

STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

Otter Tail Power Company/Montana-Dakota
Utilities Co. 345kV Transmission Line -
Jamestown to Ellendale
Public Convenience & Necessity

Case No.
PU-24-91

TRANSCRIPT OF INFORMAL HEARING

July 8, 2024

APPEARANCES

Commissioners Sheri Haugen-Hoffart, Randy Christmann, and
Julie Fedorchak

OTTER TAIL POWER COMPANY:

Robert Endris, Jason Weiers, Todd Langston,
JoAnn Thompson, Matthew Olsen

MONTANA-DAKOTA UTILITIES CO.:

Allison Waldon, Robert Frank, Travis Jacobson,
Darcy Neigum, Mark Hanson

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION:

Brian Johnson, Christopher Hanson, Adam Renfandt,
Victor Schock, Claire Vigesaa

1 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: Good afternoon. This
2 is an informal hearing on a case that is a combinational
3 case, Otter Tail Power and MDU, and it's a Certificate
4 of Public Convenience and Necessity request regarding
5 the Jamestown to Ellendale transmission line. It is
6 Case No. PU-24-91.

7 It's August (sic) 8th, 2024, at 1:32 p.m. I'm
8 Randy Christmann, chair of the Commission, joined by
9 Commissioner Sheri Haugen-Hoffart here in the room with
10 me and Commissioner Fedorchak is on the phone and, I
11 believe, in transit.

12 I didn't have any opening comments.

13 Commissioner Haugen-Hoffart, did --

14 Well, Commissioner Fedorchak, did you have any
15 opening comments?

16 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: I don't, no. Thank
17 you.

18 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: Okay. So I'll save
19 yours and combine.

20 I want to emphasize this is an informal hearing
21 so it involves only undisputed facts. If there are any
22 -- if anything comes up that is disputed, we will have
23 to stop the informal and proceed to scheduling a formal
24 case.

25 The Applicant goes first, but I will first turn

1 it over to Commissioner Haugen-Hoffart who is the
2 portfolio holder for any opening comments and then we'll
3 listen to the case.

4 COMMISSIONER HAUGEN-HOFFART: Okay. Well,
5 thanks, everyone. I think this is going to be an
6 interesting, like, overview and questions regarding a
7 joint filing. So it's so good to see so many people
8 here.

9 And because Julie is on the phone, before we
10 turn it over to you guys to present, why don't we go
11 around the room and introduce -- introduce everyone so
12 Julie knows who's going to be presenting but who is also
13 in the room.

14 So I'll go to Brian.

15 MR. JOHNSON: Brian Johnson, PSC staff.

16 MR. HANSON: Chris Hanson, PSC staff.

17 MR. FRANK: Robert Frank, Montana-Dakota.

18 MS. WALDON: Allison Waldon representing
19 Montana-Dakota.

20 MR. WEIERS: Jason Weiers, Otter Tail Power
21 Company.

22 MR. ENDRIS: Robert Endris, Otter Tail Power
23 Company.

24 MR. LANGSTON: Todd Langston, Otter Tail Power
25 Company.

1 COMMISSIONER HAUGEN-HOFFART: Do we want -- in
2 the back.

3 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: Yeah, please pass the
4 mic back.

5 MS. THOMPSON: JoAnn Thompson, Otter Tail Power
6 Company.

7 MR. OLSEN: Matt Olsen, Otter Tail Power
8 Company.

9 MR. JACOBSON: Travis Jacobson, Montana-Dakota.

10 MR. NEIGUM: Darcy Neigum, Montana-Dakota.

11 MR. HANSON: Mark Hanson, Montana-Dakota.

12 MR. RENFANDT: Adam Renfandt, staff.

13 MR. SCHOCK: Victor Schock, PSC staff.

14 MR. VIGESAA: Claire Vigesaa, North Dakota
15 Transmission Authority.

16 COMMISSIONER HAUGEN-HOFFART: Well, thank you
17 everyone for the introductions.

18 My only question is, as you go through the
19 PowerPoint, do you want us to ask questions at that time
20 or do you want questions held until the end?

21 MR. WEIERS: Please interrupt with questions
22 along the way.

23 COMMISSIONER HAUGEN-HOFFART: Okay. So we will
24 turn it over to you guys for your presentation.

25 MR. WEIERS: All right.

1 MR. ENDRIS: Thank you, Commissioner. Robert
2 Endris appearing on behalf of Otter Tail Power Company.

3 Today Jason Weiers will be our main presenter
4 and main responder to questions, but, of course, we have
5 the full Otter Tail and MDU compliment here to help with
6 answers.

7 COMMISSIONER HAUGEN-HOFFART: Okay.

8 MR. WEIERS: All right. Well, good afternoon,
9 everybody and thanks again for the opportunity to be
10 here today to talk about Otter Tail and Montana-Dakota's
11 joint petition for a Certificate of Public Convenience
12 and Necessity for the Jamestown to Ellendale 345 kV
13 project.

14 Today's presentation is going to start with a
15 brief overview of the Applicants. We'll then cover the
16 project description, the need for the project, benefits
17 of the project, and the alternatives considered to the
18 project. We will then explain how the project fits into
19 MISO's Long-Range Transmission Plan and why it was
20 classified as a Multi-Value Project. We'll next review
21 the project schedule and wrap up with a review of the
22 CPCN requirements in the North Dakota Century Code and
23 our conclusions that support granting a Certificate of
24 Public Convenience and Necessity for the JETx project.

25 So as mentioned earlier, the Applicants in this

1 case are Otter Tail Power Company and Montana-Dakota
2 Utilities. Otter Tail and Montana-Dakota will co-own
3 the Jamestown to Ellendale project.

4 As you look back on Otter Tail and
5 Montana-Dakota's history, you'll note that we have over
6 200 years of a combined experience in serving customers
7 in North Dakota. Over this time frame we've built an
8 extensive network of transmission and generation
9 facilities, and currently Otter Tail owns about
10 6,000 miles of transmission and about 1,100 megawatts of
11 generation while Montana-Dakota Utilities owns about
12 3,400 miles of transmission and about 700 miles --
13 700 megawatts of generation.

14 Otter Tail and Montana-Dakota have been
15 long-standing business partners for many, many years,
16 dating back to the 1970s when we first partnered in
17 building the Big Stone Plant. In the 1980s, that
18 partnership continued in partnering to build the Coyote
19 Station. And most recently we partnered in building the
20 Big Stone South to Ellendale 345 kV transmission project
21 between 2011 and 2019. These past successes on these
22 previous projects, along with our articles of
23 incorporation and our continued certificates of good
24 standing that are on file with the Commission, prove
25 that we are fit, willing, and able to construct, own,

1 and operate the Jamestown to Ellendale project.

2 MISO approved the Jamestown to Ellendale 345 kV
3 project with five distinct facilities. These five
4 distinct facilities are shown here on the slide.

5 The first facility is the new 345 kV double
6 circuit transmission line. The project is expected to
7 be between 85 and 95 miles in length and traverse the
8 counties of Stutsman County, LaMoure County, and Dickey
9 County. The line will be co-owned between Otter Tail
10 and Montana-Dakota Utilities.

11 The next facility approved by MISO was the
12 Jamestown Substation expansion. This is needed to
13 accommodate the new 345 kV line termination as well as
14 an Ellendale Substation expansion that will be needed,
15 again, to accommodate the new 345 line. The Jamestown
16 Substation is currently owned and will continue to be
17 solely owned by Otter Tail while the Ellendale
18 Substation is currently owned and will continue to be
19 solely owned by Montana-Dakota.

20 In addition to those core project components,
21 there's also upgrades required at the Maple River
22 Substation. This substation is located north of Fargo.
23 And an expansion is needed there, as approved by MISO,
24 to accommodate the replacement of two existing 345/230
25 kV transformers.

1 And, lastly, there's also a Twin Brooks
2 Substation expansion that's been approved by MISO as
3 part of the project. This is located down in South
4 Dakota just west of Big Stone. And we'll be expanding
5 this substation to accommodate new 345 kV reactors.

6 The Maple River Substation is currently solely
7 owned by Otter Tail and the Twin Brooks Substation is
8 jointly owned by Otter Tail and Montana-Dakota
9 Utilities.

10 The anticipated structures for the project will
11 look very similar to the picture you see on this
12 particular slide and they will be constructed with steel
13 monopole, self-supporting structures. They will be
14 double circuit capable structures and we will be
15 installing one circuit initially, but we'll have space
16 for that second circuit in the future when the need
17 arises.

18 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: When you talk about
19 joint ownership of the transmission line part, is it
20 equal or is it a percentage one and a percentage the
21 other?

22 MR. WEIERS: Equal ownership rights so
23 50 percent ownership rights. Yep.

24 COMMISSIONER HAUGEN-HOFFART: I mean, while
25 we're on the joint ownership, so if something goes down,

1 is there, like, a primary contact, secondary contact? I
2 mean, how does that work as far as doing the expansion
3 work, recovery, whatever?

4 MR. WEIERS: Very good question, Commissioner.

5 We do have a series of agreements that we have
6 executed and are continuing to work on that will
7 actually designate the lead responder in the case of a
8 maintenance need. So those arrangements will be
9 memorialized and documented as part of the ownership
10 arrangements between Otter Tail and MDU.

11 COMMISSIONER HAUGEN-HOFFART: Okay.

12 MR. WEIERS: Yep.

13 COMMISSIONER HAUGEN-HOFFART: So from the onset
14 of doing the expansion work all the way through on
15 maintaining it?

16 MR. WEIERS: Correct, yep.

17 COMMISSIONER HAUGEN-HOFFART: Okay.

18 MR. WEIERS: Yep.

19 Just continuing down this slide here, the
20 average structure height is expected to be 150 feet
21 tall and the structures will be installed on concrete
22 foundations with between four to six structures per
23 mile.

24 The estimated cost for the overall project is
25 \$440 million as we've included in our application.

1 The need for the project is driven by
2 reliability concerns that are existing on the 230 kV
3 system in southeastern North Dakota, eastern South
4 Dakota, and west-central Minnesota.

5 I've included a graphic here that shows the
6 existing transmission facilities in this part of the
7 region.

8 The existing 230 kV system from Ellendale all
9 the way over to Wahpeton plays an important part today
10 in exporting generation from North Dakota. Today what
11 happens on the system is an outage of the Big Stone
12 South to Ellendale 345 kV line results in excessive
13 loadings on the existing 230 kV line. This excessive
14 loading also leads to some voltage depressions.

15 After completion of the new 345 kV line from
16 Jamestown to Ellendale, the generation that is forced to
17 flow in that 230 kV system during that Big Stone South
18 to Ellendale outage will now have an alternative path to
19 head north from Ellendale up to Jamestown where it can
20 then jump on the existing 345 kV facilities and make its
21 way towards Fargo.

22 The green dots and the green lines on this map
23 actually represent the facilities that no longer have
24 excessive loadings after we complete the Jamestown to
25 Ellendale project as identified in the studies that have

1 been completed by MISO.

2 And I did get this real handy-dandy laser
3 pointer so I could actually show that on the map if I
4 had been thinking ahead of time, but I can -- I can
5 certainly show it now.

6 So the Big Stone South to Ellendale project is
7 this gray line through this part of the system here.
8 And then the existing 230 kV system is here from
9 Ellendale heading east to Forman or to Hankinson and
10 then up to Wahpeton.

11 So as I was mentioning earlier, in today's
12 system a loss of the Big Stone South to Ellendale 345 kV
13 line forces the generation coming from North Dakota to
14 have to go down the 230 kV system which is constrained
15 today. As we look at the future condition of the system
16 and the addition of Jamestown to Ellendale, an outage of
17 Big Stone South to Ellendale will now allow for an
18 alternative transmission path for the generation to flow
19 from Ellendale up to Jamestown where it will then be
20 able to jump onto the 345 kV line from Jamestown towards
21 Fargo and make its way to the rest of the region.

22 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: I just want to repeat
23 that back --

24 MR. WEIERS: Okay.

25 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: -- to make sure I

1 understand what we're trying to fix. It's the worry
2 that the Ellendale to Big Stone goes down --

3 MR. WEIERS: Yep.

4 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: -- forcing everything
5 to go from Ellendale to Hankinson?

6 MR. WEIERS: On the existing 230 kV system,
7 correct.

8 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: That's inadequate?

9 MR. WEIERS: Yeah.

10 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: And so now if this
11 were constructed, if that Big Stone to Ellendale goes
12 down, it can divert up to Jamestown and go east?

13 MR. WEIERS: Correct, yeah.

14 COMMISSIONER HAUGEN-HOFFART: And there's plenty
15 of capacity from Jamestown to Fargo to take that on?

16 MR. WEIERS: Yeah. So MISO is studying the
17 system out in 2030. And as they've done the contingency
18 analysis looking at the various combination of outages
19 that are possible, there were no additional overloads
20 identified as you go from Jamestown towards Fargo.
21 That's correct.

22 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: What is the flow of
23 most of the energy? You know, when we say Big Stone to
24 Ellendale, I think of energy that is being created at
25 the Big Stone Plant and coming north. But when you were

1 talking, you said the energy produced in North Dakota
2 that's flowing down to Ellendale.

3 MR. WEIERS: Yep.

4 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: And so which is the
5 predominant --

6 MR. WEIERS: That's a great question,
7 Commissioner.

8 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: -- of energy that
9 we're dealing with here?

10 MR. WEIERS: Yep, great question, Commissioner
11 Christmann.

12 Most times during the course of the year as you
13 look at the generation patterns on the system, there is
14 a predominant flow of energy in this region from west to
15 east. So we are seeing flows from Ellendale to Big
16 Stone South most of the year. And this is especially
17 predominant when we have the off -- off-peak or
18 light-load conditions, where we have high generation and
19 low load, we see the bias of flow in the system from
20 west to east, most of the time from Ellendale to Big
21 Stone South.

22 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: And so when we always
23 refer to it out of habit as Big Stone to Ellendale, it's
24 really more the other way around?

25 MR. WEIERS: Yeah. And the line can flow either

1 way as an AC transmission line but, generally speaking,
2 the historical flows have been from Ellendale to Big
3 Stone South, yeah.

4 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: Okay.

5 MR. WEIERS: All right. The Jamestown to
6 Ellendale project will bring several benefits to the
7 local and regional area as we think about adding a new
8 transmission line like this.

9 We've already talked about the enhanced
10 reliability that the project will bring to the -- to the
11 area. Through the course of the MISO analysis, they've
12 identified that this project will relieve excessive
13 loadings on 70 transmission facilities and address 97
14 voltage violations as they've done their contingency
15 analysis of this future condition.

16 COMMISSIONER HAUGEN-HOFFART: Repeat that again.

17 MR. WEIERS: The analysis performed by MISO,
18 looking at the various contingencies on the system, has
19 identified that this project will help relieve excessive
20 loadings on 70 different transmission elements and
21 address 97 voltage violations in those future, out-year
22 conditions.

23 The project will also increase transmission
24 capacity that will have the ability to enable new
25 commercial and industrial loads.

1 And when you think about a 345 kV line of this
2 magnitude, we're talking about load additions that are
3 possible in the magnitude of what we've already seen
4 happening out in this area. As folks are aware, Applied
5 Digital has added some load at Jamestown and Ellendale.
6 A project like this is going to help serve that load and
7 also result in the ability to add more larger-scale
8 loads like that, not only at the end points but also
9 anywhere along the line through the course of a future
10 interconnection.

11 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: I just got to go back
12 to what I was talking about before with the Ellendale to
13 Big Stone flow. So really this is more about Ellendale
14 to Jamestown than it is Jamestown to Ellendale.

15 MR. WEIERS: Yeah.

16 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: But we need the vowel
17 in the middle for the really cool acronym; right?

18 (Laughter)

19 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: But the flow will
20 generally be when it's needed going north?

21 MR. WEIERS: That's my -- that's my
22 understanding. As you look at the system as an
23 integrated system, interconnected on all those different
24 places, really the Jamestown to Ellendale line will
25 provide relief on that existing 230 system for an outage

1 of the Big Stone South to Ellendale line.

2 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: Okay.

3 MR. WEIERS: Yep, yep.

4 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: Thank you.

5 MR. WEIERS: All right. The JETx project will
6 also accommodate new generation in North Dakota. I'll
7 just mention as a part of MISO's studies of these future
8 conditions, they added about 4,500 megawatts of new
9 generation in North Dakota, and this line will help
10 accommodate that future generation development.

11 It's also going to help reduce transmission
12 congestion. That's going to help allow existing North
13 Dakota generation to operate more often to get their
14 product to the market.

15 In addition, the project will also increase
16 resilience to extreme weather events. I believe Otter
17 Tail was in front of the Commission in the past talking
18 about the 2023 Christmas ice storm and the conditions
19 that we experienced out at Jamestown. We had a
20 situation this past Christmas season where we had lost
21 both 345 kV lines into the Jamestown load pocket, and
22 that forced us to have to operate the Jamestown pocket
23 as an island for the matter of about one and a half
24 days. We supported that entire load pocket through the
25 use of our existing peaking plants that run off diesel

1 fuel.

2 As we look at adding the Jamestown to Ellendale
3 project, we'll now have a third source into the
4 Jamestown load pocket and this will help reliably
5 support that load in the event that we lose both of
6 those 345 kV lines into Jamestown again. So tremendous
7 reliability benefits for the Jamestown area.

8 As we look at the southern end of this project
9 at Ellendale, there's also going to be benefits to that
10 area as we think about the current line from Big Stone
11 South to Ellendale really ends at Ellendale as a 345 kV
12 line. Connecting Jamestown down to Ellendale will now
13 create a looped 345 kV system and help address some of
14 those voltage stability concerns that are present today
15 at Ellendale.

16 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: What are the two 345
17 lines that are currently going into Jamestown?

18 MR. WEIERS: There's two lines today. One comes
19 from Center and goes over to Jamestown and then it
20 continues east to Buffalo, North Dakota, and then
21 ultimately over to Bison Substation and then Maple
22 River, which is just outside of Fargo.

23 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: Okay.

24 MR. WEIERS: Yep. All right.

25 Going down the benefits here, the next benefit

1 is support to local landowners. As we think about
2 boosting the local economy, Otter Tail and
3 Montana-Dakota Utilities estimate that we'll be paying
4 over \$10 million to local landowners in this area as a
5 result of the easement payments that we'll be paying for
6 the project. It's also going to generate tax revenues
7 for many of those governmental entities that support --
8 or that collect taxes, primarily in the form of property
9 taxes.

10 And also, as you think about the work needed to
11 construct a project of this magnitude, we'll also be
12 looking to lever some of the local service providers in
13 the area. It could be tree-clearing companies. It
14 could be local contractors to help with road
15 improvements; collecting or, you know, getting gravel,
16 getting aggregate concrete. Those are all things that
17 we hope to be able to leverage the local businesses for.

18 And, lastly, as you think about the workforce
19 needed to build a project like this, many of the local
20 businesses will also benefit by purchasing fuel, meals,
21 and lodging during the construction phase of the
22 project.

23 Speaking of construction, we do expect between
24 100 and 150 employees on-site during the construction
25 phase of the project, and we're hoping to be able to

1 leverage some of the local skilled laborers for
2 performing some of this work.

3 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: Regarding the
4 landowner payments, have you started easement
5 acquisition yet and how enthusiastic have the landowners
6 been to have that opportunity?

7 MR. WEIERS: We have started land acquisition
8 efforts. Last August we started asking for survey
9 permission along a proposed route, and then in February
10 of this year we started asking for options to get
11 easements on property.

12 Through the course of this interaction, we've
13 actually been taking landowner feedback in the form of
14 suggested revisions to our route, and at this point in
15 time we've looked at over 30 different reroutes for the
16 line. And negotiations with landowners continue to go
17 well. As of last week, we reached about a 33 percent
18 volunteer easement status. And we're continuing to work
19 on that and will continue to work on that throughout the
20 development phase of the project.

21 COMMISSIONER HAUGEN-HOFFART: You said you've
22 looked at -- I don't remember how many reroutes. Have
23 you rerouted it or are you looking at it? I'm just
24 curious on that.

25 MR. WEIERS: So over the course of landowner

1 discussions, oftentimes we hear alternative ideas on
2 where to reroute the transmission line. So to date I
3 would say that we've experienced -- or we've processed
4 over 30 different reroute requests from landowners.

5 (Commissioner Fedorchak enters room.)

6 MR. WEIERS: So of the over 30 reroute requests
7 we've gotten from landowners, I don't have an exact
8 number on how many we were able to grant, but it has
9 been most of them.

10 And I don't know if anybody else has any
11 additional color on that on the project team, but I'll
12 open it up if there's any additional feedback.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes. We continue to --
14 as we engage with landowners, we continue to see more
15 and more reroutes, but they're small reroutes, primarily
16 on their property. They just want it moved to one side
17 or the other.

18 COMMISSIONER HAUGEN-HOFFART: Sure.

19 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: And when you said
20 "about 33 percent of easements acquired," are you
21 talking about the number of landowners that would need
22 to be dealt with or about the linear miles of the line?

23 MR. WEIERS: It's based on the number of
24 landowners. At this point we have about 170 unique
25 landowners along the proposed route, and we've acquired

1 about 33 percent of the easements that we need for the
2 line so far.

3 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: I have a question about
4 the voltage and the voltage violations that you talked
5 about a little bit ago. Could you give me those numbers
6 again, Jason, and then kind of explain, give us some
7 examples of what's happening there? I think you called
8 it loading and voltage violation?

9 MR. WEIERS: Yep. Sure. Commissioner
10 Fedorchak, if you don't mind, I'll maybe go back to this
11 previous slide --

12 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: Sure.

13 MR. WEIERS: -- so I can use the map to explain
14 this in a little more detail.

15 So each transmission facility has a rating
16 associated with it, and that rating is set by the owner
17 to avoid any damage to the facility and to avoid any
18 safety concerns. And as you think about excessive
19 loadings on the transmission system, this is a condition
20 where the loading on the facility has exceeded the safe
21 operating limit of the line. So in those situations,
22 the market may have to redispatch to avoid that overload
23 issue or may have to pursue underlying upgrades to fix
24 those loading issues.

25 And on the map again, just to illustrate this,

1 it's this 230 kV path from Ellendale to Forman to
2 Hankinson up to Wahpeton that's experiencing some
3 excessive loadings and then also from Hankinson as we
4 head down towards Big Stone. You'll see this is a --
5 the system that's exporting this generation from North
6 Dakota to the neighboring states.

7 So as we look at the addition of the Jamestown
8 to Ellendale 345 kV project, we have found that the
9 additional line will relieve excessive loadings on 70
10 different transmission elements during this contingency
11 analysis performed for that future condition.

12 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: And is that, like, how
13 often? Is it a constant thing or, like, how often are
14 these excessive loadings happening?

15 MR. WEIERS: I don't have an exact count of how
16 many hours per year, but, generally speaking, these are
17 typically times of the year when we're seeing a large
18 amount of generation and lower amounts of load so we
19 have higher flows throughout the system. We also see
20 some of these same challenges during winter peak
21 conditions when the load in this area is higher than it
22 is in the summer.

23 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: Okay.

24 MR. WEIERS: And if I may, Commissioner
25 Fedorchak, just one other quick comment on these

1 excessive loadings.

2 Along with excessive loadings comes depressed
3 voltages. What you'll see on these transmission
4 facilities is the higher you load them, the lower the
5 voltages will be on the system. So, generally speaking,
6 we're going to see excessive loadings and depressed
7 voltages accompany one another in these same areas, and
8 that's exactly what's happening here. As this 230 kV
9 system is loading up to its maximum rating, the voltages
10 are dipping to a point where it's violating the criteria
11 set by the owner and we need to do something to fix
12 those issues.

13 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: So when it's -- when
14 the demand is lower than the generation, which you said
15 is one of the drivers, is there demand out of the state
16 that wants that power? Or what's stopping it from just
17 being curtailed and how will that -- I guess if there's
18 a demand, how will more transmission help if there's no
19 demand, or maybe the demand is just out, someplace else?
20 So explain that.

21 MR. WEIERS: Sure. This would all be basically
22 determined through MISO's dispatch in the energy market.
23 And to the extent that there is demand outside of the
24 state, the MISO Market Dispatch would try to get that
25 generation out of North Dakota and to those neighboring

1 states as long as we had sufficient transmission
2 capacity available to export that generation. To the
3 extent that that transmission capacity is constrained,
4 then they'd have to curtail generation so that it would
5 be bottled up within North Dakota.

6 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: So is what's happening
7 now is there's this constraint so it can't get out,
8 there's demand outside but it's constrained or -- I'm a
9 little confused by your comment that one of the cause of
10 the voltage violations is it occurs at a time when
11 there's low demand and excessive generation.

12 MR. WEIERS: Yep. Yeah. And that's a situation
13 where the flow on the transmission system is at its
14 maximum rating so that -- that we can't get any more
15 generation out of -- out of the state in those
16 situations.

17 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: But it's wanted outside
18 of the state. Somebody wants it. It just can't get
19 there.

20 MR. WEIERS: Correct.

21 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: Okay.

22 MR. WEIERS: Yep.

23 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: So the demand just
24 isn't local.

25 MR. WEIERS: Correct.

1 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: Got it. All right.
2 That makes more sense now. Thank you.

3 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: But what about when
4 it's not wanted? Then by doing this, we've just added
5 more generation into the mix that has to curtail;
6 correct?

7 MR. WEIERS: Can you repeat that, please?

8 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: Okay. You seem to be
9 alluding to times when the energy is needed somewhere
10 and this would open more avenues to get it there. But
11 what about the times in the middle of the night and the
12 nice spring and autumn evenings when it's not needed
13 anywhere and we're curtailing and curtailing? If you're
14 right that this will add opportunities for more
15 generation in North Dakota, doesn't it just mean more
16 generation facilities that need to curtail and lose
17 money?

18 MR. WEIERS: It's possible that could be a
19 situation, but I'm assuming most generation developers
20 would be doing their homework before they would be
21 interconnecting with the grid to make sure that they
22 have a viable business opportunity before proceeding.

23 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: I -- I agree with
24 that, the developers do, because they get subsidized.
25 It's the existing ones that are left hanging out to do

1 the curtailment.

2 MR. WEIERS: Yeah. And that comes down to how
3 they set their market prices as they enter the market
4 and MISO chooses which resources to dispatch.

5 Okay. I think we're on slide 7.

6 So as MISO performed their studies of the area
7 here, they did evaluate five different alternatives to
8 determine if any feasible alternative was out there that
9 more effectively addressed the reliability concerns that
10 were appearing on that 230 kV system in southeastern
11 North Dakota, northeastern South Dakota, and
12 west-central Minnesota.

13 This particular slide has a table that shows all
14 of the various combination alternatives that MISO
15 considered. And as you'll notice, the list of
16 alternatives here, you'll note that the Jamestown to
17 Ellendale project is part of every different alternative
18 that was tested by MISO, which further reinforces the
19 importance and the benefits of the project to not only
20 the region but also this local area.

21 The Jamestown to Ellendale project was
22 identified as part of the Tranche 1 Portfolio for MISO's
23 Long-Range Transmission Plan. This long-range
24 transmission planning effort started back in 2020 and is
25 planning to be broken into four different phases or four

1 different tranches of transmission projects.

2 As shown on the slide here, Tranches 1 and 2 are
3 focused on the Midwest subregion of MISO while Tranche 3
4 will then turn its focus to MISO's South region, and
5 then Tranche 4 will look at focusing on intraregional
6 projects to help strengthen the connections between the
7 Midwest subregion and the South subregion.

8 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: It's really five
9 tranches.

10 MR. WEIERS: Yeah. You consider Tranche 2.1 and
11 2.2 --

12 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: I'm not buying the
13 marketing. Sorry.

14 MR. WEIERS: Yeah. Understood.

15 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: So do you mean there's
16 a fifth one that's not mentioned here --

17 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: No.

18 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: -- or you mean 2.1 and
19 2.2 are two different tranches?

20 MR. WEIERS: Yes.

21 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: Yeah. They really are.

22 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: So you mentioned this
23 one being \$440 million. No. This project being \$440
24 million. What was the total price tag of --

25 COMMISSIONER HAUGEN-HOFFART: Ten billion.

1 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: -- Tranche 1? Ten?

2 MR. WEIERS: Yep. Ten point -- \$10.3 billion
3 was the approved cost of the Tranche 1 Portfolio.

4 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: And go through 2, 3,
5 and 4. You can divide 2 or put them together.

6 MR. WEIERS: Are you talking about the --

7 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: Estimated costs.

8 MR. WEIERS: At this point in time the other
9 tranches aren't known. They're not finalized yet so
10 it's hard to put a price tag on them.

11 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: Just estimates out
12 there.

13 MR. WEIERS: Yeah, I -- I'm not comfortable
14 stating a specific estimate because I don't believe that
15 the portfolios are finalized yet.

16 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: Tranche 2 is looking
17 like -- if you combine them, 30 to 50 billion. Probably
18 a lot closer to 50.

19 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: For just --

20 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: Because Tranche 1 --
21 2.1 is almost 30. Actually, Tranche 2.1 is almost 30
22 billion.

23 Right, Adam? Yeah.

24 So they haven't really put a price tag on 2.2
25 that I've seen but --

1 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: So 2.1 you said is
2 about 30?

3 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: Uh-huh.

4 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: And 2.2?

5 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: They haven't really
6 said. And I don't know, what did -- is Tranche 3's at
7 all -- price tag range?

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Just a range (inaudible).

9 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: Yeah.

10 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: Okay.

11 MR. WEIERS: Okay. Moving on to slide 9, again
12 refocusing our discussion here on Tranche 1, MISO did
13 take about two and a half years to perform the studies
14 to support the Tranche 1 Portfolio through the course of
15 several different stakeholder meetings and workshops.
16 And as a result of all that study work, they did approve
17 18 new transmission projects in July of 2022, and they
18 call that the Tranche 1 Portfolio.

19 As you'll notice on the map here, the Jamestown
20 to Ellendale project is project number 1 on the map.

21 COMMISSIONER HAUGEN-HOFFART: I was just
22 curious, how did you prioritize the difference between
23 Tranche 1 to Tranche 4? What were the key components on
24 that? I mean --

25 MR. WEIERS: Yeah.

1 COMMISSIONER HAUGEN-HOFFART: -- north versus
2 south?

3 MR. WEIERS: Sure. Thanks, Commissioner, for
4 the question.

5 The actual prioritization of looking at which
6 parts of MISO was performed by MISO. And the reason
7 that they focused on the Midwest subregion first is
8 because they're seeing the amount of generation being
9 built in this region is far outpacing what's happening
10 in other parts of MISO. So they're attempting to try to
11 get ahead of the transmission needs because of the
12 faster development of generation up in this region.

13 COMMISSIONER HAUGEN-HOFFART: Getting it out
14 more?

15 MR. WEIERS: Yeah.

16 COMMISSIONER HAUGEN-HOFFART: Okay.

17 MR. WEIERS: So as Commissioner Christmann had
18 just asked about here, this slide actually indicates
19 that Tranche 1 represents over 2,000 miles of new and
20 upgraded high-voltage transmission. And the price tag
21 that was associated with the Tranche 1 was \$10.3
22 billion.

23 As you think about these Tranche 1 projects,
24 they do offer multiple benefits. And because of those
25 multiple benefits, all these projects as part of the

1 Tranche 1 Portfolio were approved as Multi-Value
2 Projects, or MVPs, under MISO's tariff.

3 So under MISO's tariff, a transmission project
4 can be approved as an MVP if it meets one of three
5 criteria: It needs to address a reliability issue
6 that's in violation of a NERC reliability standard; it
7 needs to provide economic value across a broad area with
8 a benefit-to-cost ratio of 1.0 or higher; or it needs to
9 support the reliable and economic delivery of energy.

10 Because the benefits of the Tranche 1 Portfolio
11 are spread broadly across the entire Midwest subregion,
12 the cost of the Tranche 1 Portfolio is shared on a pro
13 rata basis to all loads in that Midwest subregion based
14 on energy usage. So what this means for Otter Tail's
15 North Dakota customers is that they'll be paying for
16 .61 percent of the projects and Montana-Dakota's North
17 Dakota customers will be paying for about four --
18 0.47 percent of the projects.

19 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: So does the southern
20 region pay anything for these?

21 MR. WEIERS: In this case, the benefits were
22 limited to just the Midwest subregion. So that's the
23 only load area that (indiscernible) allocated costs from
24 the Tranche 1 Portfolio.

25 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: And based on a couple

1 slides ago, Tranche 3 will be just about the opposite.

2 MR. WEIERS: Based on the focus for Tranche 3,
3 we expect that the cost allocation would be limited to
4 the MISO South subregion.

5 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: What about that big
6 Tranche 2? That's north?

7 MR. WEIERS: The intent is to focus on the
8 Midwest subregion, yep.

9 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: Okay.

10 MR. WEIERS: All right. The next slide has just
11 an overview of the project schedule.

12 As I mentioned earlier, we started outreach to
13 landowners back in 2023. We actually held some public
14 meetings to get input on the routing process back in
15 early to mid-2023 and then began defining a proposed
16 route in late 2023.

17 And we started securing land rights for the
18 route in early 2024; in February, in fact. We do plan
19 to file a combined Certificate of Corridor Compatibility
20 and Route Permit Application late in Q3 of this year.

21 And we're hoping for a PSC decision on the
22 combined route permit filing in the early -- early in
23 the second half of 2025.

24 Assuming all this goes as planned, we would plan
25 to start pre-construction activities in the fall

1 of 2025. And some of those pre-construction activities
2 would include tree clearing. We'd be working on laydown
3 yards and getting road improvements ready to start
4 construction in the spring of 2026.

5 We'd start first, of course, with foundation
6 drilling, and then that would be followed up with
7 setting structures, and then finally stringing
8 conductor.

9 And as the current schedule stands, we would
10 have two to two and a half years construction and wrap
11 the project up and have it in service by the end
12 of 2028.

13 All right. We have reviewed Chapter 49-03 of
14 the North Dakota Century Code and believe that we are in
15 compliance with the requirements needed to obtain a
16 Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity. As you
17 review our application, you'll note that the Jamestown
18 to Ellendale project will not interfere with the service
19 provided by any of the other utilities in the area.

20 Otter Tail and Montana-Dakota have articles of
21 incorporation on file with the Commission. And Otter
22 Tail and MDU are committed to obtain all the applicable
23 permits from federal, state, and local authorities prior
24 to starting construction.

25 So, in conclusion, we believe that public

1 convenience and necessity will be served by Otter Tail
2 and MDU's construction, ownership, and operation of the
3 project because of the reliability and economic benefits
4 provided to customers. The project is part of the
5 MISO's long-range plan and was approved as part of their
6 2021 Transmission Expansion Plan because of the
7 reliability and economic benefits that it enables as
8 part of the overall Tranche 1 Portfolio.

9 And Otter Tail and MDU are fit, willing, and
10 able to construct, own, and operate the Jamestown to
11 Ellendale project as proven by their articles of
12 incorporation, their certificates of good standing, and
13 their success in past projects.

14 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: Jason, did you -- was
15 this project a standalone on the cost-benefit analysis
16 or did it -- I forget how it works. Was it all the MVPs
17 were done together?

18 MR. WEIERS: That's -- the latter is correct,
19 Commissioner Fedorchak. All MVPs were done together.

20 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: Okay. Have you guys
21 done a cost-benefit of just this project?

22 MR. WEIERS: We have not. In fact, Otter Tail
23 doesn't have the necessary software to perform that
24 calculation.

25 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: Okay. And the benefits

1 that you mentioned in your discussion about benefits
2 including, like, landowner payments and tax -- tax
3 revenue, etcetera, those aren't part of the MISO
4 business case, are they?

5 MR. WEIERS: They are not actually --

6 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: Okay.

7 MR. WEIERS: -- part of the MISO business case.

8 I will mention to the commissioners here today
9 that Otter Tail and Montana-Dakota have commissioned a
10 study with North Dakota State University to help better
11 quantify the benefits of the project to the local area,
12 and we do include -- we do plan to include that study as
13 part of our upcoming combined Certificate of Corridor
14 Compatibility and Route Permit Application. So the
15 Commission will get a chance to see that coming up as we
16 finalize that and better quantify those local benefits.

17 COMMISSIONER HAUGEN-HOFFART: Who's doing that
18 study?

19 MR. WEIERS: We've commissioned North Dakota
20 State University, NDSU.

21 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: You mentioned that this
22 will accommodate 4,500 megawatts of new generation. Do
23 you know where MISO got that figure? Or did you guys
24 give that to them? Where's that come from? And is that
25 generation in the queue? You know, how do we -- do we

1 have confidence that that's actually probably going to
2 materialize?

3 MR. WEIERS: The 4,500 megawatts was determined
4 through MISO's stakeholder process when they built the
5 futures to analyze as part of the other TP study. And
6 it's my understanding that the 4,500-megawatt assumption
7 of generation in North Dakota was based on a variety of
8 inputs including stakeholder input from utility
9 integrative resource plans. If there was an announced
10 project, they made sure they included that in their
11 assumptions. And then they also did look at the queue
12 and they tried to determine where there's been recent
13 activity and used some of those locations as well for
14 the future generation siting assumptions.

15 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: Okay.

16 And then you probably covered this and I missed
17 it, but the O&M for this line, how is that handled in
18 terms of covering the cost?

19 MR. WEIERS: Yeah. The -- the O&M costs for the
20 MVP projects are recovered as part of the overall MISO
21 tariff.

22 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: Okay.

23 MR. WEIERS: So we will calculate O&M charges
24 and pass those through as MVP charges under Attachment
25 MM of Otter Tail and Montana-Dakota's respective

1 attachments in MISO.

2 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: Okay. So is it safe
3 to, kind of just in a simple manner, assume that this is
4 a decently-size investment in both your systems that
5 you'll pay only a fraction of the cost for it?

6 MR. WEIERS: Yeah, that's correct, Commissioner
7 Fedorchak. The calculations that have been performed by
8 Otter Tail and Montana-Dakota Utilities indicate that
9 North Dakota customers will be paying, roughly,
10 .61 percent -- I'm sorry, let me back up a minute there.
11 Otter Tail's North Dakota customers will be paying
12 .61 percent of this project cost and Montana-Dakota
13 customers in North Dakota will be paying 0.47 percent of
14 the overall project cost.

15 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: Okay.

16 COMMISSIONER HAUGEN-HOFFART: But what's the
17 impact to the maintenance of it? How does that affect
18 the -- you know, the ongoing costs? Because you have --
19 maintain a hundred percent ownership on one and joint,
20 but that's got to be some ongoing costs and which
21 repairs will pay for.

22 MR. WEIERS: The MVP costs for O&M are treated
23 the very same way they are for the investment needed to
24 get the projects constructed. So if it's a capital cost
25 upfront for part of the construction costs or an O&M

1 cost after the project goes in service, those costs are
2 allocated similarly across the MISO Midwest subregion.

3 COMMISSIONER HAUGEN-HOFFART: Okay.

4 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: I want to go back to
5 that allocation. It's one thing to talk about that on
6 \$440 million. And it was wonderful because we're only
7 paying this small part of the costs of this. But this
8 is the thing with socialization. In agreeing to that,
9 we're paying that same part of the costs of the other
10 more than \$9 and a half billion involved here and the 30
11 billion on Tranche 2 and all of that; correct?

12 MR. WEIERS: That's correct, Commissioner
13 Christmann.

14 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: So what's the rate
15 impact? In rate cases, we often talk about typical
16 residential customers as an example so that the people
17 that you serve and that we serve understand how they're
18 going to be impacted. What is the impact of this
19 project or Tranche 1 for each company?

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You got number two?

21 MR. WEIERS: Okay. So Otter Tail and
22 Montana-Dakota Utilities has performed calculations to
23 determine the rate impact to an average North Dakota
24 residential customer using a thousand kilowatt-hours per
25 month. And as you look at the cost of just the

1 Jamestown to Ellendale project, Otter Tail residential
2 customers are going to see a rate impact of 18 cents per
3 month, MDU customers will see an impact of 12 cents per
4 month for just the Jamestown to Ellendale project.

5 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: Doesn't really --

6 MR. WEIERS: Yeah.

7 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: Doesn't really
8 interest me because we're talking about a package deal.

9 MR. WEIERS: So I have those numbers handy here
10 as well.

11 As you look at Otter Tail's impact for North
12 Dakota customers from the full Tranche 1 Portfolio,
13 again, an average residential customer for Otter Tail
14 using a thousand KW-hours per month, the rate impact is
15 estimated to be \$5.85 per month.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Montana-Dakota's
17 additional cost for the entire Tranche 1 would be about
18 \$3.15 a month.

19 MR. HANSON: Would it be safe to say that if
20 you're considering that's about, roughly, \$10 billion,
21 we're talking another 30 to 40 billion. So if you take
22 that number times four and add to that, I mean, you get
23 an idea of what the cost of Tranche 1, Tranche 2 would
24 be. So it would be somewhere in the mid-30s per month
25 probably per customer once Tranche 2 and 3 are through?

1 Is that fair to say?

2 MR. WEIERS: From a rate impact perspective, I
3 think that's a fair statement. I just don't want people
4 to lose sight of the benefits that these projects also
5 offer to the local area and the region in general.

6 So, yeah, if you look at it just purely on a
7 rate impact basis, that's a reasonable assumption,
8 Chris, but we also need to look at the full package and
9 there are other benefits these future projects will
10 bring to the region and the local area.

11 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: So when we do that, I
12 completely understand the impact to government with
13 taxes collected. I can completely understand the
14 benefits to potential -- potential new energy generation
15 that is looking all over the country for places to get
16 in on a transmission system to take advantage of federal
17 subsidies. So I see that as a benefit to them.

18 I'm wondering about the benefit to Otter Tail
19 and especially to MDU. We talk about the occasional
20 inability to get their power out. Tells me that we have
21 plenty to serve our people. And so we're entering into
22 these compacts for all these socialized projects at a
23 great cost to the system that benefits government and
24 renewable generators, but I'm not getting quite the
25 enormous benefits to the customers of these two

1 companies.

2 And I'll just add this to the question because
3 I'd like both companies' responses. I sort of get Otter
4 Tail's because I understand the push from Minnesota to
5 stop using the Coyote Plant power and have all renewal,
6 renewable. I don't really see the pressure on MDU.

7 MR. WEIERS: Thanks, Commissioner Christmann.

8 If I could maybe start from Otter Tail's
9 perspective and then I'll hand it over to MDU to respond
10 on their behalf.

11 As you look at the Jamestown to Ellendale
12 project, one of the huge benefits for Otter Tail, as I
13 mentioned earlier, is the benefits that we're going to
14 see in the local Jamestown area. As you think about the
15 current load pocket and the existing sources into that
16 load pocket, we were in a very difficult position last
17 Christmas with the ice storm that took down both 345 kV
18 lines that serve Jamestown. As a result, we had to run
19 that diesel peaking generation for almost one and a half
20 days that consumed nearly 90,000 gallons of diesel fuel.

21 If we add this new source from Ellendale up to
22 Jamestown, this additional 345 delivery will result in a
23 very much more -- or a much more resilient and robust
24 transmission system that can serve that Jamestown load
25 pocket, which, by the way, is Otter Tail's largest

1 community as you think about our service territory
2 across our entire 70,000-square-mile service territory.

3 So we see tremendous benefits of this project.
4 And over time we knew something was going to be needed
5 to be done to that Jamestown load pocket. This project
6 is going to be a huge benefit because of the fact that
7 we can share the cost of the project with all of the
8 MISO Midwest customers and get the huge benefit to our
9 customers in the Jamestown area, and anywhere along the
10 line as we look to Otter Tail communities even down as
11 far south as Edgeley.

12 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: Does that happen very
13 often where both those 345 lines were out?

14 MR. WEIERS: I'll mention that because both --
15 last Christmas was certainly a unique situation with an
16 extreme weather event. But I will also mention that
17 even when it comes to performing maintenance at the
18 substation, when we have the entire load pocket sourced
19 from a single substation, we do get into some very
20 difficult situations when we try to schedule outages and
21 be ready to survive that next contingency so we don't
22 have a contingency that takes down the entire load
23 pocket. So now this third source will also help ease
24 some flexibility and be -- and being able to perform
25 maintenance more often during the year.

1 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: And was that always an
2 issue on maintenance or is that just since the addition
3 of the data processing center at Jamestown?

4 MR. WEIERS: It certainly has gotten more
5 challenging as we've experienced load growth in the
6 area. Even before the addition of the Applied Digital
7 load, we did see some of the residential loads and
8 commercial loads around the Jamestown loop increase over
9 time.

10 As you think about the Spiritwood Energy Park,
11 there's a lot of activity going on there with the
12 soybean facility going on. We have Aviko Cavendish, a
13 lot of those commercial customers in that area.

14 And at some point we have reached a load level
15 where the local peaking generation can no longer
16 reliably serve all of that load during certain times of
17 the year. So it's become even more important now to
18 have that third delivery into Jamestown to help serve
19 that area when we have an outage to the existing
20 facilities.

21 MR. SCHOCK: When both of those 345 lines went
22 down coming into Jamestown, where did they fail at? Was
23 it in that local area or was it somewhere else?

24 MR. WEIERS: I don't know the exact answer to
25 that. It was outside of the Jamestown Substation.

1 Actually, Todd, do you have any --

2 MR. LANGSTON: I know the line between Jamestown
3 and Buffalo failed east of Spiritwood. I'm not sure
4 where the line failed from Jamestown to Center.

5 MR. SCHOCK: And both failures were directly
6 related to the ice storm?

7 MR. LANGSTON: Yes.

8 MR. SCHOCK: Okay. How is this line resistant
9 to ice storms and failure like the other two lines?

10 MR. LANGSTON: The conductor on this proposed
11 line, JETx line, is going to be T-2. That -- that type
12 of wire, it's a twisted pair, sheds ice. Ice does not
13 form on there and get the galloping that a normal
14 conductor would.

15 MR. SCHOCK: Okay. Thank you.

16 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: Before we go to any
17 more, I'd like to get MDU's perspective on the -- unless
18 you had a question and follow-up of Otter Tail's
19 perspective.

20 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: I don't. I just have
21 some commentary on --

22 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: Okay.

23 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: -- Tranche 1 and
24 Tranche 2.

25 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: This was sort of a

1 double question. I'd like to get MDU's response.

2 MR. FRANK: Yeah, I think I'll start and then
3 Darcy probably has some comments to add as well for
4 Montana-Dakota.

5 There's some -- we definitely see some
6 reliability benefits as well from this increased
7 transmission in the area. I think there's also some
8 opportunities for us from a load-serving perspective as
9 well because we've seen some interest in the area where
10 our transmission has been growing like Ellendale where
11 we can realize some -- some benefits as a company and
12 customers in North Dakota for these increased load
13 opportunities that we have to serve, like data centers.

14 And I think that Jamestown to Ellendale also
15 gives us an opportunity to increase the transmission
16 investment in North Dakota and allow a maybe future
17 expansion of MISO's transmission system further west
18 more into our system. And I think Jamestown to
19 Ellendale gives -- Jamestown to Ellendale line gives us
20 that opportunity to continue that transmission further
21 west into -- more into MDU's system, I think, in the
22 future.

23 MR. NEIGUM: I would agree with what Rob says.

24 And the other one that we're looking at too is
25 this looking for a need for additional generation to

1 come into the state, whether it's for ourselves or other
2 developers. So, you know, without projects like this,
3 it's hard to develop additional generation within the
4 state. And so it does provide those opportunities as
5 well. You know, one, for our own utilities to be able
6 to supply the needs for our customers and also at least
7 for additional development to happen in the state that
8 otherwise wouldn't happen.

9 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: Thank you.

10 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: So kind of stepping off
11 of those comments, when Tranche 1 was being discussed
12 and the cost allocation -- this is more background for
13 my colleagues -- when the cost allocation was being
14 discussed, our office and Darcy, so MDU, tried really
15 hard to get a generator-pays component to the formula.
16 I mean, we took many, many runs at it and were starting
17 to get some traction. And then people got nervous that
18 we're taking too long and had to get going and, you
19 know, it takes so long to build, etcetera, etcetera, so
20 they move forward with this postage stamp approach.

21 And so we ultimately went along with it for the
22 reasons, you know, both the reliability reasons and
23 recognizing, like, North Dakota is an exporting state
24 and we have potential to export more both from the gas
25 side, gas generator side, perhaps through coal with

1 carbon capture and storage if -- if that's proven out,
2 or if the science changes, you know, there might be more
3 hope for the -- our coal fleet and through wind -- you
4 know, wind and renewables. So this Tranche 1 seemed
5 like much more of backbone-type investments to bring
6 this system up to speed.

7 I will say Tranche 2 is much more about helping
8 the states -- and they even state this, MISO even states
9 this -- Tranche 2 is much more about helping the states
10 meet their goals.

11 So in my opinion, I don't think that -- and I'm
12 not prepared to just have North Dakota, as long as I'm
13 here, go along with Tranche 2 depending on how it all
14 shakes out, but I mean that's -- that's a play that we
15 need to be looking at down the road, but there should be
16 a generator-pays component to that and there isn't. And
17 they fought it tooth and nail.

18 And the benefits to our state of that,
19 especially 2.1 where we basically aren't even connected
20 and they've left MDU high and dry in that there's no
21 investments -- they don't even have in this system west
22 of Jamestown on the map on their Tranche 2 stuff.

23 So that one is an area where North Dakota needs
24 to be very engaged in watching how the costs come
25 forward and how those -- what the benefits are of those

1 projects, how they address the cost-benefit analysis and
2 -- and be prepared to not go along with it.

3 Anyway, commentary, not for today's case.

4 COMMISSIONER HAUGEN-HOFFART: So there's a lot
5 of flexibility on the difference between the different
6 tranches and the cost allocation or is it --

7 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: No, no.

8 COMMISSIONER HAUGEN-HOFFART: -- are you saying
9 we did this for 1, it's got to be this way for 2, 3, 4,
10 whatever?

11 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: There's no flexibility.
12 The cost allocation is set and it would have to be
13 fought at FERC if we wanted to not go along with it.

14 COMMISSIONER HAUGEN-HOFFART: Okay.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: A quick question on cost.
16 You know, I don't think I'd be the only one who was a
17 little shocked by the cost of the project. I would
18 imagine you guys were probably maybe not surprised by
19 it. But looking back at the cost of industrial
20 materials and things like that, you'd be at like
21 85 miles, and when you do the breakdown between the
22 substations and the lines, you've got somewhere in the
23 ballpark of \$4 million a mile for four structures per
24 mile.

25 I mean, how does that compare to more recent

1 projects that you guys have done and what kind of an
2 inflation? Is it twice the cost of what you did ten
3 years ago? Any sense of that?

4 MR. WEIERS: Yes. It's basically doubled as
5 what we had done on BSSE. BSSE, we hit the steel prices
6 at an all-time low. Right now these steel prices, the
7 indices are twice that what we had paid for BSSE. Along
8 with concrete prices also.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And what year was that?

10 MR. WEIERS: It was in service in 2019.

11 COMMISSIONER HAUGEN-HOFFART: Julie, you missed
12 the brand?

13 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: It's very intriguing.

14 COMMISSIONER HAUGEN-HOFFART: Otter Tail --

15 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: JETx, is that how we
16 say it? JETx? Good job.

17 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: Are there other
18 questions?

19 MR. SCHOCK: I thought I could just sit quietly
20 back there and I can't. I tried.

21 Okay. So cost recovery of a line such as this.
22 You wouldn't be coming in and asking for cost recovery
23 in your transmission rider as rate base; correct? You
24 would be coming in through a MISO charge in the
25 transmission rider. Is that accurate?

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Different skills.

2 (Laughter)

3 MR. SCHOCK: Matt wanted to talk anyways.

4 MR. OLSEN: Yeah, thanks, Victor. Matt Olsen
5 here.

6 Most of it. I think you're -- you're accurate
7 about that. There's a small portion that's rate base.

8 MR. SCHOCK: Okay. So what portion would be
9 rate base?

10 MR. OLSEN: The small portion that represents
11 North Dakota customers of Otter Tail.

12 MR. SCHOCK: Okay. So this .6 -- .6 percent,
13 roughly.

14 MR. OLSEN: Yeah.

15 MR. SCHOCK: That portion you would be adding to
16 rate base and getting your North Dakota approved rate of
17 return or your FERC approved rate of return?

18 MR. OLSEN: Yeah, this is where I probably need
19 help from others. Probably may be better if we work
20 this out in --

21 MR. SCHOCK: It's just curiosity.

22 MR. OLSEN: Yeah.

23 MR. SCHOCK: So you could file something just to
24 kind of clarify those points of the cost recovery.

25 MR. OLSEN: And it may be there already, but we

1 can spell it out for you.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, Matt, maybe speak
3 to the FERC jurisdiction a little bit. I know MDU and
4 Otter Tail have a little bit of a difference between --
5 you have a small jurisdictional portion but maybe -- I
6 think -- and Victor can correct me if I'm wrong, but I
7 had a misconception at first that this would be a rate
8 base, rate recovery item.

9 And maybe kind of speak a little bit to the
10 mechanism that -- how that gets recovered through -- or
11 how that gets charged back to customers as opposed to
12 being rate base with a recovery and base rates and how
13 it flows from MISO instead.

14 MR. OLSEN: Yeah, I -- I think I'll probably add
15 confusion by trying to explain it myself and I'd rather
16 not introduce that here but certainly --

17 MR. SCHOCK: That's perfectly fine if you're
18 willing to make a subsequent filing just to kind of lay
19 out the cost recovery of what -- what I think would be
20 interesting to demonstrate for -- for this project, for
21 the Jamestown to Ellendale line and for the rest of
22 Tranche 1, how that would pass through to North Dakota
23 customers, because I would assume it's slightly
24 different.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And we do have some of

1 this in data requests so --

2 MR. OLSEN: Yeah.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- we can just do a
4 little addendum.

5 MR. OLSEN: I think we'll point there and spell
6 it out for you there.

7 MR. SCHOCK: Yeah. Okay. Sure.

8 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: Would it be different
9 for MDU or Otter Tail?

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

11 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: Maybe --

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Next.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes, it's different.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Slightly. I do know
15 that.

16 MR. JACOBSON: Travis Jacobson with MDU.

17 Montana-Dakota would only see in our
18 transmission cost adjustment where we would see the
19 Schedule 26, the MVP piece of that. And that would be
20 the same for Montana-Dakota's JETx project as well as
21 the rest of Tranche 2. That's just going to come
22 through our Schedule 26-A, I think.

23 MR. SCHOCK: Okay. So -- so then that would be
24 based upon your FERC approved rate of return?

25 MR. JACOBSON: That's true.

1 MR. SCHOCK: Okay. So there's other stuff in
2 there other than rate of return but that's --

3 MR. JACOBSON: Same as BSSE and all the other --

4 MR. SCHOCK: Yep, yep.

5 MR. JACOBSON: -- ones today.

6 MR. SCHOCK: Absolutely.

7 MR. JACOBSON: That's true.

8 MR. SCHOCK: Yep. Okay.

9 MR. JACOBSON: And there is nothing that we
10 would put in rate base at Montana-Dakota.

11 MR. SCHOCK: Okay. And then -- and that would
12 flow through, you would be charged by the MISO 26?

13 MR. JACOBSON: I think it's 26-A.

14 MR. SCHOCK: For how many years?

15 MR. JACOBSON: Well, until it's gone. So 40.

16 MR. SCHOCK: 40? 40 years? Okay.

17 I think that's all I have. I can go down other
18 rabbit holes, but that one seemed most fun.

19 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: I'll be 95 when that's
20 done.

21 COMMISSIONER HAUGEN-HOFFART: What's that?

22 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: I'll be 95 years old
23 when they quit paying for it.

24 (Laughter)

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'll be pretty old too.

1 (Laughter)

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: But the electrons will
3 still be flowing.

4 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: When it's windy.
5 Did that cover your questions?

6 So I don't know if this is more for staff or
7 what, but we're discussing this with Otter Tail and MDU
8 because you're owners of the line and (indiscernible)
9 certificate, but this rate impact is going to go to Xcel
10 customers too; right?

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Uh-huh.

12 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: Do you know how much
13 that is?

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I can speak to that since
15 Alex -- I spoke to Alex Nisbet.

16 As far as the allocation of cost per
17 megawatt-hour, it's exactly the same for all of the
18 companies. The difference is, as you see the difference
19 between MDU and Otter Tail's rate for residential
20 customer, theirs is going to be in that ballpark of what
21 they have -- he hasn't gotten back to me on the actual
22 thing, but it has to go through the jurisdictional
23 allocation and the -- and the -- you know, the
24 customer -- or the class allocations to kind of get at
25 the customer rate, but it's going to be in the same

1 ballpark. So the bottom line --

2 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: The ballpark is so
3 much different.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, it -- it --

5 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: A little over three to
6 almost six.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah. And I've asked
8 them to expand upon -- upon that, but the point that I'd
9 make, though, is when you look at the allocation, the
10 cost per megawatt-hour is essentially the same for --
11 for each company.

12 So if you think about it like a -- the way I
13 looked at it on a short basis is, if you jump through
14 all the math, is one customer uses about one
15 megawatt-hour per month and the cost was like -- for
16 Tranche 1 was like \$2.51 in 2031 per month. So you
17 think it would be 2.51, but it has to go through all the
18 allocations. So it all kind of starts from the same
19 place.

20 So I'm still waiting to get what that exact
21 number will be, but they all start with the same charges
22 from -- for the same amount of energy from -- from the
23 MISO cross charges through the Transmission 26 or
24 whatever you call it. So I'm waiting to hear what that
25 number is exactly.

1 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: And the cooperatives
2 are also going to be paying on this.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, if they're on --

4 MR. SCHOCK: MISO --

5 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: MISO co-ops.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, right.

7 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: Which is Minco --
8 Minnkota. No, they have their own deal, don't they?
9 Yeah, they're not members. They got some other tariff.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: But an answer will get --
11 as soon as Alex gets back to -- I'll get you that
12 information.

13 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: Is Cass -- Cass County
14 -- no. They're SPP. All right.

15 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: Okay. Anything else?

16 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: I don't think so.

17 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: Well, we'll just say
18 I'm going to continue a lot of discussions with staff.
19 Like I said, the N in this whole thing is "necessity,"
20 and I get the need -- I get the benefit that -- that
21 comes through government to renewable developers and to
22 anyone who really wants to meet Minnesota's policy --
23 policy goals, but I'm not convinced of the rest quite
24 yet, but I'll certainly be doing a lot of discussing and
25 thinking.

1 MR. SCHOCK: I have one other one. I forgot
2 about this from earlier.

3 So I just want to clarify. So this line is not
4 needed because of Applied Digital's load at either
5 Ellendale or Jamestown?

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Speaking specifically for
7 Ellendale, no.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And for Otter Tail, no,
9 it's not needed for Applied Digital at Jamestown.

10 MR. SCHOCK: Okay. We've got a couple of
11 concerned landowners who had made that claim. And I was
12 fairly certain that was the answer. I just wanted to
13 confirm it. So if neither of those loads showed up, you
14 would still be here requesting this same certificate.
15 Okay.

16 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: Okay. One more time,
17 any other questions? Staff? Commissioners?

18 | COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: Unh-unh.

19 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: Okay. Is there any
20 objection to the evidence produced today becoming part
21 of the official record? And by "the evidence," I'm
22 talking about the recording of the discussion as well as
23 the slides.

24 MR. ENDRIS: No, Your Honor -- or Commissioner.

25 (Laughter)

1 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: MDU?

2 MS. WALDON: No objection.

3 MR. JOHNSON: No --

4 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: Staff?

5 MR. JOHNSON: -- objection from staff.

6 COMMISSIONER CHRISTMANN: Okay. So the evidence
7 will become part of the record upon which a decision
8 will be made.

9 Are there any other matters to come before the
10 Commission?

11 Hearing none, this informal hearing is
12 concluded. Thank you, everyone.

13 COMMISSIONER HAUGEN-HOFFART: Thanks, everybody.

14 COMMISSIONER FEDORCHAK: Thank you.

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