

## COMMENT ON SCOPE OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Here's a form to guide you in making your Comment for the record. You can hand it in today or you can send it later to the Dept. of Commerce that's preparing the Environmental Impact Statement. Comments must be received by March 13, 2007. Comments may be sent by email to [sharon.ferguson@state.mn.us](mailto:sharon.ferguson@state.mn.us) or by mail:

Sharon Ferguson  
Department of Commerce  
85 – 7<sup>th</sup> Place E., Suite 500  
St. Paul, MN 55101-2198

If questions: David Birkholz, Dept. of Commerce  
(651) 297-2375 [david.birkholz@state.mn.us](mailto:david.birkholz@state.mn.us)

**FOR COMMENTS TO COUNT, THEY MUST BE ABOUT THE SCOPE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT, WHAT THE EA MUST ADDRESS.**

\_\_\_\_\_**John Olinger**\_\_\_\_\_

Name

\_\_\_\_\_**Jolinger@cityoflindstrom.us**\_\_\_\_\_  
email

\_\_\_\_\_**13292 Sylvan Ave. Lindstrom, MN 55045**\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_**6512570625**\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

### MY COMMENT REGARDING SCOPE OF CHISAGO EA:

Generally, the EA should consider: Alternate existing routes through less dense populations with larger corridors. If the Lindstrom alignment is chosen the line should be undergrounded due to the dramatic impacts on our quaint historic downtown and the health concerns to the proximity of our employment base, trail users along the Swedish Immigrant Trail and nearness to our children while in Middle School

The EA must address the visual impacts of line in these open/protected spaces: The City of Lindstrom is investing millions in bridge improvements and lake connection upgrades to improve our western gateway to the City and reestablish the "Big Lake" that existed. A high voltage power line barging its way into our visual landscape will reduce our investment and negate much of the improvements we are making.

The EA must address the visual impact of line through these cities at these locations: The City of Lindstrom, the Federal Government, the State of Minnesota and Chisago County are investing millions to redesign Highway 8 and redevelop our small downtown. The high voltage line is proposed to run along the north side of this new Highway segment within a very small corridor. A buried line or Poles and wires will severely restrict the full benefit from these millions. The right of way is narrow and large poles will limit the ability to use our sidewalks. The wires will limit our ability to build up in our limited downtown. Undergrounding of the line puts our visitors and residents directly above an 115kv line and exposed to the MRF's. It also creates tremendous trouble for future redevelopment of our business district which is in dire need of upgrading.

The EA must address the socioeconomic impact of transmission through these downtown business districts: The City of Lindstrom is investing millions of dollars to improve our environment and standard of living. The 115Kv line will dramatically reduce the investment in our lives that we are making. Working near, walking under, crossing over, shopping by and attending school near this line will impact the enjoyment of our surroundings. The Department of Health recommends Prudent Avoidance of contact with high voltage lines.

The City of Lindstrom is investing in our town. The negative impacts of this high voltage line will devalue this investment and make it harder to leverage future investment. Small towns are at a disadvantage in this age of Big Box retailers. This high voltage line will negate the efforts we are taking to revitalize our small town.

Prepared and provided by the City of Lindstrom

For more project info, go to [www.puc.state.mn.us](http://www.puc.state.mn.us) and search eDockets for 04-1176 and 06-1677

The EA must address the comparative impact and costs of overhead and underground transmission line in the following locations: First and overall we believe the line should be relocated. But, if not, the City believes our investment of at least 10-15 million dollars for the Highway 8 improvements coupled with 100's of thousands of dollars planned for Economic Development of the Downtown and increased by private investment will be drastically reduced in value. We believe that if the PUC chooses the Lindstrom alignment it should also choose to preserve our millions of dollars of investment by requiring undergrounding. The minimal difference between undergrounding and overhead costs that could be spread over the rate payer would preserve Lindstrom's investment.

### **ALTERNATE ROUTES**

The Dept. of Commerce should consider the following alternate routes (provide as detailed description as possible of route and why that route should be considered – attach a map if possible):

Alternate routes that should be considered are; Highway 70 to Grantsburg, King Plant crossing in Bayport and then north in WI, Arden Hills line, and the Viking Gas Main corridor.

The EA must address the following socioeconomic impacts of transmission line on tourism:

We are a historic town with Swedish heritage. Over 3,000 Swedish Tourist arrive every year to visit our town, thousands of American Swedes visit, visitors from all over the world travel through and spend time in our town because of Hazelden, thousands of people attend our Karl Oscar Days Celebration and Celebration of the Lakes events, many attend fishing tournaments or come to spend a day boating on our many lakes. In the future we will be a main stop along the Swedish Immigrant Trail that currently runs through our town on its way to Taylors Falls. The impact of the high voltage lines on the natural views from the lake, of our historic downtown and nationally recognized "Coffee Pot" water tower, or health concerns from users of our Swedish Immigrant Trail segment are immense. People come to Lindstrom to vacation and they expect to not be assaulted by visual pollution. They want to rest and escape the big city concerns of the metro area. A utilitarian high voltage line of 115Kv will severely damage our tourist attractiveness.

The EA must address the following socioeconomic impact of transmission line on agriculture:

The EA must address socioeconomic issues related to eminent domain and easements for this transmission, i.e., conditions, whether upgrades are allowed, stream of payment: The 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue corridor will be the new alignment for west bound Highway 8. This corridor is narrow and introducing large diameter poles will severely impact our sidewalk and right of way.

The EA must address the following cultural impacts of the transmission line:

Culturally, we are Swedish. We celebrate our Swedish Heritage in our architecture, signage, colors, Celebrations, sculptures and in our easily recognized "Coffee Pot" water tower. This water tower and the replica sculpture of Karl and Kristina Nielson are the two most photographed things in our

community. Both of these cultural icons will be impacted by the high voltage lines. Our residents understand the need for power, but are wholly opposed to its provision in such a visible public space. Bringing an 115Kv line through Lindstrom's downtown dramatically impacts our sensibilities.

The EA must address the following construction impacts, and impacts of maintenance and operation: Both the underground line and large diameter poles will impact Lindstroms ability to use its sidewalks, redevelopment it's commercial property along 1<sup>st</sup> ave. and repair and replace its underground water and sewer services and mains. Any alignment of a high voltage line will increase our costs of construction and maintenance.

The EA must address the following transmission and substation noise issues:

The EA must address the following safety issues: We are concerned with the safety of a high voltage line in a densely populated business and residential district. We are even more concerned with a high voltage line running past our only Middle School where all our children attend during their school life and our large Catholic Church.

The EA must address traffic routing and impact issues:

The EA must address the following wetland impact issues in the following areas:

The EA must address the following wildlife impact issues in the following areas:

The EA must address land use appropriateness and impact issues, particularly in these areas: We believe that a high voltage line is not compatible with dense business, residential, and school districts and Recreational Trail corridors.

The EA must address the following health impacts of the transmission line: The Department of Health recommends prudent avoidance and we agree. The health impacts of nearby high voltage lines to our children, church goers, trail users, residents and business workers require us to demand consideration.

The EA must address the following electromagnetic field impacts of the transmission line:

Other:

Date: March 30, 2007 Signature:



TO: Dave Birkholz, Dept. of Commerce

FROM: John Olinger, City Administrator, City of Lindstrom

DATE: March 30, 2007

SUBJECT: Comments on Scope of Environmental Impact Assessment

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The City of Lindstrom is voicing its objection to the proposal by Xcel Energy to increase the 69Kv line to 115Kv. We question Xcel's conclusion that our local area is driving the demand for more energy. We disagree with Xcel's conclusion that the alignment of this high voltage power line is the most cost effective. Lindstrom believes that when the Environmental, Socioeconomic and Cultural factors are considered the Lindstrom 69Kv option will be considered more expensive and incompatible with the existing uses along the corridor. The following is our summary of the problems this option poses for the City of Lindstrom.

- The alignment through the City of Lindstrom places the line through one of the most densely populated areas in the County.
- The alignment follows a very narrow corridor through the City of Lindstrom's downtown. The buried cable or poles and wires will pose immense obstacles to the planned redesign of Highway 8, future road maintenance, sewer and water service maintenance, property redevelopment and our eminent downtown revitalization efforts.
- The alignment through our small historic town will overwhelm the quaint character and devalue the millions of dollars of investment currently being planned to redesign and construct Highway 8 and revitalize our downtown.
- The City of Lindstrom believes a power line and accompanying poles negatively impacts the money and efforts we are expending to reestablish the "Big Lake" that existed when North and South Lindstrom Lake were one. A line overhead at the juncture of these two lakes will negate the environment we are creating by reestablishing this link in our past.
- The power line will also negatively impact the investment the City of Lindstrom is making in its western entrance. The City of Lindstrom recently approved a highway 8 redesign that creates a triangular shaped parcel at the western edge of the downtown. This parcel will coincide with a new multimillion dollar bridge over the connection between North and South Lindstrom Lakes. The power lines will negatively impact this investment by traversing over and impeding in on our views from the lake and of our City Gateway.

- Lindstrom is experiencing difficulty, as most small towns across Minnesota, with business retention and attraction. Big Box retailers are squeezing out the independent small business. Our efforts at revitalization will require millions of public and private funds to reverse this trend in our downtown. We have made a commitment to strengthen our business environment and increase the goods and services available to our residents. A high voltage line dissecting our business district will devalue our investment, quash our optimism and limit our marketability.
- Our Swedish heritage is strong and the City of Lindstrom still attracts over 3,000 Swedish Tourists per year. The Chisago Lakes area, namely North and South Lindstrom and North and South Center Lakes are well known for their great bass habitats. Many fishing tournaments are hosted on our lakes. Many additional recreational boaters, park visitors and City Celebration attendees call Lindstrom a destination. Swedish Immigrant Trail users currently travel our segment experiencing the town. The site of a power line traversing our City assaulting our view from the lakes, trails and open spaces will lesson the enjoyment of our tourists and our ability to attract increased tourism.
- Chisago Lakes School District has only one Middle School. This school is located on Highway 8 and the proposed High Voltage Power Line runs between the Highway and the School. The Department of Health recommends prudent avoidance. All of our children spend three years of their school life attending this school. Our School District does not want our children exposed 6 hours a day, 9 months out of the year for three years to something that at this point, we don't know is safe. We strongly object to the alignment of this high voltage line for this reason.
- We believe there are alternatives which pose fewer impacts on the region. Alternatives where lines already exist that will achieve the same objectives.
- We object to a strictly monetary evaluation. This favors Xcel Energy but fails to recognize the intangible impacts that dramatically reduce the standard of living for the City of Lindstrom and its surrounding area.

We request the Department of Commerce carefully consider these intangible impacts and fairly review these clearly negative impacts. Please consider these severe impacts to our community as you draft your environmental assessment report.

Narrative and supporting documentation will follow prior to the April 9<sup>th</sup> deadline.

Respectfully submitted, John Olinger

TO: Dave Birkholz, Dept. of Commerce

FROM: Carol A. Overland, representing City of Lindstrom

DATE: March 30, 2007

SUBJECT: Addendum to Comments of City of Lindstrom on Scope of Environmental Impact Assessment – Legal and Electrical

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Several additional transmission, jurisdictional and cost issues must be addressed in the Environmental Assessment for the Chisago transmission project.

**Transmission need and planning – purpose of upgrades**

Transmission planning is a process that evolves over many years, with various studies being completed to substantiate system problems and needs in an area and propose rational and justified fixes for problems discovered. The Chisago transmission project has been proposed in different venues and configurations over the last decade, based on these transmission studies, and the conclusions of these studies must be considered in the Environmental Assessment.

The first historical study to be considered must be the WIREs Phase II report, incorporated into the Wisconsin Reliability Assessment Organization (WRAO) report, which studied the area need, considered Chisago options, and found that the best solution for the area need was the Arrowhead transmission line, which is now permitted and energized. The WRAO report, incorporating WIREs, may be found at: <http://www.arrowhead-weston.com/wrao.shtml>

The Hugo Area Long-Range Electric Delivery System Study (attached) sets out a proposal for local load service. Many of these upgrades proposed have been completed – which ones? The EA must address local upgrades to all transmission in the area (the application references only the 69kV lines). In addressing the “significance of potential Chisago County to Wisconsin line,” the Hugo report states that:

*A high voltage line from Chisago County to Wisconsin has no immediate benefit for this study area. A Chisago County – Apple River line ... is NSP's preferred option for bulk load serving support needed in western Wisconsin around 2000 to 2002. .. Also, a Chisago County – Apple River line will not traverse the Wyoming and Hugo vicinities – which drive the immediate needs for the study area – so it will neither help nor hinder any options to supplying Wyoming and Hugo.*

The next historical document is the 1997 MAPP Ten Year Reliability Assessment (attached). This MAPP document lists the Chisago transmission project of one of several “bulk transmission system improvement projects” and sets out the Chisago upgrades proposed and the Stone Lake-Bayfront 161kV line addition that “will address the northern Wisconsin load-serving limitations. This report notes that:

*The most stressful system intact conditions will occur at summer peak with heavy power transfers flowing through the Twin Cities 345kV loop and on the Twin Cities 345kV interconnections to Wisconsin or Iowa. ... An outage of the interconnections will tend to depress voltages in southern Minnesota and western Wisconsin primarily due to the heavy power transfer conditions.*

The point of the historical analysis is to recall the root of the Chisago proposal, a system addition for bulk power transfer, and not for local load service.

Many system upgrades have been discussed for Western Wisconsin. The EA must identify in detail the system upgrades and additions proposed, under construction and completed and address the impact of these upgrades and additions on local and regional need in the area of the Chisago transmission line in Minnesota and Wisconsin and in Western Wisconsin.

#### Dam issues

The Chisago transmission project, as proposed would go over the St. Croix dam. Wisconsin DNR has a history of dam removal, and in the agreement between NSP and the cities of St. Croix Falls and Taylors Falls (attached), removal of the dam was specifically contemplated:

**12. FUTURE UNDERGROUNDING OF RIVER CROSSING:** If the dam located between the Cities of St. Croix Falls and Taylors Falls on the St. Croix River is removed or significantly reconstructed so as to disturb the river bottom, NSP will make application to the requisite regulatory and governmental bodies to secure approval for placing that portion of the Line crossing the St. Croix River underground subject to the necessary regulatory approvals and technical feasibility.

The EA must identify the regulatory agencies with jurisdiction over the dam and address the environmental and cost impacts of undergrounding at the dam.

#### Undergrounding through Lindstrom and Center City

A draft agreement between the NSP and the Cities of Taylors Falls and St. Croix Falls (attached) originally contained a section regarding undergrounding in Lindstrom and Center City. Although this paragraph was omitted from the original agreement, and although Lindstrom and Center City were NOT included in negotiations with NSP regarding the Chisago project, the subject of this paragraph should be included in the Environmental Assessment:

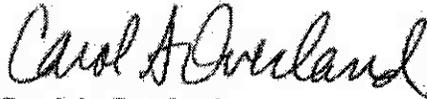
- 8. ROUTING IN LINDSTROM AND CENTER CITY:** Preliminary work suggests that it may be technically feasible to rebuild the Line using the existing above ground right-of-way corridor through the Cities of Lindstrom and Center City. Detailed land use assessment on this issue has not been done, however. ... Notwithstanding §§ 7(a) and 7(d) above and the preceding reference to use of existing aboveground right-of-way, the Parties acknowledge that an alternative for routing to avoid the Cities of Lindstrom and Center City entirely by going around nearby lakes will be studied for

**comparison purposes, as will the possibility of underground construction for a portion of the route through those cities.**

The EA must include this study of "an alternative for routing to avoid the Cities of Lindstrom and Center City entirely by going around nearby lakes will be studied for comparison purposes, as will the possibility of underground construction for a portion of the route through those cities."

Additional issues will be raised upon review of the EA and in the contested case. The City of Lindstrom reserves the right to submit additional documents by April 9, 2007, as provided by Commerce staff.

Respectfully submitted,



Carol A. Overland  
Attorney for City of Lindstrom

Mayor

Keith Carlson

City Administrator

John J. Olinger



APR - 9 2007

APR - 9 2007

Council Members

Jim Singer

Angelo Rew

Curt Flug

Joe Wishy

**CITY OF LINDSTRÖM**

"America's Little Sweden"

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(651) 257-0620 • Fax: (651) 257-0623

David Birkholz  
Department of Commerce  
85-7<sup>th</sup> Place E., Suite 500  
St. Paul, MN 55101-2198

Dear Mr. Birkholz,

Please accept these support materials for the City of Lindstrom's comments on the scope of the Environmental Impact Assessment. Mr. Birkholz allowed us to April 9<sup>th</sup> to add support material to our comment sheet.

The City of Lindstrom believes the proposed routing, given the narrow dense corridor through our downtown is not prudent. We ask that the Viking Gas Main line be reexamined, a new northern route around the lakes in a less dense rural area be examined. We also believe it is feasible that a new line from the King Plant in Bayport then into Wisconsin may be more workable. There is also the ability to upgrade the Arden Hills line that already exists. If these alternatives are not feasible we ask the Commission to consider requiring Xcel Energy to bury their line through our downtown.

These alternatives will protect our future investment in our historic downtown. Our small town is struggling to survive and to find its niche in the new order of big box retail. We have finally made a decision to invest and the presence of a larger line than we currently have threatens our ability to preserve our investment. We understand we all have need for power. We feel we have provided a corridor that serves us and our surrounding area.

We question the local need presented by Xcel Energy and feel this need is more regional and located more in Wisconsin. Therefore, Lindstrom asks the region bear the inconvenience of this High Voltage Line. The costs for the City of Lindstrom are too high.

We ask that you consider the information we have provided and request Xcel to further study the alternatives to provide a better route for this High Voltage Line.

Respectfully Submitted,

  
John J. Olinger  
City of Lindstrom

# LINDSTROM'S NEWLY DESIGNED DOWNTOWN

THE CITY'S MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR EFFORT TO REVITALIZE IT'S  
DOWNTOWN AND MANAGE TRAFFIC ON HIGHWAY 8, A MAJOR STATE  
CORRIDOR.

THE PROJECT IS EXPECTED TO BEGIN CONSTRUCTION IN 2010.

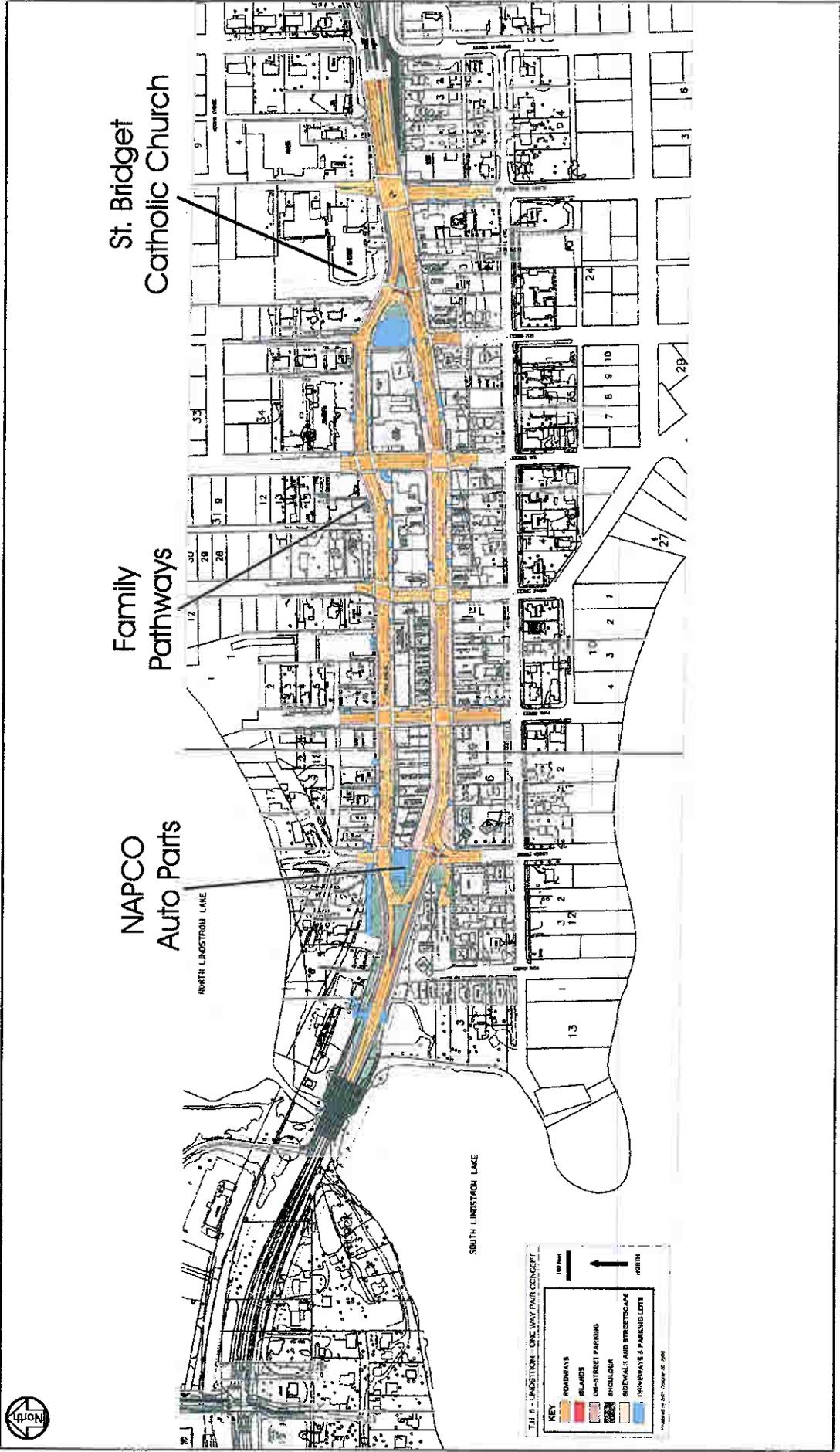


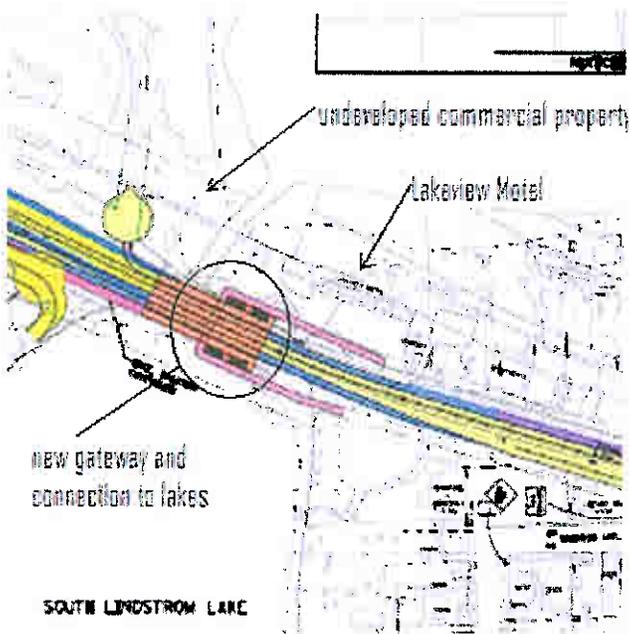
Figure 2

**PROPOSED CONCEPT**  
 LINDSTROM ONE-WAY PAIR  
 City of Lindstrom



0005957  
 October 2006

# MAP OF LINDSTROM'S NEW GATEWAY



# THE LAKEVIEW MOTEL

The City is very concerned for the impact on this particular property. With the Multi-Million dollar investment in downtown this motel is a prime opportunity for redevelopment. The value of the property and the opportunity to improve the City's only motel is severely damaged by the location of the high voltage line. The only option here is to relocate the line to an entirely different alignment or bury it. There is no way to screen, disguise or diminish the impact of these lines.

A motel development that wishes to increase the



height or quality will find the visibility and the alignment of the lines a severe impairment to their investment. This motel and the historic "Dinner Bell" restaurant on the south side of Highway 8 work together to provide food and lodging to our underserved area.

## **XCEL'S 115Kv POWERLINE JOINS LINDSTROM'S GATEWAY**

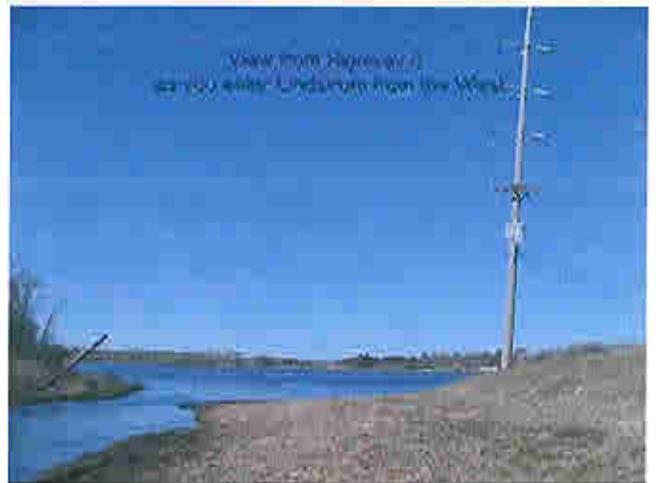


This undeveloped commercial lakeshore property is high developable. The location of the power lines dividing this property into two virtually unusable parcels severely damages its potential. On the ridge to the left is Arby's and our only supermarket. The small stream is the connection between South and North Lindstrom Lakes.

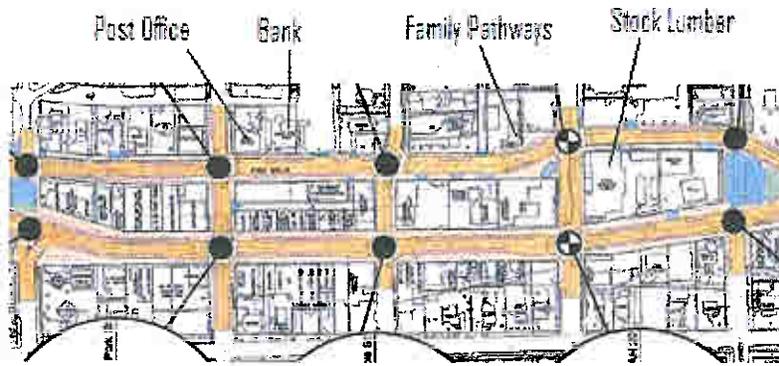
Directly behind the picture is the bridge crossing between the two lakes and the entrance to Lindstrom's downtown district. This is the key investment area for our City and the power line damages future potential.

The City of Lindstrom is receiving several million dollars from Federal, State, County and local sources to improve the entrance to and the downtown district within Lindstrom. The confluence of Lakes, City gateway and Commercial opportunities is key to our investment and setting a tone for the entire downtown.

A visible power line limits the ability to recognize our investment and limits our ability to create a statement that represents the City's connection with it's lakes and rural history.



# LINDSTROM'S HISTORIC DOWNTOWN DISTRICT



# THE HIGH VOLTAGE LINE ON 1<sup>ST</sup> AVENUE IN LINDSTROM'S HISTORIC DOWNTOWN



1<sup>st</sup>. Avenue is the proposed alignment of the 151Kv High Voltage Line. Currently the 69Kv follows the northern ROW line. The line travels very close to our heavily used Post Office and Lake Area Bank. Both facilities have full time staff and many visitors that would come in contact with the poles and lines. The lines hang directly above our sidewalk and interfere with our pedestrians. Larger poles would create an even greater inconvenience.

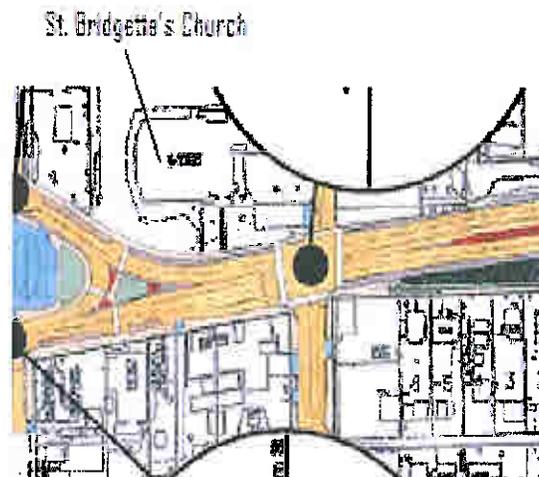
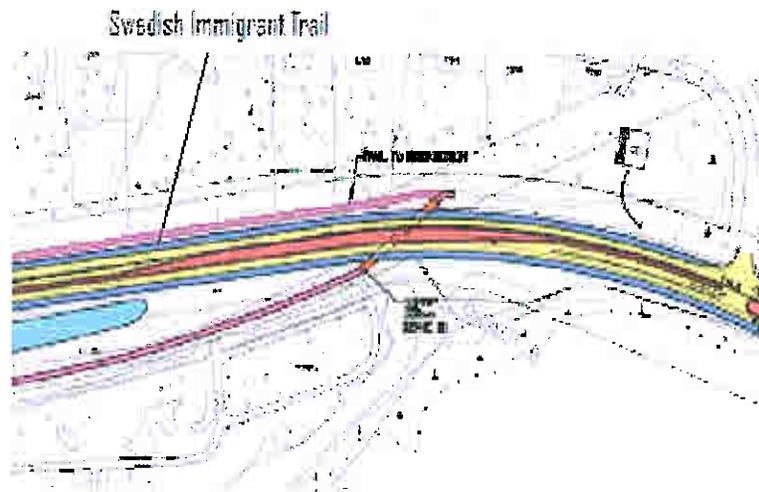
The Family Pathways building is directly under the transmission line. Family Pathways provides services to a large number of families in our community. Volunteers staff this building many hours a day five days a week.



The High Voltage line crosses directly above the Stock Lumber Building. Stock Lumber has closed and is being redeveloped, hopefully by Holiday Gas Station directly to the East. Our concern is the complications of locating a gas station under the high voltage line. The road will change to align better with 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue in the foreground so the poles will need to be moved south causing further complications to an already narrow parcel.



# ST. BRIDGET OF SWEDEN CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE SWEDISH IMMIGRANT TRAIL



# ST. BRIDGET OF SWEDEN AND THE SWEDISH IMMIGRANT TRAIL

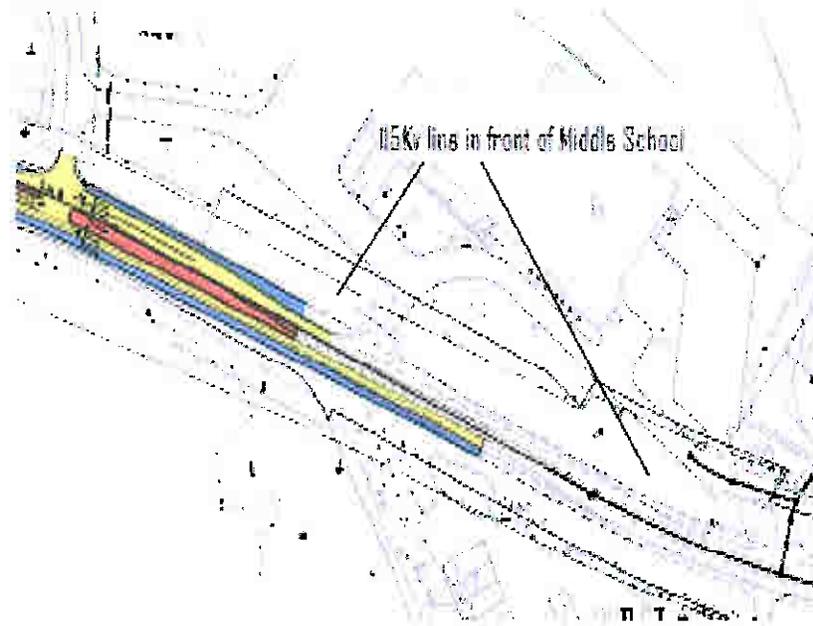
The High Voltage line crosses from 1<sup>st</sup> Ave. through St. Bridget of Sweden Catholic Church parking lot. The parking lot is the location for the weekly Farmers Market as well as the Annual Karl Oscar Days Car Show. St. Bridget of Sweden is one of the largest churches in our community and is well attended for services on Saturday and Sunday. This church also hosts many of our local weddings and funerals as well as many other church and community events.



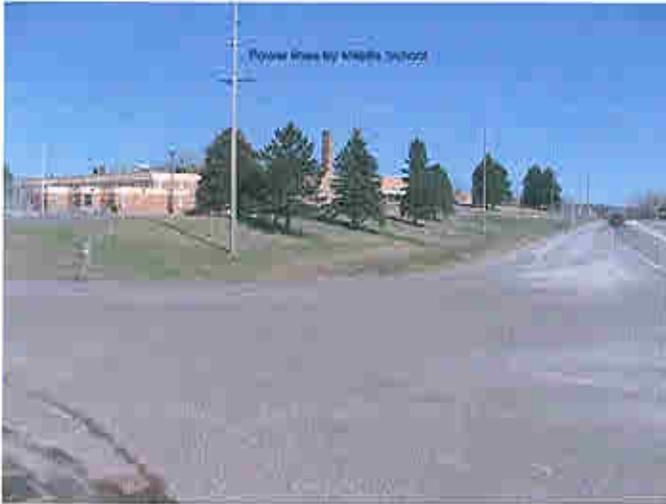
This section of the High Voltage line runs almost directly above the alignment for the Swedish Immigrant Trail. This trail follows the historic path of Swedish Immigrants disembarking from Taylors Falls to settle in our area.

This section of the trail will be the main corridor between Lindstrom and Center City. We expect the popularity of biking and the historical connections with biking, William Moberg the author of the “Immigrant” trilogy biked all over our area and walking, the Swedish Immigrants mode of transportation in our area, will make this trail very popular.

# **XCEL'S HIGH VOLTAGE LINE IMPACTS MIDDLE SCHOOL**



# CHISAGO LAKES MIDDLE SCHOOL



This section of the High Voltage line runs directly in front of our only Middle School in the School District. All of our children will at sometime attend this school during their school life. The community is very concerned that our children would be exposed to the high voltage lines for such a long duration of time.

The school is also the District Headquarters and hosts many annual events. The location of these lines causes concern.

