February 18, 2023

Colorado Public Utilities Commission

Reference: Xcel Colorado Power Pathway, Proceeding # 21A-0096E

Attn: Commissioner Blank

 Commissioner Gavan

 Commissioner Gilman

I am writing this letter to voice my opposition to the current preferred and alternate routes for Segment 5 of Xcel Energy’s Colorado Power Pathway.

With Colorado’s growth along the front range, and the increasing demand for more energy, new transmission facilities are needed. The residents of Elbert and other rural counties in Colorado, are greatly impacted by the needs and decisions of those in larger, metropolitan communities. When a commissioner for the PUC is quoted as saying, “We are going to be slathering the Eastern Plains with wind and solar,” it indicates that our communities are not a priority, our way of life does not matter, and the only thing perceived as being of value is our resource of open space and land to benefit the metro communities’ demands for more energy.

These high voltage transmission lines will:

* Negatively impact our community (health concerns, views, landowner rights)
* Negatively impact the abundant wildlife in the area (change migration patterns, affect nesting)
* Decrease property values up to 45% ([Valuation study](https://puc.sd.gov/commission/dockets/electric/2013/EL13-028/guidelines.pdf), [WSJ](https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-electrifying-factor-affecting-your-propertys-value-1534343506))
* Increase the threat of wildfire in an area with tall grass and many trees
* Not benefit Elbert County (power is for the greater Denver Metro area)
* Bring wind and solar facilities to the area, which are even more impactful to the environment and community

The Elbert County Government officials recently updated their 1041 Zoning Regulations, whose purpose is to facilitate the identification, designation, and regulation of areas or activities of state interest in Elbert County. Within these revised regulations, Section D, 4.5 says: “For new transmission lines and wind energy generation facilities and turbine installations, existing easements shall be used to the extent possible and expansion of existing easements is preferable to acquiring new easements”.

I propose that having Xcel use and/or expand in existing rights of way by using the existing line along Quincy (east/west) and then down through the Rush Creek area (north/south), or by using the easement along I70 and down through Rush Creek. This would reduce the impact to residents of the county, facilitate the needs of the larger metropolitan communities, and respect the 1041 regulations. While there may be a cost increase to this alternative, it is but a small percentage of the overall project, and will be amortized across the years of depreciation to the consumer who is benefiting from the project, as opposed to the great cost that would be incurred by rural residents who receive no benefit if the current proposed routes are used.

Respectfully,