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Engineers say Keystone threatens Fargo water

By Janell Cole

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BISMARCK - A leak in the proposed TransCanada Keystone crude oil pipeline could go undetected for as long as 90 days, an engineer for the city of Fargo testified Tuesday. He also said the line would cross 11 coulees that drain directly into Lake Ashtabula, the city's secondary water supply.

"Those coulees represent conveyance mechanisms to the lake," said Mark Deutschman, one of three engineers from Houston Engineering who testified on the city's behalf at a Public Service Commission hearing Tuesday at the Capitol.

The 30-inch pipeline is to carry crude oil from Alberta to refineries in Illinois and Chicago. It would enter North Dakota near Walhalla and exit near Oakes, N.D., paralleling part of the Sheyenne River and Lake Ashtabula, and crossing the Sheyenne near Fort Ransom, N.D. The North Dakota section is to be built starting in May if the PSC grants a route permit in time.

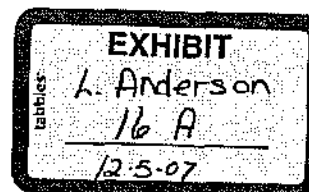
Commissioners and TransCanada's lawyers questioned Fargo's belated concern about the pipeline, considering that petroleum product pipelines already underlie Lake Ashtabula, the Sheyenne River and the Red River at Fargo.

Commissioners Tony Clark and Kevin Cramer pressed Fargo Enterprise Director Bruce Grubb about his awareness of a Cenex gasoline pipeline under Ashtabula. Cramer also asked if the Magellan petroleum products pipeline crosses the Red River above or below Fargo's water intake. The Red is Fargo's primary water supply.

Grubb said he was not aware of the Cenex pipeline until after he learned of the proposed Keystone line about two months ago. Grubb directs the city's wastewater, water supply and solid waste functions.

The city is a latecomer to the PSC case. Fargo asked in October to be allowed to intervene, more than a month after hearings had concluded and the official record was closed, saying it had not been properly notified that the line was near its water supply.

Tuesday's hearing went all day and is likely to take all of today. Commissioners said their decision on a permit likely will be made some time after Dec. 12.



Anderson Exhibit #16a