poremba and  
24 Meghan Sweeny from ERM. ERM is the consulting firm  
25 that we've worked with to prepare the EIS.

1 My role in the project is to develop a  
2 record for the Minnesota decision process. The  
3 decision maker is -- in Minnesota for transmission  
4 lines of this size is the Minnesota Public Utilities  
5 Commission. My role is to develop a record for them  
6 to make a decision.

7 And, I'm sorry, we have also -- Christine  
8 is here to record the comments in the meeting. And  
9 we'll ask people to come up and to use the  
10 microphone, if they can, to speak slowly so that she  
11 can have an accurate record of the comments here  
12 tonight.

13 The purpose of the meeting tonight is to  
14 provide an opportunity for the public to ask  
15 questions and provide comments on the completeness  
16 and accuracy of the draft environmental impact  
17 statement prepared for the project.

18 I realize that most of you are here  
19 because you have a preferred place that you'd like  
20 to see the route go, and we'll take those comments.  
21 I do want to let you know, we'll get into this a  
22 little bit later, there will also be another set of  
23 public meetings in late April, April 21st through  
24 23rd, that will be in the project area. I don't  
25 have the actual locations, but it will be in

1 locations similar to this set of meetings.

2 That is -- in the Minnesota process, it's  
3 a contested case hearing that will be presided over  
4 by a judge, by an administrative law judge. And  
5 that also is the venue where the applicants will  
6 advocate for their preferred route. Any member of  
7 the public and, I expect, some agencies will also  
8 advocate for a route. So we'll take your comments  
9 tonight. To the extent that we can address them in  
10 the final EIS, we will do so.

11 The proposed project is, depending on the  
12 route selected, between 68 and 113 miles. It begins  
13 at the Wilton Substation, which is located a little  
14 bit west of here, and ends at the Boswell Substation  
15 in Cohasset. Depending on the route selected, the  
16 route may include either an expansion of the  
17 existing Cass Lake Substation or a new Cass Lake  
18 substation. Also, a Nary breaker station, which for  
19 purposes of -- for your and my purposes is similar  
20 to a substation, near Nary.

21 As I mentioned before, in Minnesota there  
22 is one route permit, and that's issued by the Public  
23 Utilities Commission. No person, no entity can  
24 construct a transmission line of more than  
25 100 kilovolts without a permit from the Public

1 Utilities Commission. The Commission will determine  
2 the route, where the actual route will go, and any  
3 conditions that should be included in the permit.

4 The rules for the administration of the  
5 Power Plant Siting Act are found in Minnesota Rules  
6 7850. I do want to make clear, the Commission  
7 has -- when they make their decision, they balance a  
8 number of factors, but they have to make their  
9 decision based on the record.

10 As I said earlier, my role is to  
11 develop -- to begin developing a record for the  
12 Commission to make their decision on, and the record  
13 will be further developed in greater detail in the  
14 contested case hearings in April.

15 Yeah.

16 MR. POREMBA: Just keep going?

17 MS. STEINHAUER: Yes, sorry. This is  
18 sort of a process flow diagram. The applicants,  
19 Minnkota Power, Otter Tail Power, and Minnesota  
20 Power, submitted a route permit application for a  
21 transmission line route in June of 2008. I saw a  
22 number of you here in the summer of the 2008, about  
23 15 months ago. And we held scoping meetings. The  
24 purpose of those scoping meetings was to receive  
25 comments from the members of the public and also

1 from agencies to determine which routes will be  
2 evaluated in the EIS and what impacts need to be  
3 evaluated also in the EIS.

4 Based on the comments that we received  
5 through the scoping comment period, agency review of  
6 the proposed routes, and also the recommendations of  
7 an advisory task force, the OES issued a scoping  
8 decision in March of 2009. We spent, essentially,  
9 the last year developing the draft environmental  
10 impact statement. It's the large three-volume set  
11 of binders that's out there. There are also copies  
12 available -- hard copies available in public  
13 libraries. It's available on our website. We can  
14 go through that contact information, and we have a  
15 limited number of CDs here if anybody's interested  
16 in taking.

17 And so that brings us to the EIS public  
18 meetings that are held here. The purpose, as I  
19 iterated before, is to receive comments on the  
20 information, specifically the accuracy and  
21 completeness of the information included in the  
22 draft environmental impact statement.

23 The green box, then, to the left, as I  
24 mentioned earlier, is the contested case hearing.  
25 That takes the information that's in the draft EIS

1 and develops that further and -- to build a record  
2 for the Commission to make their final decision on.

3 The comment period for the draft  
4 environmental impact statement closes on April 26th.  
5 We're taking oral comments here tonight. There's  
6 also -- you can provide us with written comments, we  
7 can take them here. There are comment sheets  
8 available at the sign-in table. I encourage you to  
9 take them, not because your comments need to fit on  
10 this sheet, but because it does provide the contact  
11 information and you may want to give some to your  
12 neighbors.

13 The comments received before the close of  
14 comments will be addressed in the final  
15 environmental impact statement, and then subsequent  
16 to that, the -- again, for the state process -- the  
17 federal process, and Stephanie will get into this,  
18 is a little bit different.

19 The judge will take all the comments  
20 received in the draft EIS -- will take the final  
21 EIS, which includes comments on the draft, will take  
22 comments and testimony received in the contested  
23 case hearings, and will make --

24 You can go up, I think, to the next one.

25 Will make a recommendation to the Public

1 Utilities Commission. The Commission is not bound  
2 to follow that recommendation, but it will -- the  
3 judge does a good job. He will take it very  
4 seriously and the Commission will take the  
5 recommendation very seriously. And that feeds into  
6 the Commission's route permit decision.

7 I think we can roll through to the next  
8 one.

9 This just reiterates the milestones. The  
10 application was filed in June of '08 and the  
11 Commission accepted it as complete in the end of  
12 June 2008. We had scoping meetings out here in the  
13 project area in the summer of 2008.

14 The EIS scoping decision was issued in  
15 March of last year. The draft EIS was issued  
16 February 23rd. We're right now in the public  
17 comment period, and the public comment period closes  
18 April 26th of this year. And then again, at the  
19 same time we're taking public comments, towards the  
20 end of that, we'll move on to the contested case  
21 hearing, and I'm happy to try to answer questions  
22 about that.

23 The draft EIS evaluated three route  
24 alternatives. They're shown, I think, in the next  
25 slide, also in the map up here. The two route

1 alternatives in generally the Highway 2 area, those  
2 are about 68 and 69 miles, and then a longer route  
3 alternative to the north, which is about 113 miles.

4 The applicants requested a route of  
5 1,000 feet. So we looked at that 1,000-foot route,  
6 within which they would locate a narrower  
7 right-of-way. The applicants have requested a  
8 125-foot wide right-of-way to be located within that  
9 route.

10 For the purposes of comparison, we looked  
11 at -- we asked the applicants to identify a  
12 right-of-way that they believe is feasible from an  
13 engineering perspective, and we looked at that to  
14 provide a comparison between the routes. That's not  
15 necessarily the route that would be permitted, but  
16 it allows us to compare the impacts in a narrower  
17 area and to, based on that, determine if there might  
18 be areas where it should deviate from what the  
19 applicants have said is a feasible route.

20 In addition to the three routes, there  
21 were 20 alternative route segments that were also  
22 evaluated. Some of them are so small they don't  
23 really show up very well on the map. Most of them  
24 are -- a number of them connect Routes 1 and 2 to  
25 allow those two routes to be moved back and forth.

1 Again, we looked at a 1,000-foot-wide route there  
2 and then a narrower feasible right-of-way.

3 The EIS also, for all of those, for the  
4 routes and alternative route segments, evaluated,  
5 looked at them through, sort of, 21 different  
6 prisms. We looked at the aesthetic impacts, air  
7 quality and climate impacts, geology and soils,  
8 water resources, floodplains, wetlands, biological  
9 resources, species of special concern -- or  
10 threatened or endangered species or communities --  
11 cultural resources, land use, socioeconomic,  
12 environmental justice, recreation and tourism,  
13 agriculture, forestry and mining, community  
14 services, utility systems, traffic and  
15 transportation, safety and health, and noise. And  
16 the Commission has to weigh all these different  
17 factors for the routes in their final route  
18 determination.

19 Hard paper copies are available for  
20 review out in the lobby. I ask that -- I would ask  
21 that you please not take them so we can carry those  
22 forward to the other meetings. There are a couple  
23 of CD copies that we can provide you with. There  
24 are also copies available in local libraries and on  
25 our website, which I think is the next slide, on the

1 RUS website. Those are noted in the handouts.  
2 Please feel free to take those.

3 Tonight, again, the focus of the meeting  
4 is to receive comments on the draft EIS. The  
5 comments during this meeting and the comment period  
6 should be focused on the content of the draft EIS.  
7 More specifically, the accuracy and the completeness  
8 of the data.

9 After Stephanie's presentation, we'll  
10 open it up for public comments. And a couple of  
11 people have preregistered, and I'll call on -- we'll  
12 call on those people first. We'll ask you to please  
13 come to the front of the room and speak slowly and  
14 spell your name so that the court reporter can get  
15 that down.

16 Please be respectful. I think that it's  
17 probably fair to say a lot of people have very  
18 strong opinions about where they would like the  
19 route to go, and they're very dear to them. I mean,  
20 it's very personal. But other people may have just  
21 as strong an opinion about something else. So  
22 please be respectful.

23 Please limit your comments to five  
24 minutes in order to allow everybody to speak. After  
25 I've gone through the people that have

1 preregistered, then we'll just take people as they  
2 raise their hand and ask them to come forward and  
3 comment.

4 There will be transcripts available.  
5 Comment sheets are also available. If you prefer  
6 not to speak or if -- even if you speak tonight, if  
7 something occurs to you later, please feel free to  
8 provide written comments. They don't have to be on  
9 this form, but it does provide the contact  
10 information. They can be sent by fax, by U.S. mail,  
11 by e-mail. And also we have an ability -- you can  
12 comment directly on our website.

13 If you can scroll down, please. One  
14 back.

15 And, again, that's on the longer slide  
16 presentation. Please take one home with you.  
17 Comments may also be submitted directly online, and  
18 I receive those as an e-mail. All of the comments  
19 are logged. And to the extent that we can respond  
20 to them, they will be -- all the comments will be  
21 included in the final EIS in the responses that we  
22 can make to them. Comments, again, are due  
23 April 26th of this year by 4:30.

24 MS. STRENGTH: Good evening. Can  
25 everyone hear me? Okay. I'm Stephanie Strength.

1 I'm with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural  
2 Utility Service. It's also part of Rural  
3 Development. We're an agency that gives financing  
4 assistance to utilities to serve rural America. We  
5 are one of the federal agencies involved in this  
6 project. Also, we are preparing this EIS with the  
7 state jointly.

8 And then, can you see the lower part of  
9 the slide presentation of this map?

10 UNIDENTIFIED: Um-hmm.

11 MS. STRENGTH: Okay. There are three  
12 what we call cooperating agencies, which are also  
13 federal entities that are developing the  
14 environmental impact statement along with RUS and  
15 OES. And that is the U.S. Forest Service - Chippewa  
16 National Forest, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and  
17 the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe.

18 Each of these agencies has a different  
19 decision that they have to make with regard to this  
20 project. Whether it's a permit to cross land,  
21 whether it's a permit to allow the conversion of  
22 wetlands, or in our case, to decide whether or not  
23 to agree to finance this project.

24 Go to the next slide, please.

25 Okay. So as I mentioned, we give

1 financing assistance. Minnkota Power Cooperative  
2 has approached us for financing assistance for their  
3 portion in this project. When that happens, that's  
4 called a federal action, which means we have to look  
5 at what the impacts would be of this project.

6 In this case, we're doing an  
7 environmental impact statement. And rather than  
8 preparing that huge document on our own and then  
9 having the state do one and having each agency do  
10 one, we're doing one jointly and together and having  
11 the meetings together so you only have to come to  
12 one set of meetings and read one document. And,  
13 again, it just lists the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe,  
14 Chippewa National Forest, and the Corps of Engineers  
15 as the cooperating agencies.

16 All of the comments, as Suzanne  
17 mentioned, that are received before April 26th will  
18 be addressed in the final environmental impact  
19 statement. After the close of that comment period  
20 and we put out the final environmental impact  
21 statement, there will be another opportunity for  
22 public comment.

23 At this point is where the state and  
24 federal processes differ. Where they go on with the  
25 hearing and the judge makes a determination, each of

1 the agencies that I mentioned will be recording  
2 their decision as far as which alternative that they  
3 would consider either permitting or, in our case,  
4 financing. And there would also be in that decision  
5 the list of what sort of conditions we might want to  
6 see as far as how it could be constructed and where.

7 All of that information would be  
8 published, not only on OES's website, but also on  
9 RUS's website, which -- go to the next slide -- is  
10 listed right here. And this is the one-page handout  
11 that was on the comment table which has everything  
12 in my slide show presentation including our agency's  
13 website where there are preliminary documents, there  
14 are the public comments received during scoping, and  
15 then the EIS would be listed, as well as, in the  
16 end, all of the record of decisions from the  
17 different agencies. And they will also be published  
18 in the newspapers where you probably, hopefully, saw  
19 the notice for this meeting tonight.

20 Can we go back to the previous slide?

21 Thank you.

22 So the EIS is prepared by federal  
23 agencies because of a little act called the National  
24 Environmental Policy Act. We also have Section 106,  
25 which deals with historic properties. Both of these

1 regulations have a public involvement portion.

2 We do this together. So if you have  
3 comments tonight that address cultural resources or  
4 historic properties, that will also play into the  
5 actions that we're taking on Section 106. So you  
6 don't have to worry about trying to comment in two  
7 locations.

8 Go to the next slide, please.

9 So you can comment directly to Suzanne in  
10 all the ways that she has provided. You can also  
11 comment directly to myself. The comments will go to  
12 both places. All the agencies will be sharing this  
13 information and reviewing and commenting together  
14 and working together to make sure that we're coming  
15 to, hopefully, the same decision when we get to our  
16 records of decision and what happens through the  
17 state process as well.

18 So, with that, I will hand it back over  
19 to Suzanne so we can start the comment period, and  
20 thank you very much.

21 MS. STEINHAUER: Thank you.

22 As I mentioned before, if you could  
23 please come up and speak into the microphone. If  
24 you're unable to get up, we can bring the microphone  
25 out to you. But we did let loose a little bit this

**Commenter 18 – Jerry Solheim**

**Responses**

1 afternoon, or I didn't pursue the microphone, and I  
2 know that the court reporter had difficulty hearing  
3 and recording an accurate transcription.  
4 So the first name I have here is  
5 Jerry Soleheight (phonetic). I'm sorry. It could  
6 be Solheim. If you could please spell your name for  
7 the court reporter.  
8 MR. SOLHEIM: You bet. Are you the court  
9 reporter? I'm not on trial, right?  
10 Jerry, J-E-R-R-Y, Solheim, that's S like  
11 in September, O-L-H-E-I, M like in Mary.  
12 Just a couple of real quick comments.  
13 Number one, this should be underground. This is  
14 totally ridiculous to have these ugly things in our  
15 skyline. It's terrible. There's absolutely no  
16 reason why this shouldn't be underground.  
17 They just put in a couple of pipelines  
18 through our area. I believe one of them is  
19 36 inches, and if that can be driven all the way  
20 from Canada to somewhere in Wisconsin, it's totally  
21 ridiculous to have these lines. We have way too  
22 many of them. It should be underground.  
23 And it should be -- number two, it should  
24 be following existing right-of-ways. Why screw up  
25 beautiful areas, virgin areas, with a new

18-1

18-2

**Comment 18-1**

A discussion of the option to underground the transmission line appears in Section 2.3.4 of the EIS.

**Comment 18-2**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS. A discussion of the existing linear features and new corridor requirements for the Route Alternatives appears in Table 2-1 of the EIS.

**Commenter 18 – Jerry Solheim;  
Commenter 19 – Keith Pommprening**

1 right-of-way when we already have a right-of-way?  
2 Highway 2, there's a right-of-way on both sides of  
3 the road. It's already cut, it's already planned,  
4 it's already delivered. All they have to do is put  
5 it there. And again, it should be underground.  
6 Enough said.  
7 MS. STEINHAUER: Thank you.  
8 The next person I have is  
9 Keith Pommprening.  
10 MR. POMMPRENING: My name's  
11 Keith Pommprening, K-E-I-T-H, P-O-M-M-P-R-E-N-I-N-G.  
12 What I have here is a copy of a letter I  
13 sent to Suzanne on August 28th -- August 25th of  
14 2008. And my first thought is in the area has --  
15 already has -- you know, if you have an area that's  
16 already got a transmission line or a pipeline on  
17 your property, you're doing your fair share to  
18 support the common good of the people. In football,  
19 you know, if they pile on, it's called piling on,  
20 you get penalized for that. I mean, you know,  
21 they're already doing their share.  
22 And one question of the wisdom of  
23 running -- I question the wisdom of running power  
24 lines and gas lines together. You do not bundle gas  
25 lines and electric service to your house. When a

**Responses**

**Comment 19-1**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS.

**Comment 19-2**

Text in Section 3.18.2.2 has been supplemented to include a discussion of the potential for the Project to interfere with natural gas and crude oil pipelines and result in ignition of released natural gas or crude oil. Text in Section 3.18.3.3 has been supplemented to included mitigation measures to address potential interference.

19-1

19-2

**Commenter 19 – Keith Pommrening**

**Responses**

19-2  
(cont.)

20

1 fire and explosion like the one in Clearbrook  
2 last -- well, a couple winters ago now, took out  
3 both services, and then we'd be out of gas and out  
4 of electricity.

5 Just the service being there would  
6 increase the chance of diaster. Having them  
7 side-by-side would increase the likelihood and  
8 resultant danger and damage exponentially.

9 Gusset plates fail, like the I-35 bridge.  
10 Bolts strip and work loose, and wind pressures on  
11 the towers, would a falling tower rupture a gas  
12 line? Are the pipeline people in favor of having  
13 the lines in close proximity? One would think the  
14 power lines would greatly hinder their ability to  
15 add new pipes and service the existing ones.

16 Would they want heavy equipment and --  
17 working on their pipes or servicing near the  
18 existing ones? Who would want to -- would they want  
19 heavy equipment working around their buried pipes?

20 Easements give power and gas line people  
21 free access to one's land and cause excess  
22 restrictions on what the landowner can do with the  
23 land. Of course, the power lines would greatly  
24 reduce the owner's property values. In some  
25 instances, a fairer option would be to let the power

19-3

19-4

19-5

**Comment 19-3**

A discussion of loss of land use to private land owners appears in Section 3.10.2.2 of the EIS.

**Comment 19-4**

Discussion of potential impacts to property value appears in Section 3.11.2 of the EIS.

**Comment 19-5**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS.

**Commenter 19 – Keith Pommrening**

19-5  
(cont.)

1 company buy the land and buildings at the pre-power  
2 line value. This way the line could remain -- the  
3 power line could -- can maintain the -- this way the  
4 power line can maintain the property and pay taxes  
5 and rent back to the original owner. The original  
6 landowner would have a chance to buy the land back  
7 after the power lines decides to buy and abandoned  
8 the power line.

19-6

9 Another friend of mine told me that, you  
10 know, if you have gas, you know, like oil fields or  
11 something, you get royalties. If you have a power  
12 line going across your property, they pay you once  
13 and you don't get any more for it. I mean, they  
14 continue to use it, they should continue to pay.  
15 That's a pretty good idea.

19-7

16 State land is for the use and benefit of  
17 the residents of Minnesota, why not use this land as  
18 much as possible? What better way to use the  
19 resources of the state to help the most people? Do  
20 not enrage citizens and decrease property values of  
21 the overtaxed residents any more.

22 A corridor through state land would be a  
23 great thing for the residents of this state. It  
24 would improve habitat for large and small game, it  
25 would allow the DNR to be able to rapidly respond to

**Responses**

**Comment 19-6**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS.

**Comment 19-7**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS.

**Commenter 19 – Keith Pommrening;  
Commenter 20 – Lester Hiltz**

1 a forest fire, and be a blessing to anyone lost in  
2 the forest. Access for logging and hunting would  
3 improve and would enable the state to better  
4 maintain its lands, its forests, and its wildlife.

19-8

5 The towers make nesting sites for  
6 raptors. The big challenge here would be working  
7 with the forestry department's attitude on the use  
8 of forest lands.

9 So in conclusion, it's obvious that the  
10 powers who set this route have not done their  
11 homework and the public is not being well served.  
12 It would be best if the proposal routes were tabled  
13 and some effort and wisdom were brought to bear and  
14 find a better proposal. Thank you.

15 MS. STEINHAUER: Lester Hiltz.

16 MR. HILTZ: My name is Lester Hiltz,  
17 L-E-S-T-E-R, H-I-L-T-Z.

20-1

18 And my comments and concerns on this  
19 line, it goes right through my property, Route 1.  
20 And how much is this going to devalue our property?  
21 The pipeline went through my property and it  
22 devalued it considerably.

20-2

23 The safety of living underneath it. Can  
24 any of the people that is going to put this line in  
25 give me or the rest of us -- that it's going to be

**Responses**

**Comment 19-8**

A discussion of the use of transmission line structures as nesting sites appears in Section 3.7.2.3 of the EIS. Additional information on the use of Project structures as nesting sites is presented in the Avian Mitigation Plan, included as Appendix I.

**Comment 20-1**

Discussion of potential impacts to property value appears in Section 3.11.2 of the EIS.

**Comment 20-2**

A discussion of potential safety and health effects appears in Section 3.20 of the EIS.

**Commenter 20 – Lester Hiltz; Commenter 21 – Doug Bjerke**

**Responses**

20-2  
(cont.)

23

1 safe underneath that line? And can you promise that  
2 there's going to be no EMFs from this line? I don't  
3 believe that you can, but you will probably never do  
4 that.

5 Will there be any noise underneath this  
6 line? That's another comment that I have. A lot of  
7 these lines, if you stand underneath them, there is  
8 going to be noise underneath these lines. And if  
9 you've got it right next to your house, it does not  
10 make you very happy.

11 The other thing is, how are we going to  
12 be compensated for this line going through our  
13 property? If it's anything like the pipeline, it's  
14 not good.

15 Another thing, what can you do with the  
16 property after the line goes through? Can you put  
17 trees on it, can you put houses on it? No. You can  
18 cut it for lawn, that's about all you can do. And  
19 my property is a third-generation, as of myself.

20 Thank you.

21 MS. STEINHAEUER: Thank you. Doug Bjerke.

22 MR. BJERKE: Doug Bjerke, B-J-E-R-K-E.

23 I just had some questions about what's  
24 the line loss per mile of line? What's the cost of  
25 construction of the line per mile? And the

**Comment 20-3**

A discussion of impacts to noise levels appears in 3.21.2 of the EIS.

**Comment 20-4**

A discussion of the easement acquisition process appears in Section 2.4.3 of the EIS.

**Comment 20-5**

A discussion of impacts to homes appears in 3.11.2 of the EIS. A discussion of the loss of land use to private land owners appears in Section 3.10.2 of the EIS.

**Comment 21-1**

Text in Section 2.2 has been supplemented with information on the line loss reduction for the Route Alternatives.

**Comment 21-2**

A comparison of the costs to construct each Route Alternative appears in Table 2-1, which is located in Section 2.2 of the EIS.

20-4

20-5

21-1

21-2

## Commenter 22 – John Robinson

24

1 difference in the routes seems to be about 45 miles  
2 between the shortest to the longest, and in talking  
3 with a gentleman in the back there, they were  
4 talking about five megawatts of loss per mile of  
5 line, I think.

6 At approximately \$600,000 per mile to  
7 construct, that comes out to be somewhere around  
8 27 million, I think, difference between the lines.  
9 And I'm just wondering how many houses can be heated  
10 with the electricity loss per mile, per day, per  
11 year, or over the life of the line?

12 And I guess that's the only comments I've  
13 got.

14 MS. STEINHAUER: John Robinson.

15 MR. ROBINSON: Do you have any questions  
16 about how to spell my name? J-O-H-N.

17 I live on the Route 2 plan for -- right  
18 under Lake Irving. And we had the pipeline go  
19 through and I saw across the way one of my neighbors  
20 lost about 75 feet of depth of woods between his  
21 house and the pipeline. And I've noticed that the  
22 noise from the highway is terrible, and I think it  
23 has to do with the dropping of all the trees to make  
24 the widening of the -- and now where I live is in  
25 the city of Bemidji and I think it's a developed

## Responses

**Commenter 22 – John Robinson;  
Commenter 23 – Peter Guggenheimer**

25

1 residential community. And I think it would be a  
2 shame to, you know, make the environment -- living  
3 environment worse by funneling all the noise from  
4 the highway.

5 As Bemidji grows, more and more trucks  
6 are coming down the road. And my wife and I just  
7 noticed this winter, it's -- since they cleared out  
8 an area of marsh, it is unbelievably noisy, and  
9 we're very, very disappointed in our property. And  
10 I am very concerned that taking more trees down in  
11 the right-of-way is going to make that living  
12 community worse.

13 MS. STEINHAUER: Thank you.

14 Peter Guggenheimer.

15 MR. GUGGENHEIMER: My name is Peter,  
16 P-E-T-E-R, Guggenheimer, G-U-G-G-E-N-H-E-I-M-E-R.

17 I don't have any prepared comments, but I  
18 just want to express my opinion that it would be far  
19 less of a blight on the community to have this  
20 utility following an existing highway as opposed to  
21 running through people's personal property within  
22 the community.

23 I don't think that there's going to be a  
24 significant impact, visual -- of visual blight by  
25 following a major trunk highway. If this

**Responses**

**Comment 22-1**

A discussion of impacts to noise levels appears in Section 3.21.2 of the EIS.

**Comment 23-1**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS.

22-1

23-1

**Commenter 23 – Peter Guggenheimer;  
Commenter 24 – Scott Dingman**

26

1 transmission line goes through a lot of personal  
2 property space, a lot of people are going to be  
3 affected. Their property values are going to be  
4 diminished, and the enjoyment that they will have  
5 from their personal property will be greatly  
6 affected.

7 So I would strongly appeal to you to  
8 consider what would be Route 2 following along the  
9 highway.

10 Thank you.

11 MS. STEINHAUER: Thank you.

12 That is everyone that we've had  
13 preregister. I believe there's a play rehearsal  
14 going on next door. So at this time, I'd like to  
15 open it up to comments. If you could raise your  
16 hand and I'll call on you. And, again, if you could  
17 please come up, and if you're unable to come up we  
18 can bring the mic to you. Thank you.

19 Yes.

20 MR. DINGMAN: I'd like to speak, please.

21 I can get up there.

22 MS. STEINHAUER: Yes. Please. Sorry.

23 MR. DINGMAN: My name is Scott Dingman,  
24 D-I-N-G-M-A-N.

25 I've been listening tonight and I feel

**Responses**

**Commenter 24 – Scott Dingman**

1 like all of you, I don't want it by my place and I  
2 think everyone's here for the same reason.

24-1

3 Some of the points that have not been  
4 brought up that I think are important is looking at  
5 the endangered species act. I do believe, if I'm  
6 correct, the government can't do anything to  
7 infringe upon endangered species.

24-2

8 On my land, I have very sensitive  
9 ecosystems, as many of you probably do also. I have  
10 very rare plants that grow underneath the power  
11 line, the existing one. Now, if they widen it out,  
12 they're going to destroy more of those sensitive  
13 plants.

14 The last time they came in, they had this  
15 great big machine. The guy can't even see where  
16 he's going and he just ripped right through my land.  
17 He actually went beyond the zone that they're  
18 supposed to because he said he couldn't see where he  
19 was going.

24-3

20 We also have wolves. They're an --  
21 whether you like wolves or not, I'm not saying, but  
22 they're an endangered species in Minnesota. In the  
23 western part of the country they're not, here they  
24 found subspecies. The northern route goes much  
25 further in and through wolf country. It has an

**Responses**

**Comment 24-1**

A discussion of species of concern appears in Section 3.8 of the EIS.

**Comment 24-2**

A discussion on biodiversity, specifically effects on plants, appears in Section 3.7.2.1 of the EIS. Further discussion on plant species of concern appears in Section 3.8.1.5 of the EIS. Biological surveys were conducted for the Study Area; however, only public lands were included in the Project surveys. A discussion of species identified within the Study Area during biological surveys appears in Section 3.8 of the EIS.

**Comment 24-3**

A discussion on the Gray Wolf as a species of concern appears in Section 3.8.1.2 of the EIS.

**Commenter 24 – Scott Dingman;  
Commenter 25 – Gabriel Wakonabo**

1 impact. Wolves normally shy away from humans. I've  
2 camped many nights in the mountains, they've never  
3 bothered me. They're a beautiful sound.

4 And I know there are probably people who  
5 hate wolves out there and others who love them. But  
6 these are important issues, I think, that we need to  
7 also address.

8 Thank you.

9 MS. STEINHAUER: Yes. Please, in the  
10 grey sweatshirt.

11 MR. WAKONABO: Gabriel Wakonabo,  
12 W-A-K-O-N-A-B-O. Just a few quick notes.

25-1

13 What is the real need for this line? Are  
14 the lights not on right now? What about wildlife  
15 endangerment? If a bald eagle strikes one of these  
16 lines, will these companies go ahead and pay for the  
17 rehabilitation of said animals?

25-2

25-3

18 Did renewable energy resources ever occur  
19 to these companies? And will they continue to rely  
20 on old technology which is dependent upon coal  
21 fields, open-pit mining, and again, our own very  
22 backyards are being mowed down and trampled over.

25-4

23 Remember, folks, that what we do here  
24 affects others in our neighboring states, our other  
25 fellow citizens. Companies that rely on coal are

**Responses**

**Comment 25-1**

A discussion on purpose and need appears in Section 1.1 of the EIS. The Minnesota Certificate of Need is discussed in Section 1.2.6 of the EIS.

**Comment 25-2**

A discussion of effects on biological resources appears in Section 3.7.2 of the EIS. Species of concern, including the Bald Eagle, are specifically addressed in Section 3.8.1.1 of the EIS.

**Comment 25-3**

Mitigation measures for species of concern are addressed in Section 3.8.3 of the EIS. Additional mitigation is included in the Avian Mitigation Plan, included as Appendix I.

**Comment 25-4**

A discussion of generation alternatives considered but not evaluated in the EIS appears in Section 2.3.1 of the EIS.

**Commenter 25 – Gabriel Wakonabo**

1 going to continue to harvest and collect and mine  
2 those resources, and they're going to infringe on  
3 their backyards just as well as ours.  
4 Government subsidies come from taxpayers,  
5 I believe, if I'm not mistaken, and are we not just  
6 paying for our own infringements by corporations?  
7 Who's really winning, who's gaining?  
8 No follow-up for the environment impact  
9 that's already been done by the recent pipeline. We  
10 haven't even given it -- the chance for the  
11 environment to even mend itself and we want to go  
12 right down the same corridor with those precious  
13 plants that grow underneath and the wildlife up on  
14 the northern routes.  
15 I'm also a Leech Lake Band member, and do  
16 we really need to cut the reservation in half again  
17 with another facility -- or utility? That's a  
18 concern of mine, and I'll bring that up to my  
19 constituents and my representatives of Leech Lake.  
20 And then I'd like to see if there is an  
21 agreement, one that requires that for every ten  
22 years of transmission use that they also decrease  
23 their carbon footprint by ten percent.  
24 Thank you.  
25 MS. STEINHAUER: Thank you.

25-5

25-6

25-7

**Responses**

**Comment 25-5**

A discussion of the effects on vegetative cover appears in Section 3.7.2.1 of the EIS. Mitigation is addressed in Section 3.7.3.1.

**Comment 25-6**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS.

**Comment 25-7**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS.

**Commenter 26 – Frederick Petrowske**

1 Yes. The gentleman in orange.  
2 MR. PETROWSKE: This is orange  
3 (indicating)?  
4 MS. STEINHAUER: I need new glasses. I'm  
5 sorry.  
6 MR. PETROWSKE: Frederick Petrowske,  
7 F-R-E-D-E-R-I-C-K, P-E-T-R-O-W-S-K-E.  
8 I'd just like to speak against Route 3,  
9 the longer route. About a month ago, or a little  
10 more than a month ago, I was in this room taking my  
11 continuing education for a contractor license, and  
12 the big focus was energy conservation.  
13 Now, that longer route just goes against  
14 everything that I was learning there as far as  
15 energy conservation. To start with, the  
16 construction costs would be much more, which takes  
17 more energy. The maintenance cost over the life of  
18 the line, the cost of operation, the longer lines  
19 take more power. That's not conserving like  
20 everyone's looking to do these days. And that's a  
21 non-ending factor for the life of them, the power  
22 line, it wouldn't stop.  
23 So that's my statement.  
24 MS. STEINHAUER: Thank you.  
25 I want to make sure that people who would

**Responses**

**Comment 26-1**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS.

26-1

1 like to comment tonight feel that they have an  
2 opportunity, but if something occurs to you later,  
3 there are opportunities to provide written comments.

4 If you have questions, we'll be around  
5 after the meeting. I'm not closing things off now,  
6 I just want to give everybody an opportunity who  
7 chooses to take that tonight.

8 Comments, going once, going twice, going  
9 three times?

10 I will close, then, the formal part of  
11 the meeting and we'll be available to try to answer  
12 questions. That won't be part of the record, but to  
13 the extent that we can provide you information, if  
14 you'd like to do that. Thank you.

15 (Public comment concluded.)  
16  
17  
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## Responses

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PUBLIC COMMENTS

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 17, 2010  
1:00 p.m.

In the Matter of the Application for a Route Permit for  
the Bemidji-Grand Rapids 230 kV Transmission Project

PUC Docket Number: E017, E015, ET6/TL-07-1327

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I N D E X

SPEAKER	PAGE
Cindy Kuismi	6
Stephanie Strength	14
Lloyd Lundquist	18
Terry Helmer	19
Greg Abbott	23
Garry Frits	24
Norley Hanson	25
Terry Helmer	26
George Berbee	26
Kay Ikola	27
Terry Helmer	29
Janet Snell	31

1 MS. STEINHAUER: (Indicating throughout.)  
2 So thank you very much for joining us this  
3 afternoon. This is the public information meeting  
4 and public comment meeting on the draft EIS for the  
5 proposed Bemidji-Grand Rapids 230 kV transmission  
6 line.  
7 My name is Suzanne Steinhauer. I'm with  
8 the Minnesota Office of Energy Security. We are the  
9 lead agency charged with preparing the environmental  
10 impact statement for the project. With me this  
11 afternoon is Stephanie Strength. She's sitting at  
12 the front table, she's with the USDA Rural Utilities  
13 Service, and they are the lead of several federal  
14 agencies -- they have been the lead federal agency  
15 preparing the EIS.  
16 We also have Christine here and she is  
17 the court reporter. She'll be keeping a record of  
18 the meeting this afternoon, and we'll open it up to  
19 public comments and I'll kind of go through the  
20 rules with that.  
21 Let's see, there are also Cathy Thompson  
22 and Christine Brown from the Forest Service here,  
23 representing Chippewa National Forest. I have  
24 Jamie MacAlister and Ray Kirsch in the back.  
25 They're my colleagues at OES, and they can --

1 they're not as involved in the preparation of the  
2 environmental review, but they can help you with --  
3 if you have questions, they can answer general  
4 questions about the project and also the Minnesota  
5 review process.  
6 Greg Poremba, the gentleman that's  
7 standing, and Meghan Sweeney is also here, in red.  
8 They're with ERM and they are the consultants for  
9 the environmental impact statement.  
10 My role for the project is to -- in  
11 Minnesota, for transmission lines of this size,  
12 before they can be constructed they need to receive  
13 a permit from the Minnesota Public Utilities  
14 Commission. My role is to develop -- begin  
15 developing a record that they can make that decision  
16 on.  
17 The EIS, the environmental impact  
18 statement, plays slightly different roles in the  
19 state and the federal process. I'll talk about the  
20 state process and Stephanie will kind of go over how  
21 that fits into the federal review process.  
22 One thing that I do want to note is for  
23 the state process, the EIS does not identify a  
24 preferred alternative. That can be different for  
25 federal projects, but in the state process the EIS

1 is not going to identify a preferred alternative,  
2 and this one doesn't.

3 And the purpose of this afternoon's  
4 meeting is to take comments on the information, and  
5 specifically the completeness and accuracy of the  
6 information in the EIS.

7 I recognize that probably most people are  
8 here because they have a preference about a route,  
9 and we will take those comments. We probably can't  
10 respond to them here in the meeting. All of the  
11 comments received this afternoon orally and by  
12 the -- any written comments by the close of the  
13 comment period, which is April 26th, will be  
14 included in the final EIS and the responses in the  
15 final EIS.

16 I'll get into a little bit later -- this  
17 is the handout. There are a couple of handouts.  
18 I'm going to be going through the one -- the larger  
19 one with several pages. I'll get into -- the state  
20 also has a separate process called a contested case  
21 hearing. There will be meetings held on that also  
22 in the project area. There will be one in Deer  
23 River, I don't know the location, probably here or  
24 the high school, between April 21st and 23rd.

25 So if you've signed up at the sign-in

1 sheet at the back and if you've checked the box,  
2 you'll receive direct-mail notice of those hearings.  
3 There will also be a notice published in the  
4 newspaper, so we'll get to that a little bit later.

5 The proposed project is a -- depending on  
6 the route, there's a map over there near Stephanie,  
7 is between 68 and 113 miles of 230 kilovolt high  
8 voltage transmission line. The transmission line  
9 would extend from the Wilton Substation in the west,  
10 which is slightly -- just a little bit west of  
11 Bemidji, and then end at the Boswell Substation in  
12 Cohasset.

13 Depending on the final route, the project  
14 may also include either the expansion of an existing  
15 substation in Cass Lake or the construction of a new  
16 substation in Cass Lake, and may include a breaker  
17 station which --

18 MS. KUISMI: Sorry, Suzanne, can you turn  
19 that volume up just a little? It's on the side  
20 panel, do you see it, the volume?

21 MS. STEINHAEUER: Oh, okay. How's this,  
22 is that any better? No.

23 MS. KUISMI: I don't know, do you want me  
24 to go ask the bar to try to hold it down a little?  
25 Okay. It's that one.

1 MS. STEINHAUER: Is this a little bit  
2 better? I don't know if I'm as interesting as they  
3 are. Maybe I'll try to speak more loudly.

4 And may also include the construction of  
5 a breaker station near Nary.

6 As I mentioned before, for a transmission  
7 line of this size, it cannot be constructed in  
8 Minnesota without approval from the Public Utilities  
9 Commission. The permit issued by the Public  
10 Utilities Commission will designate the route for  
11 where the transmission line will go. It will also  
12 include a number of conditions related to either the  
13 construction or operation or route for the project.

14 And, again, my role here -- the  
15 Commission in their final decision balances a number  
16 of factors that are designated in Rule and Statute.  
17 And my role here is to develop a record for the  
18 Commission to make their decision on. That will be  
19 further developed in the contested case hearings  
20 that will be conducted by a judge here.

21 There is -- I think on the third page of  
22 your handout, there's a process flow diagram, which  
23 when it's reduced doesn't reproduce so well. But  
24 I'll go through it briefly to get you to where we  
25 are here and then where we're going from here.

1 The applicants, Otter Tail Power,  
2 Minnkota Power Cooperative, and Minnesota Power,  
3 submitted a route permit application to the Public  
4 Utilities Commission in the beginning of June,  
5 June 4th of 2008. The Commission accepted that  
6 application as complete at the end of June, also in  
7 2008.

8 We were out here in the project area in  
9 the summer of 2009 for the scoping meetings (sic).  
10 There were also -- an advisory task force met  
11 several times also in the project area. The  
12 advisory task force was comprised of representatives  
13 from local government.

14 The purpose of the public meetings that  
15 were held in the summer of 2008 was to gather public  
16 comment on what's called the scope of the EIS, what  
17 the EIS should look at, which routes it should look  
18 at, and what effects should be evaluated.

19 So based on the comments we received,  
20 based on the information collected through the  
21 advisory task force, and then based on agency  
22 review, the OES issued a scoping decision in March  
23 of last year, March 2009. And we spent the  
24 intervening, approximately a year developing the  
25 draft EIS. Which is -- there are copies back there

1 on the freezer, it's a large volume -- there's three  
2 volumes, there's a number of maps in there.

3 So that brings us to the public meetings  
4 to take comments on the EIS. As I mentioned and  
5 I'll probably keep mentioning, there will also be  
6 contested case hearings held in the project area and  
7 that will further develop the record.

8 I realize that many of you have  
9 preferences for the route, we'll take those comments  
10 here. But the contested case hearings are set up to  
11 provide for an opportunity for advocacy. The  
12 applicants at that point will advocate for a  
13 particular route and anybody else can enter their  
14 comments into the record, ask questions of the  
15 applicant.

16 And so that process is set up a little  
17 bit better for people to advocate for particular  
18 routes. We'll certainly take your comments here,  
19 but again, the purpose of tonight's meeting is more  
20 to just make sure that the information that goes  
21 into that record, in the draft EIS is, to the best  
22 of our ability, complete, and accurate.

23 I'll try to speak directly in it.

24 And then moving forward, contested case  
25 hearings will be held in the project area at the end

1 of April, April 21st through 23rd. The close of  
2 comments on the draft EIS, and that is in the  
3 comment sheet, it's also in the handout here, is  
4 April 26th. Based on the comments, those will all  
5 be included and addressed in the final EIS that will  
6 come out sometime later, I imagine sometime this  
7 summer probably.

8 And then following the conclusion of the  
9 final EIS, the judge presiding over the contested  
10 case hearings will issue a report to the Commission.  
11 Their report will include the judge's  
12 recommendations on the route and any permit  
13 conditions that should be included.

14 The Commission will weigh the judge's  
15 report, they'll also have all of the comments  
16 received. They take the judge's report very  
17 seriously, but they'll be looking at the body of the  
18 evidence and they'll make their final decision on  
19 the route permit probably -- maybe sometime this  
20 summer or early fall.

21 The draft EIS is, again, available at the  
22 back of the room. It evaluated three route  
23 alternatives. The applicants in their application  
24 asked for the Commission to designate a route for a  
25 larger area of up to 1,000 feet, within which the

1 applicants would locate a right-of-way.

2 Right-of-way and easements are often used  
3 interchangeably. That means the area that needs to  
4 be maintained and clear for construction and  
5 operation of the transmission line. The applicants  
6 have asked for a right-of-way of 125 feet.

7 So within the three routes and the -- we  
8 should also mention there were 20 what we called  
9 segment alternatives, which are either deviations or  
10 ways of connecting mostly Routes 1 and 2 together.  
11 Within those 1,000-foot areas, we looked at 125 feet  
12 of what we called a feasible right-of-way as a way  
13 to provide some means of comparison between the  
14 alternatives evaluated.

15 The feasible right-of-way represents what  
16 we asked the applicants and what we reviewed and  
17 what we thought was something that looked, at least  
18 from a preliminary engineering outlook, was  
19 feasible, could be constructed. It does not  
20 represent where the route would go, but it provides  
21 a way of comparing across all the different factors  
22 considered.

23 The draft EIS looked at -- I believe  
24 there are 21 different factors for all the segment  
25 alternatives, all the route alternatives. It

1 reviewed aesthetics, air quality and climate,  
2 geology and soils, water resources, floodplains,  
3 wetlands, biological resources, species of concern  
4 or threatened and endangered species or special  
5 biological communities, cultural resources, land  
6 use, socioeconomic, environmental justice,  
7 recreation and tourism, agriculture, forestry and  
8 mining, community services, utility systems, traffic  
9 and transportation, safety and health, and noise.

10 In the notice that you received and also  
11 in the newspaper notice, it mentioned that the  
12 copies of the draft are available at public  
13 libraries in the area. It's also -- there's our  
14 contact information, it's also available on our  
15 website, on RUS's website.

16 And there's a link there so you can  
17 follow to -- we tried to break it apart on our  
18 website so you don't have to download all 500 pages.  
19 We also do have a limited number of CDs if that's  
20 something you'd like. You can talk to me or Jamie  
21 or Ray or any of us and we can get you a CD if you'd  
22 like to take that home with you.

23 Again, the focus of today's afternoon is  
24 to receive comments on the content of the draft EIS,  
25 and specifically the accuracy and completeness of

1 the data. As I mentioned earlier, the contested  
2 case hearing -- we'll take any comments and we will  
3 try to respond to them in the final EIS, but the  
4 contested case hearing is also another opportunity  
5 for you to comment and to advocate for a particular  
6 route.

7 We'll take oral comments here. There are  
8 green speaker cards in the back. I think we only  
9 have a couple of them, but it doesn't look like a  
10 huge crowd. So I'll take those people first that  
11 knew they wanted to speak. I'll ask you to please  
12 come to the microphone, it's, I guess, pretty clear  
13 that we do need a mic, to state and spell your name,  
14 please speak clearly and be respectful of others.

15 People here -- I imagine most of you are  
16 here because you have seen that there may be a  
17 transmission line near or crossing your property,  
18 and I understand that you have strong feelings about  
19 it. Other people would have just as strong feelings  
20 that may be different from yours, so please be  
21 respectful.

22 Please limit your comments to five  
23 minutes in order to allow everybody to speak.  
24 Christine will be -- the court reporter will prepare  
25 transcripts. Comment sheets are also available at

1 the back. I suggest that -- you don't need to  
2 follow this comment sheet, but I suggest you may  
3 want to take one because it does have the contact  
4 information, and if that's something you'd like to  
5 give to your neighbors so that they have that  
6 information to comment, also.

7 They don't have to be on this sheet, but  
8 we do have to receive them by the close of business,  
9 4:30, on the 26th. They can also be faxed or  
10 e-mailed. My contact information is on this  
11 handout. You can also comment directly to us on our  
12 website.

13 So I will turn it over to Stephanie, and  
14 then we'll open it up for comments. Thank you.

15 MS. STRENGTH: Good afternoon. Can you  
16 hear me? Okay. I am Stephanie Strength. I'm with  
17 the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Utilities  
18 Service. It's part of Rural Development, at one  
19 time we were known as REA.

20 RUS is jointly preparing this EIS with  
21 the state of Minnesota OES so that we don't  
22 duplicate this process, so that there aren't  
23 multiple of these giant documents for you to read  
24 and to comment on and multiple sets of meetings to  
25 go to.

1           There are also three agencies that are  
2 acting as cooperating agencies. They are also  
3 having input into and review over this document  
4 process. They'll be reading your comments and  
5 responding to them.

6           Those agencies -- and I'm speaking from  
7 the smaller handout, it's the one-page. If you need  
8 a copy of it, please let me know. We can pass them  
9 around. It looks like people have it.

10           Okay. So the three cooperating agencies  
11 are the U.S. Forest Service - Chippewa National  
12 Forest, and that is due to the potential for the  
13 route to cross Forest Service land. Then you have  
14 the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and that is due to  
15 potential impacts to wetlands and waters of the  
16 United States. The last is the Leech Lake Band of  
17 Ojibwe, and that is due to the potential for the  
18 route to cross the reservation boundaries.

19           RUS is involved because Minnkota Power  
20 Cooperative is one of the utilities involved in this  
21 project and they have approached RUS for federal  
22 financing. And that financing is what we call a  
23 federal action, which means we have to look at what  
24 the impact of the project would be on the human and  
25 natural environment.

1           There are the 21 factors Suzanne listed  
2 of all the different resources we look at,  
3 everything from land use to threatened and  
4 endangered species and cultural resources, so we're  
5 all assessing the same things. Your comments will  
6 be considered by all of the agencies, and we will  
7 alter our paths after the final environmental impact  
8 statement from the state.

9           So that means we have the comments coming  
10 in on the draft environmental impact statement.  
11 Those will be responded to in the final  
12 environmental impact statement. After that is  
13 released, there's a comment period. After that, the  
14 state goes through their process with the PUC as  
15 Suzanne explained.

16           However, the federal agencies do what's  
17 called a record of decision, and each of the  
18 agencies will issue their own. And that's basically  
19 where we put in writing and publish in newspaper and  
20 the Federal Register which of the routes we would  
21 be, in our case, considering financing or the other  
22 agencies will be considering issuing a permit for,  
23 as well as what sorts of conditions there would be  
24 on how it would be constructed. So your comments  
25 that you submit today or before April 26th will help

1 develop those decisions. That information is on the  
2 back of the one-page handout from RUS.

3 In addition to the EIS process, which is  
4 because of NEPA, National Environmental Policy Act,  
5 we also have something called Section 106, which is  
6 where we address impacts on historic properties,  
7 cultural resources.

8 Any comments that are submitted through  
9 the EIS process we will also be considering in that.  
10 So you don't need to worry about commenting in more  
11 than one location. And on the back side of this  
12 sheet is my name, Stephanie Strength, my contact  
13 information, my e-mail. All of that is there. So  
14 if you wish to comment directly to me you can do  
15 that. Again, we will be sharing the comments with  
16 all of the agencies involved so you don't have to  
17 worry about commenting to multiple locations.

18 Our website is listed above my name. On  
19 that we have listed the -- or posted that so you can  
20 download preliminary documents, the public comments  
21 from the scoping process, as well as our scoping  
22 report. You can also get the draft EIS there and  
23 any notices for future things such as the federal  
24 EIS will be there. So a lot of it's a duplicate  
25 with what's on the state website, but this is where

**Commenter 27 – Lloyd Lundquist**

1 you can go to the federal website to find that  
2 information.  
3 So I'll turn it over to public comment.  
4 I think Suzanne will talk and then we'll be back  
5 around afterward if you have questions for me, or  
6 there are some people here with the Forest Service  
7 and we do have someone here from the Corps as well.  
8 So if there are questions, we can try to help you.  
9 Thank you.  
10 MS. STEINHAUER: Thank you.  
11 The only person I have preregistered is  
12 Lloyd Lundquist, and if I can ask you --  
13 MR. LUNDQUIST: I'm right here.  
14 MS. STEINHAUER: We really need you --  
15 I'm sorry. We need you to really speak up. It's  
16 St. Paddy's Day.  
17 MR. LUNDQUIST: The only question I had  
18 was where the actual -- the three routes went from  
19 like Deer River to Cohasset, because the last map I  
20 got you bunched them all together. And I live north  
21 of Highway 2 and I was just wondering if they were  
22 going south of Highway 2 or north of Highway 2, what  
23 they were doing. And how much more easement are  
24 they taking than what they've already got if they go  
25 where the high line is originally at?

**Responses**

**Comment 27-1**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment.

**Comment 27-2**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment.

27-1

27-2

**Commenter 28 – Terry Helmer**

19

1 MS. STEINHAUER: The answer is we don't  
2 have a final route, so I can't tell you exactly  
3 where it will go. The applicants have asked for a  
4 125-foot right-of-way. One of the things we'll be  
5 evaluating and continuing to build the record on is  
6 if there is an existing transmission line there,  
7 what would happen if we -- we call it  
8 double-circuiting. If there's an opportunity, then,  
9 to construct those, to move both of the lines onto  
10 one set of structures, it would be a wider easement.  
11 But there may be some overlap.

12 MR. LUNDQUIST: All right.

13 MS. STEINHAUER: Thank you.

14 Yes.

15 MR. HELMER: Terry Helmer, Grand Rapids.

16 MS. STEINHAUER: You're really going to  
17 have to --

18 MR. HELMER: Terry Helmer, Grand Rapids.

19 MS. STEINHAUER: I'm sorry. Can you  
20 please come up?

21 MR. HELMER: Do you want me to use this  
22 thing (indicating)?

23 MS. STEINHAUER: Yes.

24 MR. HELMER: It's not going to work.

25 Terry Helmer, Grand Rapids. I own property on White

**Responses**

**Commenter 28 – Terry Helmer**

20

1 Oak Lake over here, and I've already got a  
2 transmission tower that's on my property. Your  
3 proposed line is going to run right through there,  
4 again. There's already a couple gas lines, oil  
5 lines. I don't know what else they can get in  
6 there.

28-1

7 I'm just wondering if your mind is made  
8 up as to which route you're going to take. I can  
9 understand where you're coming from because it would  
10 be the easiest way to go, but it doesn't help me  
11 any. I've got 37 acres in there on White Oak Lake  
12 and it's already messed up over there. And then  
13 they just put in two oil lines, I think -- or three  
14 this summer.

15 I don't know. I'm just venting a little  
16 bit.

17 MS. STEINHAUER: Thank you for your  
18 comment. Just to clarify, first of all, I am not  
19 going to be the one making the decision, and  
20 secondly, the record from our perspective isn't  
21 complete. And that's one of the things we're out  
22 here taking comments on now and at the end of April,  
23 and the judge will be making the recommendation on  
24 that.

25 So I can certainly understand the

**Responses**

**Comment 28-1**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment.

**Commenter 28 – Terry Helmer**

1 frustration of not knowing where it's going to be,  
2 but I have to answer honestly. It's not my place to  
3 have an opinion and I don't, and it will be some  
4 time. Thank you.

28-2

5 MR. HELMER: Thank you. Now, what's your  
6 time schedule on this, and what happens if you do  
7 put it -- what's your schedule on this if -- well, I  
8 lost my place here. I'm just wondering, if you do  
9 go through that property, do you pay compensation  
10 for whatever property you take through there?

28-3

11 MS. STEINHAUER: The question was what's  
12 the time frame for completion of the project, is  
13 what it -- the first part?

14 MR. HELMER: Well, that would be one,  
15 yes.

16 MS. STEINHAUER: And then is there  
17 compensation provided.

18 The first part is I would say that the  
19 earliest the Commission -- and I cannot speak for  
20 the federal agencies, but the earliest that the  
21 Public Utilities Commission would make a decision on  
22 the route would be perhaps late summer of this year.

23 Following that, the applicants -- and  
24 just to clarify again, the Commission, and I  
25 represent the Commission, makes the decision. But

**Responses**

**Comment 28-2**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment.

**Comment 28-3**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment. A discussion of the property acquisition process appears in Section 2.4.3 of the EIS.

## Responses

22

1 they're not constructing the line. So following the  
2 permit decision by the Commission, the applicants,  
3 the utilities, would send out people once the route  
4 is determined to work with landowners and reach --  
5 try to reach an easement agreement with the  
6 landowners.

7 For the route that's permitted, the  
8 utilities do have condemnation authority. The  
9 utility must to try to reach an agreement between  
10 the landowner and the utility. If they can't reach  
11 that, they can move to condemn. Which would mean,  
12 still, that the landowner must be compensated, but  
13 it's adjudicated, the level of compensation and the  
14 conditions of easement are adjudicated.

15 One thing that I do want to make clear is  
16 for a transmission line of this size, anything -- in  
17 Minnesota anything over 200 kilovolts, and this is  
18 230 kilovolts, there is also a provision in statute  
19 called the Buy the Farm provision. That means if a  
20 transmission line is permitted across your land, you  
21 can request that the utility buy the parcel  
22 outright. Not just an easement or a strip, but buy  
23 the parcel outright. So that is also an option  
24 available.

25 The utility must, in any case, compensate

**Commenter 29 – Greg Abbott**

23

1 the landowner. The Commission does not -- the level  
2 of compensation is not part of the Commission's  
3 decision. There are members from the -- there are  
4 representatives from the utilities and they can talk  
5 to you after the meeting about how compensation is  
6 determined.

7 Can you --

8 MR. ABBOTT: I can speak up.

9 MS. STEINHAUER: Really loudly, please.

10 MR. ABBOTT: I will. Okay. If --

11 MS. STEINHAUER: Can you please identify  
12 yourself.

13 MR. ABBOTT: Greg Abbott. If you can't  
14 come to a determination agreement with the  
15 landowner, is eminent domain ever your last resort?

16 MS. STEINHAUER: Again, I want to qualify  
17 the you in there.

18 MR. ABBOTT: Anybody, you know, the --

19 MS. STEINHAUER: The route and the  
20 conditions of the easement are determined between  
21 the landowner and the utility. Eminent domain and  
22 condemnation -- I guess I use them interchangeably,  
23 but for the route that the Commission determines,  
24 part of that determination is the Commission's  
25 determined that that route is in the public

**Responses**

**Comment 29-1**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment.

29-1

**Commenter 30 – Garry Frits**

24

1 interest, and that grants the utility the authority  
2 to use eminent domain.

3 That does need to be the last resort.  
4 They do need to try to make a good faith effort with  
5 the landowner before they can proceed to eminent  
6 domain proceedings.

7 MR. FRITS: My name is Garry Frits. And  
8 I'd like to comment for the record that one of the  
9 problems I think a lot of us are having is that,  
10 lacking a preferred alternative being identified in  
11 the draft environmental impact statement, it's very  
12 difficult for us to comment, not knowing where the  
13 preferred alternative is at this time.

14 I think it would have been to the benefit  
15 of you folks who wanted public input if you would  
16 have identified that, the preferred alternative.  
17 Knowing that it may not be the final alternative,  
18 but recognizing that at least the public could spend  
19 some time reviewing the document and looking at why  
20 that alternative was preferred against all of the  
21 others.

22 And I think that's a lot of the  
23 difficulty that I had and other people had, too, in  
24 commenting at this stage of the process.

25 MS. STEINHAUER: Thank you for the

**Responses**

**Comment 30-1**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS

30-1

**Commenter 31 – Norley Hanson**

1 comment, and I can certainly understand that.  
2 That's why we have the contested case hearing, but I  
3 can understand the frustration with that. Thank  
4 you.

5 I want to make sure that people who do  
6 want to speak this afternoon have an opportunity.  
7 We will be available afterwards to try to answer  
8 questions, and you can provide written comments any  
9 time before April 26th.

10 I don't see any hands, so I'm going to --  
11 yes, did you have a comment?

12 MR. HANSON: I'm Norley Hanson. My  
13 comment that I would like to make is what is the  
14 time frame you're looking at that so you will have a  
15 preferred route, a preferred alternate route, and so  
16 forth? You know, you've been doing this now for a  
17 year and a half and we don't know any more about it  
18 than when you started.

19 MS. STEINHAUER: The earliest the  
20 Commission would make a decision would be this  
21 summer. They would permit a route. At that point,  
22 there would not be an alternative. If for some  
23 reason the permitted route could not be constructed,  
24 the utilities would have to come back to the  
25 Commission and we'd have to reopen the case.

**Responses**

**Comment 31-1**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment regarding the Project schedule. Text, tables, and figures throughout the EIS have been supplemented with a discussion of Route Alternative 4, a combination of Route Alternatives 1 and 2, which the Applicants have identified as their preferred route. A discussion of the Preferred Alternative of the lead federal agency appears in Sections 2 and 5 of the EIS. Neither the OES nor the Commission have identified a preferred route, as discussed in Section 2.5 of the EIS.

31-1

**Commenter 32 – Terry Helmer; Commenter 33 – George Berbee**

**Responses**

32-1

1           Going once -- yes. I'm sorry. Could you  
2           please identify yourself once again.

3           MR. HELMER: Terry Helmer again. It's  
4           probably just abstract, how tall are these towers  
5           we're talking about building, are they like the ones  
6           I see going to Duluth?

7           MS. STEINHAUER: The question was how  
8           tall are the towers. The applicants have proposed  
9           their preference is to use -- located against the  
10          back wall, their preference is to use the H-frame or  
11          the two-pole structures. Those would be between, I  
12          think, 70 and 100 feet tall.

13          They may in some areas also use the  
14          single-pole structures, which would be the other  
15          illustration, which would be narrower but a little  
16          bit taller to compensate.

33-1

17          MR. BERBEE: Are those metal, those  
18          single lines?

19          MS. STEINHAUER: The single-pole  
20          structures --

21          MR. BERBEE: I just had a question. Are  
22          those metal or --

23          MS. STEINHAUER: I'm sorry. Could you  
24          please identify yourself for the record.

25          MR. BERBEE: George Berbee.

**Comment 32-1**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment. A discussion of the Project structures appears in Section 2.4.1 of the EIS.

**Comment 33-1**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment. A discussion of the Project structures appears in Section 2.4.1 of the EIS.

**Commenter 34 – Kay Ikola**

27

1 MS. STEINHAUER: The single-pole  
2 structures would be metal. The two-pole or the  
3 H-frame structures could be wood or metal. It  
4 probably depends on the actual area where they would  
5 be installed.

6 And the metal structures could be either  
7 galvanized, or the shiny metal, or what they call  
8 COR-TEN, which is the brown, some people say rusty,  
9 metal so it's darker.

10 Yes.

11 MS. IKOLA: Okay. Kay Ikola, I-K-O-L-A.  
12 And I just have a question of when you came up with  
13 the third alternative. Because I've heard about  
14 this for a couple years, but I never really heard of  
15 the third alternative route until lately.

16 MS. STEINHAUER: The question was when  
17 did the third, or the yellow, the more northern  
18 route enter into the picture. The applicants in  
19 their application to the Minnesota Public Utilities  
20 Commission proposed two routes, generally in the  
21 Highway 2 area.

22 Through scoping and through agency  
23 review -- I should backtrack. When they approached  
24 the RUS about financing, the RUS looked at -- they  
25 look at things a little bit differently and they had

**Responses**

**Comment 34-1**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment. A discussion of the Project scoping process appears in Sections 1.4.1, 1.4.2, and 2.1.2 of the EIS. The state and federal scoping decisions are included Appendix A of the EIS.

34-1

## Responses

28

1 four what they call macro-corridors, or four larger  
2 study areas. One was in that northern area, there  
3 were also two that were further south of Leech Lake.

4 Through the public scoping comments, the  
5 agency review, I think they're starting to identify  
6 some problems with portions of one of the routes in  
7 the Highway 2 area. And the fact that even if there  
8 weren't problems, those two are pretty close, they  
9 parallel each other very closely for a long  
10 distance. And I think the agencies agreed that  
11 there needed to be a different alternative that was  
12 looked at.

13 And that -- so it's been reviewed for a  
14 while, that was in the OES's scoping decision that  
15 came out in March of 2009. That's when I think it  
16 was probably formally identified for the public for  
17 the first time.

18 MS. STRENGTH: Do I have to identify  
19 myself?

20 It was also addressed in more detail in  
21 the federal agency's scoping document decision,  
22 which is also on the RUS website. And in that all  
23 of the additional macro-corridors or the routes  
24 other than what the applicant had first come out  
25 with, those are addressed in detail as well as some

**Commenter 35 – Terry Helmer**

29

1 of the agency's analyses for why we decided not to  
2 go with one of the southern ones and why we kept in  
3 the northern one that wasn't originally proposed.

4 Ms. IKOLA: Okay. Thank you.

5 MS. STRENGTH: Um-hmm.

6 MS. STEINHAUER: Again, I want to make  
7 sure people have an opportunity to comment. I also  
8 want to respect people's time if they need to move  
9 on.

10 So not --

11 MR. HELMER: When will your next meeting  
12 be, or is there going to be one?

13 MS. STEINHAUER: There's another public  
14 comment meeting tonight in Blackduck.

15 MR. HELMER: I know that, but somewhere  
16 down the line.

17 MS. STEINHAUER: The next set of meetings  
18 will be April 21st through 23rd. They will be in  
19 the same cities as these meetings have been. I  
20 can't tell you which actual building they'll be in.  
21 If you check the box on the sign-in sheet at the  
22 back, you'll receive notice of those, and I expect  
23 the notice will go out sometime in early April.

24 MR. HELMER: Okay. You said, now,  
25 April 23rd?

**Responses**

**Comment 35-1**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment.

35-1

**Commenter 35 – Terry Helmer**

30

1 MS. STEINHAUER: April 21st, 22nd, and  
2 23rd.

3 MR. HELMER: Okay. And then what are you  
4 going to tell us at that meeting, that this is a  
5 done deal or --

6 MS. STEINHAUER: That is the contested  
7 case hearing. It will be presided over by a judge.  
8 At that point, the applicants will have  
9 identified -- they've identified their preferred  
10 routes and they will advocate for that. I'll ask  
11 questions of them. Any member of the public -- or I  
12 imagine some of the other agencies will also -- can  
13 ask questions and can advocate for routes at that  
14 point.

35-2 | 15 MR. HELMER: You will send us the  
16 information beforehand of the routes you're picking,  
17 before this meeting?

18 MS. STEINHAUER: The selection of the  
19 route won't happen until after the conclusion of the  
20 contested case hearing. What I will -- we'll send  
21 you a notice of the hearings at the end of April,  
22 and then when the Commission makes -- we'll also  
23 then provide a notice of the availability of the  
24 final EIS.

25 And we will -- if you registered on the

**Responses**

**Comment 35-2**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment.

**Commenter 35 – Terry Helmer; Commenter 36 – Janet Snell**

1 OES's project website or checked the box, you'll  
2 receive a notice of the meeting where the Commission  
3 is scheduled to make their final selection. That  
4 will be in St. Paul.

5 So the earliest that the final selection  
6 would happen -- I would anticipate the earliest  
7 would be sometime this summer of this year. I don't  
8 know the date.

35-3 | 9 MR. HELMER: Not this summer, but the  
10 following summer?

11 MS. STEINHAUER: Summer of 2010, this  
12 summer.

13 MR. HELMER: Okay.

14 MS. STEINHAUER: At the earliest.

15 MR. HELMER: Okay.

16 MS. STEINHAUER: I'm very hesitant,  
17 particularly with this project, to provide a  
18 schedule anymore.

19 MR. HELMER: I understand.

20 MS. STEINHAUER: And I can appreciate how  
21 frustrating that is.

22 Yes.

36-1 | 23 MS. SNELL: Janet Snell, S-N-E-L-L. Have  
24 you addressed crossing tribal lands with the routes  
25 you have now?

**Responses**

**Comment 35-3**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment.

**Comment 36-1**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment. A discussion of the potential for the Project to cross tribal lands appears in Section 1.3.5 of the EIS.

**Commenter 36 – Janet Snell**

1 MS. STEINHAUER: The question is have we  
2 addressed crossing tribal lands with the routes that  
3 are on the board now. Yes, the EIS does address  
4 that. If any of the routes cross the reservation,  
5 they would need a resolution or a permit from the  
6 Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe.

7 MS. SNELL: So has that taken place, in  
8 that you already have them lines mapped out, or are  
9 these just proposed?

10 MS. STEINHAUER: These are proposed  
11 routes. These are route alternatives. There has  
12 been no selection by any of the agencies about which  
13 route will be constructed. But with the two lines  
14 along the Highway 2 area, they both do cross the  
15 reservation and would need permission from the Leech  
16 Lake Band to cross the reservation.

17 MS. SNELL: And if they object, then you  
18 do these alternates?

19 MS. STRENGTH: The Leech Lake Band of  
20 Ojibwe are a cooperating agency for the development  
21 of the environmental impact statement. So in the  
22 draft EIS, what is discussed is what the impacts  
23 would be to the reservation from any of the routes  
24 that cross the reservation, and they would be part  
25 of the decision-making process. They would issue

**Responses**

**Comment 36-2**

Please refer to the comment responses from Ms. Steinhauer and Ms. Strength that appear directly below the comment. A discussion of the permissions required to cross the Leech Lake Reservation appears in Section 1.2.3 of the EIS.

36-2

**Commenter 36 – Janet Snell**

1 their own decision at the same time that the federal  
2 agencies do so.

3 So at this time there's been no decision  
4 and there's been no resolution because there's not a  
5 route for them to make a resolution on yet. But  
6 they are part of the process and part of the  
7 analysis going on now.

8 Does that answer your question?

36-3 | 9 MS. SNELL: And these 21 factors that she  
10 listed in selection, have they been built into the  
11 routes you have proposed?

12 MS. STRENGTH: Those 21 factors are  
13 considered for all three of the routes. So while we  
14 don't have a preferred right now, we have looked at  
15 the same impacts or the same 21 resources for all  
16 three of the routes.

17 Where normally you might see one route  
18 with a couple little alternatives being considered  
19 at this detail, we're considering all three because  
20 of the complexity of the lands being crossed by this  
21 project and all the agencies. Which is what's  
22 feeding into the time line problem, that's why it's  
23 taking so long, because there's a lot of  
24 coordination.

25 MS. SNELL: Okay.

**Responses**

**Comment 36-3**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Strength that appears directly below the comment.

1 MS. STEINHAUER: Thank you.  
2 I'll sweep the room one more time for  
3 hands, and seeing none, we'll conclude the formal  
4 portion of this meeting. And we are available to  
5 answer questions afterward. Thank you very much.  
6 (Public comment concluded.)  
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## Responses

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PUBLIC COMMENTS

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 17, 2010  
6:00 p.m.

In the Matter of the Application for a Route Permit for  
the Bemidji-Grand Rapids 230 kV Transmission Project

PUC Docket Number: E017, E015, ET6/TL-07-1327

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I N D E X

SPEAKER	PAGE
Stephanie Strength	16
Clarence Johnson	19
Rich Morine	21
Dean Sedgwick	22
Vernon Beighley	26
Greg Sorheim	29
Vernon Beighley	30
Sally Sedgwick	30
Dean Sedgwick	32
Vern Beighley	34
Greg Sorheim	36
Katie Haws	36
Cathy Thompson	37
Dean Sedgwick	37
Sally Sedgwick	40
Mark Michalek	41
Vern Beighley	43
Mark Michalek	44
Dean Sedgwick	44
Vern Beighley	45

2

1 MS. STEINHAUER: (Indicating throughout.)  
2 Can everybody hear me? It sounds like it. Good  
3 evening. Thank you for coming to the meeting  
4 tonight. My name is Suzanne Steinhauer. I'm with  
5 the Minnesota Office of Energy Security, and I  
6 represent the Public Utilities Commission.

7 The Public Utilities Commission -- the  
8 Minnesota Public Utilities Commission is the state  
9 permitting agency for transmission -- for a number  
10 of different power facilities, but in this case, for  
11 transmission lines of this size.

12 I've got a couple people with me tonight  
13 and I want to introduce them. In the back near the  
14 window is Jamie MacAlister, and Ray Kirsch near the  
15 map. They are also with the Office of Energy  
16 Security. They're involved in the project. They  
17 can answer some questions, if you have them, about  
18 the project, and also the public review process and  
19 how you can get involved in that.

20 I also have here Stephanie Strength with  
21 USDA Rural Utility Service. The environmental  
22 review for this project is a joint effort between  
23 the state of Minnesota and federal agencies. The  
24 Rural Utility Service is the lead federal agency.

25 We also have a couple folks here, Kay and

1 Cathy Thompson from the Forest Service. They're a  
2 cooperating agency.

3 Is there anyone here from the Corps  
4 tonight? No. Okay.

5 And then there are a number of  
6 representatives from the applicant and -- oh, also,  
7 in the back there's Greg Poremba and Meghan Sweeney.  
8 They're from ERM Consulting, they worked with us in  
9 developing the environmental impact statement.

10 My role in the project is to develop the  
11 record for the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission  
12 to make their decision on. The meeting tonight is  
13 to -- the purpose of the meeting tonight is to  
14 provide an opportunity for the public to ask  
15 questions and provide comments on the completeness  
16 and the accuracy of the draft environmental impact  
17 statement.

18 And the EIS, or environmental impact  
19 statement, serves a slightly different role for the  
20 state and the federal processes. And I think  
21 Stephanie will talk a little bit about some of the  
22 differences.

23 For the state process, the EIS does not  
24 identify a preferred alternative. We've looked  
25 at -- and I'll get into it a little bit later, we've

1 looked at three different route alternatives and a  
2 number of different segment alternatives. And the  
3 information in the EIS tries to present an  
4 apples-to-apples comparison between the  
5 alternatives.

6 The EIS is a large document, and I  
7 realize that probably most people have not had an  
8 opportunity to read it. There are three volumes.  
9 There are copies that are available if you'd like to  
10 take a look at them here. We have some CDs we can  
11 send you home with.

12 But that provides -- for the state  
13 process what it provides is kind of a baseline  
14 comparison of information between the alternatives  
15 that the Commission has to select from and develops  
16 sort of that baseline information.

17 Where it goes from here, there are sort  
18 of two processes. We're here tonight to take  
19 comments on the environmental impact statement. I  
20 realize a number of people probably have comments on  
21 the routes and preferences, and we'll take those and  
22 they'll be part of the record. All of the comments  
23 received tonight or in writing are part of the  
24 record and will be included and responded to in the  
25 final EIS.

1 The state process also moves on from  
2 there into a contested case hearing, and a contested  
3 case hearing is something that's required for all  
4 transmission lines of this size. The assumption, I  
5 think, behind it is the realization that these can  
6 be controversial projects and people probably don't  
7 want to have them near them. But it's to develop  
8 the record to make the best informed decision about  
9 where the route should go and what conditions should  
10 be attached to the permit.

11 The proposed project -- I should  
12 backtrack a little bit. The project has been  
13 proposed by three utilities: Minnkota Power  
14 Cooperative, Minnesota Power, and Otter Tail Power  
15 Company. There are also representatives from those  
16 utilities here tonight.

17 Depending on the route selected, the  
18 route would be between 68 miles -- 68, 69, those  
19 two, the blue and the red line in the center,  
20 generally in the Highway 2 area. And then the  
21 yellow line to the north is about 113 miles.

22 It's, again, 230 kilovolts of  
23 transmission. It would extend from the Wilton  
24 Substation located slightly west of Bemidji to the  
25 Boswell Substation. Both of those substations would

1 be -- they'd add equipment, the Boswell Substation  
2 would be expanded slightly.

3           Depending on the route selected, the  
4 project may also include improvements and expansion  
5 of the existing Cass Lake Substation, or perhaps the  
6 construction of a new substation and the  
7 construction of a new breaker station near Nary.

8           As I mentioned before, the Minnesota  
9 Public Utilities Commission has the responsibility  
10 of permitting any transmission line of this size in  
11 Minnesota. A high voltage transmission line can be  
12 constructed only along a route approved by the  
13 Public Utilities Commission. For purposes of  
14 identification, high voltage is considered anything  
15 higher than 100 kilovolts.

16           Then there are -- the Commission needs to  
17 develop a record to base that decision on, and the  
18 rules are -- they develop a record based on the laws  
19 that are in statute and also administrative rules in  
20 Chapter 7850.

21           So I'll backtrack a little bit. The  
22 utilities submitted an application, a route permit  
23 application, to the Commission in June of 2008. The  
24 application was accepted as complete by the  
25 Commission at the end of June. We were out in the

1 project area in the summer of 2008 for scoping  
2 meetings. The purpose of these scoping meetings was  
3 to gather public input on what routes should be  
4 evaluated in the draft environmental impact  
5 statement and what impacts should be looked at.

6           There were also advisory task force  
7 meetings held also in the project area. The  
8 advisory task force is comprised of members of local  
9 units of government. They made recommendations  
10 about the routes that they wanted to see evaluated  
11 and also the facts that they believe need to be  
12 evaluated.

13           That information, through the public  
14 comment, also the advisory task force and agency  
15 review, all came together and the OES, Office of  
16 Energy Security, issued a scoping decision in March  
17 of 2009. And the scoping decision identified the  
18 routes that -- the three routes that you see here  
19 and the issues that would be addressed in that  
20 environmental impact statement. And so over the  
21 course of the last year we developed the draft  
22 environmental impact statement, that was issued in  
23 February of this year.

24           Which brings us to the draft public  
25 meetings in the yellow box down there. As I

1 mentioned earlier, there will also be, at the end of  
2 next month, April 21st through 23rd, in the project  
3 area a series of contested case hearings. Those  
4 hearings will be presided over by an administrative  
5 law judge and will continue to develop the record.

6 And he will, based on the record, based  
7 on the information in the EIS, based on the comments  
8 received on the EIS, based on the testimony received  
9 during the hearing -- and those hearings are open to  
10 the public. You can come and offer your opinion on  
11 the route.

12 That's an opportunity -- the meeting here  
13 is intended to get comments that are more geared  
14 toward the information. The contested case hearing  
15 is an opportunity for people to advocate on a  
16 particular route. If you want to make a statement  
17 about your route preference, we'll certainly take  
18 those here.

19 But at the contested case hearing, the  
20 applicants will be advocating for what they believe  
21 is the best route. There are opportunities for  
22 people to ask questions of them and provide  
23 information on why they believe that route or  
24 another route should be selected.

25 So, again, the comments received in the

1 public meetings that we're -- that we're having this  
2 week and any written comments received by April 26th  
3 will be included in the final environmental impact  
4 statement, and we'll provide responses to those  
5 comments.

6 That goes into the record. All that  
7 information, as I said before, is provided to the  
8 judge. The judge, based on that record, will make a  
9 recommendation to the Public Utilities Commission on  
10 the route that should be selected and any conditions  
11 that should be attached to the permit.

12 The Public Utilities Commission will  
13 consider the recommendation of the judge. It may  
14 not follow it exactly, but they will certainly take  
15 his recommendation seriously and issue a final  
16 permit for the route. The permit, as I mentioned  
17 before, will identify where the route's going and  
18 what conditions should be attached to the route  
19 permit.

20 And this slide just kind of reiterates  
21 where we are, how we've gotten to here, the draft  
22 EIS information meetings, and the comments, which  
23 are due April 26th.

24 Moving forward, then, to the next phase,  
25 going on simultaneous to the public comment for the

1 draft is the contested case hearings. The comment  
2 period for the contested case hearings is to be  
3 determined, and if you -- I hope that people were  
4 able to sign in in the back. If you checked the  
5 box, you'll receive notice of when, the location,  
6 and comment time lines for the contested case  
7 hearings. And the notice will also be published in  
8 area newspapers.

9 And getting back to the draft EIS, the  
10 EIS evaluated three route alternatives. Routes --  
11 we labeled them Route 1, which is the red line;  
12 Route 2, the blue line. Those are, again, generally  
13 in the Highway 2 area and follow for the most part  
14 existing either highway or pipeline easements, some  
15 transmission lines. And then Route 3, which is the  
16 northern yellow alternative, follows for the most  
17 part existing transmission lines there.

18 The EIS also evaluated 20 different  
19 segment alternatives, which are shown as the dotted  
20 lines. Some of these are very small, located on the  
21 eastern end of Routes 1 and 2 and connect Routes 1  
22 and 2. So they provide an opportunity for the line  
23 maybe to cross between those two alternatives.

24 The applicants requested a  
25 1,000-foot-wide route, within which they would

1 prepare a right-of-way of -- they've requested a  
2 right-of-way of 125 feet. Right-of-way and easement  
3 are terms that are used kind of interchangeably, but  
4 basically that represents what the cleared -- the  
5 area that would need to be cleared and maintained  
6 for construction and operation of the line.

7 They've requested a 125-foot  
8 right-of-way. We continue to evaluate that. There  
9 may be areas where it should be narrower -- there  
10 may be areas where the route should be narrower.  
11 That's part of what the record that we're building  
12 is.

13 But we asked the applicants to -- within  
14 the much larger route to identify what we called a  
15 feasible 125-foot right-of-way. That doesn't mean  
16 that's necessarily where the line would go along  
17 that route, but it provides an initial look at what  
18 appears to be, from the outset, an engineering -- a  
19 route that's feasible to construct from an  
20 engineering perspective and allows us to compare  
21 across all the different criteria to compare those  
22 routes.

23 And the criteria that we looked at, that  
24 we compared on the routes, are -- there are 21  
25 criteria. Aesthetics, air quality, geology and

1 soils, water resources, floodplains, wetlands,  
2 biological resources, species of special concern --  
3 which are threatened and endangered species or  
4 biologically significant communities -- cultural  
5 resources, land use, socioeconomic, environmental  
6 justice, recreation and tourism, agricultural,  
7 forestry, mining, community services, utility  
8 systems, traffic and transportation, safety and  
9 health, and noise.

10 There are paper copies of the EIS  
11 available on the side for you to look at. As I  
12 mentioned, we have a limited number of CD copies we  
13 can send you away with. If questions come up later,  
14 there are hard copies available at local libraries.  
15 There are also copies of them -- if you have  
16 Internet access, you can look at the EIS on our  
17 website. Our website also has information on the  
18 process generally.

19 Coming back, the intent or the focus on  
20 tonight's meeting is to try to make sure that the  
21 information contained in the EIS is, to the best of  
22 our ability, accurate and complete. I'd ask you to  
23 focus your comments tonight on the content of the  
24 draft EIS, and specifically the accuracy and  
25 completeness of the data.

1 We'll take oral comments. Stephanie will  
2 have a brief presentation. We'll take oral comments  
3 after that. I don't know if anybody -- there were  
4 green cards at the back, and if you gave those to  
5 somebody we'll take those speakers first.

6 I'm sorry. I forget to introduce our  
7 court reporter here. She's here, she's taking a  
8 transcript of the meeting. To provide an accurate  
9 public record, we'd ask you to please use the  
10 microphone, to state and spell your name, to speak  
11 clearly so that she can hear and that we have an  
12 accurate record, because I'm the one who goes back  
13 and I listen -- or, fortunately, I can look at the  
14 transcript now. I don't have to listen to many  
15 hours of tape recordings. But that's helpful to me  
16 if you can speak clearly so she has an accurate  
17 record. We can get your comments and respond to  
18 those in the final.

19 I ask you also, and I'm sure you will, to  
20 be respectful of everyone here. I imagine a number  
21 of people have very strong opinions about what they  
22 think about the line, where they think it would  
23 be -- where they think it would best be, and other  
24 people have just as strong and just as heartfelt  
25 opinions about -- that may differ from yours. So

1 please be respectful.

2 I'd ask you to try to limit your comments  
3 to five minutes in order to allow everybody a chance  
4 to speak. Christine will be preparing transcripts  
5 and those will be available for review.

6 And, again, at that back table there are  
7 comment sheets. I would encourage you to take those  
8 sheets with you. We're accepting written comments  
9 until April 26th. If you comment tonight, if you  
10 think of something later, please do send your  
11 comments in.

12 You can send multiple comments in. I  
13 know sometimes you leave and -- or at least for me,  
14 I leave the meetings and things occur to me later or  
15 you talk to your neighbors and there are other  
16 questions or things that you want to know about,  
17 provide the comments.

18 You don't have to use this sheet. You  
19 can fax them, you can e-mail, you send it to me in  
20 the mail, but I encourage you to take this sheet  
21 just because it does provide the contact information  
22 in one fairly concise form. My address is -- my  
23 cards, I believe, are at the back. You can mail or  
24 e-mail your comments to me. You can also submit  
25 them directly on our website. Again, the comment --

1 the written comment period closes at 4:30 on  
2 April 26th.

3 I'm going to turn it over to Stephanie  
4 now, and then we'll open it up for comments.

5 MS. STRENGTH: Good evening, everybody.  
6 Can you all hear me in the back? Yes. My name's  
7 Stephanie Strength. I'm with the U.S. Department of  
8 Agriculture, Rural Utilities Service. We're part of  
9 Rural Development, formerly known as REA.

10 We are working with the state of  
11 Minnesota to jointly prepare this EIS so that you  
12 don't see multiple versions of that document and  
13 multiple editions of this meeting to comment in.  
14 We're trying to simplify the process and work  
15 together.

16 In addition to being joint agencies, as  
17 the lead with the state, we also have several  
18 cooperating agencies. In this case, we have the  
19 Chippewa National Forest, Forest Service, and the  
20 Corps of Engineers, as well as Leech Lake Band of  
21 Ojibwe.

22 For the Forest Service and the Leech Lake  
23 Band of Ojibwe the involvement is due to the  
24 crossing of their land, and so there is a permit  
25 that would have to be issued to allow that for any

1 of the routes chosen. For the Corps of Engineers,  
2 their involvement is due to the potential impacts to  
3 wetlands or to waters in the United States.

4 RUS is involved because we provide  
5 financing assistance to rural utilities to provide  
6 power, water, other utilities at a lower interest  
7 rate to rural America. In this case, Minnkota Power  
8 Cooperative has approached us for financing  
9 assistance.

10 If we were to agree to finance, that's  
11 considered a federal action. And we have to do  
12 what -- in this case, an environmental impact  
13 statement to meet the requirements under the  
14 National Environmental Policy Act. The other  
15 federal agencies also have the same requirement due  
16 to their permit activities, which is why we're all  
17 working together to do this environmental impact  
18 statement.

19 There have been several opportunities for  
20 public involvement so far with the state through the  
21 scoping process and now today with the draft EIS.  
22 Any of the comments received will be viewed by all  
23 of the federal agencies, as well as the state, and  
24 considered and addressed in the final environmental  
25 impact statement.

1 After the final EIS is released for  
2 review, there will also be notices and a chance for  
3 the public to review. After that process, after the  
4 release of the FEIS, the final environmental impact  
5 statement, is where the state and the federal  
6 process splits a little bit. They go through a  
7 process where the judge makes a recommendation and  
8 it goes on and then the PUC makes a decision.

9 In the case of the agencies, each of the  
10 agencies will need to make -- the federal agencies  
11 will each need to make a decision on what they would  
12 agree to permit or, in our case, to finance, as well  
13 as conditions on how this project could be  
14 constructed. So each of the agencies would publish  
15 that decision. It's called a record of decision.  
16 It would be in the newspapers where tonight's  
17 meeting was located as well as the Federal Register.

18 In addition to the National Environmental  
19 Policy Act which requires this environmental impact  
20 statement, there's also something called Section  
21 106. And that is where we take comments -- there's  
22 a public involvement part of that where we take  
23 comments on cultural resource impacts, historic  
24 properties.

25 If you comment in the EIS process, your

### Commenter 37 – Clarence Johnson

19

1 comments will also be considered in that review. So  
2 you don't need to worry about commenting in more  
3 than one location, they will be shared throughout  
4 all the agencies and meet all the requirements.

5 Suzanne has given you the OES website.  
6 There's also RUS's website where you can see the  
7 direct links to documents that we have put out and  
8 the notices that have been put out by the federal  
9 agencies and where you can download the documents  
10 like the draft environmental impact statement.

11 You can also comment directly to me. The  
12 one-page handout that has USDA at the top of it, on  
13 the back is located all of my contact information as  
14 well as the website. And as she had mentioned, you  
15 can e-mail them in, fax them, send them by mail, you  
16 can even call.

17 Yeah. That's the last one. So I'll turn  
18 it over to you, and we'll go to the comment period.

19 MS. STEINHAUER: Thank you.

20 The only person that I have who's  
21 preregistered is Clarence Johnson. Either come up  
22 to the mic or I can bring the mic out to you.

23 MR. JOHNSON: I've only got a short  
24 statement -- or a question, I should say.

25 MS. STEINHAUER: Can you say --

### Responses

**Commenter 37 – Clarence Johnson**

1 MR. JOHNSON: And it's not on the EIS.  
2 UNIDENTIFIED: He's got a bad leg.  
3 MR. JOHNSON: The question I had was, in  
4 looking at the routes I was wondering, why that  
5 northern route instead of a direct route that would  
6 be more economical?  
7 UNIDENTIFIED: That's what we're all  
8 wondering.  
9 MS. STEINHAUER: (Indicating throughout.)  
10 Thanks. As I mentioned earlier, the applicants  
11 applied for two alternative routes generally in the  
12 central corridor. Based on the scoping comments  
13 that we received and the agency review, we -- there  
14 were some issues identified with some of those  
15 routes that the agencies determined it would be  
16 better to have something that was different to look  
17 at and provide a comparison.  
18 The scoping process for RUS is a little  
19 bit different, and in that process the applicants  
20 looked at a number of different larger study areas  
21 called corridors. One was in this Highway 2 area,  
22 one was generally in this northern area. And then  
23 there's two -- there was one along Highway 200 and  
24 then one that went further south. In the RUS  
25 scoping decision, which is available on their

**Responses**

**Comment 37-1**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment. A discussion of the scoping process appears in Section 1.4 of the EIS.

37-1

**Commenter 38 – Rich Morine**

21

1 website, they go into a little bit more detail about  
2 why these alternatives and why this was included.

3 And I'm going to open it up to hands now.  
4 If you could please identify yourself and spell your  
5 name so the court reporter --

6 MR. MORINE: Rich Morine, M-O-R-I-N-E.

38-1

7 I was just curious why, like, you got the  
8 yellow route going close to Blackduck, and then down  
9 to the east of that you've got the purple route  
10 going through and back up again. And that one goes  
11 very close to my land. Of course, it's going to be  
12 different for everybody, it's close for some and far  
13 for others. But it seems funny that it would drop  
14 down and go back up again.

15 MS. STEINHAUER: Thanks. The purple  
16 lines that show up on your map -- that are on the  
17 overview maps are, we call them alternative  
18 segments, and there are a number of them that are  
19 considered in the EIS just to develop some  
20 alternatives around areas that may have routing  
21 issues.

38-2

22 MR. MORINE: I don't like that  
23 alternative.

24 MS. STEINHAUER: Okay. Thank you.

25 Yes. If you can please identify yourself

**Responses**

**Comment 38-1**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS.

**Comment 38-2**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS.

**Commenter 39 – Dean Sedgwick**

22

1 and spell your name so that the court reporter can  
2 hear, please.

3 MR. SEDGWICK: Sure. Dean Sedgwick,  
4 S-E-D-G-W-I-C-K.

5 When you looked at your justification for  
6 this line, did you consider any energy generation  
7 sources as a reason for this line?

8 MS. STEINHAUER: The Minnesota route  
9 approval process -- there are two processes.  
10 There's the route, which is where it's going to go  
11 and how it will be constructed, and then there's  
12 also something called a certificate of need.

13 When utilities propose to construct a  
14 line they have to demonstrate that there's a need  
15 for it. They -- part of what's required for the  
16 utilities to supply and also for the state to look  
17 at is what other kind of alternatives, and there is  
18 a generation alternative that was considered.

19 That summarized -- why we did not pursue  
20 that alternative, that's summarized in, I believe  
21 it's Chapter 2 of the EIS. But the Commission made  
22 a determination that there is a need for  
23 transmission and then that need cannot be met by  
24 adding generation. The project doesn't include any  
25 generation.

**Responses**

**Comment 39-1**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment. A discussion of generation alternatives considered but not evaluated in the EIS appears in Section 2.3.1 of the EIS.

39-1

1           In some cases, there are other  
2 transmission lines which are constructed in order to  
3 provide an outlet for a particular generation  
4 source. This line has been proposed and the Public  
5 Utilities Commission approved it because of the need  
6 for reliability in the Greater Bemidji/Northern  
7 Minnesota area.

8           MS. STRENGTH: And for the federal  
9 agencies, there was a preliminary document prepared,  
10 it's also on the RUS website, where -- at the very  
11 beginning where we start when a project comes to us  
12 is first they tell us there's a problem. That's  
13 what the need is. We need to demonstrate what this  
14 problem is. Then there are the ways to meet this  
15 problem, to fix it.

16           And first, you have to look at, can you  
17 do things like generation, can you do things like  
18 conservation, or is it something like transmission  
19 that's necessary. Then if transmission is  
20 determined necessary, which was demonstrated in the  
21 document of our agency, what size and then where  
22 should it go. And then the final decision to be  
23 made after you decide where it should go is how it  
24 should be constructed.

25           So we've tried to lay out all of these

## Responses

**Commenter 39 – Dean Sedgwick**

24

1 decisions through the different documents on the  
2 website and would welcome, you know, any input on  
3 that.

4 MS. STEINHAUER: Yes.

5 MR. SEDGWICK: Same person. When you  
6 look at this routing, you have the right to  
7 condemnation. Why would you be looking at all of  
8 the alternatives when you could basically pick the  
9 cheapest, lowest-cost alternative and address the  
10 environment issues and then just condemn the  
11 property and build the line?

12 What's the purpose of going through some  
13 of these options? And you've already eliminated one  
14 option, so why would you not just focus on the one  
15 main corridor and follow through on that?

16 MS. STEINHAUER: When the Commission  
17 makes their route determination, they need to  
18 evaluate -- I believe there are 14 different  
19 criteria and provide values for all of them.  
20 There -- they weigh them all. There are a number of  
21 different factors, cost is one of them, and  
22 environment and social impacts are other concerns.  
23 They need to develop a record. They have to have a  
24 rational base for their decision. So what there is  
25 in the record so far are some alternatives for them

**Responses**

**Comment 39-2**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment.

39-2

**Commenter 39 – Dean Sedgwick**

25

1 to consider.

2 Back to your question of condemnation.

3 The route that's approved by the Public Utilities  
4 Commission does provide the applicants with -- give  
5 them eminent domain. In order to pursue that, the  
6 applicants must first approach the landowner and try  
7 to reach a negotiated settlement with them on an  
8 easement, which is a use for a portion of the  
9 property. If they can't reach a negotiated  
10 arrangement with them, they can then proceed to  
11 eminent domain proceedings.

12 Another thing that is somewhat unique to  
13 transmission lines of this size, for transmission  
14 lines of over 200 kilovolts, which this is, the  
15 owner can request that the utility buy not just the  
16 easement, but the parcel outright. And there's some  
17 limitations to that, but it's called the Buy the  
18 Farm provision. It's in statute.

19 MR. SEDGWICK: Why didn't you just move  
20 this right up to 345 or some larger voltage? As  
21 long as you're bringing in power and reliability  
22 into that area, why did you pick just 245 kV (sic)?

23 MS. STEINHAUER: The applicants did their  
24 engineering studies and that's what they believe is  
25 needed. When the Commission and RUS engineering

**Responses**

**Comment 39-3**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment.

39-3

**Commenter 40 – Rich Morine; Commenter 41 – Vernon Beighley**

**Responses**

1 reviewed that application, I think they agreed that  
2 230 is the appropriate voltage.

3 If other people have questions, I want to  
4 provide them with that.

40-1

5 MR. MORINE: I just wanted to add, I sit  
6 here and I look at that purple -- around town, we  
7 talk about rational, that goes right through all  
8 kinds of farm ground and close to homes. And to me,  
9 that wouldn't be rational at all when you go close  
10 to town and where it's not going to hurt property  
11 values. Thank you.

12 MS. STEINHAUER: Thank you.

13 MR. BEIGHLEY: Vernon Beighley,  
14 B-E-I-G-H-L-E-Y.

41-1

15 Question one is how many houses -- homes,  
16 actual homes, are impacted by a line on these  
17 proposed routes? I know the yellow route has a  
18 number of homes, especially on that east road and  
19 stuff going out of Blackduck that is going to be  
20 impacted, even a little to the south, which is where  
21 I'm located.

41-2

22 There are routes that they could take to  
23 go south further that would put them basically  
24 through either federal or state forestry land, which  
25 is public land. I know the forestry don't like to

**Comment 40-1**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS.

**Comment 41-1**

The number of homes located in proximity to the Route Alternatives appears in Table 3.11-10 of the EIS. A discussion of impacts to homes and structures appears in Section 3.11.2 of the EIS.

**Comment 41-2**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS.

**Commenter 41 – Vernon Beighley**

41-3

1 give up land, but neither does anybody else.  
2 And this is public land. I'm just  
3 wondering why they didn't propose a route  
4 cross-country and bypass the impact on individuals  
5 and their livelihood. Which a lot of their  
6 livelihood is invested in their homes, which a  
7 transmission line right at your front door is going  
8 to decrease property values.

41-4

9 And like I talked to the one gentleman  
10 back here (indicating) earlier, if the transmission  
11 line goes across the road from me, I have no real  
12 legal recourse to recoup what I would lose in  
13 property value of my home. And there's going to be  
14 a lot of other people in the same boat I'm in, which  
15 is unfortunate.

41-5

16 The second question is, I'm opposed to  
17 the yellow line -- or route, how many homes are  
18 impacted going either the blue or the red? You said  
19 a lot of that is following existing right-of-ways  
20 already, are a lot less homes involved?

21 MS. STEINHAUER: Thank you. With respect  
22 to the number of homes potentially affected, I can't  
23 provide you right now with the number of homes.  
24 What we did is we looked -- and we can go over the  
25 EIS later. All of the routes would be within --

**Responses**

**Comment 41-3**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS. Sections 2.1.2, 2.2, and 2.3 discuss the scoping process for deciding which alternatives were evaluated in the EIS. The OES and RUS scoping decisions are included in Appendix A. A discussion of potential impacts to property values appears in Section 3.11.2 of the EIS.

**Comment 41-4**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS. A discussion of potential impacts to property values appears in Section 3.11.2 of the EIS.

**Comment 41-5**

Please see response to Comment 41-1, which addresses the same concern.

**Commenter 41 – Vernon Beighley**

1       there are homes within some number of feet within  
2       all of those proposed center lines.  
3               Those homes can be clustered in certain  
4       areas and that's why we tried to look at what they  
5       called the feasible right-of-way to see if moving  
6       that right-of-way -- which may have been good from  
7       an engineering perspective or may have, for  
8       instance, avoided species, if moving that  
9       right-of-way would potentially minimize the impact  
10       to homes.  
11               But I can't provide you with the number  
12       of homes, the comparison, right now. We can look at  
13       the EIS later, that is addressed.  
14               MR. BEIGHLEY: Just if -- that  
15       west-to-east route between Blackduck/Alvood, if  
16       that were to drop down through forestry land, you  
17       would impact almost zero amount of homes and it  
18       would be on government land without invading upon  
19       the private citizen. I just question why they  
20       haven't considered that.  
21               UNIDENTIFIED: For an alternate.  
22               MS. STEINHAUER: I'll take that as a  
23       comment. The routes that were developed tried to  
24       follow existing rights-of-way. They are not the  
25       same as existing rights-of-way, but we did try to

41-6

**Responses**

**Comment 41-6**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and is included in the record for this EIS. Route Alternative 3 was developed to follow existing corridor to the extent possible. The section between Blackduck and Alvwood would primarily follow existing roadway rights-of-way.

**Commenter 41 – Vernon Beighley;  
Commenter 42 – Greg Sorheim**

1 consolidate them. That as one of the factors that  
2 the Commission looks at.  
3 MR. BEIGHLEY: But you're sure making an  
4 impact on a lot of people by putting it along  
5 that -- a main road where there are houses when they  
6 could be avoided.  
7 MS. STEINHAUER: Thank you.  
8 MR. SORHEIM: Greg Sorheim,  
9 S-O-R-H-E-I-M.  
10 I'm just wondering what's the cost  
11 difference between going up and over and the  
12 straight-away routes that go through? And also, the  
13 pipeline just got done running through there, why  
14 can't they go over the top of that, the  
15 right-of-ways are already there?  
16 MS. STEINHAUER: Thank you. With respect  
17 to the cost differential, there are tables in the  
18 EIS. I believe for these two routes the costs are  
19 pretty similar. I think they were 68 or 69 million,  
20 something in that range. Less than 70, between 65  
21 and 70, and then the cost for the longer route is  
22 99 million.  
23 With respect to the pipeline  
24 rights-of-way, the transmission can't go directly  
25 over a pipeline right-of-way, but the routes that

**Responses**

**Comment 42-1**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment.

**Comment 42-2**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment.

42-1

42-2

**Commenter 43 – Vernon Beighley;  
Commenter 44 – Sally Sedgwick**

43-1

1 are down there do parallel pipeline rights-of-way,  
2 and so that is one thing that we're looking at.

3 MR. BEIGHLEY: What's the reason for  
4 that, why can't they go over pipeline right-of-way?

5 MS. STEINHAUER: There's a safety issue  
6 in the conduction -- conductivity issue with the  
7 metal in the pipeline and electricity.

8 MS. SEDGWICK: Sally Sedgwick.

44-1

9 I have a couple of questions. One is --  
10 and I apologize if this is was addressed before I  
11 came in, in the EIS was the preferred -- a preferred  
12 route identified?

13 And the second question is, if you look  
14 at the yellow route between 46 and 2, that's all  
15 territory that is neither Minnkota or Minnesota  
16 Power. And it seems to me that kind of -- if  
17 Minnesota Power and Minnkota are the applicants, why  
18 are they sending it through -- why would they even  
19 consider sending it through such a long route over  
20 territory that isn't served by them?

44-2

21 MS. STEINHAUER: Thank you. The first  
22 question about the draft EIS, for the state process  
23 we do not in the EIS identify a preferred  
24 alternative. The applicants have identified for the  
25 contested case hearing a preferred alternative.

**Responses**

**Comment 43-1**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment. A discussion of the potential impacts of the Project on pipelines appears in Section 3.18.2 of the EIS.

**Comment 44-1**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment. Please see response to Comment 31-1, which addresses the same concern.

**Comment 44-2**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment.

**Commenter 44 – Sally Sedgwick**

31

1           That's not part -- all of their -- their  
2 preferred alternative is a mixture of Routes 1 and  
3 2, and all of these segments are addressed -- there  
4 is information in the EIS. But the EIS -- for the  
5 OES, we don't -- we're not an advocacy. It's not  
6 our project. Our objective is to build a record.  
7 So we will not make a recommendation in the EIS.

8           And then with respect to the -- I believe  
9 you're talking about this portion (indicating) of  
10 the yellow line not being in the service territory.  
11 It does follow an existing Great River Energy 69 kV  
12 line. Utility -- with your high voltage  
13 transmission, it's not always exactly in their  
14 service territory.

15           MS. SEDGWICK: But Minnkota isn't Great  
16 River Energy.

17           MS. STEINHAEUER: That is correct. The  
18 reason why there's a state permitting process is a  
19 recognition that transmission lines above a certain  
20 size meet a state need, and in order to meet that it  
21 may mean that it goes outside of a particular  
22 service territory. But I'll take your comment.  
23 Thank you.

24           I see you, I want to make sure that other  
25 people have an opportunity to comment.

**Responses**

**Commenter 45 – Dean Sedgwick**

1 MR. SEDGWICK: Thank you. Dean Sedgwick,  
2 again.

3 What is the state need for this line,  
4 really? And then number two, what role does,  
5 really, the PUC and the OES and DOC play in choosing  
6 this overall line? Those acronyms, so everybody  
7 knows, Public Utilities Commission, the Office of  
8 Energy Security, and then the Department of  
9 Commerce. And they're pretty much related, so maybe  
10 you can explain that.

11 MS. STEINHAEUER: I believe the first  
12 question is what role does the state have in  
13 determining the need for a project or the route.  
14 For transmission lines over 100 kilovolts, which  
15 this project is, the permit -- they can't be  
16 constructed without a permit from the Minnesota  
17 Public Utilities Commission.

18 The Public Utilities Commission is  
19 comprised of five Commissioners. They are appointed  
20 by the governor. They serve staggered terms so  
21 they're not all appointed by the same governor and  
22 they are bipartisan.

23 The Minnesota Department of Commerce has  
24 two functions that provide advice to the Minnesota  
25 Public Utilities Commission. One is they serve

**Responses**

**Comment 45-1**

A discussion of Project purpose and need appears in Sections 1.1, 1.2.6, and 2.1.1 of the EIS.

**Comment 45-2**

A discussion of the role of the PUC and RUS in the EIS and environmental review process appears in Section 1.3 of the EIS.

45-1

45-2

**Commenter 45 – Dean Sedgwick**

33

1 as -- the Office of Energy Security that I work for,  
2 or Energy Facilities Permitting group, develops --  
3 as I mentioned earlier, develops the record on  
4 routes and sites for transmission lines and power  
5 projects.

6 We provide -- we staff the meetings like  
7 this to get public comments and to develop the --  
8 review documents and develop the record for the  
9 Commission to make that decision on. There's  
10 another -- excuse me, another branch of the Office  
11 of Energy Security that serves as advocates for  
12 ratepayers on rate cases and on determining the  
13 need.

14 When the Commission determines there's a  
15 need for a project, it's understood then that the  
16 ratepayers will pay for that project.

17 MR. SEDGWICK: And the other part.

18 MS. STEINHAUER: I'm sorry. I'm not very  
19 quick on my feet, if you could please repeat the  
20 other question.

21 MR. SEDGWICK: What's the real benefit to  
22 the area for the construction of this line in either  
23 of those corridors?

24 MS. STEINHAUER: All of the lines  
25 would -- by linking the Wilton Substation and the

**Responses**

**Comment 45-3**

A discussion of Project purpose and need appears in Sections 1.1, 1.2.6, and 2.1.1 of the EIS.

45-3

**Commenter 45 – Dean Sedgwick;  
Commenter 46 – Vernon Beighley**

34

1 Boswell Substation would provide reliability of the  
2 bulk power system. Some may do it better than  
3 others, and that's one of the factors that the  
4 Commission will consider.

5 MR. SEDGWICK: But at this point you  
6 don't have a reliability issue, so what reliability  
7 issues are they trying to address?

8 MS. STEINHAUER: That's been -- that is  
9 summarized generally in the environmental impact  
10 statement and it's been addressed in more detail in  
11 the need determination.

12 The utilities are responsible for  
13 providing reliable electric service to all of their  
14 customers. Part of that responsibility is they have  
15 to start planning and looking at not just what the  
16 need is now, but what the need will be in the  
17 future. When they demonstrate the need, they have  
18 to provide forecasts of what the electric load is  
19 and provide justification for the forecast.

20 MR. BEIGHLEY: Vern Beighley again.

21 I just did a quick mental calculation in  
22 my head just trying to count up how many houses are  
23 involved between Blackduck and just the county line,  
24 I believe the number is 27 or 28 homes.

25 Most of those homes lie within about

**Responses**

**Commenter 46 – Vernon Beighley**

35

46-1

1 250 feet of the road, there's a couple of them that  
2 sit back a little further. But if you're going to  
3 be putting that right along the road, this  
4 transmission line just about sits on people's homes.

5 There was one other thing, too, but I  
6 forgot it right now. So I'll think on that again.

7 MS. STEINHAUER: Thank you.

8 There are certain electric standards that  
9 the utilities have to build to. They cannot  
10 construct a transmission line over people's homes,  
11 that's one of the routing factors that we look at,  
12 and we'd certainly weigh whether homes would need to  
13 be moved.

14 I mean, in some cases you may be able to  
15 adjust the route of the line and in some cases you  
16 may not be able to, and that would be a very serious  
17 factor that would be considered by the Commission.

46-2

18 MR. BEIGHLEY: Now I remembered. Just  
19 out of curiosity, have you calculated what it costs  
20 to purchase the right-of-way for this line into your  
21 figures that you already quoted, and if you have,  
22 what kind of costs are you talking about reimbursing  
23 landowners along this route?

24 MS. STEINHAUER: The answer to the first  
25 part of your question is the costs that I quoted are

**Responses**

**Comment 46-1**

A discussion of distance to homes appears in Section 3.11.2 of the EIS, specifically Table 3.11-10.

**Comment 46-2**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment.

**Commenter 46 – Vernon Beighley;  
Commenter 47 – Greg Sorheim; Commenter 48 – Katie Haws**

1 just the construction and permitting costs, they do  
2 not include the acquisitions of right-of-way. The  
3 Commission does not adjudicate or get involved in  
4 the right-of-way negotiations between the utility  
5 and the landowner. There are representatives from  
6 the utilities and you can talk to them about how  
7 that's calculated and what the payments may be.

46-3

8 MR. BEIGHLEY: But you have no idea that  
9 you could enlighten us with what it is?

10 MS. STEINHAUER: I do not know what the  
11 going rate is.

47-1

12 MR. SORHEIM: Who pays for this line,  
13 this extra \$30 million involved? Greg Sorheim. Is  
14 that -- that's the taxpayers, right, that pay for  
15 this extra 30 million?

16 MS. STEINHAUER: It would be the  
17 ratepayers.

18 MR. SORHEIM: Um-hmm. Okay.

48-1

19 MS. HAWS: Katie Haws, H-A-W-S,  
20 K-A-T-I-E.

21 I was just wondering if the Forest  
22 Service had expressed a preference for either of the  
23 three routes?

24 MS. STEINHAUER: I'll have to let the  
25 Forest Service answer that question.

**Responses**

**Comment 46-3**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment.

**Comment 47-1**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment.

**Comment 48-1**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Thompson that appears directly below the comment.

**Commenter 49 – Dean Sedgwick**

37

1 MS. THOMPSON: This is Cathy Thompson.  
2 We have not selected a preferred route at this time.  
3 We're waiting for public comments and additional  
4 data at this time.

49-1

5 MR. SEDGWICK: Dean Sedgwick again.  
6 I'm a little confused at something. You  
7 come to a meeting and you propose a set of routes  
8 and you haven't selected a definite preferred route  
9 option. And then the forestry hasn't selected a  
10 route and yet we're, as people living in this area,  
11 probably much more impacted than most of the  
12 individuals that are associated with this process.

13 Yet you're in a position to basically  
14 decide how you want to route something that so far I  
15 haven't seen any verification that indicates that  
16 it's needed nor that the options were really, truly  
17 vetted out.

18 And yet, the forestry comes here -- and  
19 I've gone through this in other routing exercises  
20 and seen the forestry say yes, we don't want it on  
21 our property right away and pick a route, I mean,  
22 immediately. And why is it that in this case you  
23 can't come up with some firm definition so that the  
24 people here can have some idea as to what's really  
25 going to happen?

**Responses**

**Comment 49-1**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer and Ms. Strength that appears directly below the comment.

## Commenter 49 – Dean Sedgwick

38

1           In the case of where I live, which is  
2 east of 46, this routing goes right through our  
3 yard. It would probably go right through lakes,  
4 right on the edge of lakes, and there's no real  
5 easily buildable route that is an alternative if you  
6 choose that direction. And you'll probably wipe  
7 homesteads or houses out completely because of the  
8 width of this transmission corridor.

9           So I think it behooves the government  
10 entities who do have a very significant input into  
11 this to lay the cards on table and say, yeah, we  
12 would rather go this way or that way or none of the  
13 routes look good and describe what their rationale  
14 is.

15           But, you know, at this point in time, why  
16 have the meeting if nobody is willing to stand up  
17 and say, yeah, we really want this route because of  
18 these reasons?

19           MS. STEINHAUER: Thank you for your  
20 comment. I can certainly appreciate that. The  
21 position of the OES is that we don't advocate for a  
22 route. The contested case hearings that will be  
23 held, there will be one at Blackduck. I don't know  
24 the location.

25           The utilities have identified a preferred

## Responses

1 alternative generally in that Highway 2 area. They  
2 will be advocating for that route. I will not be  
3 advocating for a route, but I'll be asking questions  
4 to help develop the record. At that point, or any  
5 time between now and then, any member of the public  
6 or any agency can advocate for a route.

7 MS. STRENGTH: In terms of a federal  
8 perspective, there are, as she mentioned earlier,  
9 about 21 resource areas that we have to look at that  
10 there could be impacts to. And none of the agencies  
11 are going to make a premature decision before we've  
12 assessed those impacts and come to the public and  
13 put out the information and put out our analysis to  
14 make sure that we're not missing something along the  
15 way that would help us to make a better decision.

16 So I understand that it's frustrating to  
17 have so many steps in the process. But really, the  
18 purpose is to make the best decision possible. As I  
19 say, I don't live in your backyard so I don't know  
20 what's there, so we have to come out and find this  
21 information out. We have find out what studies are  
22 needed, we have to find out what information we  
23 still have to gather or if there's something that we  
24 have missed.

25 So I understand that it's a frustrating

## Responses

**Commenter 49 – Dean Sedgwick;  
Commenter 50 – Sally Sedgwick**

40

1 process at times, but it is done to try to make the  
2 best decision possible. Thank you.

3 MR. SEDGWICK: In response to that, has  
4 NERC or MISO or FERC or any of those groups come out  
5 and actually talked about the reliability needs for  
6 this line? Have you based your assessments on the  
7 need for this line from anything that you're seeing  
8 right now in terms of line reliability by MISO?

9 MS. STRENGTH: In terms of our agency,  
10 there are many steps they have to go through -- that  
11 the bar has to go through in order to justify a need  
12 for a project. And that's with all sorts of -- you  
13 know, MISO and FERC and industry standards as far as  
14 how they have to justify it.

15 They do long-term load forecasts over a  
16 certain period of time. There have been a lot of  
17 studies that have been done to justify the need for  
18 this project, and there's, you know, several  
19 preliminary studies on our website as well as on the  
20 OES's website that address it in great detail.

21 MS. STEINHAUER: Oh, I'm sorry.

22 MS. SEDGWICK: I'm Sally Sedgwick, again.

23 Just as a note to develop the record, the  
24 reason there is an existing transmission line along  
25 this northern route was told to us because that's

**Responses**

**Comment 49-2**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Strength that appears directly below the comment.

**Comment 50-1**

A discussion of the Federally Preferred Alternative appears in Sections 2 and 5 of the EIS.

49-2

50-1

Commenter 50 – Sally Sedgwick; Commenter 51 – Mark Michalek

Responses

50-1  
(cont.)

1 what the largest -- that's the route the largest  
2 landowner wanted, and that was the Forest Service.  
3 So it's very important how the Forest Service comes  
4 down, at least as far as the northern route.

5 MS. STEINHAUER: Thank you.

6 MR. MICALAK: Mark Michalek,  
7 M-I-C-H-A-L-E-K.

51-1

8 And if you've got an existing power line  
9 to run it by already, what are your setbacks from  
10 your power line to that one? If you've got the  
11 highway running on one side, it's most definitely  
12 got to be on the inside. So what would it be to an  
13 existing power line already, how far would you go  
14 further?

15 MS. STEINHAUER: The applicant's proposal  
16 for areas that would run along existing transmission  
17 lines would be to -- they've asked for a 125-foot  
18 right-of-way. There may be portions when that could  
19 be narrower but that's what they've asked for and  
20 that's what we'll start to question. And their  
21 proposal is to build it parallel to the existing  
22 transmission lines.

23 From our perspective, we need to develop  
24 a record to see if there are opportunities to build  
25 them on the same set of structures or to share

**Comment 51-1**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment.

Commenter 51 – Mark Michalek

42

1 right-of-way. There may be some paralleling, there  
2 may be some opportunity to slightly overlap, but  
3 we'd also want to develop a record to see if they  
4 could be constructed on the same set of structures  
5 and consolidate those rights-of-way to some extent.

6 MR. MICALEK: But you'd never go towards  
7 the highway, would you, there being that  
8 right-of-way?

9 MS. STEINHAUER: For --

10 MR. MICALEK: To go around homes versus  
11 moving homes or going over the top of homes, you  
12 certainly wouldn't go over the top of a house, would  
13 you?

14 MS. STEINHAUER: You can't construct over  
15 the top of the homes. The reason that the  
16 applicants have given for asking for a 1,000-foot  
17 right (sic) is to wiggle the lines around homes or  
18 to meet landowner preferences.

19 Generally the lines can't be  
20 constructed -- MnDOT's been very clear that on trunk  
21 highways they can't be constructed within  
22 right-of-way. There may be some opportunities on  
23 county roads to use some of the county right-of-way,  
24 and that's one thing we need to develop a better  
25 record of.

Responses

Cont. from  
51-1

**Commenter 52 – Vernon Beighley**

1 I want to make sure that people have the  
2 opportunity to speak and to offer comments tonight,  
3 but I also want to respect your time. We'll be  
4 available afterwards to try to answer questions and  
5 we can go over some of the information that's in the  
6 EIS, if that's helpful to you. And then written  
7 comments we'll take until April 26th.

8 Is there anyone else, I'm going to --

9 MR. BEIGHLEY: I'm Vern Beighley. I  
10 would like to know how many homes are impacted  
11 within a quarter of a mile of the power line on each  
12 of the routes that you've done, and you must have  
13 that somewhere in your records.

14 MS. STEINHAUER: I'd be happy to go over  
15 that in the EIS. I don't have the figures off the  
16 top of my head.

17 MR. BEIGHLEY: Because I would like to  
18 know, and also your little alternative routes, how  
19 many homes are impacted there as well versus the  
20 proposed routes.

21 MS. STEINHAUER: I'd be happy to go over  
22 that with you and then we can take a look at the  
23 EIS. That is in the record, and then if you want to  
24 take a look at that and you want to add some homes,  
25 that's the kind of comment that would be helpful to

**Responses**

**Comment 52-1**

A discussion of the number of homes within certain distances of the feasible ROW for each Route Alternative appears in Table 3.11-10.

52-1

**Commenter 53 – Mark Michalek; Commenter 54 – Dean Sedgwick**

**Responses**

53-1

1 us in developing that.  
2 MR. MICHALEK: Mark Michalek. How do you  
3 ask people that have lived there all their lives to  
4 move?

5 MS. STEINHAUER: I think to the extent  
6 possible, we try to route around people's homes.  
7 But all of the routes evaluated would come near  
8 somebody's home. I think it's probably fair to say  
9 that if there was a real easy, clean route it  
10 probably would have been constructed by now, and  
11 that's why we're in this evaluation process.

12 I understand how frustrating it is for  
13 you, but there are a number of factors that we  
14 need to -- that we need to bring to the Commission  
15 to consider and allow them to weigh.

16 MR. SEDGWICK: Thank you. Dean Sedgwick  
17 again.

54-1

18 Did you consider any types of advanced  
19 technologies instead of the traditional, just 230 kV  
20 lines, overhead building? I mean, did you look at  
21 anything? If energy density is the problem that  
22 you're dealing with, how much additional looks did  
23 you give to other technologies that have been  
24 developed recently?

25 MS. STEINHAUER: Thank you. In the need

**Comment 53-1**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS. A description of the property acquisition process appears in Section 2.4.3 of the EIS.

**Comment 54-1**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment. A discussion of generation alternative considered but not evaluated in the EIS appears in Section 2.3.1.

**Commenter 55 – Vernon Beighley**

45

1 evaluation, again, it's summarized in some of the  
2 RUS studies. And in the EIS we looked at  
3 generation, we looked at demand-side management. We  
4 didn't -- there aren't, to my knowledge and nobody's  
5 brought to the record thus far, advanced  
6 transmission technologies that are commercially  
7 viable at this scale.

8 Any other comments?

55-1 | 9 MR. BEIGHLEY: Do you know what type  
10 you're going with? One pole or two poles or metal  
11 ones, what are you going with?

12 MS. STEINHAUER: The applicants have  
13 proposed for the majority of the line the two-pole  
14 or H-frame structures. Those would, for the most  
15 part, probably be wood. They'd be in the range of  
16 70 to 100 feet tall.

17 They've also proposed as an alternative  
18 the single-pole structures, which would most likely  
19 be metal. They'd be -- that's the illustration on  
20 the top (indicating), and they would most likely be  
21 metal. They may be -- there are a number of  
22 different finishes available, but most likely it  
23 will be galvanized, which is the shiny, or what's  
24 called a COR-TEN finish, which is the brown, kind of  
25 rusty -- people don't like it when I call it rusty,

**Responses**

**Comment 55-1**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment. A discussion of Project structures appears in Section 2.4.1 of the EIS.

**Commenter 55 – Vernon Beighley**

46

1 but the brown metal.

2 MR. BEIGHLEY: Do you ever get in places  
3 where you put your local company lines below yours,  
4 the same pole?

5 MS. STEINHAUER: The question was are  
6 there instances where you'd put the local company --  
7 or the lower voltage distribution or lower  
8 voltage transmission lines on the same poles, and  
9 yes, there are some instances where that happens.  
10 And that would be something that the Commission may  
11 recommend.

12 Comments, going once, going twice, going  
13 three times?

14 And as I mentioned, we are available  
15 afterwards and we'll try to answer your questions.  
16 Please take some of the material and the comment  
17 sheets. We would appreciate written comments, and  
18 those will all be part of the record. The comment  
19 deadline closes April 26th.

20 Thank you very much.

21 (Public comment concluded.)  
22  
23  
24  
25

**Responses**

**Comment 55-2**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment.

55-2

PUBLIC COMMENTS

THURSDAY, MARCH 18, 2010  
6:00 p.m.

In the Matter of the Application for a Route Permit for  
the Bemidji-Grand Rapids 230 kV Transmission Project

PUC Docket Number: E017, E015, ET6/TL-07-1327

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I N D E X

SPEAKER	PAGE
2 Stephanie Strength	15
Joe Michaletz	20
3 Darrell Magoon	21
Kenn Mitchell	22
4 Elizabeth Sherman	26
Vikki Howard	33
5 Shirley Young	38
Barry Babcock	41
6 Greg Chester	45
Becky Knowles	48
7 Steve Griep	54
Nicole Beauliao	55
8 Shirley Young	58
Elizabeth Sherman	59
9 John Green (phonetic)	60
Greg Chester	61
10 John Green	63
Elizabeth Sherman	64
11 Becky Knowles	66
Sydney Harper	69
12 Susan Indieke	70
John Green	71
13 Shirley Young	72
Elizabeth Sherman	73

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1 MS. STEINHAUER: Good evening. Thank you  
2 very much for coming to the meeting tonight. I  
3 appreciate your interest in the project.

4 My name is Suzanne Steinhauer. I'm with  
5 the Minnesota Office of Energy Security. I'm  
6 representing here the Minnesota Public Utilities  
7 Commission, which, for a transmission line of this  
8 size to be constructed in Minnesota, it requires a  
9 permit from the Public Utilities Commission.

10 We're at the public information meeting  
11 on the draft environmental impact statement for the  
12 proposed Bemidji-Grand Rapids 230 kV transmission  
13 line.

14 It was working.

15 UNIDENTIFIED: There it goes.

16 MS. STEINHAUER: Okay. The purpose of  
17 this meeting this evening is to provide an  
18 opportunity for the public to ask questions and  
19 provide comment on the completeness and accuracy on  
20 the draft environmental impact statement. The draft  
21 environmental impact statement was prepared jointly  
22 to meet both federal agency needs and the Minnesota  
23 Public Utilities Commission needs. We both require  
24 the environmental impact statement be prepared for a  
25 project of this size, but the way that fits into the

1 decision-making process is a little bit different.

2 With me here tonight is  
3 Stephanie Strength from the USDA Rural Utilities  
4 Service. The RUS, or Rural Utilities Service, is  
5 the lead federal agency on the federal side of the  
6 project.

7 I also have Ray Kirsch, who's the  
8 gentleman in the blue sweater back there. He's my  
9 colleague at the Office of Energy Security, and he's  
10 here -- he can try to answer -- he can provide  
11 some information to you on the process, the  
12 Minnesota process.

13 I know that there are a number of other  
14 people representing the other federal agencies and  
15 the Band and I'll let Stephanie introduce them.  
16 Also with me tonight is Greg Poremba and  
17 Meghan Sweeney. They are with ERM Consulting.  
18 That's the firm we engaged to prepare the draft  
19 environmental impact statement.

20 And we also have here a court reporter,  
21 and her purpose tonight is to transcribe a complete  
22 and accurate record of the meeting and the comments  
23 received.

24 My role in the project and in the  
25 environmental review is to develop a complete record

1 for the Commission to make their decision on. In  
2 the state process, the EIS does not identify a  
3 preferred alternative. But my job is to provide  
4 a -- is to get that information out there into the  
5 record, which is one of the first things that the  
6 draft EIS does, and also to -- now that it's out  
7 there, receive comments from the members of the  
8 public, from agencies, from interested persons, and  
9 that becomes part of the record upon which the  
10 Commission makes their decision.

11 The proposed project, depending on the  
12 route selected, is between 60 and 113 miles of  
13 230 kV transmission line. We'll have a map up here  
14 a little bit later. There's also a map over on the  
15 other side of the room. The transmission line would  
16 extend from the Wilton substation, just located on  
17 the western edge of the project west of Bemidji, to  
18 the Boswell substation in Cohasset.

19 The project includes improvements to both  
20 the Wilton and Boswell substations. And depending  
21 on the route selected, the project may also expand  
22 or construct a substation in Cass Lake and/or add a  
23 breaker station -- which is essentially, for the  
24 purposes of you and I, another substation -- near  
25 Nary.

1 As I mentioned earlier, for transmission  
2 lines of this size, they can't be constructed in  
3 Minnesota without a permit from the Public Utilities  
4 Commission. A high voltage transmission line is  
5 considered to be anything over 100 kilovolts. This,  
6 again, is 230 kilovolts, so it falls into the  
7 mandatory EIS category.

8 The Commission must make their decision  
9 based on the record. There are a number of  
10 statutory requirements for things that they need to  
11 consider that are developed in more detail in the  
12 administrative role.

13 I'm going to walk you through -- this  
14 doesn't -- you do have a -- I don't know if you were  
15 able to pick up a handout sheet, this is included in  
16 the handout, but because it's reduced it's not  
17 necessarily visible. But I want to walk you through  
18 the Minnesota process -- review process.

19 The applicants, Otter Tail Power,  
20 Minnesota Power, and Minnkota Power Cooperative,  
21 submitted a route permit application to the Public  
22 Utilities Commission in the beginning of June 2008.  
23 The Commission accepted that application as  
24 complete, which basically means that the review and  
25 public information then -- the review starts, at the

1 end of June.

2 We were out here in the project area for  
3 scoping meetings in the summer, I believe it was  
4 August of 2008. Along the same time frame there was  
5 an advisory task force which was comprised of  
6 members of local units of government.

7 The purpose of the scoping phase, the  
8 scoping comment period, was to gather information  
9 and comments from the public and from agencies on  
10 the routes that should be considered in the  
11 environmental impact statement, and then effects  
12 that need to be evaluated.

13 As a result of the public comments that  
14 came in, the advisory task force recommendations,  
15 and then agency review, the OES issued a scoping  
16 decision in March of 2009. That outlined the routes  
17 that would be evaluated and the factors that would  
18 be discussed in the EIS. RUS also issued a scoping  
19 decision that met the federal needs.

20 In the intervening year we've been  
21 preparing the draft environmental impact statement.  
22 It's a large document, there were copies outside.  
23 And that I'll go over briefly sort of the things  
24 that we looked at, that's what we spent the last  
25 year preparing. That was released on February 23rd

1 of this year.

2 And that brings us to the -- I'm sorry.  
3 That brings us to the public comment period. The  
4 draft environmental impact statement, the public  
5 meetings, this is the last of five meetings that  
6 we've held on the project in the project area.

7 We will be taking oral comments here  
8 tonight. There are also written comments that we'll  
9 receive until April 26th. I just want to direct  
10 your attention to the comment forms that were  
11 available when you signed in. I would recommend  
12 that you take them, not because you need to follow  
13 this form, but it does provide the contact  
14 information, my e-mail and mail address, as well as  
15 the website where information on the project can be  
16 found.

17 Towards the end of the comment period,  
18 Minnesota also requires -- for projects of this size  
19 it's assumed that there will be some controversy and  
20 that there will be, perhaps, some difference of  
21 opinion about -- excuse me -- where the line should  
22 be and what factors should be included in the  
23 permit, any type of mitigation that should be  
24 included in the permit.

25 The EIS sort of begins to develop the

1 record on that, but the record is further developed  
2 in a process that's called a contested case hearing.  
3 We'll have meetings here in the project area  
4 April 21st through 23rd. There will be a meeting in  
5 Cass Lake, I don't know exactly where it will be.  
6 But if you did sign in on the sign-in sheet and  
7 checked the box, you'll get direct mail notice of  
8 that. Notice will also be provided in local  
9 newspapers.

10 The purpose of the contested case hearing  
11 is to further develop the record for the Commission  
12 to make their decision on. At that point, the  
13 applicants will advocate for what they believe is  
14 the best route. There are also opportunities for  
15 any member of the public or agencies also to  
16 advocate for what they believe is the best route  
17 and/or factors that they believe should be mitigated  
18 in the permit, any type of permit conditions that  
19 can be placed on the project. Conditions may be  
20 either related to construction or operation of the  
21 project.

22 After the close of comments on the draft  
23 environmental impact statement, all of the comments  
24 received -- that we've received orally at these  
25 meetings as well as any written comments received by

1 April 26th will be included in the final  
2 environmental impact statement. Those comments will  
3 be included and responded to in that document. The  
4 public hearing will also have a comment deadline, I  
5 don't know what that is yet.

6 Again, this is for the state process.  
7 All of that information, the final EIS, which  
8 includes the information in the draft, the comments  
9 received both orally and in writing, responses to  
10 those comments, the comments and testimony received  
11 during the public hearing, the contested case  
12 hearing, goes to the administrative law judge.

13 The administrative law judge reviews --  
14 all that information is called the record. He  
15 reviews the record and will make a recommendation to  
16 the Commission on which route should be selected and  
17 any type of permit conditions that should be  
18 included in the permit issued by the Public  
19 Utilities Commission.

20 This, again, just -- this slide just kind  
21 of briefly reiterates what I talked about. Again, I  
22 want to reiterate, and we'll keep coming back to  
23 this, written comments are due by April 26th. We  
24 would welcome oral comments tonight. I know even if  
25 you make a comment tonight, sometimes you may go

1 home or you may -- something else may occur to you,  
2 you may talk to neighbors and have other comments or  
3 questions that you want to add, you can do that as  
4 many times as you like, and all of those will be  
5 included and addressed in the final environmental  
6 impact statement.

7 And then moving forward, the dates again  
8 for the contested case hearing are April 21st  
9 through 23rd, which is the Wednesday through Friday  
10 before the comment period on the draft EIS closes.  
11 The final EIS will be issued -- we don't have a time  
12 frame on that. I expect it will be sometime in the  
13 summer. A lot of that depends on the comments that  
14 come in and we'll need to address those.

15 The EIS -- the draft EIS evaluated three  
16 route alternatives. They're shown on the map over  
17 to the side as the red, blue, and yellow  
18 alternatives. The applicant -- in their route  
19 permit application, the applicants asked the  
20 Commission to consider a route width of 1,000 feet,  
21 within which they would locate a narrower  
22 right-of-way.

23 Right-of-way or easement are used sort of  
24 interchangeably. That represents the area that's  
25 cleared and needs to be maintained as clear for

1 construction and operation of the project. The  
2 applicants have asked for a right-of-way of  
3 125 feet. That's something that the Commission will  
4 consider in their review of the project. There may  
5 be areas where they feel that 125 feet is  
6 appropriate, there may be areas, depending on the  
7 information that they review, that they believe a  
8 more narrow area needs to be defined.

9 Within that 1,000-foot route, in order  
10 to -- as I mentioned, it's a lot of area, 68, 69  
11 miles, 113 miles. Within that area we asked the  
12 applicants to identify a 125-foot right-of-way that  
13 at least initially looked feasible from an  
14 engineering perspective.

15 That doesn't mean that's either the  
16 location or the width of the right-of-way that would  
17 be approved, but that provides a better comparison  
18 of what the actual effects would be in that area and  
19 allows us to better compare the effects between the  
20 routes and also between a number of alternative  
21 route segments for the project.

22 There are -- I should back up a little  
23 bit. In addition to the three routes, there are 20  
24 alternative route segments. They're represented --  
25 some of them are so small they don't really show up

1 on the overview maps, but they represent different  
2 ways of getting between areas that -- there may be  
3 some congested areas and also ways of getting  
4 between Routes 1 and 2. So perhaps what ends up  
5 being the best route is a mixture of different  
6 routes.

7 And this, again, is an overview map  
8 similar to the one that's up front.

9 The EIS evaluated a number of factors  
10 that the Commission needs to consider when they  
11 determine the location and the conditions for a  
12 final route permit for the project. For all of  
13 those 1,000 foot -- for all of those routes and  
14 segment alternatives, we looked at and identified 21  
15 different issue areas: Aesthetics, air quality and  
16 climate, geology and soils, water resources,  
17 floodplains wetlands, biological resources, species  
18 of special interest or threatened and endangered  
19 species or significant biological communities,  
20 cultural resources, land use, socioeconomic,  
21 environmental justice, recreation and tourism,  
22 agriculture, forestry, mining, community services,  
23 utility systems, traffic and transportation, safety  
24 and health, and noise. And, again, we did this in  
25 order to compare the routes along all these

1 different factors. A route or a segment that may  
2 look good in one may look not so good when you  
3 evaluate it on another criteria.

4 There are copies of the EIS available if  
5 you'd like to look at them outside on the table.  
6 There are also copies available in public libraries  
7 in the project area, and I have a limited number of  
8 CDs. And tonight's the last meeting so I can feel  
9 free to give them all away. If you're interested in  
10 that, you can see me or Ray afterwards and I'd be  
11 happy to provide you with that.

12 The EIS is also available for downloading  
13 on our website, there's a link there. Our website,  
14 the OES website, also contains some information more  
15 generally on the review process and what the  
16 Commission does.

17 Again, the purpose of tonight's meeting  
18 is to receive comments on the draft EIS. Comments  
19 should -- during the meeting and during the comment  
20 period should be focused on the content of the draft  
21 EIS, and specifically, the accuracy and completeness  
22 of the data.

23 Again, this is a big -- it's not -- for  
24 the state of Minnesota, it's not the only part. But  
25 it is the big part that goes into the record for the

1 Commission to make their decision on. It provides a  
2 baseline comparison between the different  
3 alternatives, so we want to ensure that that  
4 information is accurate and complete to the best of  
5 our ability.

6 And my contact information is here, my  
7 business cards are there, and it's also provided in  
8 the comment sheet. I think I'll turn it over to --  
9 and, again, I want to reiterate the comment period  
10 closes on April 26th. And I'll turn it over to  
11 Stephanie now.

12 MS. STRENGTH: Good evening. Can you  
13 hear me in the back? Okay. I am Stephanie  
14 Strength. I'm with U.S. Department of Agriculture,  
15 Rural Utilities Service. We're part of Rural  
16 Development, you may have known us before as REA.  
17 The purpose of our agency is provide financing  
18 assistance to utilities in rural America. We're  
19 involved in this process today as a joint lead  
20 agency with OES in the preparation of the  
21 environmental impact statement.

22 There are three agencies that are also  
23 cooperating agencies with us in this analysis and in  
24 the EIS process. Those agencies are U.S. Forest  
25 Service - Chippewa National Forest, and that is due

1 to the potential for the routes to cross forest  
2 service land. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and  
3 that is due to the potential for impacts on wetlands  
4 as well as waters in the U.S. Then the last is  
5 Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, specifically Department  
6 of Resource -- DRM, Department of Resource  
7 Management. Thank you.

8 We have representatives from all three of  
9 the cooperating agencies that are here tonight. We  
10 will be taking the oral comments into the draft EIS  
11 process, and afterward we'll be available for  
12 questions as well.

13 RUS is involved in this project because  
14 Minnkota Power Cooperative has approached us for  
15 financing for their portion of this project. That  
16 request and our consideration of it is what we call  
17 a federal action. Before the government can take a  
18 federal action, we have to assess what the impacts  
19 would be on human health and environment.

20 For our process, it's a little different  
21 than the state, although we're working together so  
22 that you don't have see one of those huge EISs from  
23 each one of these agencies and you don't have a  
24 different set of meetings from each one of these  
25 agencies.

1           When we're approached with a project, the  
2 very first thing we have to do is consider what is  
3 it that is needed, and in this case, we've put out a  
4 preliminary document that we called an alternatives  
5 evaluation. That's where they said that there's a  
6 problem, in this case reliability, and then address  
7 different ways that they can fix that problem. Is  
8 it generation, is it conservation, is it a  
9 transmission line? In this case, the transmission  
10 line was what was selected as being the proposed  
11 best option for that fix.

12           When transmission is selected, the next  
13 decision is where are you going to put the  
14 transmission line. So we also have a preliminary  
15 study on that which identified different routes for  
16 consideration. We went out, along with the state,  
17 to do the scoping meetings, so we could get input  
18 from the public and from agencies to see what we  
19 were missing, if there were further things we needed  
20 to consider.

21           That information was all fed into -- all  
22 the comments that were received through the scoping  
23 process, those earlier meetings, the meetings of the  
24 agencies fed into the draft environmental impact  
25 statement that is the subject of the meeting today.

1           And basically the draft environmental  
2 impact statement looks at the project, the routes  
3 with all of those 21 different resource areas, and  
4 lets us know what the potential impacts could be.  
5 The reason we're having the meeting tonight is to  
6 get comments on that information we've put out there  
7 to see if there's things that have been missed, to  
8 see if there are, you know, any clarifications that  
9 need to be made in the document so that we can then  
10 finalize the report into the final environmental  
11 impact statement.

12           At that point, we'll come back out and  
13 we'll have an opportunity for public review.  
14 Before -- and this is where the state and the  
15 federal process splits a little. The PUC makes a  
16 decision for the state. For the federal agencies,  
17 each agency will issue and publish in the newspaper  
18 what's called a record of decision. And that record  
19 of decision will not only say which of the routes  
20 they would consider either permitting or, in our  
21 case, financing, but conditions on how that project  
22 could be constructed.

23           That, in a nutshell, is the process.  
24 Let's see, wrong way. And all the comments received  
25 tonight orally or through the written comments

1 received through April 26th, they'll all be answered  
2 and addressed by and reviewed by all of the agencies  
3 involved in this process in the final EIS.

4 If your comments pertain to cultural  
5 resources or Section 106 issues, you don't need to  
6 worry about commenting in more than one location.  
7 We'll make sure that information goes into both  
8 processes and analyses.

9 The RUS website lists all of the -- for  
10 download all of the preliminary studies that we did,  
11 as well as all the notices that have been out, as  
12 well as all of the draft environmental impact  
13 statement, and anything in the future coming out on  
14 this project. My contact information is there, all  
15 of this is on the one-page handout. So if you  
16 prefer to comment directly to RUS, you can do that  
17 either in writing or in e-mail.

18 Let's see. With that, we'll go over the  
19 rules of the meetings. So far I have one green  
20 speaker card. If you have signed up and you want to  
21 sign up for a green speaker card, we call those  
22 first. I don't know if there's any others, just the  
23 one.

24 After that, you can raise your hand and  
25 we'll bring a microphone over to you. And it's very

1 important that when you receive the microphone that  
2 you state your name and spell it because we do have  
3 a court reporter tonight. She will be recording  
4 your comments so that it gets into the record so  
5 that the agencies can find the answer to your  
6 question and put it into the final EIS.

7 So please state your name and spell it  
8 and please be respectful and speak clearly. You  
9 know, this is a project that people probably feel  
10 strongly about and we may not all feel the same way.  
11 And so if we can be respectful of each other's  
12 opinions and everyone can feel comfortable to speak,  
13 we'll get better comments.

14 Five minutes for each person to speak,  
15 and that's just to appreciate everyone's time and  
16 allow everyone a chance to speak without being here  
17 for the entire night. Let's see, and you can also,  
18 of course, use the written comment sheets or submit  
19 comments through e-mail or on the PUC's -- the OES's  
20 website.

21 With that, I'm going to hand it over to  
22 Suzanne, and our first speaker is -- I'm going to  
23 butcher this last name, Joe Michaletz.

24 MR. MICHALETZ: I'm going to hold my  
25 question until later.

**Commenter 56 – Darrell Magoon**

21

1 MS. STRENGTH: Okay.  
2 MS. STEINHAUER: Okay. Yes, the  
3 gentleman in the orange. If you could wait until  
4 the mic is there, please.  
5 MR. MAGOON: I'm Darrell Magoon,  
6 D-A-R-R-E-L-L, M-A-G-O-O-N. My physical address is  
7 50334 279th Avenue in Bemidji.  
8 I have a 40-acre parcel that Route 1 is  
9 supposed to go through, and I just got a printout  
10 here tonight. At the time -- when was it, last  
11 year, this was an accurate printing. But since that  
12 time, a pipeline, Enbridge pipeline, altered their  
13 proposed route and they went underneath Great  
14 Lakes -- it's called TransCanada now.  
15 And they went on the southern side of it  
16 and it's right -- right now it's right along where  
17 the proposed Route 1 is. So someone would need to  
18 take a look at that on my property. And it also  
19 affects the 40 to the west behind me. They did the  
20 same thing there, also.  
21 So if they're considering Route 1, they'd  
22 have to somehow change it through our properties  
23 there.  
24 MS. STEINHAUER: Thank you for that  
25 comment. That's helpful, and we'll try to develop

**Responses**

**Comment 56-1**

Thank you for your comment. In September 2009, the PUC approved Enbridge Energy's request for a deviation from the permitted route in this area to address environmental and cultural resource concerns associated with crossing the Necktie River. Revised maps with the new pipeline alignment have been requested from Enbridge Energy.

56-1

**Commenter 57 – Kenn Mitchell**

1 that.

2 The gentleman in the red hat.

3 MR. MITCHELL: I'm Kenn Mitchell,  
4 K-E-N-N, two Ns, M-I-T-C-H-E-L-L.

57-1

5 What is the health risk factor to the  
6 people and the animals living near this so-called  
7 power line? I mean, there have been reports out and  
8 they're not good for people that live near this  
9 power line, so why is it that you want to put it  
10 through the city of Cass Lake and Bena, people live  
11 there.

12 I drove down -- aren't you people even  
13 worried about me and my people, or is my skin too  
14 dark, I'm not white enough? That's my problem. You  
15 white folks did not even consider us as people. Did  
16 you ever ask us if we want this power line near us,  
17 did you even ask if we want it through our  
18 reservation?

57-2

19 We already got a pipeline that's  
20 contaminating the land, now we need you people to  
21 come in here and contaminate our air, the air we  
22 breathe. Do you want our kids and our generation to  
23 be having cancer and whatever?

57-3

24 I mean, come on, give me an answer here,  
25 huh? You didn't even look at the health factors of

**Responses**

**Comment 57-1**

A discussion of potential health and safety effects appears in Section 3.20 of the EIS.

**Comment 57-2**

A discussion of the cumulative effects from the Project and pipelines appears in Section 4 of the EIS.

**Comment 57-3**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS.

Commenter 57 – Kenn Mitchell

23

57-3  
(cont.)

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the people.

MS. STEINHAUER: Thank you for your  
comment.

MR. MITCHELL: It's not a comment, it's a  
question. Answer it.

MS. STEINHAUER: The question is a good  
question and a complicated question.

MR. MITCHELL: It's not complicated.  
It's a simple question, simple answers. You guys  
didn't even look at the health factor of this thing.

MS. STEINHAUER: The draft environmental  
impact statement does include a chapter on human  
health and safety. This is a comment and a question  
that we get --

MR. MITCHELL: It's not a comment, it's a  
question. I want an answer.

MS. STEINHAUER: Do you want to answer  
that?

MS. STRENGTH: I understand your concern.  
In the draft environmental impact statement we have  
a chapter that discusses EMF as well as the health  
impacts. It's not a simple answer and there are  
studies -- there a lot of studies on this and the  
information -- can you hear me?

MR. MITCHELL: But you don't care how

Responses

Commenter 57 – Kenn Mitchell

57-3  
(cont.)

1 close to us you're building this thing.  
2 MS. STRENGTH: One of the main factors  
3 that's considered in routing transmission lines is  
4 proximity to residences, and there are a lot of--  
5 MR. MITCHELL: Okay. Look where you've  
6 got it, right through our city, right where  
7 everybody are. Right next to Bena we've got a  
8 school with kids, you didn't even consider that,  
9 look.  
10 MS. STRENGTH: At this point --  
11 MR. MITCHELL: Yeah. Point.  
12 MS. STRENGTH: -- none of the routes have  
13 been selected as the preferred and they're all under  
14 consideration --  
15 MR. MITCHELL: Did you ever ask us if we  
16 want this thing through our reservation?  
17 MS. STRENGTH: We're happy to take your  
18 comments.  
19 MR. MITCHELL: You're like Enbridge, you  
20 don't give a shit.  
21 MS. STRENGTH: Excuse me, one thing --  
22 MR. MITCHELL: You feel that you come in  
23 and just -- come in through our reservation without  
24 asking us about it. The Tribal Council don't speak  
25 for the people. If you give a few dollars, they'll

Responses

57-3  
(cont.)

**Commenter 57 – Kenn Mitchell**

25

1 sign anything without even asking the people. They  
2 don't speak for us.

3 Why don't you ask the people if we want a  
4 referendum vote, if we want this through our land,  
5 our reservation? Did you ever think of that, why  
6 didn't you ask us? We're people too, you know, but  
7 you guys don't seem to think so.

8 MS. STRENGTH: Okay. I appreciate your  
9 comment. One thing that will be done in result of  
10 the comments that we've had throughout several of  
11 the meetings regarding EMF, since the section of the  
12 impact statement is very large and discusses that,  
13 we will be preparing a fact sheet that can give you  
14 links to the latest information that we have as the  
15 federal agency on what the potential impacts could  
16 be.

17 And we have agreed that we will make that  
18 available to the different entities in the area, and  
19 it will be published in the tribal newspaper, okay.

20 MR. MITCHELL: The problem with you  
21 printing things like that in the tribal paper, it's  
22 not the truth. You have a history of that. You  
23 don't -- the history is that you guys don't tell us  
24 the truth.

25 MS. STRENGTH: Thank you for your

**Responses**

**Commenter 57 – Kenn Mitchell;  
Commenter 58 – Elizabeth Sherman**

26

1        comments. Do you have other comments you'd like to  
2        make? In order to give everybody a chance to speak  
3        tonight --

57-4

4                MR. MITCHELL: Okay. One more comment is  
5        this, it's my understanding you guys are going to  
6        use this eminent domain to take our land to go build  
7        your power line. Okay. I'm going to tell you here  
8        in front of all these people and these witnesses, I  
9        now take any land that you try to claim, I take it  
10       back under the eminent domain. Because I am a ward  
11       of the federal government and the federal government  
12       supercedes the state government. And if you guys  
13       want to try and take my land, fine. But I will see  
14       you in court and you're going to be paying a hefty  
15       price.

16               MS. STRENGTH: Thank you for your  
17       comment.

18               Is there anyone else who would like to  
19       speak, make a comment? Okay.

20               MS. SHERMAN: Good evening. My name is  
21       Elizabeth, E-L-I-Z-A-B-E-T-H, Sherman,  
22       S-H-E-R-M-A-N. My physical address is 14004  
23       Wakonabo Drive Northwest. Spelling,  
24       W-A-K-O-N-A-B-O, Drive Northwest. P.O. Box 854,  
25       Cass Lake, Minnesota 56633.

**Responses**

**Comment 57-4**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS.

**Commenter 58 – Elizabeth Sherman**

27

1 I would like to ask --  
2 MR. MITCHELL: Give me a minute, okay.  
3 MS. SHERMAN: Okay.  
4 MR. MITCHELL: Okay. I'm going to do  
5 something I don't normally do. I'm going to pull  
6 out my asemaa and I'm going to tell you this:  
7 Whoever tries anything, they're going to be in  
8 trouble. Nanikana (phonetic).  
9 MS. SHERMAN: Actually, I have three  
10 questions. My first question is, and I know that  
11 you're from the Office of Energy Security, and  
12 Stephanie, you're from the Rural Utilities Service,  
13 I would like to know if there are officials here  
14 from the cooperative, Minnesota Power, Minnkota, and  
15 Otter Tail. I would like to ask them this first  
16 question. Are they here?  
17 MS. STEINHAUER: There are people from  
18 the applicant.  
19 MS. SHERMAN: Okay. The question is, the  
20 state of Minnesota has a state law that they passed  
21 that requires the state of Minnesota to commit to  
22 25 percent renewable energy. And I would like to  
23 ask you applicants, why are you not making a  
24 commitment to put forth that 25 percent renewable  
25 energy? Why not start in Northern Minnesota with

**Responses**

**Comment 58-1**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment. A discussion of the Project purpose and need appears in Section 1.1 of the EIS. A discussion of alternatives considered but not evaluated in the EIS appears in Section 2.3 of the EIS.

58-1

Commenter 58 – Elizabeth Sherman

28

1 renewable energy? And I understand the state of  
2 Minnesota is now trying to repeal that law, but  
3 they're showing good faith until 2025. So could you  
4 please answer that?

5 MS. STEINHAUER: I can try to answer  
6 that. You're correct, there is a renewable energy  
7 mandate by 2025, 25 percent. The state of Minnesota  
8 has a two-part process for any proposed transmission  
9 line.

10 First is, is it needed? In that process  
11 we do look at alternatives, which would include  
12 generation, including renewable energy generation.  
13 We looked at the possibility of adding renewable  
14 energy as well as more traditional forms of energy.  
15 We looked at the possibility of different  
16 transmission alternatives.

17 The federal government also looked at  
18 that as part of their review to determine whether  
19 transmission is the best way to meet the need. The  
20 state of Minnesota determined that there is a need  
21 for transmission between these two substations, and  
22 they determined that in July of 2009.

23 The question for the state of Minnesota  
24 is once the need for the project is determined,  
25 where will it go and how will it be constructed and

Responses

**Commenter 58 – Elizabeth Sherman**

1 operated.

2 MS. SHERMAN: Okay. But that still does  
3 not answer why that superceded the need or the  
4 desire to seek renewable energy.

5 MS. STEINHAUER: The project was applied  
6 for as a reliability -- as a transmission  
7 reliability project. And the applicants had to  
8 demonstrate that the need was for reliability, not  
9 for bringing new generation in. They meet different  
10 needs.

11 MS. SHERMAN: Okay. The impact, the  
12 financial, the socioeconomic, and the health factors  
13 you have to consider are going to far outweigh the  
14 cost of renewable energy, much more, and it's time  
15 that these power companies start looking at  
16 renewable energy and making that commitment.

17 And they may feel that it's -- in the  
18 short term that it's very expensive, but in the long  
19 term we've got health factors that we've got to  
20 consider for our people along this route. Not only  
21 on this reservation, but all the way from Wilton to  
22 Grand Rapids.

23 My next question, to what extent have you  
24 considered those scientific definitive studies  
25 linking leukemia and brain cancer to children, and

**Responses**

**Comment 58-2**

A discussion of socioeconomic impacts of the Project appears in Section 3.11 of the EIS. A discussion of potential health and safety effects appears in Section 3.20 of the EIS.

**Comment 58-3**

A discussion of EMF appears in Sections 3.20.1.1 and 3.20.2.2 of the EIS. Text in Section 3.20.1.1 has been supplemented with an additional subsection titled "Continued Research on EMF Health Effects" that contains a discussion of ongoing research on the potential health effects of EMF.

58-2

58-3

**Commenter 58 – Elizabeth Sherman**

58-3  
(cont.)

1 neurological disease such as Lou Gehrig's and  
2 Alzheimer's to adults? As far as the long-term  
3 exposure to the electromagnetic fields of these  
4 power lines, to what extent have you really  
5 considered it?

6 MS. STEINHAUER: Thank you for the  
7 comment. There is information in the draft  
8 environmental impact statement, and I would  
9 appreciate your comments once you've had an  
10 opportunity to review that and the position -- and  
11 the summary that RUS is putting together to comment  
12 on whether you believe that is adequate or not.

58-4

13 MS. SHERMAN: Okay. I want to go on the  
14 record that on behalf of my tribe here at Leech Lake  
15 and our children that we totally oppose this power  
16 line. Because we have our tribal school on the  
17 shortest route, the central corridor which is  
18 68 miles, and we know that you've already planned on  
19 putting that through that route.

20 We have our tribal school, we have our  
21 daycare centers, we have people that live along that  
22 route and they will be exposed on a long-term basis.  
23 And guess what's going to happen? And like this man  
24 (indicating) said, you have not even considered  
25 life, a human life over money.

**Responses**

**Comment 58-4**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS.

**Commenter 58 – Elizabeth Sherman**

58-5

1           And we are going to oppose it, and we  
2           have tribal trust land that goes from boundary to  
3           boundary on our reservation and Congress has a trust  
4           responsibility to this tribe and to our lands. And  
5           so the state of Minnesota, with the introduction of  
6           their Minnesota bill on eminent domain and it looks  
7           like they've lined their ducks in a row to have  
8           access, priority consideration along that easement  
9           and that right-of-way of that railroad and that  
10          pipeline. And so guess where it's going, folks? We  
11          know it's going to go through the central corridor.

58-6

12           And what about our wetlands through  
13          Blackduck? We have environmental -- federal  
14          environment laws that protect our wetlands and our  
15          natural habitat and our culture, those animals,  
16          those fish, those eagles, those flyers, those  
17          crawlers, they are our relatives and they are going  
18          to be impacted severely.

58-8

19           And there's been research done by a  
20          doctor that worked at our IHS hospital here in  
21          Bemidji -- or excuse me, Cass Lake, Dr. Becker. And  
22          I was told by Greg Chester just a little while ago  
23          that he did extensive research on electromagnetic  
24          fields and how long-term exposure causes fetus --  
25          affects the fetuses and stillbirths and actually

**Responses**

**Comment 58-5**

A discussion of the trust responsibility appears in the Executive Summary and Sections 1.3.2 and 1.3.3 of the EIS.

**Comment 58-6**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS.

**Comment 58-7**

A discussion of impacts to wetlands appears in Section 3.6.2 of the EIS. A discussion of impacts to biological resources appears in Section 3.7.2 of the EIS. A discussion of environmental permits and regulatory approvals that may be required for the Project appears in Section 6 of the EIS.

**Comment 58-8**

Text in Section 3.20.1.1 has been supplemented with an additional subsection titled "Continued Research on EMF Health Effects" that contains a discussion of ongoing research on the potential health effects of EMF.

**Commenter 58 – Elizabeth Sherman**

1        aborts the fetus.

2                And so you can imagine what it does to  
3        our cell tissue in our bodies and how that impacts  
4        our children, our adults, our elders. And I'm  
5        saying that you need to consider human life  
6        irregardless of what it is. And it doesn't matter  
7        what socioeconomic status that person is in, it's  
8        human life and life in our natural habitat.

9                The subsistence that our natural habitat  
10       will be eating will be severely impacted to the  
11       point where it's going to be just a path of  
12       destruction, and that's what I call it, it's a path  
13       of destruction.

14               I have fought the Enbridge pipeline along  
15       with my Enbridge family. I call them my Enbridge  
16       family because we became a family defending our  
17       homelands, defending our people, defending our  
18       natural habitat, defending our sacred waters. And I  
19       am here to go on record to voice that we are  
20       totally, totally in opposition to this power line.

21               I guess I addressed the third question.  
22       It wasn't necessarily a question, it was about  
23       eminent domain. I am just here to go on record that  
24       the state of Minnesota and the federal government  
25       cannot just introduce their Minnesota bill on

**Responses**

**Comment 58-9**

Text in Sections 1.2.3, 1.3.5, and the Executive Summary has been modified to clarify that all Route and Segment Alternatives would avoid crossing on or over tribal trust land.

58-9

**Commenter 58 – Elizabeth Sherman;  
Commenter 59 – Vikki Howard**

33

58-9  
(cont.)

1 eminent domain because eminent domain does not apply  
2 to trust lands. It might apply to allotted lands,  
3 but not trust lands, and Congress defines Indian  
4 country boundary to boundary.

5 Thank you.

6 MS. STEINHAUER: Thank you for your  
7 comment. They are a part of the record now.

8 Yes. We'll bring the mic over.

9 Excuse me, I just want to clarify, if you  
10 would like to introduce your address, that's fine,  
11 but it's not a requirement. Just the main thing is  
12 that we have your name spelled correctly.

13 MS. HOWARD: Okay. My name is  
14 Vikki Howard, V-I-K-K-I, H-O-W-A-R-D.

15 I have a question and then I just want to  
16 make a comment. My question is, I know in the  
17 process of defining of the routes for the power  
18 line, at one point there was a line that went down  
19 through Highway 200 around Walker and then up to  
20 Bemidji. What happened to that line, why was it  
21 eliminated?

22 MS. STEINHAUER: That was introduced as  
23 part of the federal process, so I'm going to let  
24 Ms. Strength answer that.

25 MS. STRENGTH: Through the scoping

**Responses**

**Comment 59-1**

Three Route Alternatives (Route Alternatives 1, 2, and 3) were identified in the state Scoping Decision signed by the Director of the OES on March 31, 2009 and the federal Scoping Decision signed by the Director of Engineering and Environmental Staff, Rural Utilities Service on December 3, 2009. An alternative that follows Highway 200 was evaluated in the Macrocorridor Study, prepared by the Applicants for the RUS in June 2008. Based on the evaluation conducted under the Macrocorridor Study, the corridor that follows Highway 200 was eliminated from further consideration in the EIS by the RUS. Impact analysis for this corridor was not conducted for the EIS.

59-1

## Responses

34

1 process several additional alternatives were added  
2 for consideration, the northern route that we have  
3 today and then two that went further south. Those  
4 routes were added because through the federal  
5 process we felt that only having the central  
6 corridor routes, 1 and 2, didn't give us enough of a  
7 difference in what the impacts could be and we  
8 needed to look further to see if there was another  
9 area or another route that would have less impacts  
10 or that should be looked at through the EIS.

11 After the public meetings, the public  
12 comment, the cooperating agencies all met and looked  
13 at the information on those corridors. There were  
14 some studies that were done and we looked at which  
15 ones should be carried forward into the draft  
16 environmental impact statement because they did give  
17 us a good, you know, range of options, they were  
18 possible routes.

19 The two routes that went further south  
20 were shown to have greater impacts and there were  
21 some other concerns with it. There's a lot of  
22 information, and to try to give you an answer to  
23 summarize it right now wouldn't do justice to the  
24 work that went into it.

25 But that is spelled out in a document

Commenter 59 – Vikki Howard

35

1 that's on the RUS website, which is on that handout  
2 that I have at the front, it's called the scoping  
3 decision or the scoping report. And it's the one  
4 that federal agencies put out and it really explains  
5 why those other alternatives were eliminated and why  
6 Route 3 was added.

7 MS. HOWARD: Okay. Is Route 3 the  
8 northern route, then?

9 MS. STRENGTH: Yes.

10 MS. HOWARD: Was the impact from -- the  
11 southern route around Walker, was that from after  
12 the public meetings that they held? Were those  
13 public meetings held in Walker and Longville and  
14 Remer?

15 MS. STRENGTH: I don't believe so.

16 UNIDENTIFIED: Walker.

17 MS. STRENGTH: Walker, okay.

18 MS. HOWARD: Was it environmental impact  
19 or people impact?

20 MS. STRENGTH: It was an environmental  
21 impact. There's a lot information on it if you want  
22 to look at that, and I really appreciate comments.  
23 If there's something that we've missed in that  
24 analysis, it would be very helpful for the final  
25 EIS.

Responses

**Commenter 59– Vikki Howard**

1 MS. HOWARD: I'm just bringing that up  
2 because there seems to be a large impact of the  
3 central corridor. And I'm going to make a written  
4 statement, but I'll also make a public comment  
5 tonight here, too.

6 In the central corridor going through the  
7 midst of the Leech Lake Reservation Nation -- and I  
8 want to speak on behalf of, also, the bald eagle  
9 nation, Leech Lake is -- has the largest nesting  
10 area of the bald eagle outside of Alaska. This is  
11 their home and we know that this is going to affect  
12 their breeding ground.

13 The birds that will come forward from the  
14 bald eagle, their whole nesting area, their hunting  
15 area, and where they live. But more importantly, it  
16 will affect the people of Leech Lake Nation and our  
17 neighbors and friends that have all lived here most  
18 of their lives.

19 I'm a parent of a student at  
20 Bug-O-Nay-Ge-Shig Tribal School outside of Bena  
21 here, west of Bena. And there are 300 children that  
22 go to school there and they will be within range of  
23 those electric/magnetic fields. And I know you  
24 wouldn't want your children attending that school if  
25 there was a big power line going by.

**Responses**

**Comment 59-2**

A discussion of species of concern in the Study Area, specifically birds, appears in Section 3.8.1.1 of the EIS.

**Comment 59-3**

A discussion of EMF appears in Sections 3.20.1.1 and 3.20.2.2 of the EIS.

The Bug-O-Nay-Ge-Shig School is located approximately 200 feet north of the northern boundary Route Alternatives 2 and 4. If Route Alternative 2 or 4 is selected and a 125-foot ROW would be required for the Project in the area of the school, the distance between transmission line structures and the school would be at least 262.5 feet. The actual distance may be greater depending on the Route Alternative selected and final alignment of transmission line.

59-2

59-3

**Commenter 59 – Vikki Howard**

1           And I ask all of you that work for those  
2           companies and for the national security, how  
3           comfortable you would feel having your children in a  
4           school that was within range of electromagnetic  
5           fields? You know, that really concerns me.

6           So I'm going to speak on behalf of those  
7           children at Bug-0-Nay-Ge-Shig School, that's their  
8           home, that's their school. It's the central  
9           location and the heart of our nation here at Leech  
10          Lake, and they have every right to be there, to be  
11          safe.

12          And I also want to speak on behalf of all  
13          the water that will be impacted. Because the water  
14          tables in Northern Minnesota here at the three  
15          largest lakes here on the Leech Lake Reservation,  
16          they feed the Mississippi River flowage all the way  
17          down to New Orleans. It starts here. All the water  
18          that goes into the Mississippi River comes from here  
19          within the Leech Lake Nation.

20          And so that's another impact. And maybe  
21          there's not a lot of our people here tonight, but  
22          those of us that are here, we're speaking on behalf  
23          of those people that don't have -- are able -- are  
24          comfortable to articulate our desires and our  
25          concerns regarding to our land, our children, our

**Responses**

**Comment 59-4**

A discussion of the effects of the Project on water resources, including the Mississippi River, appears in Section 3.4 of the EIS.

59-4

Commenter 59 – Vikki Howard

38

1 families, and the wildlife, our brothers and sisters  
2 of the earth that we share this earth with.

3 So I want to put that on record because  
4 that's the impact that this will have on those  
5 central corridors going through starting at the Ball  
6 Club community, Schley, Bena, Cass Lake, and I'll  
7 even speak on behalf of people in Bemidji.

8 And I don't know how the meeting went in  
9 Bemidji this week, what statements were made there,  
10 if there were concerns. But we're concerned here at  
11 Leech Lake for that. Miigwech.

12 MS. STRENGTH: Thank you. I do want to  
13 mention that all of the transcripts from the  
14 meetings, including the Bemidji one, will be made  
15 available.

16 MS. HOWARD: On your website?

17 MS. STRENGTH: Do you know when they will  
18 be -- will it be with the final EIS or is it sooner?

19 MS. STEINHAUER: I think it will be  
20 sooner.

21 MS. STRENGTH: Okay. It takes a while to  
22 have them processed and typed and posted, but they  
23 would be on the OES website that's on the handout.

24 MS. STEINHAUER: Yes.

25 MS. YOUNG: Good evening, everybody.

Responses

**Commenter 60 – Shirley Young**

1 Usually when we have a meeting when our people get  
2 together we usually have a prayer before we start,  
3 so I wish that would have happened.

4 But anyway, my name is Shirley Young,  
60-1 5 S-H-I-R-L-E-Y, Y-O-U-N-G, and I'm from Bena. I'm  
6 totally opposed to this going through where I live.  
7 I'm surrounded right now by the pipeline, I have one  
8 on the left and one on the right. And now you want  
9 to put this transmission line through, probably over  
10 my head, and I do not want that to happen.

11 A lot of the things that I had planned on  
12 saying have already been said, so I'm not going to  
13 repeat, and I feel the same way as the three people  
14 that have spoken. I feel the same way they do.

15 I belong to the Bug-O-Nay-Ge-Shig school  
16 board, and that is one of the questions I wanted to  
60-2 17 ask. How many miles or how many feet would the  
18 transmission line be from the school before it was  
19 okay to be there? That's one of the questions.  
20 Could you answer that for me, please?

21 MS. STEINHAUER: I can't answer your  
22 question directly because I don't know actually  
23 where the school is. And we can go over the maps  
24 and we can look at that. There can't be any  
25 structures within the right-of-way of a transmission

**Responses**

**Comment 60-1**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS.

**Comment 60-2**

A discussion of the proximity of structures to the transmission line appears in Section 3.11.2, Impacts to Homes and Structures, of the EIS. Text in this section has been modified to expand the discussion of potential impacts to homes to include other building structures.

The Bug-O-Nay-Ge-Shig School is located approximately 200 feet north of the northern boundary Route Alternatives 2 and 4. If Route Alternative 2 or 4 is selected and a 125-foot ROW would be required for the Project in the area of the school, the distance between transmission line structures and the school would be at least 262.5 feet. The actual distance may be greater depending on the Route Alternative selected and final alignment of transmission line.

**Commenter 60 – Shirley Young**

1 line.

2 MS. YOUNG: Okay. Okay. I have family  
3 all over the Leech Lake Nation, so I'm speaking for  
4 them and I'm speaking for my children, my  
5 grandchildren, and my great-grandchildren that are  
6 yet to come, and I do not approve of this  
7 transmission line going through our reservation.

8 Maybe it will be cheaper for you to put  
9 it through this way, but I see that there's another  
10 line going around the Blackduck way. So that is how  
11 I feel and I do not approve of this. And I know --  
12 I've read up, too, on what this has caused for  
13 different -- you know, the different diseases and  
14 things that it does to the people, and I just feel  
15 that it's not right for our people.

16 And if we don't speak up for our people,  
17 for the people that can't speak for themselves, then  
18 who's going to do it? We need to speak up for all  
19 of the Leech Lake people that aren't here tonight,  
20 and I'm so grateful for these people that are here  
21 to speak up for the people that do not have a voice.

22 And I have haven't always been able to  
23 speak up either, but I'm doing it now for the  
24 people. And I know -- the Bemidji meeting, I know  
25 there was a lot of opposition there, too, and I'm

**Responses**

**Comment 60-3**

A discussion of health effects appears in Section 3.20 of the EIS.

60-3

**Commenter 61 – Barry Babcock**

41

1       sure you're going to find more and more as you have  
2       your meetings. Thank you.

3               MS. STEINHAUER: Thank you for your  
4       comment.

5               MR. BABCOCK: Barry Babcock, I live in a  
6       rural area of Lakeport Township in northern Hubbard  
7       County.

8               MS. STEINHAUER: I'm sorry. Could you  
9       please spell your name so that the court reporter  
10      can --

11              MR. BABCOCK: B-A-R-R-Y, B-A-B-C-O-C-K.

12              I'll admit, I'm not acquainted with the  
13      nuances of the power line other than the fact of the  
14      electromagnetic field, nor I was that acquainted  
15      with the nuances of the Enbridge pipeline other than  
16      the horrific effects that were taking place up in  
17      northern Alberta and that it was -- it's very dirty  
18      oil.

19              And but I -- as a white person, and I  
20      don't want to come here tonight and sound like I'm  
21      patronizing to my Native American friends here, but  
22      I know I grew up in the culture of white society  
23      where racism -- to be outright, you know, blunt  
24      about it. It's the atmosphere that I grew up in.

25              But having made a lot of acquaintances,

**Responses**

**Commenter 61 – Barry Babcock**

42

1 good friends in the Cass Lake area, I've come to  
2 learn about treaty rights, treaty and hunting  
3 rights. And the land -- the treaties -- all the  
4 major treaties that were signed in this state with  
5 the Native Americans, the Ojibwe and the Dakota, is  
6 what became -- those parcels of land are what became  
7 the building blocks of what's now Minnesota.

8 And these hunting and fishing rights,  
9 gathering rights, when those were given to the  
10 Native Americans when they gave away their land or  
11 sold their land or outright stole it from them, or  
12 they got a real raw deal on it, that was under the  
13 understanding that they needed those rights in order  
14 to maintain their identity and culture to fish and  
15 hunt and to be healthy, physically healthy and  
16 mentally healthy at the same time in order to  
17 maintain their identity as people.

18 And having been here and as part of the  
19 state for quite a few years, I'm going to be 62  
20 shortly, and I've seen what's happened in Northern  
21 Minnesota here, how it's been cut up and carved up  
22 with development and power lines and pipelines, and  
23 now we're even looking at sulfide mining projects,  
24 there's eight to twelve different proposed sites in  
25 the state.

**Responses**

**Commenter 61 – Barry Babcock**

43

1           But what we're doing here is we're  
2           denying these people what -- their identity by --  
3           with these treaties they were to maintain these  
4           hunting and fishing rights. With the impact that  
5           this is having on wetlands and the Enbridge  
6           pipeline, there's been oil spills in Cass Lake.

7           And at a recent rally I heard a  
8           well-known Native American speaker talk about when  
9           he was in Mexico, they were warned not to drink the  
10          water. Now when you come to Cass Lake, they warn  
11          you not to drink the water here, too.

12          I empathize with your job that you people  
13          are -- you know, you have a job to do, and I don't  
14          want to sound like I'm just dumping on you, but I'm  
15          not even sure if this draft environmental impact  
16          statement is done under federal NEPA or if this is  
17          state, Minnesota Environmental Protection Act.

18          But my experience with EAWs and EISs are  
19          that pretty much the tablet's -- the rules are  
20          already set. They're determined before we even get  
21          to those. Even now they're weakening. The  
22          Environmental Quality Board of Minnesota has a lot  
23          of proposals where they're going to -- what we have  
24          as citizens is going to -- our access to the  
25          Minnesota Environmental Protection Act is being

**Responses**

**Comment 61-1**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS.

61-1

Commenter 61 – Barry Babcock

44

61-1  
(cont.)

1 weakened and yearly in the legislature there's some  
2 bill that's passed that further corrodes the  
3 Minnesota environmental act, whether it's an ethanol  
4 plant where they get to get under the wire on  
5 environmental review if they keep it under a certain  
6 size, or a hog feedlot.

7 And even with the recent draft  
8 environmental impact statement for this nonferrous  
9 sulfide mining up by Ely along Birch Lake that was  
10 just condemned by the Federal Environmental  
11 Protection Agency.

12 So although I'm not -- I haven't read the  
13 draft environmental impact statement and I'm not  
14 acquainted with it, I've just become very suspect to  
15 it. And people, ordinarily citizens, don't have the  
16 access that we're supposed to be guaranteed through  
17 NEPA and MEPA. It seems to be more that it's like  
18 these Dick Cheney-esk backdoor corporation decisions  
19 that determine pipelines, power lines, sulfide  
20 mining, timber access, whatever.

21 But anyhow, I guess I don't have a  
22 question, but I just wanted to make that comment  
23 here tonight.

24 MS. STEINHAUER: Thank you for that  
25 comment. That's part of the record.

Responses

**Commenter 62 – Greg Chester**

1 I'm sorry. I realize it wasn't a  
2 question, but the EIS is prepared to meet both  
3 federal and state need. On the federal side, it is  
4 to meet the National Environmental Policy Act and  
5 Section 106 consultation. On the Minnesota side,  
6 it's prepared in order to meet the Power Plant  
7 Siting Act requirements for a transmission line of  
8 this size, to reiterate and clarify.

9 MR. CHESTER: Thank you. My name is  
10 Greg Chester, G-R-E-G, C-H-E-S-T-E-R.

11 A little bit farther away, I don't want  
12 to deafen people in here.

62-1

13 I want a point of clarification. The  
14 Dr. Becker that did the research on electromagnetic  
15 fields was from New York State, not from here. And  
16 he did find that there was a major increase -- or an  
17 increase in spontaneous abortions of woman who lived  
18 within a certain range of the 765 kilovolt power  
19 line in that area.

20 He has spent over 40 years -- 45 years of  
21 research in that field. The -- one thing I'm  
22 wondering about here is that I guess Minnkota is the  
23 person in charge here and I think should be up in  
24 front and speaking.

25 There's an old saying that if one only

**Responses**

**Comment 62-1**

A discussion of EMF appears in Sections 3.20.1.1 and 3.20.2.2 of the EIS. Text in Section 3.20.1.1 has been supplemented with an additional subsection titled "Continued Research on EMF Health Effects" that contains a discussion of ongoing research on the potential health effects of EMF.

**Commenter 62 – Greg Chester**

1 has a hammer, everything is a nail. And it seems  
2 that since they have the hammer or the power, the  
3 coal-fired power plant to the west of us, they want  
4 to feed everything with that coal-fired power plant.

5 And I think it's time that we use our  
6 brain power, our energies, to bring in renewable  
7 energy and use it here locally so we won't need this  
8 power line at all and we can do away with a lot of  
9 these coal-fired power plants. I think it's time to  
10 act and act now.

11 Why give away billions of dollars to  
12 build these monsters that are hurting us, that are  
13 hurting our children, and will hurt our  
14 grandchildren? I think it's time that we followed  
15 up on the wisdom that our great educational  
16 institutions have developed in our population and  
17 lean on the wisdom of the indigenous people that  
18 have been here a lot longer than we have and follow  
19 that.

20 I'm reminded of this program I heard  
21 today where they were talking about this French  
22 experiment where they -- the researcher got a  
23 subject to turn the power up on an electric shocker.  
24 And if a person mis-answered a question, they would  
25 turn it up a little bit further. And they got him

**Responses**

**Comment 62-2**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS.

62-2

**Commenter 62 – Greg Chester**

47

1 to go all the way to 450 volts and the guy was  
2 screaming and shouting. And what I envision here is  
3 the people from Minnkota getting you to turn the  
4 power up on us, how much will these people be  
5 willing to take before they are -- you know, are in  
6 total agony?

7 We've already lost many, many people here  
8 from the -- this, what do they call it? The box  
9 factory down here where they used to put telephone  
10 poles into open pits of creosote, and from that  
11 whole area the people who lived there are suffering  
12 from autoimmune disease. Now you're going to put  
13 something else that is probably just as toxic  
14 through the same area and through a much greater  
15 part of the Ojibwe people's territory.

16 Back in 1898, the Ojibwe people were  
17 surrounded and their forest was being chopped down,  
18 and they turned to the United States and said  
19 protect us from your people, protect us from your  
20 corporations. And they brought in the U.S. Forest  
21 Service to do that, to protect their forest -- not  
22 our forest, their forest from the United States  
23 citizens and corporations. It's time that we U.S.  
24 citizens put our foot down and follow through on  
25 their plea 100 years ago and stop this. They want

**Responses**

**Comment 62-3**

A discussion of cumulative effects of the Project and the St. Regis Superfund Site in Cass Lake appears in Section 4 of the EIS.

62-3

**Commenter 62 – Greg Chester; Commenter 63 – Becky Knowles**

1 an intact, healthy forest.

2 One of my students here about 15 years  
3 ago wrote a beautiful little paper where her father  
4 slapped her on her hand and told her no, you can no  
5 longer drink the water from the pond behind our  
6 house. They were able to drink the water straight  
7 from the ponds and lakes around here up to the  
8 1970s, at that particular one.

9 This is their Garden of Eden. We don't  
10 have the right -- we don't have any right to butcher  
11 it. We have the responsibility to protect it.  
12 We're just guests here in their territory. We're  
13 just guests, and we should act responsibly as  
14 guests. Thank you.

15 MS. STEINHAUER: Yes. Grey shirt.

16 MS. KNOWLES: Hi. My name is  
17 Becky Knowles, B-E-C-K-Y, K-N-O-W-L-E-S. I live up  
18 in Hines, Minnesota, just along the proposed  
19 northern corridor.

63-1 | 20 I see the proposal to run this new power  
21 line right through the heart of the Leech Lake  
22 Reservation as just yet further ecological and  
23 cultural degradation of the homeland of the Leech  
24 Lake Band of Ojibwe.

25 I was at a recent meeting with top

**Responses**

**Comment 63-1**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS. Potential impacts of the Project on resources specific to the Lake Leech Reservation are discussed throughout the EIS. Consultation with the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe is ongoing.

## Commenter 63 – Becky Knowles

49

1       leaders from federal agencies and they were  
2       addressing climate change. And they were asked at  
3       this meeting to specifically talk about what each of  
4       their agencies is doing about climate change. And I  
5       was most interested that the representative from the  
6       U.S. Forest Service said that the forest service has  
7       identified environmental justice as one of the  
8       priority considerations for the entire Forest  
9       Service as they go forward addressing the fact of  
10      climate change.

11                So the federal agencies there were NOAA,  
12      USGS, the National Parks Service, the U.S. Fish and  
13      Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Forest Service. And  
14      they all were in total agreement with directions  
15      from their secretaries, Secretary Salazar and  
16      Secretary Vilsack, that climate change is a fact and  
17      climate change will be addressed as these agencies  
18      go forward.

19                And so, again, the U.S. Forest Service  
20      has identified environmental justice as a primary  
21      priority consideration as they address climate  
22      change. So I know you've addressed environmental  
23      justice in your report.

24                Since we began this process, this  
25      proposal to run this power line right through the

## Responses

## Commenter 63 – Becky Knowles

50

1 heart of the reservation, things have changed. The  
2 fact of climate change has been acknowledged, the  
3 federal administration has changed, the realization  
4 by the American people -- not all of the American  
5 people, certainly, but the realization by our  
6 federal agencies that climate change is a fact and  
7 will have to be acted on, that has changed.

8 Also, the recognition that tribal people,  
9 indigenous people have not been treated to the full  
10 extent of the trust responsibility that the federal  
11 agencies have, that has been acknowledged as well.  
12 And so the secretaries of Interior and the  
13 secretaries of the USDA are working hand-in-hand,  
14 according to what I just learned at this meeting, to  
15 right some of those -- some of the ways that the  
16 indigenous rights have been overlooked in the past.

17 Further, it's common knowledge -- it was  
18 pointed out at this meeting that I just came from  
19 that as you increase the use of coal-fired power  
20 plants you increase the mercury emissions in the  
21 air. These increased mercury emissions are going to  
22 increase the risk of the methylmercury being  
23 produced and the bioaccumulation of methylmercury,  
24 the toxic chemical in the fish and the other animals  
25 that the Leech Lake people rely on for their very --

## Responses

**Commenter 63 – Becky Knowles**

1 for their very livelihood.

63-2

2 I mean, these folks are living off the  
3 land as they have done, and it's the federal  
4 responsibility to ensure that that ability to live  
5 off of their homeland is not compromised. This  
6 power line running right through the heart of their  
7 homeland would certainly compromise that.

63-3

8 This idea that -- I just heard it in the  
9 hallway just a moment, too, that the electromagnetic  
10 field is attenuated or lessened as you move away  
11 from the line. Well, that's fine and good, but that  
12 doesn't provide any protection whatsoever for the  
13 humans and other animals that are using the  
14 right-of-ways.

15 These right-of-ways and -- of all sorts,  
16 the roads, the railroad right-of-ways, the various  
17 utility right-of-ways that crisscross this Leech  
18 Lake Reservation, they're used by animals and  
19 people. There are -- there are lots of traditional  
20 resources that are growing along these  
21 right-of-ways.

22 So the fact that, well, yeah, the  
23 electromagnetic field is attenuated or lessened, and  
24 as long as you stay a certain distance from the line  
25 then you're not at risk, that provides no protection

**Responses**

**Comment 63-2**

Potential impacts of the Project on resources specific to the Lake Leech Reservation are discussed throughout the EIS. Consultation with the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe is ongoing.

**Comment 63-3**

A discussion of EMF appears in Sections 3.20.1.1 and 3.20.2.2 of the EIS. Text in Section 3.20.1.1 has been supplemented with a discussion of persons working and engaging in other activities within the ROW.

**Commenter 63 – Becky Knowles**

1 for the people who would be otherwise using that  
2 right-of-way.

63-4

3 So, in essence, if you're saying that for  
4 the people to be safe from the electromagnetic field  
5 they need to stay 125 feet, 62 feet on other side of  
6 the line, away from the line, then you're in essence  
7 saying you're going to be putting up a fence and  
8 that right-of-way no longer is useful to these folks  
9 for gathering and hunting.

10 And finally, I'm involved with a lot  
11 of -- I'm a biologist and I work for the Leech Lake  
12 Band. But I'm an ecologist more than anything and  
13 I'm working with all the different agencies and  
14 scientists on landscape scale considerations of  
15 managing our lands, managing our working landscapes  
16 with all of the various threats coming down the  
17 pike.

63-5

18 And what I learned at all of these  
19 meetings, and I heard it again today, that this  
20 landscape right here -- this Leech Lake Reservation  
21 that includes these three major lakes of the  
22 headwaters of the Mississippi River, this very  
23 landscape of the Leech Lake Band, has been  
24 identified just within the past five to ten years by  
25 both state and nonprofit biologists as being an area

**Responses**

**Comment 63-4**

A discussion of typical EMF levels for a 230 kV transmission line are displayed in Figure 3.20-2 contained within Section 3.20 of the EIS. The estimated peak magnitude of electric field density directly beneath the transmission line conductor is 2.6 kV/m, below the 8 kV/m threshold established by the State of Minnesota and would not require limited access to the Project ROW. The estimated peak magnetic field beneath the transmission line conductor is 260 mG. Minnesota has not established any thresholds for magnetic fields, but these levels are below established international thresholds.

**Comment 63-5**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS.

Commenter 63 – Becky Knowles

Responses

63-5  
(cont.)

53

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of high conservation value.

I actually heard it mentioned today and I was not supposed to repeat it, but here we go on public record, there actually is a consideration of establishing a new federal wildlife refuge -- wildlife refuge -- wildlife refuge within this land mass. This is -- ecologically this is very high quality land, the waters are of ultimate -- high value. Biologically, this landscape is very, very, valuable -- very valuable.

And to dissect it -- bisect it once again with more corridor is just -- it should be unconscionable. And in addition to its ecological value, this landscape may well be eligible to be listed on National Register of Historical Places.

So this particular landscape, the Leech Lake Band's homeland, is unique in many, many ways. The degree of overlap with the U.S. Forest Service is unique. The fact that this Forest Service was established to protect this land on behalf of the Leech Lake people, that is a unique occurrence.

The fact that this landscape will very well qualify to be listed as a historic district and the fact that this entire landscape is of potentially high conservation value, all of that

**Commenter 63 – Becky Knowles; Commenter 64 – Steven Griep**

**Responses**

1 works together to say we do not need an extra set of  
2 disturbance going through the very heart of it,  
3 particularly when there is an alternative, which is  
4 why we worked hard to have something other than the  
5 central corridor put into this project.

63-6

6 So I live up near the northern corridor,  
7 this thing would be coming by my house. But in this  
8 particular case, I say put it in my backyard. This  
9 landscape here is too valuable to just disregard  
10 those factors and just continue to disturb it.

11 MS. STEINHAEUER: Thank you.

12 UNIDENTIFIED: Good job, Vikki.

13 MR. GRIEP: My name is Steve Griep,  
14 S-T-E-V-E-N, G-R-I-E-P. And I just live a few miles  
15 south of here, it would be along the corridor -- the  
16 Route 1 corridor.

64-1

17 And a comment I have that hasn't been  
18 mentioned and deals with the environmental impact  
19 statement is the socioeconomic part of it, is that  
20 high lines are a real eyesore, and to run them  
21 through the heart of the Chippewa National Forest --  
22 which has to be one of the largest tracts of forest  
23 in this country.

24 I certainly agree with what people have  
25 said about the health aspect of the people and all

**Comment 63-6**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS.

**Comment 64-1**

A discussion of potential visual impacts of the Project appears in Section 3.1 of the EIS.

Commenter 64 – Steven Griep; Commenter 65 – Nicole Beauliao

Responses

1 that, but just the environment, the beauty of the  
2 area around here is -- you can't duplicate it. And  
3 I guess that's all I really have to say.

4 MS. STEINHAEUER: I want to give everybody  
5 who wants to speak tonight the opportunity to do  
6 that. I also want to respect people's time and not  
7 keep people here if everybody believes they've had  
8 an opportunity to speak.

9 We are accepting written comments through  
10 April 26th, and so if you think of something later,  
11 there is a variety of contact information. As long  
12 as we get that by April 26th to either myself or  
13 Stephanie, that will also be part of the record for  
14 this project.

15 And Stephanie and I, as well as  
16 representatives from the applicant and the Forest  
17 Service, will be around afterwards to answer  
18 questions, if you're more comfortable asking  
19 questions in that format.

20 I don't see any hands, so I'm -- oh.

21 MS. BEAULIAO: Good evening. My name is  
22 Nicole Beauliao, N-I-C-O-L-E, B-E-A-U-L-I-A-O.

23 I guess I don't really have a question,  
24 but I have something to say. I am a Leech Lake  
25 enrollee here. I grow up in Bemidji, but this is a

**Commenter 65 – Nicole Beauliao**

65-1

1 very, very touchy thing that you guys are trying to  
2 bring to our reservation here. Not only is there  
3 ecological importance, there is cultural importance.  
4 And I don't expect you guys to understand that, but  
5 you need to listen to these people.

6 We had a very frustrated elder here  
7 tonight, and I can understand his frustration. Our  
8 identity is being questioned here for the future of  
9 the Anishinaabe people. Let me remind you guys, you  
10 guys, the government, never defeated the Ojibwe  
11 people. We allowed you guys to live here out of  
12 brotherhood. We held our hands out and we helped  
13 you, we let you raise your children here, and all  
14 you do is take, take, take.

65-2

15 We don't have much left. We -- our  
16 language is on the verge of being absent, our  
17 culture, our identity, and that is scary. And I  
18 really like what Greg had to say and I don't think  
19 it could have been said any better. You guys are  
20 visitors here, don't forget that. This is our land  
21 here. We were the original inhabitants and now we  
22 are being taken from and taken from.

23 And I was talking to a young man  
24 yesterday and we got into a real deep discussion and  
25 he had a really awesome analogy. He said it's as if

**Responses**

**Comment 65-1**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS. Potential impacts of the Project on resources specific to the Lake Leech Reservation are discussed throughout the EIS. Consultation with the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe is ongoing. A discussion of the potential affect on cultural resources appears in Section 3.9 of the EIS.

**Comment 65-2**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS.

**Commenter 65 – Nicole Beauliao**

65-2  
(cont.)

1 the government came here, took everything you  
2 possibly could have when we held our hand out with  
3 peace and brotherhood. You got a huge plate heaping  
4 of our food, our game, our vegetables. We're hungry  
5 people trying to get at that plate, like, hey, we  
6 taught you how to grow those vegetables, we taught  
7 you how to hunt this game and you keep pushing us  
8 away out of gluttony.  
9 And I think that that really clarifies  
10 the way we feel and that our relationship with the  
11 U.S. Government is not -- there is nothing good  
12 coming -- that came out of that and it continues  
13 just to worsen and worsen. And I haven't heard one  
14 good thing come out of anybody's statements tonight,  
15 not one good thing.  
16 My kids go to the Bug-0-Nay-Ge-Shig  
17 School. And I don't know if you guys are aware, but  
18 the Bug-0-Nay-Ge-Shig School holds our niigaane  
19 program. That is our most vital source of the  
20 revitalization of our language. That language holds  
21 our identity, and you guys want to take that from  
22 us, almost.  
23 That's basically what you're saying with  
24 these routes here. And yeah, this is going to bring  
25 brain cancer, this is going to bring infant

**Responses**

**Comment 65-3**

A discussion of EMF appears in Sections 3.20.1.1 and 3.20.2.2 of the EIS.

65-3

**Commenter 65 – Nicole Beauliao**

**Responses**

65-3  
(cont.)

1 mortality, as if our rates aren't high enough. It's  
2 going to raise it right to the roof. There goes our  
3 language, there goes our identity, there goes our  
4 ceremonies.

5 And I heard a lot of sighing going on  
6 back here (indicating) when our elder was up here  
7 talking, he has every right to be frustrated. He  
8 grew up watching this corruption and putting us down  
9 constantly, putting us down and pushing our issues  
10 under the rug as if they don't exist.

11 And this appalled me, this makes me sick  
12 to my stomach, knowing that you guys want to make --  
13 what it is is at the end of the day, it's a paycheck  
14 and a comfort zone. A paycheck, a comfort zone,  
15 versus the original inhabitants of the United  
16 States.

17 And I see a pregnant young lady up here  
18 (indicating). Now, I want you to put yourself in my  
19 position, imagine your kid being exposed to things  
20 like this. That is not right, that's not human.

21 Miigwech.

22 MS. YOUNG: Could I ask another question?  
23 My question is, who benefits from this transmission  
24 line coming through here?

25 MS. STEINHAUER: I'm sorry. Can I ask

**Commenter 66 – Shirley Young;**

59

1 you to please restate your name for the court  
2 reporter?

3 MS. YOUNG: Oh, I'm sorry. My name is  
4 Shirley Young. Do I have to spell it?

66-1 5 That's my question. Who benefits from  
6 this huge power line coming through here, does the  
7 Leech Lake people benefit from this? I don't think  
8 so. I think it's just taking some more of our land  
9 that has already been taken from us.

66-2 10 And like the young lady said, it seems  
11 like that's all that happens is taking, taking,  
12 taking from the Anishinaabe people, and I'm really  
13 tired of it. It saddens me that I know once I'm  
14 gone from this earth that my grandchildren, my  
15 great-great-grandchildren will no longer have any  
16 more land. They might not even be alive once they  
17 live under this power line that's going right over  
18 my house.

19 That's all I have to say.

20 MS. SHERMAN: Elizabeth Sherman.

21 You heard very compelling statements by  
22 very concerned residents of your proposed corridor,  
23 and I would ask that you humble yourself to pay  
24 attention to what you heard tonight because it's far  
25 too compelling to not listen.

**Responses**

**Comment 66-1**

A discussion of the Project purpose and need appears in Section 1.1 of the EIS.

**Comment 66-2**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS. Potential impacts of the Project on resources specific to the Lake Leech Reservation are discussed throughout the EIS. Consultation with the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe is ongoing.

**Commenter 67 – John Green**

1           And I ask you please, please, do not let  
2           this transmission line power line go through our  
3           reservation.  
4           Miigwech.  
5           MS. STEINHAUER: Yes. I think we have --  
6           excuse me. Okay. We'll take another comment now  
7           and then, depending on how many more people, it may  
8           be time to break so that the reporter can take a  
9           break. But we'll be happy to take your comment now.  
10          MR. GREEN: My name is John Green  
11          (phonetic). I don't know how to spell that, I  
67-1 | 12          guess, my name is Geewagan (phonetic). But I'd like  
13          to know why this has to come through our  
14          reservation, why can't they go around?  
15          Did you tell everybody what a threat this  
16          is -- health threat this is? Hello?  
17          MS. STEINHAUER: That's your comment?  
18          MR. GREEN: Yeah. It's a question.  
19          MS. STEINHAUER: The -- my response to  
20          your first comment is, there are three routes under  
21          consideration, and that's part of what we're out  
22          here for is taking comments on those.  
67-2 | 23          MR. GREEN: Okay. We would appreciate it  
24          if you did not go through our reservation and go  
25          around. We just had this pipeline come through here

**Responses**

**Comment 67-1**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment. A discussion of the alternatives considered in the EIS appears in Section 2.2. The state and federal scoping decisions are included in Appendix A of the EIS.

**Comment 67-2**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS. A discussion of cumulative effects of the Project and the Enbridge Energy pipeline expansions appears in Section 4 of the EIS.

Commenter 67 – John Green; Commenter 68 – Greg Chester

Responses

67-2  
(cont.)

61

1 and this is a terroristry (phonetic) that you're  
2 proposing, you know.

3 So I can speak for a lot of people that  
4 they do not want this coming through our  
5 reservation. But, you know, I speak for myself  
6 right now, but there's a lot of people who won't  
7 speak up because everything is -- everything was  
8 either taken from them or they were forced into  
9 doing what they had to do to survive. And we're  
10 still in the survival thing. You know, it may not  
11 seem like that to the non-Native people, but that's  
12 the way it is. So that's all I've got to say.

13 MS. STEINHAUER: Yes.

14 MR. CHESTER: Greg Chester, speaking a  
15 second time.

16 Just a brief comment, I notice that we  
17 really have not gotten any answers to any of the  
18 questions out here to this point in time, and I  
19 would respectfully ask the folks from Minnkota, if  
20 there are any people here from Minnkota, if they  
21 could come up and answer any of the questions that  
22 have been proposed.

23 MS. STEINHAUER: Mr. Chester, the meeting  
24 is being conducted by the state of Minnesota and the  
25 RUS, and the purpose of the meeting is to take

**Commenter 68 – Greg Chester**

62

1        comments on the project.

2                The applicants have had meetings, they  
3        have a position, and they continue to advocate for  
4        that position. The purpose of this meeting is to,  
5        in a neutral setting, take comments on that. I  
6        don't want to cut you off, but April 21st through  
7        23rd, the contested case hearings, one of which will  
8        be held in Cass Lake, those will be presided over by  
9        a judge. The applicants, as well as myself, will be  
10       available to answer questions. The OES will  
11       cross-examine the applicants. Any member of the  
12       public can directly ask them questions at that time.

13                MR. CHESTER: But wouldn't it be  
14       appropriate to at least answer a few of the  
15       questions that have been brought up here at this  
16       meeting? And if the people from Minnkota have those  
17       answers, you know, we're not in an adversarial  
18       relationship, we're simply asking for answers.

19                MS. STRENGTH: I understand what you're  
20       saying. The answers to the comments and oral  
21       portion of the meeting will be answered in the final  
22       environmental impact statement. The reason for that  
23       is, rather than give you an answer today from  
24       myself, from Suzanne, we get the answer from the  
25       actual people who are experts from the resource area

**Responses**

**Commenter 67 – John Green**

63

1 that your question's coming from.  
2 There will be opportunities after we have  
3 the oral portion, where if you have questions and  
4 you want to speak one-on-one with the  
5 representatives, you can try to get your questions  
6 resolved that way. But we want make sure that we  
7 give responses that are accurate and that build on  
8 what's already been put out in the draft  
9 environmental impact statement into the final. So  
10 there will be answers, it's just not a format where  
11 we're going to sit here and go through the details  
12 and specifics on what, in a lot of cases, are very  
13 lengthy analyses.  
14 UNIDENTIFIED: Just going through the  
15 motions.  
16 MS. STEINHAUER: Yes. The gentleman --  
17 MR. GREEN: Have you made an agreement  
18 with Leech Lake yet for this power line, the Tribal  
19 Council or anything, or are you talking to them  
20 about it?  
21 MS. STEINHAUER: The state of Minnesota  
22 and the RUS are working with the Leech Lake Band DRM  
23 to prepare the environmental impact statement. The  
24 Minnesota Public Utilities Commission will make a  
25 determination on the route, and how that affects the

**Responses**

**Comment 67-3**

Consultation with the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe is ongoing. Information regarding necessary permits or approvals to cross the Leech Lake Reservation has been requested from the LLDRM.

67-3

**Commenter 68 – Elizabeth Sherman**

64

1 reservation is something that the applicants would  
2 need to work with the band on.

3 MR. GREEN: You know, they did that with  
4 the pipeline. They said that it wasn't coming  
5 through. Next thing you know, they're digging up  
6 the thing, you know. So they paid no attention  
7 whatsoever to the statement from the research that  
8 they did. The band didn't -- the DRM made a --  
9 recommended that they shouldn't do that, but they  
10 did it.

11 We are concerned, you know. So I'm here  
12 to find out what I can and so is everybody else, I  
13 guess, you know. So that's where I'm at, I want to  
14 know.

15 MS. SHERMAN: I have one more question.  
16 Elizabeth Sherman.

17 You said the southern corridor has been  
18 scratched, right, along 200?

19 MS. STEINHAUER: There was a corridor  
20 that was looked at along 200, and that's not been  
21 carried forward.

68-1 | 22 MS. SHERMAN: And why was it not carried  
23 forward?

24 MS. STRENGTH: There are a lot of reasons  
25 that are in detail in the document we put forward,

**Responses**

**Comment 68-1**

See response to Comment 59-1, which addresses the same concern.

**Commenter 68 – Elizabeth Sherman**

65

1 the scoping report decision. But in essence, what  
2 we can say is that the northern corridor avoided the  
3 Leech Lake Reservation, and that was one of the  
4 things we were trying to look at in the analysis, is  
5 a route that avoided the Leech Lake Reservation,  
6 what it'd look like and what the impacts would be.  
7 So the northern route was carried forward to do  
8 that.

9 The southern route had additional  
10 impacts, and since it did not parallel a  
11 transmission line, there were the potential for more  
12 wetland impacts and some other things that made  
13 it the decision of the cooperating agencies to  
14 eliminate the southern route from further  
15 consideration and instead go forward with the  
16 northern route.

68-2

17 MS. SHERMAN: How many acres in that  
18 southern -- on Highway 200 would impact our  
19 reservation if you would have went through there, or  
20 do you know how many acres of Leech Lake  
21 Reservation?

22 MS. STRENGTH: I don't have that  
23 information with me.

24 MS. SHERMAN: Okay. Do you know what I  
25 believe, and I'd like to go on record to say this, I

**Responses**

**Comment 68-2**

See response to Comment 59-1, which addresses the same concern.

**Commenter 68 – Elizabeth Sherman;  
Commenter 69 – Becky Knowles**

68-3

1 believe that was scratched and disregarded because  
2 of socioeconomic class. Because we have many  
3 non-Native people, non-Indian people who are from  
4 the higher socioeconomic class who own resorts, own  
5 lake-front property who have the clout and the power  
6 to get you to stop that route.

7 But here we are on this reservation,  
8 poverty-stricken, from the lower socioeconomic  
9 class, with no power. But I'll tell you one thing,  
10 we do have spiritual power. There is such a thing  
11 as spiritual justice. There might not be no justice  
12 made out on earth, but there is spiritual justice.  
13 And we as Ojibwe cling to that and we put our hope  
14 in that.

15 MS. STEINHAUER: I want to make sure that  
16 other people who haven't spoken yet have an  
17 opportunity to speak.

18 MS. KNOWLES: I have another comment.

19 MS. STEINHAUER: Yes.

69-1

20 MS. KNOWLES: This is Becky Knowles  
21 again.

22 I've been involved with this review  
23 process for three years now, since the pipeline and  
24 this power line were first proposed. It seems to me  
25 now, even down to the very end, that the burden is

**Responses**

**Comment 68-3**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS.

**Comment 69-1**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS.

69-1  
(cont.)

**Commenter 69 – Becky Knowles**

67

1 on the Leech Lake people and those of us at DRM to  
2 somehow find the time and expertise to conduct this  
3 environmental review, to come forward with our best  
4 assessments of the work that's put forward.

5 The department of -- the state Department  
6 of Natural Resources, they have an entire division  
7 of environmental review, people whose job is to do  
8 nothing but review one proposed project after  
9 another. The Leech Lake Band has no such  
10 department.

11 So the scientists within DRM who have  
12 been reviewing this work and been meeting with the  
13 applicants for the past three years, we are doing  
14 that just on the side of the work that we are really  
15 obligated to do by the grants that we're under.

16 So it seems to me that there's a real  
17 injustice going on here. Perhaps this is the  
18 environmental injustice, in that the band just  
19 simply does not have the resources to complete the  
20 evaluation. And now, I will likely never read the  
21 EIS. I mean, I simply don't have time. We have to  
22 divide it up within ourselves, who can look at this  
23 part, who can look at that part.

24 So the fact that you don't get adequate  
25 responses and arguments against this project may not

**Responses**

Commenter 69 – Becky Knowles

68

69-1  
(cont.)

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reflect that fact that the arguments aren't there, it may reflect more that the Leech Lake Band just simply has not been able to muster the legal power, the scientific power, the time to put into the environment review.

And the other thing, this has really, really bothered me from the very beginning of this, is the sense of inevitability, and I've even heard it again here tonight. It's as if, as I heard someone say in the back, this is all just going through the motions, and that has been endlessly frustrating for me because we are very, very busy with the work we're supposed to be doing, and yet we've all been taking time off to conduct these environment reviews with the pipeline and the power line.

And yet, through the whole thing, we keep getting this sense of inevitability from the band members, from the applicants, just that this is going to happen, this is going to happen. And so it's like we are trying to spend as much time as we can to put forward the strong arguments why this thing should not cross the Leech Lake Reservation. And yet, between the sense of inevitability and the insufficient time and resources to adequately mount

Responses

Commenter 69 – Becky Knowles; Commenter 70 – Sydney Harper

Responses

69-1  
(cont.)

1 an argument against this thing, it's -- those folks  
2 might be right, that it would not be because there's  
3 not adequate arguments to support running this thing  
4 around the reservation. So I still say do not come  
5 across this landscape.

6 MS. STEINHAUER: Yes. There's somebody  
7 in the back who hasn't spoken yet.

8 MS. HARPER: My name is Sydney Harper,  
9 S-Y-D-N-E-Y, H-A-R-P-E-R.

70-1

10 I don't know much about this, but I'm  
11 looking at your map, there doesn't seem to be many  
12 towns or anything up there on Route 3. So why not  
13 just put it up there and not affect many people that  
14 way?

15 UNIDENTIFIED: Because it costs more,  
16 that's why.

17 MS. HARPER: Can you explain that to me,  
18 please?

19 MS. STEINHAUER: I will have to take that  
20 as a comment because that's part of what we're out  
21 here to get comments on.

22 MS. HARPER: Okay.

23 MS. STEINHAUER: The state has not  
24 determined the route for the project. That's part  
25 of the intent of this meeting and the meetings that

**Comment 70-1**

Please refer to the comment response from Ms. Steinhauer that appears directly below the comment.

**Commenter 71 – Susan Indieke**

1 will happen at the end of April, is to get comment  
2 on the different route alternatives.

3 MS. INDIEKE: My name is Susan Indieke  
4 S-U-S-A-N, I-N-D-I-E-K-E.

71-1

5 Is it my understanding that the meeting  
6 that you're going to be holding April 23rd through  
7 the 26th (sic) you will give us answers to our  
8 questions, it's not going to be just comments?

9 MS. STEINHAUER: The meetings that are  
10 held April 21st through 23rd -- and these are,  
11 again, just the state meetings, the federal agencies  
12 are not part of that process. If you mean is the  
13 answer going to be where the route will be, we will  
14 not answer that. That's part of what those meetings  
15 are held for.

16 MS. INDIEKE: No. That's not why I'm  
17 asking. All these people are asking you questions  
18 and you're saying all this is is a comment meeting.  
19 Will the questions be answered at that time -- that  
20 we have?

21 MS. STEINHAUER: There will be an  
22 opportunity to ask questions and for the applicants  
23 and myself to respond to them. Whether you believe  
24 those answers are adequate, I can't tell you. But  
25 yes, that's the intent of the contested case

**Responses**

**Comment 71-1**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS.

Responses

Commenter 71 – Susan Indieke; Commenter 72 – John Green

71

71-1  
(cont.)

1       hearings.

2               MS. INDIEKE: So if we want answers to

3       our questions, we have to come back to that meeting?

4               MS. STEINHAUER: And if you can make a

5       comment tonight or in writing, we can respond to

6       that in the final environmental impact statement.

7               UNIDENTIFIED: They're lying to us.

8               MS. INDIEKE: Well, you also said that

9       you could answer our questions individually tonight,

10       why can you answer them individually but not as a

11       group?

12              MS. STEINHAUER: It really depends on the

13       nature of the questions and the detail. It's a

14       large document and I don't have all that information

15       here.

16              Yes, that gentleman (indicating).

17              MR. GREEN: My name is John Green.

18              Do you expect us to just say, well, go

19       ahead and put that power line through here and just

20       back off and get out of your way? That's a very

21       simple question.

22              MS. STEINHAUER: The --

23              MR. GREEN: This is our home.

24              MS. STEINHAUER: No, I do not.

25              MR. GREEN: This is our home, you know,

**Commenter 72 – John Green; Commenter 73 – Shirley Young**

72

72-1 1 and this was set aside by Congress to be our home.  
2 This is where we were put because we weren't wanted  
3 anywhere else. So why do you want to come through  
4 here? You know, it's true. So leave us with what  
5 we've got, you know.

6 That's what I'm saying, and I'm sure  
7 that's what everybody else is thinking, too. You  
8 know, as Native people we don't need to -- we  
9 already have infected blankets, you know, and this  
10 is another infected blanket. It's a sickness. So I  
11 think you understand what I'm talking about.

12 MS. YOUNG: Shirley Young.

73-1 13 I think people have stated that there's  
14 not a lot of people here to show their support for  
15 this, not wanting this transmission line to go  
16 through. But as a Bug-0-Nay-Ge-Shig school board  
17 member, I think I speak for every one of our  
18 students out there that go to the school, I think I  
19 speak for the staff, and the administration even,  
20 because we discussed this at a board meeting last  
21 month.

22 And I know that our little kids out there  
23 are -- they get angry when they see trees getting  
24 cut down, even. We have tree huggers out there at  
25 the school, they don't want the power -- this

**Responses**

**Comment 72-1**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS.

**Comment 73-1**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS.

**Commenter 73 – Shirley Young;  
Commenter 74 – Elizabeth Sherman**

73

1 transmission line to go through.

2 And I've had three of my children  
3 graduate from the Bug-0-Nay-Ge-Shig without having  
4 to worry about this big power line coming through  
5 and getting these diseases that it causes. So that  
6 is what I'm speaking for, our little kindergarten  
7 kids up to the 12th grade.

8 At one time we had a daycare out there,  
9 but we no longer have it. But I would speak for  
10 them, too, because my grandchildren went to the  
11 daycare and now they are starting to attend the  
12 school. And that is my statement. Thank you.

13 MS. SHERMAN: I think those of us have  
14 already figured out the process and your  
15 methodology -- I'm Elizabeth Sherman -- and your  
16 methodology in presenting this meeting. And I  
17 believe -- it is my opinion and probably I can speak  
18 for others here in this room that this is -- you  
19 have lies, just like your forefathers, you have  
20 lies. You presented lies to us, you're pretentious.

21 But we are smart people and we've got you  
22 figured out. And we know why you're here, you are  
23 here because you are going through the motions. And  
24 you're going to put this power line in irregardless  
25 of what we say about human life.

73-1  
(cont.)

74-1

**Responses**

**Comment 74-1**

Thank you for your comment. It has been noted and included in the record for this EIS.

**Commenter 74 – Elizabeth Sherman**

74

**Responses**

74-1  
(cont.)

1                   And so you have to live with yourself,  
2                   you have to go to bed at night, including Minnkota,  
3                   Minnesota Power, Otter Tail Power, and you have to  
4                   look at yourself. You are responsible for human  
5                   life that you're destroying.

6                   And so I'm wasting my time, you're  
7                   wasting yours, and so I'm just going to leave right  
8                   now because there's no point in discussing or  
9                   sharing these comments any further because you're  
10                  totally disregarding our feelings, our lives, and  
11                  the future of our children.

12                  MS. STEINHAUER: Would anybody else like  
13                  to comment?

14                  Seeing no hands, I will close the public  
15                  comment portion of the meeting. We're off the  
16                  record now, and we are available to try to answer  
17                  questions.

18                  (Public comment concluded.)

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