

Administrative Law Judge Beverly Heydinger
Office of Administrative Hearings
Suite 1700, 100 Washington Square
Minneapolis, MN 55401

RE: CapX 2020 High Voltage Transmission Lines

22 June 2008

Dear Judge Heydinger,

As a resident of Minnesota, an electric ratepayer, an organic farmer, and a young person I am writing to voice my concerns over the CapX 2020 High-Voltage Transmission Line Project and respectfully ask that you deny the Certificate of Need for the proposed CapX 2020 project.

My concerns over the CapX 2020 Project are numerous and varied, and include everything from the individual concern of increased electricity rates to the global concern of further contributing to greenhouse gas emissions from coal-fired power plants that the CapX lines would rely on. However, what is most concerning to me as a young person and beginning organic farmer, is the fact that these projects will create and define a centralized, unregulated, and polluted energy future that I and others from my generation will have to live and contend with.

There is no doubt that the CapX 2020 transmission lines would define the energy future for Minnesota and the upper Midwest, and my generation (and my generation's children and grandchildren) will end up living with (and living next to) the consequences of these lines. At this point in time, it may seem that the CapX power lines are "just the way things are done"—high-voltage power lines are the way that the State's electricity needs should be met. However, two recent Department of Commerce power line studies ordered by the Minnesota Legislature found that significant amounts of wind energy can be injected into the existing transmission system at costs far lower than building new transmission lines to more distant wind farms. I agree with George Crocker, of the North American Water Office, when he states that "no longer can old, conventional central-station electric utility thinking claim to provide the cheapest, most reliable electric utility services". We need a new paradigm, and we have the resources to achieve cleaner, cheaper, more reliable, more secure and more equitable renewable energy projects.

At this great turning point in crafting Minnesota's energy future, Minnesota citizens and public officials realize that we cannot continue as business as usual. I see the CapX 2020 power lines as "business as usual", perpetuating and magnifying all the problems of our current energy system that relies heavily on coal-fired power plants. According to the National Resource Defense Council, "power plant pollution is responsible for 38,200 nonfatal heart attacks and 554,000 asthma attacks each year". As a chronic asthma sufferer myself, I can attest to the detrimental effects of air pollution on asthmatics' health (my own included) and the ensuing burden that has on our healthcare system. The Sierra Club and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency assert that although "coal-fired power plants generate just about half of our nation's electricity, they account for almost 40 percent of our nation's carbon dioxide pollution from all sources including transportation. In fact, coal-fired power plants have the highest output rate of carbon dioxide (or carbon intensity) per unit of electricity among all fossil fuels"

(<http://www.sierraclub.org/coal/dirtytruth/>). All other means—increased efficiency, better load management, conservation, and the development of more community-based renewable energy—should first be utilized before we revert to the “old” paradigm of “dirty” and unsustainable coal power plants.

Therefore, if part or all of these lines do indeed need to be built, please ensure the incorporation of conservation, renewable energy, local jobs, and the long-term ability of Minnesota to provide our own energy security. Keep the power lines in Minnesota—there is no good justification for the Rochester line, and it would curtail Minnesota’s ability to require the incorporation of more renewable wind energy which has now been shown to be a cleaner and more efficient system anyways. Please consider the public interest, especially the interests of my generation and future generations who will live with the many harmful consequences of these power lines, and yet are voiceless in this debate.

Sincerely,

Laura Frerichs
Member of the Citizens Energy Task Force
8199 257th St W
Farmington, MN