

**BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
OF THE STATE OF MISSOURI**

Cheri Meadows,)	
)	
Complainant,)	
)	
v.)	<u>Case No. EC-2025-0136</u>
)	
Grain Belt Express, LLC,)	
)	
Respondent.)	

REPLY BRIEF

COMES NOW the Staff of the Missouri Public Service Commission ("Staff"), by and through counsel, and for its *Reply Brief* states as follows:

The purpose of a reply brief is to respond to the arguments made by party opponents. Rather than replying to every argument other parties make in their initial briefs, and having presented and argued its positions in its Initial Brief, Staff is limiting its replies to where it views further explanation will most aid the Commission in its deliberations.

The main contention points, from the perspective of Staff, are discussed below. Staff's Reply Brief is organized to address these points; therefore, Staff will not address each and every sub-issue or argument made by the parties to this matter. Staff stands on the arguments as presented in its Initial Brief, and silence on any argument or position should not be taken as acceptance.

Argument

A COMMISSION FINDING THAT IT IS JUST AND REASONABLE TO MOVE THE LINE OFF MS. MEADOWS' PROPERTY HAS THE POTENTIAL TO CONTRADICT THE PUBLIC INTEREST.

Mr. Poston asserts the following in his initial brief for the Office of Public Counsel: if Ms. Meadows convinces the Missouri Public Service Commission ("Commission") that the current line route is unjust or unreasonable, then the Commission has the authority – pursuant to Section 393.140(5) RSMo – to "order a reroute".¹

In Staff's opinion, the current line route is neither unjust nor unreasonable. The Commission approved this project – including the route – with findings that the "Project is designed to have a minimal impact to land" and that the "Routing Team for the Project also ***tried*** to avoid built-up areas, residences..." [Emphasis added].^{2,3,4} The Commission was mindful of the public interest when making said decision: "[d]etermining what is in the interest of the public is a balancing process in which the Commission must consider ***the total interests*** of the public served." [Emphasis added].⁵ As stated in Staff's *Initial Brief*, when the public interest standard is put into practice "the interests of a single person will not outweigh the interests of the collective public."⁶

Moreover, a finding that it is just and reasonable to move the line off Ms. Meadows' property – and a reroute order based on such a finding – may have consequences that

¹ Commission File No. EC-2025-0136, Item No. 124, *Initial Brief of Public Counsel*, pg. 4.

² Administrative Notice of the *Report and Order* (Docket Item No. 287 in Commission File No. EA-2023-0017) was taken in the instant case and is thus properly admitted into evidence. Please see Commission File No. EC-2025-0136, Transcript – Volume 6, Docket Item No. 92, pgs. 6-7.

³ Commission File No. EA-2023-0017, Docket Item No. 287, *Report and Order*, pgs. 42 and 69.

⁴ "The certificate is limited to the construction of this line in the location specified in the application, and as represented to the landowners on the aerial photos provided by Grain Belt..." Commission File No. EA-2023-0017, Item No. 287, *Report and Order*, Attachment 1, Section VII.1 Landowner Interactions and Right-of-Way Acquisition.

⁵ Commission File No. EA-2023-0017, Docket Item No. 287, *Report and Order*, pg. 60 [Emphasis added.].

⁶ Commission File No. EC-2025-0136, Docket Item No. 121, *Initial Brief*, pg. 3.

infringe upon the public interest. Chief among these consequences is that this would open the door to more cases of this type. More cases of this type could: 1) exponentially increase the construction timelines for projects, 2). affect large amounts of customers who were not previously affected, 3). overwhelm resources here at the Commission, and 4). leave a fully adjudicated – and thus final Commission order – open to perpetual appeal through the Commission’s complaint process.^{7, 8, 9}

To reiterate, Staff has concluded that Grain Belt did not violate any applicable statutes, Commission rules, regulations, Commission orders or Commission decisions arising from allegations in Ms. Meadows’ Formal Complaint. Thus, Staff is of the opinion that no relief is appropriate in this case.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Andrea B. Hansen

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⁷ Matter of Grain Belt Express LLC, 703 S.W.3d 584, 606 (Mo. Ct. App. 2024), transfer denied (Nov. 26, 2024), transfer denied (Jan. 28, 2025).

⁸ Commission File No. EC-2025-0136, Docket Item No. 123, *Initial Post-Hearing Brief*, pgs. 8-9, “the Commission would suffer a deluge of untimely cascading requests for reroutes for not just this transmission project but any other transmission project...the lack of certainty in the route is harmful to the public interest in that it creates unnecessary delay, it drastically increases the costs of building critical infrastructure...and it leaves every landowner in proximity to established transmission routes indefinitely vulnerable to endless reroutes.”

⁹ See also: Commission File No. EC-2025-0136, Docket Item No. 123, *Initial Post-Hearing Brief*, pgs. 15-17.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that copies of the foregoing have been transmitted by electronic mail to counsel of record this 24th day of September, 2025.

/s/ Andrea B. Hansen