
From: Robert Thomas [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, August 26, 2014 12:15 PM
To: Hanson, Gary (PUC); Nelson, Chris; Fiegen, Kristie
Cc: michael.fredrich@blackhillscorp.com
Subject: Application of BHP 230-KV line

South Dakota Public Utilities Commission
cc. Michael Fredrich Black Hills Power

Honorable Commissioners,

My name is Robert Thomas. I spoke very briefly at you meeting last night.

I am writing you about the proposed line you had a hearing about last night at the Ramkota Inn. I will be speaking as not only a concerned resident of South Dakota but as some one who is also an informed past professional of power grids, Hydro Generating Operations, and the dangers of high voltage power transmission. I was the overseer of the Hydro Plant for Ford Motor Company on Lock and Dam number three in St.Paul Minnesota and the High Voltage Equipment at the St. Paul Assembly Plant as part of my duties as the Lead ME Manager of the Plant. I had extensive experience of working with FERC in obtaining a new 30 year operating license for the facility. Which I found very strange that they were not listed in the list of Governmental Organization and questioned that during the break to BHP. They failed to provide an reasonable explanation for their over site.

What is being proposed is a very dangerous route. A failure of a line this size has enormous energy that would equal a fire bomb of major proportions. A 100 foot easement surrounded by combustable materials would never be allowed in residential areas. Even the action by BHP and

the Commission of notifying only those in a half mile area shows you do not understand the potential hazards. A half mile is not a safe distance in a potential forest fire. The perfect example of this is the Deadwood Fire which was caused by a line failure. It is your responsibility to protect all of South Dakota's citizens and I think this is not being done. All of them benefit from the tourism of the Black Hills. 80 million a year is brought into Pennington County alone. To cut a 36 mile swath and access points through the National Forest and past one of the most popular recreational areas is irresponsible. A drive over Strawberry Hill into Lead Deadwood will confirm for you what the potential is for disaster. It is your responsibility first off to protect this resource for all of South Dakota's citizens.

As I pointed out in the short time I had to learn what was the intention of this line there were at least two other options to secure the grid from West to East. The alternative also gave more flexibility to the grid to the North and South. It would of also then travel closer to the I-90 strip where the most energy would eventually be used. To run this line through areas where there is little industry to save money on the front side when it could be run in the areas it will end up serving makes no sense. The ability to service and properly inspect this line would pay back and end up saving BHP money in the long term. When Michael Fredrich spoke of the three legged stool he as much as confirmed that a northern route of this line would provide better service to all BHP customers. As far as his statement how this would tie in with others on the grid I believe he misspoke. The grid has a tie in from the south through Nebraska, West through Wyoming and the North from Canada and now the potential from the oil fields of North Dakota where they are proposing generation from the methane gasses they are burning off. The need for this line that is causing destruction of our natural resource of the Hills holds less and less credibility the more you look at it. The argument that it is the best route because of weather danger is almost laughable when looking at revenue loss potential to the state. I also believe that the map of their substation locations were purposely set up so no one could understand the locations and look at better routing. If this was not the case they would of been overlaid over a map showing the town locations and major road ways.

I also noticed that there was not any representation of the Native American Community at your hearing. With the history of issues surrounding the Black Hills I found this to be very disturbing. The only conclusion that can be drawn here is they have not heard about this. Another issue that raises suspicion as to the real need of this proposed line. For the Hills are the heart of all things in their culture. Given the factor that they are very active in the proposed Uranium Mine one could only conclude they would be very active in something that would cut right through the middle of their most sacred ground. This would now add to this project the potential of State and Federal court actions. Add to this that almost all the residents that are not with in a half mile of this line are not aware of this route through the National Forest yet. When all of these people become aware of this and ask why it has not been reported on any local news I believe even more questions will be raised to the real purpose and need of this line and much more answers will need to be provided.

I do not know all the factors that have been considered for this proposal. I do know that what has been revealed does not justify the route. The overall cost can be reasonably argued, strengthening the reliability of the grid does not have merit when looking to the north, the potential damage to tourism is too great of a risk for the State of South Dakota, and immediate destruction of the National Forest is completely irresponsible. When we are spending millions of dollars to save the

forest from pine beetle and fire dangers, I need to know why this commission believes a 36 mile blatant destruction serves the good of South Dakota? I also believe that when it becomes known to all the residents of the central hills there will be many more questions asked?

Thank you for what information was supplied last night. Unfortunately I left with many more questions than when I came. The answers provide by BHP I felt were evasive at best. I have pointed out just a few things that I hope you look into and consider for the approval of this line. I do not see where this route is justified and I am against all of it. South Dakota and all of BHP customers would be much better served if the route went through their northern substations. The facts speak for themselves. This is about initial cost and not long term. As this information is brought to the attention of all residents of the community of western South Dakota and the Native American residents I am sure you will see a great resistance to this proposed line. The liability to the income of the area is too high. The location of this line is almost reckless at best. I as a person who fully understands what BHP is not saying am strongly opposed to this line.

It is just a suggestion, but I would ask a third party engineering firm to look at this proposal. I am sure there is a better and more cost effective way to achieve the objectives. At least with the information that they revealed at the meeting.

Again thank you.

Robert Thomas

