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February 8, 2010

VIA ELECTRONIC FILING AND U.S. MAIL

Hon. Richard Luis
Administrative Law Judge
P.O. Box 64620
St. Paul, MN 55164-0620

Re: *In the Matter of the Application of the Route Permit Application by Great River Energy and Xcel Energy for a 345 kV Transmission Line from Brookings County, South Dakota to Hampton, Minnesota*
MPUC Docket No.: ET-2/TL-08-1474
OAH Docket No.: 7-2500-20283-2

Dear Judge Luis:

Great River Energy, a Minnesota cooperative corporation, and Northern States Power Company, a Minnesota corporation (“Xcel Energy”), (collectively, “Applicants”), submit the following comments to provide additional information regarding certain questions that were raised during the public and evidentiary hearings and to clarify the record on several topics.

A. Minnesota River Crossings

Throughout the proceeding, there were questions raised about the type of structures that would be used for the Minnesota River crossings. In particular, there were numerous comments about the Lower Minnesota River crossing at either Le Sueur or Belle Plaine. Applicants wish to clarify that if the Le Sueur crossing is approved, to minimize environmental impacts, Applicants recommend an aerial crossing adjacent to the US 169 bridge using double circuit single pole structures. At the Belle Plaine crossing, where the Alternate Route follows an existing 69 kV transmission line across the river, Applicants identified two structure types: a four circuit H-frame structure and a double circuit H-frame structure. From a constructability and maintenance perspective, if the Belle Plaine crossing is approved, Applicants prefer that double circuit structures be authorized. Four circuit structures, whereby the new lines would be combined with the existing 69 kV line and existing distribution, present special maintenance concerns because of the close proximity of multiple circuits. However, Applicants recognize that this preference must be balanced with concerns presented by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (“USFWS”) and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (“Mn/DNR”) and request

flexibility to work with these agencies and the Minnesota Department of Commerce, Office of Energy Security (“OES”) on final design and alignment.

B. Route Width

During the contested case hearing, I was cross-examined by the OES regarding the Applicants’ requested route width. The nature of the OES questions indicated a preference for narrowing the route width. In response to these concerns, Applicants examined the Modified Preferred Route and the Alternate Route to identify those areas where a narrowed route width of 600 feet might be acceptable. Enclosed are 17 tile maps (Attachment 1) showing the Modified Preferred Route and the Alternate Route with these narrowed areas.

To maintain flexibility in working with affected landowners and agencies, Applicants continue to prefer a 1,000 foot route width for most of the authorized route. Applicants also note our desire to maintain wider route widths of up to 1.25 miles near the Minnesota River crossings. Applicants believe these wider route widths are appropriate and necessary to enable Applicants to work with the OES, other agencies, and landowners to develop a final alignment once a route is selected. In particular, Applicants believe a wide corridor will be necessary for a crossing of the Minnesota River at Le Sueur to enable further coordination with landowners, Minnesota Department of Transportation (“Mn/DOT”), the Mn/DNR, the USFWS, and the OES. The enclosed maps continue to reflect wider route widths near the Minnesota River crossings.

C. Myrick Alignment Alternative, Bimeda, Inc.

In response to concerns raised by Mn/DOT in the Le Sueur area, Applicants identified one additional alignment, the Myrick Alternative, which was described in my supplemental testimony. During the public hearing at New Prague, Bimeda, Inc.’s (“Bimeda”) Chief Operating Officer expressed concern about the proximity of the proposed transmission line to the company’s facilities. Bimeda is an animal pharmaceutical manufacturing company and is located at 291 Forest Prairie Road in Le Sueur. In particular, Bimeda stated that the line would be located too close to its proposed storage tanks which will contain isopropyl alcohol. Isopropyl alcohol is a flammable product that is produced by combining water and propane.

Bimeda also recently filed a comment letter dated January 28, 2010, asserting that the proposed lines should be located at least 750 feet from the proposed tanks. The letter does not, however, cite any statute or regulation that requires a specific distance between transmission lines and isopropyl alcohol tanks.

Applicants have examined the compatibility of the proposed transmission line with the proposed tanks and have found no standard or rule that requires transmission lines to be a particular set distance from isopropyl alcohol tanks. Applicants do not agree that there are safety concerns associated with the proximity of the proposed tanks to the proposed transmission lines. Applicants have experience constructing and operating transmission lines near other types of tanks storing flammable materials and have safely built and operated these facilities. For

example, the Koch refinery plant on Highway 52 has a variety of transmission lines including 69 kV, 115 kV, and 345 kV located near its petroleum tanks. There are also a number of 345 kV lines and substation equipment located next to fuel storage tanks at Xcel Energy's Blue Lake Substation in Shakopee.

Applicants believe the new transmission line facilities can be safely constructed and operated within the Modified Preferred Route at this location. If the Modified Preferred Route is selected, the line would be designed to ensure that the tanks are outside the right-of-way. In addition, Applicants will continue to work with Bimeda on the final alignment of the line and will have the flexibility within the requested route width to place the proposed line several hundred feet from the proposed tanks if appropriate.

D. Mn/DOT Right-of-Way

In Applicants' discussions with Mn/DOT before the contested case hearings, Applicants provided a map book to Mn/DOT highlighting the route segments within the jurisdiction of Mn/DOT. Enclosed are copies of these maps that were previously provided to Mn/DOT. These maps show locations where Applicants' Modified Preferred Route and Alternate Route will parallel Mn/DOT right-of-way (Attachment 2) and show locations where these routes will cross Mn/DOT right-of-way (Attachment 3).

In a November 30, 2009 letter to the OES regarding comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement ("DEIS"), Applicants provided head-on view diagrams of how pole placement and conductor blow-out could impact Mn/DOT's right-of-way. Enclosed is a bird's eye view diagram (Attachment 4) showing potential conductor blowout at various wind speeds when the transmission structure is placed 25 feet from the edge of Mn/DOT's right-of-way.

E. Sky Harbor Airpark

During the Lonsdale public hearing, several landowners discussed the potential impacts on the Sky Harbor Airpark if route alternative 5A-04 is selected. Route alternative 5A-04 was proposed during the DEIS scoping process and is addressed in the DEIS. It is not a route proposed by the Applicants. Route alternative 5A-04 is located within one mile of Sky Harbor Airpark, in Webster Township. Applicants evaluated this route alternative and determined that it is not feasible given the potential displacement of houses and impacts to wetlands and agricultural operations. There are potentially two homes located within the right-of-way of this route alternative. Additionally, the acres of wetlands located within the right-of-way of 5A-04 (52 acres) are higher than the acres of wetlands within the Alternate Route (36 acres). This would require four additional pole structures to be placed in wetlands. The right-of-way for this alternative would increase the percentage of prime farmland crossed by one percent compared to the Alternate Route.

With regard to impacts on the Sky Harbor Airpark, the proposed 5A-04 segment crosses the end of the runway, roughly diagonally, at a distance of about 5,600 feet from the end of the runway and about 3,100 feet from the closest point. The ground elevation at the airpark ranges from 1,098 feet to 1,108 feet above sea level. The elevation of alternative 5A-04 is approximately 1,079 feet to 1,090 feet above sea level. At these distances and relative elevations, a transmission line could be installed without impacting airpark traffic. However, given the potential displacements of houses, impacts to wetlands, impacts to agricultural operations, and the one mile proximity of the Sky Harbor Airpark, Applicants believe route alternative 5A-04 is not a feasible alternative.

F. Kruger Property

During the proceeding, a landowner along 220th Street advised that he has a proposal to place a personal use runway on his property. Applicants do not believe the proposed personal use runway on the Kruger property precludes approval of the Modified Preferred Route. There is uncertainty as to whether the personal use, east-west runway on the Kruger property will meet the Federal Aviation Administration (“FAA”) requirements for a runway in this location. Mr. Kruger testified that no FAA approval has been provided. Should FAA approval be received, the runway would run parallel to the Proposed Route. Applicants are confident that the parallel alignment will allow Applicants to place the poles far enough from the runway so that the runway could continue to comply with FAA standards.

Applicants also note that alternatives 6P-03 and 6P-06 would be located perpendicular to the runway, within 2,500 feet of the Kruger property.

G. Right-of-Way for Lyon County – Minnesota Valley 115 kV Line

During the public hearings, a question was raised regarding the right-of-way for Xcel Energy’s Lyon County – Minnesota Valley 115 kV Line. The right-of-way for this line is 75 feet. The amount that this right-of-way overlaps with road right-of-way varies along the line.

H. Installation of Second Set of Davit Arms

As stated in Kevin Lennon’s direct testimony, the Lyon County Substation – Cedar Mountain Substation – Helena Substation 345 kV sections of the Project will be constructed with double circuit 345 kV facilities. The remainder of the Project is currently proposed to be built with double circuit capable structures. These sections of double circuit capable structures include Brookings County Substation – Lyon County Substation, Lyon County Substation – Hazel Creek Substation – Minnesota Valley Substation, and Helena Substation – Lake Marion Substation – Hampton Substation. Applicants would like to clarify that while only one circuit (three phases) will be initially installed in these sections, Applicants will place the second set of davit arms on the poles during initial construction. This will conform to the Certificate of Need Order issued by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (“Commission”) which required the

structures to be built as double circuit capable. The second and unused set of arms will be tied down until the second 345 kV circuit is approved by the Commission and installed.

I. Fiber Optic Cable in Shield Wire

As stated on page 3-1 of the Application, two shield wires will be strung above the conductors to prevent damage from lightning strikes. These shield wires are typically less than one inch in diameter. The Application stated that the shield wires may also include fiber optic cables, which allow a path for substation protection equipment to communicate equipment at other terminals on the transmission line. Applicants would like to clarify that indeed the shield wires on the 345 kV and 115 kV transmission lines will contain fiber optic cables.

J. Insulin Pumps

During the public hearings, members of the public raised concerns that the proposed transmission line may interfere with their use of insulin pumps. Applicants contacted Medtronic, a manufacturer of insulin pumps and were advised that the design limit for magnetic field exposure for insulin pumps is 600 gauss and that above this level the pump would most likely malfunction. This 600 gauss level is associated with very strong magnetic fields such as those found in Magnetic Resonance Imaging (“MRI”) machines. The maximum expected magnetic field levels for the proposed transmission line are well below 150 milligauss.

K. Buffalo Herds

At the Lonsdale public hearings, a landowner asked if the proposed transmission line would affect the behavior of buffalo herds grazing near the transmission line. Applicants do not believe the transmission line facilities will negatively impact buffalo herds. Applicants have investigated this concern and have not identified any specific studies regarding the effect of high voltage transmission lines on buffalo behavior.

L. Honeybees

Several landowners during the public hearings, raised concerns about the impact of transmission line electric fields and magnetic fields on honey bees. In response to these concerns, Dr. Peter Valberg prepared a brief report, which is enclosed (Attachment 5).

Hon. Richard Luis
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Sincerely,

s/ Craig Poorker

Craig Poorker
Manager of Land Rights
Great River Energy
12300 Elm Creek Boulevard
Maple Grove, MN 55369

Enclosures
cc: Service List

**In the Matter of the Route Permit
Application by Great River Energy
and Xcel Energy for a 345 kV
Transmission Line from Brookings
County, South Dakota to Hampton, MN**

**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE
MPUC Docket No. ET2/TL-08-1474
OAH Docket No. 7-2500-20283-2**

Theresa Senart certifies that on the 8th day of February 2010, she filed a true and correct copy of the **February 8, 2010 Letter to Judge Luis Submitting Additional Comments** by posting said letter and all attachments on www.edockets.state.mn.us. Said letter and attachments were also served upon all parties on the attached service list.

/s/ Theresa Senart
Theresa Senart

TAKEN FROM OFFICIAL SERVICE LIST

**IN THE MATTER OF THE ROUTE PERMIT APPLICATION BY GREAT RIVER
ENERGY AND XCEL ENERGY FOR A 345 KV TRANSMISSION LINE FROM
BROOKINGS COUNTY, SOUTH DAKOTA TO HAMPTON, MINNESOTA**

**MPUC DOCKET NO. ET2/TL-08-1474
OAH DOCKET NO. 7-2500-20283-2**

Via Regular U.S. Mail

Richard C. Luis, ALJ
Office of Administrative Hearings
PO Box 64620
St. Paul, MN 55164
Richard.Luis@state.mn.us

Julia Anderson
Office of Attorney General
1400 Bremer Tower
445 Minnesota Street
St. Paul MN 55101
julia.anderson@state.mn.us

Karen Finstad Hammel
Office of Attorney General
1400 Bremer Tower
445 Minnesota Street
St. Paul MN 55101
karen.hammel@state.mn.us

Michael Kaluzniak
Minnesota Public Utilities Commission
121 Seventh Place, Suite 350
St. Paul, MN 55101
mike.kaluzniak@state.mn.us

Joyce Osborn
PO Box 1165
Burnsville, MN 55337

Via Regular U.S. Mail

Phillip R. Krass
Krass Monroe, P.A.
8000 Norman Center Drive, Suite 1000
Minneapolis, MN 55437
pkrass@krassmonroe.com

John Lindell
OAG-RUD
900 Bremer Tower
445 Minnesota Street
St. Paul, MN 55101
agorud.edf@state.mn.us

Paula Maccabee
Just Change Consulting
1961 Selby Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55104
pmaccabee@visi.com

Valerie T. Herring
Briggs and Morgan, P.A.
2200 IDS Center
80 South 8th Street
Minneapolis, MN 55402
vherring@briggs.com

Craig Poorker
Great River Energy
12300 Elm Creek Boulevard
Maple Grove, MN 55369
cpoorker@greenergy.com

Prita R. Patel
Xcel Energy
Suite 800
250 Marquette Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55401
priti.r.patel@xcelenergy.com

Carole Schmidt
Great River Energy
12300 Elm Creek Boulevard
Maple Grove, MN 55369
cschmidt@greenergy.com

Pamela J. Rasmussen
Xcel Energy
P.O. Box 8
1414 West Hamilton Avenue
Eau Claire, WI 54701
pamela.jo.rasmussen@xcelenergy.com

Donna Stephenson
Great River Energy
12300 Elm Creek Boulevard
Maple Grove, MN 55369
dstephenson@greenergy.com

Via MPUC E-Service

deborah.pile@state.mn.us
KlemmM@seversonsheldon.com
mkrikava@briggs.com
sharon.ferguson@state.mn.us
jshaddix@janetshaddix.com
BauerR@seversonsheldon.com
bens@integra.net
burl.haar@state.mn.us.us
bob.cupit@state.mn.us
scott.ek@state.mn.us
overland@legalelectric.org
lagrimonti@briggs.com
lrossmccalib@greenergy.com
kenn.barnaby@wellsfargo.com