APPLICATION FOR INTERVENOR STATUS

Landowner, Business Owner, and Lifelong Member of a South Dakota Farm Family

RE: Docket EL26-026 – Proposed 765-kV Transmission Line and Related Facilities – Brookings County, South Dakota

To the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission:

I respectfully request that I be granted intervenor status in this proceeding concerning the proposed 765-kV transmission line and related facilities in Brookings County.

I am a landowner and business owner whose property, family, livelihood, and future plans may be directly affected by this project. I am also a lifelong member of a farming family. I believe I have a legitimate interest in understanding the full consequences of this project before decisions are made that could permanently change our land and our community.

I am not opposed to progress or to providing reliable electricity. However, I believe that a project of this size and permanence must be carefully examined. Landowners deserve complete information, independent evidence, fair compensation, and enforceable protections—not simply verbal assurances.

1. My Personal Connection to This Land and Farming

I am 60 years old. For the first 13 years of my life, I helped my parents build what became a successful dairy farm.

The area where this proposed transmission line is being considered is not just a location on a map to me. I grew up walking through this area to bring cows in for milking. I rode horses here, cared for calves, and learned what it meant to work hard and take responsibility for animals and land.

Those experiences shaped my life and my respect for agriculture.

Today, I own acreage and land where I also operate a wholesale business. My daughter lives on the acreage as well. This is our home, our property, and part of our family's future.

Although I do not currently own cattle, I still dream of having Highland cattle on my property and raising them here. I want the opportunity to enjoy that future without having to wonder whether a major transmission project could affect the health, safety, or well-being of animals kept on my land.

I also want future grandchildren to be able to enjoy this property, just as I enjoyed the land growing up.

I am concerned that if this project is built, its effects would remain for generations.

2. Human Health and the Need for Independent Evidence

I want clear, credible information about potential human health effects from living near a 765-kV transmission line.

I am particularly concerned about the research involving electromagnetic fields (EMF), childhood leukemia, and other health questions raised by people who live near high-voltage transmission facilities.

I am not claiming that the proposed line will cause a particular illness. I am asking that the Commission require the company to provide the available scientific evidence and clearly explain what is known, what remains uncertain, and what research specifically addresses transmission lines of this voltage. I do not want just any sleep specialist to say they are safe, I want a variety of informed doctors who take research and environmental factors in their consideration of a person's health.

I request that Xcel provide:

- Independent scientific studies concerning long-term residential exposure to electromagnetic fields from high-voltage transmission lines.
- Research concerning childhood leukemia and the distances from transmission lines examined in those studies.
- Any research specifically involving 765-kV facilities, rather than relying only on studies of lower-voltage lines.
- Expected EMF levels at different distances from the proposed line and at nearby homes.
- Information about how exposure levels change with electrical loading and operating conditions.
- Any recommended setbacks or other protective measures supported by scientific evidence. Setbacks need to be a minimum of ½ mile and a mile from the substations even if the counties do not require it, they keep telling us they need to stay consistent between counties but we are not the other counties. Our population is higher; our acreages are closer to each other. On our land alone under existing county ordinances my family could add 4 more acreages. What about farms that do have animals but at present do not have homes. We are limiting our own growth over a company that is not providing any proof of need to South Dakota.
- An explanation of how the company will communicate health-related findings and concerns to nearby residents. These findings should be available to everyone before the build begins.

The people who live here should not have to rely solely on the company's assurances when making decisions about their homes and families. We need things in writing, we need testing of soil, water and stray current. We need a fund that helps if farmers are hurt under these lines, if they destroy our land around the easements. We need a week notice of them coming across our property to easements unless it is an emergency.

3. Livestock Health, Cattle Reproduction, and Animal Safety

My childhood was spent around dairy cattle, and I still hope to raise Highland cattle on my property.

I want to know what evidence exists regarding the effects, if any, of high-voltage transmission lines on livestock.

I specifically request that Xcel provide research and documentation concerning:

- Cattle conception and pregnancy rates near high-voltage transmission lines.
- Calving rates and calf health.
- Stillbirths, calf mortality, and other reproductive concerns.
- Milk production and changes in animal behavior.
- Animal stress or unusual behavior near transmission structures.
- Stray voltage, induced currents, grounding, and electrical conditions affecting livestock.
- Whether research has been conducted specifically on 765-kV transmission lines.
- Whether the company has documented livestock complaints or animal-health investigations involving comparable facilities.

If Xcel believes there is no meaningful risk to livestock, I ask that it provide the scientific evidence supporting that position.

I also want to know what monitoring, testing, investigation, and compensation procedures would be available if animal-health or reproductive problems occurred after construction. We should not be taking losses if they are created by an outside company who is for profit, not the health and welfare of South Dakota Residents.

I should not have to give up my dream of raising cattle because important questions about animal safety have not been answered.

4. Private Drinking Water Well and Groundwater Protection

My property relies on a private drinking water well. I am concerned about whether construction, excavation, runoff, drainage changes, or operation of the proposed facilities could affect my water supply. I want my water, along with my neighbor's, tested at Xcel's cost, before it starts and after a week up and running and then every six months after that. This needs to be documented and directly reported.

I request detailed information about:

- The location of the proposed line, access roads, construction areas, and related facilities in relation to my well. This information stays so vague, and seems to change by which representative you talk to. All in writing.

- Potential effects of excavation, soil disturbance, runoff, and stormwater management on groundwater. I am concerned about storm damage; we have had 2 big storms come through and throw two building between my house and the old cow barn.
- Whether any chemicals, fuels, oils, or other materials will be stored or used near my property.
- What precautions will be taken to prevent spills or contamination. I think about big cranes and large equipment to bring the towers in, are they going to destroy crops and land and how are we paid for the loses, we need that in writing and certified. Again, a fund that is easy to access for farmers is a need.
- Whether baseline water testing will be offered before construction. It should be required.
- Whether follow-up testing will be provided during and after construction. It should be and paid for.
- Who will pay for testing if a change in water quality or quantity is suspected. We need this in writing and paid for.
- Who will be responsible for providing an alternative water supply or replacing a well if project activities cause damage to my and neighbors well water.

I want a written water-protection plan and a clear process for reporting and resolving any problem. My family should not be left to prove a problem after the project is completed without access to baseline information.

5. Agricultural Drainage Tile and Protection of Rented Farmland

Drainage tile is essential to productive farmland in this area. Damage to tile can affect fields well beyond the immediate location of the damage.

I am particularly concerned about construction equipment, excavation, access roads, temporary work areas, and other activities that could damage existing drainage systems.

I request:

- Complete mapping and documentation of existing drainage tile before construction begins, with a written plan for replacement and a timeline, what are the penalties for Xcel not complying?
- A written plan showing how tile will be protected. Tiling is an expensive process and the cost should not be taken lightly.
- Advance notice of construction near tiled fields. All entry on the property must be preapproved except if there is an emergency and notices shall be posted online and on social media detailing such emergencies and their impact on the grid and the residents.

- Immediate inspection when damage occurs. We want phone numbers and contact information of at least 5 individuals that can be contacted immediately if something happens, including holidays and weekends.
- Repair or replacement as soon as damage is discovered on our properties, rather than leaving the problem for another crew to address later. I know I will be a constant supervisor on our property and will make sure the crew is aware of any damage immediately and wait for immediate fixes.
- Repairs performed by qualified personnel familiar with agricultural drainage systems.
- Testing to confirm that the repaired system is functioning properly.
- Compensation for crop losses, additional field work, and other losses caused by tile damage or delayed repairs.

I specifically want the crew responsible for the damage to report it and arrange for it to be addressed at the time it occurs. I do not want to be told that someone else will come back at a later date while the drainage system remains damaged. This is again why we need access to the people responsible for fast repairs and solutions, all in writing and certified before entering any ground in our county.

This protection must also apply to rented farmland and fields operated by tenants. Damage to a drainage system can affect the landowner, tenant, and future productivity of the property. I am sure the rental values are going to drop so how is Xcel going to compensate.

6. Exact Easement Boundaries and Protection of Neighboring Fields

I want to know exactly where Xcel's easement boundaries will be located and what rights the company and its contractors will have.

I request a complete, surveyed map showing:

- Permanent easement boundaries.
- Temporary construction easements. (Dollar value of each time a crew enters my property to get to the easement).
- Access roads and construction routes. (who is responsible, the county, townships or Xcel).
- Tower locations and work areas.
- Staging, parking, and equipment storage areas.
- Areas where contractors may enter or travel.
- Any portions of my property or neighboring rented fields that could be affected.

I do not want contractors crossing into fields outside the authorized work area simply because it is more convenient. We need in writing what the damage is and the compensation for damage. The PUC needs to take this extremely seriously because this project is not supposed to impact the farmers or cause harm. Money needs to be discussed thoroughly on how Xcel will pay for the damages they cause, a dollar value to all damages.

There must be clear written restrictions against entering neighboring or rented fields without the proper permission or legal authority.

If damage occurs outside the easement, there must be a straightforward process to document it, report it, and obtain prompt repair or compensation. How will this be enforced and how long until compensation, farms live on tight budgets they do not need outsiders causing more financial strain.

I request that Xcel provide the final surveyed boundaries before construction begins and make those maps available to the affected landowners and operators. It would be best for Xcel to place fences in their easement areas and then there would be no worries of other damage.

7. Property Access, Advance Notice, and Fair Compensation

I am concerned about the extent of the access rights being requested through the easement.

I want to know whether Xcel or its contractors could use my property to travel to other portions of the project, reach other easements, or access facilities that are not located on my land.

I request written clarification of:

- Every type of access allowed under the proposed easement.
- Whether access is limited to the specific facilities located on my property.
- Whether contractors may cross my land to reach another property or easement.
- How frequently Xcel expects to enter the property during construction and after construction.
- What vehicles and equipment may be used.
- Whether access roads will be permanent or temporary.
- What notice will be provided before anyone enters my property.
- What circumstances would qualify as an emergency entry without advance notice.

Except for a genuine emergency, I want advance notice whenever Xcel or its contractors intend to enter my property.

I also believe that access rights beyond the actual location of the facilities should be clearly identified and fairly compensated. An easement should not become an unlimited right to use a landowner's property for the company's convenience.

I do not believe the compensation offered adequately reflects the full effect of the easement and the restrictions placed on my property. Compensation should account for the actual rights taken, restrictions on use, access impacts, construction disturbance, and long-term effects.

8. Insurance, Liability, and Responsibility for Damage

Before construction begins, I want to know exactly who is responsible if a contractor, employee, vehicle, or piece of equipment causes damage or injury on my property. I have lots of concerns in this area. I am aware that my father's farm insurance doesn't cover accidents within these easements. Who is responsible and how will they be handled. Again, more than one contact and very specific documentation, Xcel needs to be held accountable. They continue to tell us how safe these lines are but none of the representatives we have spoken to have ever been under one.

I request that Xcel provide:

- Proof of insurance for the company and its contractors.
- The names of the insurance companies providing coverage.
- Applicable policy limits and coverage periods.
- Contact information for reporting a claim, not just one person.
- A clear explanation of who handles claims involving contractors and subcontractors.
- Written procedures for reporting property damage, personal injury, crop loss, drainage damage, or damage to neighboring property.
- An explanation of how landowners will be protected from being held responsible for activities controlled by Xcel or its contractors.
- The proposed indemnification and liability provisions in the easement.

I want to know that if someone is injured or property is damaged, there will be adequate insurance and a responsible party available to address the matter. All should be well documented and certified.

These responsibilities must be clearly written into the agreements. Landowners should not have to navigate confusion between Xcel, construction contractors, and insurance companies after damage occurs.

9. Proposed Substation Near My Home

I understand that a proposed substation may be located approximately one-half mile from my home.

I am concerned about the potential effects of this facility on nearby homes, property use, noise, lighting, safety, drainage, and the surrounding environment.

This facility is strongly opposed in our county, there are a few people who have been offered $50,000 and $35,000 an acre to put it in the mostly higher concentration of acreages/farms. It is not right on any level. It will take away the peace and quiet we all enjoy living in the country. It will interfere or eliminate our starlit nights, my absolute favorite part of the farms. I can not even image the noise it will produce and sleepless nights it will create.

I request the exact proposed location and complete plans for the substation, including:

- Total acreage and property boundaries.
- Dimensions and layout of the facility.
- Heights of structures.
- Locations of transformers and other major equipment.
- Expected noise levels during normal operation and under different operating conditions. We want a noise level Maximum Document and enforced by the PUC or Sioux Valley Electric that services the area in which it is proposed.
- Noise measurements or modeling at my home and other nearby residences.
- Expected electromagnetic field levels at different distances. Documentation and pre-levels and what is expected and monitored by the PUC or Sioux Valley Electric, what is the consequences of exceeding the limit, all in writing and notarized.
- Nighttime lighting plans and measures to limit light reaching neighboring homes.
- Fire prevention, emergency response, and spill-containment plans.
- Stormwater drainage and groundwater protection plans.
- Any proposed expansion areas or plans for future additional equipment.

I also request information about how noise will be measured after construction and what steps will be required if actual noise levels exceed the company's projections or applicable requirements.

A facility of this size should not be approved without providing nearby residents with accurate plans and a clear understanding of its potential effects.

10. Brookings County Tax Revenue and Long-Term Financial Impact

Xcel has reportedly discussed approximately 53% of the project being located in Brookings County and an estimated first-year tax payment of approximately $3.8 million.

I want these figures verified and explained in detail.

A first-year tax estimate does not tell the public what the county will actually receive over the life of the project.

I request that Xcel provide:

- The calculation supporting the reported 53% figure.
- The calculation supporting the estimated $3.8 million first-year tax payment.
- The taxable value and assessment method used for the project.
- A projected annual tax schedule for at least 20 to 40 years. I have read they can be depreciated out in 7 years, that is unacceptable.
- The depreciation schedule used to calculate the project's taxable value.
- Any tax exemptions, abatements, credits, or special arrangements that may apply. We want to know of any tax breaks the state may be offering for this project that has no value to the State of South Dakota.
- How tax payments could change if ownership of the facilities changes.
- What happens to the tax base if portions of the project are retired, replaced, or no longer used. And what will be the process of decommissioning the project in the future, will the land be given back to its rightful owners.
- How Brookings County's share will be determined and distributed.

The public deserves to understand whether the advertised tax benefit is a long-term benefit or primarily a first-year estimate.

I also want to understand how the project will affect the tax base and financial responsibilities of the affected communities and landowners.

11. Increased Electricity Costs for Local Residents and Businesses

I want to know who will ultimately pay for this project.

I request that Xcel explain how the cost of the proposed transmission line and related facilities will be allocated and whether local customers will pay any portion of those costs.

Please provide:

- The estimated total project cost.
- The estimated cost of the transmission facilities, substations, and related infrastructure.
- The method used to allocate project costs among utilities, regions, and customers.

- Whether residential, farm, and business customers in the three affected counties will pay any portion of the costs.
- Estimated effects on monthly electric bills for residential customers.
- Estimated effects on agricultural and commercial electric customers.
- Whether costs will be passed through to customers outside the immediate project area.
- Any available projections of future transmission charges.

I want to understand whether local residents and businesses could face higher electric bills for infrastructure that primarily serves electricity users elsewhere. Xcel should eliminate the extra transmission costs from the power lines to the 3 counties carrying the burden of this project.

The company should provide understandable estimates and explain the assumptions behind them.

12. Why I Am Requesting Intervenor Status

I am requesting intervenor status because this project could directly affect my property, my home, my business, my family, and my future plans for this land.

I have a personal and lifelong connection to the agricultural area where this project is proposed. I grew up caring for cattle and working on a dairy farm. I understand the importance of protecting farmland, drainage systems, livestock, and the ability of future generations to use and enjoy the land.

I want to participate so that I can:

- Review the company's plans, studies, maps, and supporting evidence.
- Ask questions about issues affecting my property and nearby residents.
- Challenge information that is incomplete or unsupported.
- Request independent evidence where important questions remain unanswered.
- Present information about the effects on landowners, agriculture, businesses, and families.
- Seek specific, written protections before construction or property access occurs.
- Participate in the proceedings and respond to evidence as permitted by the Commission's rules.

I am not asking the Commission to accept my concerns without evidence. I am asking for the opportunity to examine the evidence, ask questions, and have my interests considered before decisions are made.

13. Final Statement

I am 60 years old, and I have spent much of my life connected to agriculture and this part of South Dakota.

I remember walking through this area to bring cows in for milking, riding horses, and caring for calves. Those memories are part of who I am. Today, I own land and operate a business here. My daughter lives on the property, and I hope that future generations of my family will be able to enjoy it.

A 765-kV transmission line and its related facilities are not temporary changes. They could affect the land, the people who live here, and the choices available to future generations.

I believe landowners deserve more than a payment and a promise that everything will be fine. We deserve complete information, independent evidence, fair compensation, clear boundaries, enforceable protections, and accountability when damage occurs.

I respectfully ask the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission to grant my request for intervenor status so that I may fully participate in this proceeding and protect my property, my family, and the future of this land.

Respectfully submitted,

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