RE: Application for Intervenor Status – Proposed 765-kV Transmission Line

To the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission:

I am requesting intervenor status because I am a farmer who has spent the past 75 years working, improving, investing in, and protecting South Dakota farmland. I am an avid hunter of our land and the 765 brings in lots of concerns of migration of our wildlife. I also spend years as a financial counselor for the State of South Dakota as well as a realtor, appraiser and auctioneer. If all the burden falls on the farmers, how can the PUC approve this? We cannot allow Xcel to come in and take over land that makes my living and my neighbors. Are we going to be guaranteed fair market value of our land in for the easements and when we go to sell are land, with a decreased market value. We have spent weeks speaking to people in our area with the same basic concern is market value.

For nearly seven decades, farming has been my livelihood, my responsibility, and my family's future. The land we farm was not handed to us in its present condition. It represents generations of hard work, financial sacrifice, careful management, and investment. We have worked to make this land productive and valuable with the intention of passing it on to our children and grandchildren.

The proposed 765-kV transmission line presents a permanent change to that land and the way it can be farmed.

I have serious concerns about the effects of this project on:

- The value of agricultural land and the potential loss in value to entire affected parcels, not just the acres occupied by towers. Xcel should be considering not just what THEY think the land is valued at present. I want them to consider all the rents I will lose through the generations to come by grandchildren and great grandchildren for the next 50-100 plus years and beyond. It has always been my wife and mine desire to leave a legacy to our family. We love what we have done with this land and I have claimed all my life, “I have never worked a day in my life because I love what I do.” I want my future generations to have that same opportunity. The reason I feel they should be paying way over market value because we are not asking anyone to buy our farms, they are basically trying to cease them for their own profit line.
- I want Xcel to show how our farms can safely and efficiently operate large modern farm equipment around towers, wires, and permanent easements. I am not confident that these are safe to run our equipment under. I know they stand high, however, is our equipment that rely on satellites going to work? Can we use our cell phones under them with confidence. If we have wind storms, will they stand? My family has watched two barns blow away in the last 10 years with wind storms not tornados. Will tornadoes be drawn to these towers and throw them onto our homes? I want answer from Xcel, not just we do not know as they kept saying at the PUC meetings. We all felt they were their to take up the PUC time, they barely answered a question unless you pushed them
- Damage to existing drainage tile, soil structure, and productive farmland (my land is all tiled, if not repaired as they work, they will destroy my land to the south, all tiling drains

south though my south section and into my grove) during construction, future maintenance as well as when they decommissioning? How do we know how they are going to get things repaired. This burden needs to be all on Xcel they are putting in towers they claim safe so they should stand behind that with a fund that can be accessed easily before the burden of getting a lawyer to get Xcel to respond to the farmers. If they wreck my tiling, which we all know they are going to do, who pays for repairs and how long it will take for them to fix it.

- Going down 26 feet, the pressure of the surrounding soil is immense. Without professional scoring or trenching (this not just a 26' hole.) a collapse is highly likely. I want to know when my land will be done? The winter is best for farmland, when we are not planting and picking. If they were put along interstates or range land this would not cause a problem.
- I am concerned about our roads and the land they are going to drive over to get to the easements. Who is fixing these things, the township, county, state, me or the one responsible who needs to be responsible? These things need to be in their contract with the PUC, I want to be part of the negotiation. I have negotiated with attorneys and bankers for over 30 years for the state. Do not accept their word everything needs to be in writing, verified and certified with our attorney present.
- Soil compaction, drainage disruption, and long-term effects on crop production. Do they test soil before destroying it, and after? How can my renters be guaranteed the soil is not damaged. I am quite certain I will need to lower rents (which should be compensated by Xcel, I work fairly with my renters, I feel we have a partnership). Its all an inconvenience.
- Is financial burden placed on individual landowners while private companies benefit from the infrastructure? I cannot support such an endeavor because to this point I have not once heard the benefit to South Dakota or the farmers affected by it. That is one of the 2 things Xcel must prove, to this date we have no proof!
- The potential effects on neighboring homes, farms, livestock, and the surrounding rural community. As a dairy farmer for 30 plus years I am concerned about the rate of births of the cattle, we have heard farmers say stillbirth or just can not get their cattle pregnant in the first place. What about water tanks, I understand cattle will drink, but with hesitation because of the feeling in their muzzles or on the tongue. When water consumption goes do so does milk production. Stray voltage and acring is another concern with cattle, wildlife and farmers. Another underlining cost for farmers, they need plastic or rubber tanks, they have to have everything ground, PVC lines, and water heaters can cause other issues. Where are the true experts?
- Whether alternative routes and existing utility and transportation corridors have been adequately considered. I feel this has not been done, because no one from Xcel speaks of the underground option which is so much better for farmers which should be the PUC first concern in accepting a project like this. PUC should protect the land and farmers who produce for the world. Not a giant company out to increase their profits.
- South Dakota boosts its hunting, how is Xcel 765 Lines going to harm our tourist/hunting industry. I have read that Xcel clears land that interferes with the placement of lines. That interferes with the shrubs that attract deer, rabbits, quail, and turkeys, they are clearing away food sources. Big birds have a high risk of flying into lines, especially in heavy fog or low light conditions. We have a set (2 miles away of my farmhouse) of

Eagles and Xcel is putting it in their nesting area, these birds have been nesting for 7 years). Power companies cannot simply take or destroy a natural eagle habitat on its accord. They are legally protected by the United States Government. Smaller birds' sensory perception is affected by the lines which appear to be glowing to the birds or a flashing band that influences local movement and grazing patterns. Are these lines going to impact on state tourism money, what about the rancher/farmer that relies on the extra income from hunting.

- I have been researching and I am finding that the towers humming noises register in ranges over the 70 suggested by World Health Association. We should be guaranteed 70 or less. Numbers over 70 can create sleep disruption, cardiovascular and systemic stress. We need bedrooms to be under 30-40 to be restful sleep. Are things like this going to be tested before and checked more thoroughly by the PUC. I cannot believe that this problem alone should not stop the project from happening or make them do the 525 underground options. The PUC should not allow a project that cannot cause harm to South Dakota Citizens. We need assurance in writing and if it happens what action is taken. Towns have sound laws for disturbances and construction can only start at 7 am. A rational statement would say it should be shut down at dusk and started at dawn. I know that is not realistic, but this line is not realistic or needed in South Dakota.
- My property has 3 working wells and we used them all. I would want them tested before and after construction. Again, another option is underground then none of this would be up for discussion. We would agree to the easements and farms, as we always have, problem solved.
- I also have list of concerns about the substation land and drainage from it. Because my land is right south of the substation for the next 2 miles. With the substation that closes our property we want the PUC to have plan of action if something happens

    1. How many gallons of transformer oil will be stored at this substation?
    2. What type of insulation fluids and chemicals will be used?
    3. Can Xcel provide written documentation that all new transformers and electrical equipment will be PCB-free?
    4. What secondary containment will be installed to prevent oil spills from reaching farmland?
    5. Where will rainwater and snowmelt drain from the substation, with this be tested after big rains, and how will we be notified?
    6. Will any drainage leave the property and enter neighboring agricultural land?
    7. Will herbicides be used to control vegetation? Which chemicals?
    8. What happens if a transformer leaks or a major spill occurs, how are local farmers notified?
    9. Will Xcel provide independent soil and water testing if contamination occurs, and how will we know

After 75 years in agriculture, I understand what it takes to maintain productive farmland. I also understand that once farmland is permanently disrupted, some losses cannot simply be repaired with a payment.

I believe the Commission needs to hear directly from the people who actually work this land, pay the taxes on it, maintain it, and depend on it for their livelihood.

I am not asking the Commission to accept my concerns without evidence. I am asking for the opportunity to participate, review the applicant's evidence, question the proposed impacts, present information from my own farming experience, and help ensure that the interests of affected landowners are fairly considered.

I also believe the Commission must carefully examine whether the public benefits of this project justify the permanent costs and risks being placed on individual farmers and rural communities.

This is not simply a disagreement over where to put a power line. It is about protecting productive agricultural land, private property rights, rural communities, and the future of South Dakota agriculture.

I respectfully request that the Commission grant my application for intervenor status and allow me to fully participate in this matter. **I believe I have both personal stake and valuable firsthand knowledge that deserves to be heard in this proceeding.**

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