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Witness: Jason Haxton
Sponsoring Party: Neighbors United Against
Ameren's Power Line
Type of Exhibit: Rebuttal Testimony
Case No: EA-2015-0146
Date: October 21, 2015

MISSOURI PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

CASE NO. EA-2015-0146

REBUTTAL TESTIMONY

OF

JASON HAXTON

ON BEHALF OF

NEIGHBORS UNITED AGAINST AMEREN'S POWER LINE

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1 **Q. Please state your name and present position.**

2 A. My name is Jason Haxton. I have lived in Greentop, Missouri, in Schuyler County
3 since early 1986. In 1990, I ran for the position of Greentop Mayor and was elected. After my
4 term as Mayor, I continued to be consulted by the Greentop Council and active in our region. I
5 work closely with the Amish and Mennonite religious communities that have settled in Schuyler
6 County and Adair County. Due to my living in and professional involvement in this area, I have
7 knowledge and experience with the issues that affect the communities that live here. My
8 education background includes a B.A. in Advertising, a M.A. in Guidance and Counseling (I
9 worked with Judge Normile of the 2nd Judicial Circuit in the Juvenile Office). I am currently half
10 through my program for my Doctorate of Health Education. I received an honorary Doctorate
11 degree from the German Hochschule Fresenius for 10+ years of international programming and
12 exhibits in health history.

13 **Q. What is the purpose of your testimony?**

14 A. The purpose of my testimony is to rebut ATXI's assertion that the Mark Twain
15 Transmission Project is in the public interest and provide the impacts that a transmission line will
16 have on the community, in particular, the Amish and Mennonite religious communities.

17 **Q. When did the Amish and Mennonite communities settle to the Schuyler
18 County and Adair County regions?**

1 A. The Amish community settled to approximately 4,000 acres in Schuyler County
2 in 2003 from a settlement in Indiana. The Mennonite community settled to Adair County shortly
3 thereafter. The regions offered large tracts of cheap and fertile farmland that continue to allow
4 the Amish and Mennonite communities the opportunity to live in a manner consistent with their
5 traditions and religious beliefs. I learned from the Amish Elders and Bishops that when an
6 Amish Community grows too large a grouping will pool their money and look for a region with
7 good cheap farmland. Typically they will consider 3-4 different areas not letting their land
8 preference intentions be known until the final contract is signed to prevent land prices from
9 increasing before the purchase.

10 **Q. Please expand on your involvement with the Amish and Mennonite**
11 **communities.**

12 A. If not the first, then I was one of the first Greentop citizens to reach out to the new
13 Amish community assisting with medical needs, jobs, issues about wells and the land.
14 Welcoming them and available to assist with questions and problems we have remained close for
15 the past 12-years - traveling to Grabill and Berne, Indiana, for weddings and staying in their
16 homes as a house guest. I have equally been involved with the Mennonite Shekinah Community
17 that arrived very soon after the Amish population. I have been friends with the Amish Bishops
18 Elmer Graber and David Schwartz of the Amish community and Pastor John Ray Troyer of the
19 Mennonite Community for over a decade. The combined total population for these two groups is
20 459 people covering a stretch of land approximately 13.5 miles in length along Highway 63 –
21 areas of the proposed Ameren Zachary State Line. Please see my Schedules JH-01 and JH-02
22 for information on these religious communities that I have gathered directly from the population
23 within the last two months, beginning August 26, 2015. Through my work at A.T. Still

1 University, I have been instrumental in setting up monthly medical health and dental clinics in
2 the Amish community and have personal contact almost weekly.

3 **Q. When and how did you first learn of ATXI's plan for the Mark Twain**
4 **Transmission Project?**

5 A. In September of 2014, I first became aware of ATXI's plan to construct the Mark
6 Twain Transmission Line Project (the Zachary to State Line route) through both the Amish and
7 Mennonite communities along highway 63 in north Adair and Schuyler counties. Attending an
8 ATXI meeting with Amish Bishop David Schwartz, we were informed by Ms. Peggy Ladd,
9 ATXI's Director of Stakeholder Relations, that there were originally eight (8) potential routes
10 originally in our region, which had been narrowed down to just two (2) routes. Bishop Schwartz
11 and I were concerned upon seeing that the one route ran along Blueberry Way (Road 126-B)
12 over the Mennonite church and school area, then over the Amish homes, Amish cemetery, school
13 and Bishop's home before it crossed Highway 63 into more Amish homes and another Amish
14 school.

15 **Q. Where you able to ask any questions at the public meeting?**

16 A. Yes. I asked Ms. Ladd how the routes were eliminated down to the two (2)
17 potential routes. Ms. Ladd stated there were many considerations and that ATXI had used tax
18 records to contact individuals along the proposed routes. She informed Bishop Schwartz and I
19 that she was surprised and completely unaware of any Amish or Mennonite populations in the
20 two (2) paths.

21 **Q. If one was to travel the two (2) routes proposed at that time, are there any**
22 **visual indications of Amish or Mennonite settlements that are unique to those types of**
23 **settlements and would alert the passerby of these types of settlements?**

1 Yes. It was and it is still possible to travel the proposed routes through these
2 communities by car on Blueberry Way Road and the roads running through the Amish lands and
3 connecting to State Highway J. If one were to travel the proposed routes by car they would
4 notice the homes in these areas are without electric connections, horse and buggies are outside
5 many homes, and large signs indicate the presence of these communities, such as large signs for
6 the Shekinah Mennonite Church and School.

7 **Q. Please explain how the Amish conduct church and community meetings.**

8 A. The Amish hold their bi-weekly church meetings within their homes - so virtually
9 every Amish home is a church and used 2-3 times in a year for church services and community
10 meetings. After church the youth (unmarried) hold activities, called singing into the night.
11 Running a 340,000 volt power line through the many Amish farmsteads is akin to taking the
12 power line through dozens of churches.

13 **Q. Will the Amish and Mennonites personally speak out on the Mark Twain**
14 **Transmission Project?**

15 A. No, not on their own. As pacifists, the Amish and Mennonite communities have
16 shared with me and the local media that they will not act out or speak against the Mark Twain
17 Transmission Project and will pray on it. They have asked that I speak on their behalf and that I
18 can best represent them as an advocate. Because of their beliefs, they feel they can do nothing to
19 stop this action in their communities. From communications they have shared, they have a
20 strong belief that the Project will cause stray voltage that will cause adverse health impacts and
21 harm their simple farming lifestyle. Their lifestyle is inseparable from their religious practice.
22 Everything about the use of electricity and this Project runs directly counter to the principle of
23 environmental justice as it would burden their religious practice, which is their way of life.

1 Further, several Amish community members that settled here left their previous Indiana homes
2 because of a 430,000 volt transmission line. They are personally aware of the devastating impact
3 that the Mark Twain Transmission Project will have on their investment in the land and on the
4 Amish community itself.

5 **Q. Has the Amish community shared with you what they will do if the Project**
6 **comes through their community?**

7 A. Yes. Some members of the Amish community have stated if the Project is
8 allowed to cross their land they will feel the need to relocate. This is a community that is
9 cautious of modernization. This Project will cut their community property through the middle.

10 **Q. With permission to speak on the Amish and Mennonite communities' behalf,**
11 **what are you asking the Commission to do?**

12 A. On behalf of these communities, I am asking the Commission to be sensitive to
13 the cultural realities of these groups. Should the Commission allow ATXI to build the Mark
14 Twain Zachary State Line Route down the middle of the Amish community, it would severely
15 burden the religious practice of the Amish and Shekinah Mennonite communities in non-trivial
16 and substantial ways. Perhaps it will even drive them off their land, which in the case of these
17 communities, is their church.

18 **Q. Does this conclude your testimony?**

19 A. Yes it does. Thank you.