

MID-MISSOURI PEACEWORKS

CITIZEN ACTION FOR PEACE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

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Comments on Grain Belt Express Transmission Line Presented by Peaceworks Director Mark Haim, August 14, 2014.

Good evening. I come to speak with you tonight as Director of Mid-Missouri Peaceworks, a grassroots organization with approximately 500 member individuals or households residing in the Central Missouri area.

I thank you for taking the time to listen to the voices of concerned Missourians. I know you are seeking to hear concerns regarding a transmission line, and my comments address this.

I would like to start, however, by saying that every decision must be made in a context. The decision to approve the construction of the Grain Belt Express, which I hope you will make, is being considered in a context of a crisis that far too few citizens and decision makers are recognizing, let alone taking effective action to address.

I refer, of course, to the Climate Crisis. My greatest concern, when I think about what kind of future we are leaving for our kids and our grandkids, is climate change. There are many problems facing humanity, but only a handful of these are existential threats. Anthropogenic climate change and nuclear weapons are the two that stand out as most likely to end life as we know it. As such, we cannot afford inaction on the climate crisis.

As I'm sure you know, CO₂ is a greenhouse gas (GHG) that, beyond any shadow of a doubt, is altering our planet's climate. And much of this CO₂ comes from burning coal and natural gas to generate electricity.

Since the dawn of the industrial age in the late 1700s, the concentration of CO₂ in the atmosphere has increased from 280 ppm to 400 ppm. This dramatic rise is unprecedented and means that GHG levels are now higher than at any time in the last 650,000 years. It's worthy of note that most of this rise has come in the last 30 years. If significant action is not taken promptly to halt and reverse this buildup, irreversible and highly detrimental changes to our planetary environment are certainties our progeny will be forced to deal with.

I'm not only talking about a much hotter planet, but also one with much more extreme weather including severe droughts, super-storms, excessive rainfall, flooding, fires, and more. We are already seeing rising sea levels and, in the coming decades these will threaten low-lying coastal

areas around the world, where a large portion of humanity lives. The combination of these factors would likely lead to unprecedented mass migrations. Climate change also means reduced food production, loss of biodiversity and the spread of insect-borne diseases.

It is in this context that decisions about energy policy and infrastructure must now be made, including the decision on the Clean Line Grain Belt Express power line.

Wind power is clean and green—with an extremely low carbon footprint—but it is most abundant and consistently available in places like western Kansas, where few people live. The North American high plains have been called the Saudi Arabia of wind, and there has been relatively rapid growth in wind generation in this region over the past decade.

The pace of installation of this clean energy generating capacity has not, however, been nearly fast enough to meet our pressing need to phase out the use of coal and gas. There are, however, no technical problems limiting our ability to harvest wind energy. The limiting factor has been, and remains, the transmission line capacity for moving the energy from locales with abundant wind to population centers where the demand lies.

For this reason, I applaud Clean Line Energy Partners for their efforts to build the Grain Belt Express and several other direct current (DC) transmission lines. Once completed, these lines will be able to very efficiently move large amounts of electricity over significant distances with minimal line losses.

I understand that some Missourians whose property the proposed line will cross may not be happy with this proposal. It is necessary, however, to consider the overall benefit of a project like this and weigh this against its costs. It is my hope that those property owners will recognize that there is a compelling public interest served in putting this transmission line in place. I also trust that Clean Line will do everything in its power to site the line as far as possible from the residences of property owners whose land the line will traverse.

I also hope that the Public Service Commission will recognize that there is an overarching public interest in addressing the climate crisis and that this involves seeing as much very low carbon power be used in our state as possible, so as to phase out carbon-intensive generation as quickly as possible. This can, and must, be done through mandates to use ever larger amounts of renewable energy, through efficiency programs and through the approval of the transmission infrastructure needed to provide this much needed wind energy to Missourians and others in neighboring states.

Thank you for taking my concerns and those of our members into account.