



414 Nicollet Mall
Minneapolis, MN 55401

May 6, 2024

—Via Electronic Filing—

Will Seuffert
Executive Secretary
Minnesota Public Utilities Commission
121 7th Place East, Suite 350
St. Paul, MN 55101

RE: SUPPLEMENTAL COMMENTS
IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION FOR A CERTIFICATE OF NEED FOR THE
MANKATO TO MISSISSIPPI RIVER 345 kV TRANSMISSION PROJECT
DOCKET NO. E002/CN-22-532

IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION FOR A ROUTE PERMIT FOR THE
MANKATO TO MISSISSIPPI RIVER 345 kV TRANSMISSION PROJECT IN
SOUTHERN MINNESOTA
DOCKET NO. E002/TL-23-157

Dear Mr. Seuffert:

Northern States Power Company, doing business as Xcel Energy (Xcel Energy, the Company, or the Applicant), respectfully submits these Supplemental Comments in response to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission's (Commission) April 8, 2024 Notice of Comment Period (Notice) in the above-referenced dockets responding to reply comments filed on April 29, 2024.

The Commission's Notice requested comments on the completeness of the Combined Application for a Certificate of Need and Route Permit (Application) for the Mankato to Mississippi River Transmission Project (the Project) and the procedures that should be used to review the Application, including the environmental review for the Project. Reply comments were filed on April 29, 2024 by the Applicant; the Prehn Family and NoCapX 2020; and Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy, Audubon Upper Mississippi River, Center for Rural Affairs, Citizens Utility Board, Clean Grid Alliance, Fresh Energy, Sierra Club, and Union of Concerned Scientists (collectively the Joint

Commenters). Ryland Eichhorst, Mayor of Oronoco, also submitted a comment on April 29, 2024. Xcel Energy responds to each of these comments in turn below.¹

Joint Commenters

Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy, Audubon Upper Mississippi River, Center for Rural Affairs, Citizens Utility Board, Clean Grid Alliance, Fresh Energy, Sierra Club, and Union of Concerned Scientists (the Joint Commenters) submitted reply comments supporting Midcontinent Independent System Operator, Inc.'s (MISO) recommendation that the Certificate of Need be evaluated using the Commission's informal process and supporting combined proceedings for the Certificate of Need and Route Permit.

In concluding a contested case proceeding is not warranted for the Certificate of Need, the Joint Commenters note that they have not identified any disputed issue of material fact that would support referral to the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH). Joint Commenters also express concern that use of the contested case process could stymie public input, concluding that "the Commission's informal process provides a more efficient use of intervenors' limited resources in cases where substantive disputes are not present, yet maintains important provisions for environmental evaluation, a public hearing, and opportunity for written public comments."²

With respect to combined proceedings for the Certificate of Need and Route Permit, Joint Commenters conclude this approach will improve the efficiency and transparency of the proceedings and ease participation for interested parties, including the public.

The Applicant appreciates Joint Commenter's comments and perspective and supports their recommendations.

The Prehn Family and NoCapX 2020

The Prehn Family and NoCapX 2020 filed reply comments requesting a contested case for the Certificate of Need and Route Permit dockets and requesting an advisory task

¹ Xcel Energy's April 29, 2024 Reply Comments responded to the initial comments of the Minnesota Department of Commerce, Division of Energy Resources (DOC-DER); the Minnesota Department of Commerce, Energy Environmental Review and Analysis (DOC-EERA); Midcontinent Independent System Operator, Inc. (MISO); the Prehn Family and NoCapX 2020; Operating Engineers Local 49 and North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters (IUOE Local 49/NCSRC of Carpenters); Trevor Scrabeck; and Dale Thomforde. The Applicant does not restate its responses to those initial comments in these supplemental comments.

² Joint Commenters Reply Comments at 2.

force to include local governments, local landowners, landowner groups, and other public interest groups.

In their reply comments, the Prehn Family and NoCapX 2020 continue to recommend that the Certificate of Need be referred to OAH for a contested case, stating that the Project is not suitable for the informal process.³ As discussed in the Applicant's Reply Comments, the Prehn Family and NoCapX 2020 are the only commenter recommending that the Commission require a contested case for the Certificate of Need. All other commenters addressing this procedural question including DOC-DER, MISO, the Joint Commenters, IUOE Local 49/NCSRC of Carpenters, and the Applicant support the use of the informal process, recognizing that the informal process is consistent with the Commission's decisions in similar Certificate of Need applications, will allow for robust public participation, and will provide adequate opportunity for parties to raise issues through comments.

The Prehn Family and NoCapX 2020 also continue to advocate that the Commission establish an advisory task force, disagreeing with DOC-EERA's analysis and conclusion that an advisory task force is not warranted for the Project at this time. DOC-EERA's rationale for its recommendation not to establish an advisory task force for the Project reflects careful consideration and is well supported. DOC-EERA weighed consideration of Project size, complexity, known or anticipated controversy, and sensitive resources, and concluded that consideration of routing alternatives, distributed along the length of the Project and responsive to potential impacts of the Project, are a better means than a task force for addressing the potential human and environmental impacts of the Project. No other commenter has recommended appointment of an advisory task force for the Project.

The Prehn Family and NoCapX 2020 also reiterate the concern raised in initial comments that the CenterPoint natural gas storage facility is not adequately addressed in the Application and contend that the location of the CenterPoint infrastructure "should eliminate the area from consideration."⁴

As discussed in the Applicant's Reply Comments with respect to the underground natural gas storage and associated natural gas facilities, the Applicant has extensive experience working with natural gas companies and other pipeline companies on evaluating and implementing AC mitigation when transmission lines cross or are located parallel to pipelines, which is a relatively common occurrence throughout the

³ The Prehn Family and NoCapX 2020 Reply Comments at 6,

⁴ The Prehn Family and NoCapX 2020 Reply Comments at 3.

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system. For example, as depicted on the detailed maps in Appendix K and the updated Map 8 provided with the Applicant's Reply Comments, an existing Xcel Energy 115 kV transmission line parallels State Highway 13 and then travels south along 120th Street.

The Company is aware of the CenterPoint underground gas storage facility and is coordinating with CenterPoint concerning the location of the Project and any necessary mitigation. The CenterPoint facility is used to store natural gas during the summer and to withdraw gas in the winter heating season with gas stored several hundred feet below ground in the Mount Simon Sandstone formation.

On May 1, 2024, Company representatives met with CenterPoint staff to discuss the proposed Project and the CenterPoint facilities in this area. The proposed routes were discussed, as well as the 150 foot wide easement needed for the proposed 345 kV transmission line. The Company indicated that typical foundations for the proposed 345 kV transmission line structures range from 40-70 feet in depth, depending on site-specific soil and geologic conditions, and CenterPoint noted that these would have no impact on the underground storage facility, which is located several hundred feet underground.

CenterPoint noted that the proposed Segment 1 South, Route Alternative 1L is near four wells associated with their facilities (see revised Segment 1, Map 8 attached to these Supplemental Comments which shows wells within 500 feet of the proposed centerline) and indicated that it requires a minimum clearance of 70 feet above each well for access and maintenance work. CenterPoint also noted that, while unlikely, transmission lines crossing over valve sites could experience flashing in the event of a natural gas venting release.

The Company will continue to coordinate with CenterPoint to ensure that the proposed routes and transmission structures are adequately set back from the existing wells, valves, pipelines, and associated facilities to avoid any potential impacts. Additionally, the Company will work with CenterPoint to evaluate the need for potential AC mitigation.

Mayor of Oronoco

Mr. Ryland Eichhorst, the Mayor of Oronoco, provided comments regarding potential impacts of the Project and recommendations for further consideration of alternatives. While this information does not relate directly to the questions posed in the Commission's Notice, it is valuable information and should be considered in the scoping process.

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As discussed in DOC-EERA's comments, DOC-EERA and Commission staff will conduct public information and scoping meetings during a public comment period to inform the content of the EIS. The Department of Commerce issues the scoping decisions for the EIS and may include alternative routes suggested during the scoping process if they would aid the Commission in making a permit decision.

Conclusion

Xcel Energy appreciates the opportunity to provide these supplemental comments in response to reply comments and the Commission's Notice and respectfully requests that the Commission:

- Find the Application to be substantially complete under the applicable provisions of Minn. R. Chs. 7849 and 7850;
- Evaluate the Certificate of Need Application using the Commission's informal process;
- Order that the Certificate of Need and Route Permit be processed jointly;
- Decline to appoint an advisory task force; and
- Delegate administrative authority to the Executive Secretary to issue the Delegation of Authority to the Applicant for Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office consultation.

Please contact me at 214-422-3672 or monsherra.s.blank@xcelenergy.com if you have any questions regarding this filing.

Sincerely,

/s/ Monsherra S. Blank

MONSHERRA S. BLANK
DIRECTOR, REGULATORY AND STRATEGIC ANALYSIS
NORTHERN STATES POWER COMPANY

cc: Service Lists

DETAILED MAPBOOK: SEGMENT 1 (REVISED MAY 6TH, 2024)

