



Department of Energy

Washington, DC 20585

June 24, 2015

Carol Overland
1110 West Avenue
Red Wing, Minnesota 55066

1 Stewart Street
Port Penn, Delaware 19731

RE: Great Northern Transmission Line – Draft EIS Public Hearings
PUC Docket No. TL-14-21; DOE/EIS-0499

Dear Ms. Overland:

I writing to you in response to your June 23, 2015 letter addressed to me and Bill Storm, Environmental Review Manager, Minnesota Department of Commerce – Energy Environmental Review and Analysis, regarding the joint federal public hearings and state informational meetings on the Great Northern Transmission Line (GNTL) Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). Thank you for your inquiry and I appreciate the opportunity to clarify the federal public hearing process on the GNTL DEIS for you.

First, I must ask that you disregard the response to your inquiry that was provided to you by Mr. Kaluzniak of the Minnesota PUC staff via email on June 24, 2015 at 8:14 a.m. regarding the federal review and comment process. The information Mr. Kaluzniak provided to you in that email is inaccurate and this letter not only addresses your inquiry but also corrects for the misinformation about DOE's process in the referenced email.

In response to your question regarding the notice that you received about the joint federal and state public comment period and public hearings/informational meetings, DOE is conducting federal public hearings on the subject DEIS according to both Council on Environmental Quality's and DOE's National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations at 40 CFR Part 1500 and 10 CFR Part 1021, respectively; DOE is not conducting 'meetings.' The title of this Notice is very clear with regard to its subject and that among the public comment opportunities planned are both state informational meetings and federal public hearings but that they are being held jointly in order to reduce duplication of effort and process.

As to the nature of how public comments will be provided to DOE at the joint federal public hearings and state informational meetings: DOE accepts oral comments on an DEIS during its public hearings and these comments are recorded (as were public scoping comments) by a court recorder. There is no "option," as you suggest in your inquiry, to provide comments under oath. I will be present at all eight jointly planned federal public hearings and state informational meetings, acting as the federal hearings officer, and you will be provided the opportunity to sign up to provide oral comments upon arrival at the hearing/meeting locations. The record of public comments (transcripts) of the joint federal public hearings and state public information meetings will be made publicly available following the close of the comment period.

Finally, DOE will not be participating in the MN Public Utilities Commission (PUC) Public and Evidentiary Hearings; these are hearings are solely a part of the state Route Permit process and are not held for the purposes of the federal Presidential permit decision and related NEPA process. DOE is not a party to the PUC Evidentiary Hearings process on this project.

Again, thank you for your inquiry and the opportunity to address your questions about the public comment process for the GNTL DEIS and to clear up any misinformation about the jointly planned DOE public hearings and MN DOC public information meetings on the GNTL DEIS planned for the dates, times and locations provided in the Notice of Availability that you received.

Sincerely,

Julie Ann Smith, PhD
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National Electricity Delivery Division (OE-20)
U.S. Department of Energy