

**BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION  
OF THE STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA**

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In the Matter of the Facility Permit Application  
for the Big Stone South to Hankinson to Bison  
Transmission Line Project

EL26-\_\_

**DIRECT TESTIMONY OF  
NICHOLAS OLSON**

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1                                    **DIRECT TESTIMONY OF NICHOLAS OLSON**

2                                    **INTRODUCTION OF WITNESS**

3            **Q.     Please state your name, business address, and current employment position.**

4            A.     My name is Nicholas Olson. I am a Senior Project Manager for Otter Tail Power  
5 Company (“OTP”). My business address is 215 S. Cascade Street, Fergus Falls, MN 56537.

6            **Q.     How long have you held the position of Senior Project Manager for OTP?**

7            A.     Since I started working for OTP on January 20, 2025..

8            **Q.     Generally describe your duties and responsibilities in your position?**

9            A.     As a Senior Project Manager, my duties and responsibilities include managing  
10 major transmission project work through development and execution. This includes coordinating  
11 internal and external project resources, maintaining project schedules and budgets, managing  
12 project risks, supporting permitting and land rights activities, coordinating engineering and  
13 procurement planning, and ensuring that project work is performed safely and consistent with  
14 applicable standards and OTP’s project objectives. I also coordinate communications among  
15 OTP departments, consultants, contractors, project partners, regulatory personnel, and other  
16 stakeholders.

17           **Q.     What is your educational background?**

18           A.     I have a Bachelor of Arts degree in Biblical Studies from University of  
19 Northwestern St. Paul. I also have Master’s in Business Administration from St. Cloud State  
20 University. I also have a Master’s Certificate in Project Management from Auburn University.

21           **Q.     Do you have any involvement in the Big Stone South to Hankinson to Bison**  
22 **Transmission Line Project (“the BSS-H-B Project”)?**

23           A.     Yes.

1           **Q.     What is your involvement in the BSS-H-B Project?**

2           A.     I coordinate the development and execution of the Project, including route  
3 development, public involvement, environmental and cultural resource review, land rights and  
4 survey activities, engineering input for the permit application, schedule and budget management,  
5 risk tracking, coordination with consultants and legal counsel, and communications with OTP's  
6 project team and project partners. I also help ensure that information supporting the Application  
7 is developed, reviewed, and incorporated into the project record, and I coordinate the work  
8 necessary to advance the South Dakota Facility Permit Application and related project approvals.

9           **Q.     What is the BSS-H-B Project?**

10          A.     The BSS-H-B Project is a new 345 kilovolt (kV) transmission line project that  
11 will run from the existing Big Stone South Substation located west of Big Stone City, South  
12 Dakota to a new 345kV substation adjacent to the existing Hankinson Substation near  
13 Hankinson, North Dakota, and then continuing and connecting with the existing Bison  
14 Substation near Mapleton, North Dakota.

15          **Q.     Who are the owners of the transmission line for the BSS-H-B Project?**

16          A.     OTP is the sole owner of the segment of the BSS-H-B Project from the Big Stone  
17 South Substation to the Hankinson Substation. OTP and Xcel Energy will jointly own the  
18 segment of the BSS-H-B Project from the Hankinson Substation to the Bison Substation.

19          **Q.     Has OTP filed an Application for a transmission facility permit with the**  
20 **Commission authorizing construction of that portion of the BSS-H-B Project located in**  
21 **South Dakota ("the South Dakota Facility")?**

22          A.     Yes, OTP is filing its Application contemporaneously with the filing of this  
23 prefiled testimony.

**Q. How was the Application prepared?**

A. The Application was prepared as a result of a collaborative effort by OTP and the consultants on the BSS-H-B Project to satisfy the requirements necessary for issuance of the facility permit.

## REQUEST FOR PERMIT

**Q. Based on your experience and training regarding transmission lines, and the work performed by OTP and the consultants on the BSS-H-B Project, and the studies and resources cited in the Application, do you have an opinion regarding whether the South Dakota Facility complies with the requirements of SDCL 49-41B-22 for issuance of the facility permit?**

A. Yes, I have an opinion.

**Q. What is that opinion?**

A. The South Dakota Facility does comply with SDCL 49-41B-22.

**Q. In forming this opinion, did you consider the Application, including the studies and research cited?**

A. Yes, I considered all in the Application.

**Q. Is this the type of information you would typically rely on in making decisions regarding constructing, maintaining, and operating of a transmission line?**

A. Yes, it is.

**Q. Do you have an opinion regarding whether the South Dakota Facility will comply with all applicable laws and rules known to exist?**

A. Yes, I have an opinion.

**Q. What is that opinion?**

1           A.     Yes, it will comply with all applicable laws and rules.

2           **Q.     Do you have an opinion regarding whether the South Dakota Facility will**  
3 **pose a serious injury to the environment and economic conditions of the people residing in**  
4 **the area of the BSS-H-B Project in South Dakota or the people expected to reside in the**  
5 **BSS-H-B Project area in South Dakota?**

6           A.     Yes, I have an opinion.

7           **Q.     What is that opinion?**

8           A.     In my opinion, and as further discussed in Sections 11 through 21 of the  
9 Application, the South Dakota Facility will not have a serious injury to either the environment or  
10 the economic conditions of the people in the BSS-H-B Project area in South Dakota.

11          **Q.     Do you have an opinion regarding whether the South Dakota Facility will**  
12 **substantially impair the health, safety, and welfare of the people in the BSS-H-B Project**  
13 **area in South Dakota?**

14          A.     Yes, I have an opinion.

15          **Q.     What is that opinion?**

16          A.     As indicated in the Application, the South Dakota Facility will not impair the  
17 health, safety, or welfare of people in the BSS-H-B Project area in South Dakota.

18          **Q.     Do you have an opinion regarding whether the South Dakota Facility will**  
19 **unduly interfere with the orderly development of the region with due consideration given**  
20 **to the views of the governing bodies and affected units of local government?**

21          A.     Yes, I have an opinion.

22          **Q.     What is that opinion?**

1           A.     Based on the work of the BSS-H-B Project and communication with local  
2 governing bodies, the South Dakota Facility will not unduly interfere with the orderly  
3 development of the region.

4           **Q.     To your knowledge, does the Application provide all information necessary**  
5 **for the Commission to grant the requested permit and satisfy the form and content**  
6 **requirement?**

7           A.     Yes.

8           **Q.     On behalf of the BSS-H-B Project, what are you asking of the Commission?**

9           A.     Issuance of the permit requested in the Application subject to the acquisition of all  
10 local, state, and federal permits.

11          **Q.     Does this complete your direct testimony?**

12          A.     It does at this time. However, as additional information is learned through  
13 discovery in this docket, and as additional work is performed on the BSS-H-B Project, I reserve  
14 the right to supplement my direct testimony.