Exhibit No. 305
Issues: Impact on farming
Witness: Jim Edwards
Type of Exhibit: Rebuttal
Sponsoring Party: MLA
Case No.: EA-2016-0358
Date Testimony Prepared: Dec., 2016

MISSOURI PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

CASE NO. EA-2016-0358

REBUTTAL TESTIMONY OF

JIM EDWARDS

ON BEHALF OF

MISSOURI LANDOWNERS ALLIANCE

January 24, 2017

Q. Please state your name.

A. Jim Edwards.

Q. On whose behalf are you testifying?

A. I am testifying on behalf of the Missouri Landowners Alliance.

Q. What is the purpose of your testimony?

A. I will address the portions of the direct testimony of Grain Belt witnesses Richard Tregnago and Wayne Wilcox, where they seem to imply that transmission line structures pose no significant problems with farming operations.

Q. Do you own a farm in northern Missouri?

A. Yes, I do. Our farming operation consists of approximately 2,500 acres of both owned and rented land, located in Chariton County.

Q. Please briefly describe the nature of your farming operation there.

A. We have approximately 1,700 acres of grain crops, corn, soybeans and wheat. There are 575 acres of pasture and hay, with most of the balance of the acreage being in timber, levees, and wetlands in the Wetlands Reserve Program administered by the U. S. Department of Agriculture/NRCS.

Q. Do you also raise cattle there?

A. Yes, I do. We have a commercial cow-calf operation with approximately 110 head of crossbred cows. We retain our own replacement heifers and sell the remaining heifers and steers as feeder cattle.

Q. Are you yourself directly involved on a day-to-day basis in the operation of your farm?

A. I am. My brother and I work together. I primarily do the planting, spraying and combining. He does the fertilizer application, tillage, grain hauling and most of the haying. However, we help each other out when needed. We both work with the cattle, including feeding, calving, veterinary work and checking them from day to day regarding their health. The rest of the time is spent repairing machinery and maintaining the farms and their facilities.

Q. For how long have you been farming?

A. I've been on the farm all of my life, and farming full time after graduating from the University of Missouri with a B.S. in Agriculture in 1976.

Q. What types of equipment do you commonly use in your farming operations?

A. For tillage we have a 32' disk and a 50'6" field cultivator pulled by a 325 H.P. tracked tractor. We plant with a 16/32 row-40' planter behind a 215 H.P. tractor. The combine is a class 6 with an 8 row-20' corn head and a 30' platform for cutting soybeans and wheat. We spray with a 1000 gallon self-propelled sprayer with a 90' boom.

Q. Is that equipment generally typical of the size and type of machinery which others utilize on comparable size farms?

A. Yes, I'd say it is generally typical for a farming operation of our size.

Q. Is your farm crossed by a transmission line, and if so please briefly describe the line and structures.

A. Yes, it is. I understand it is a 161 kv line. It has seven two-pole support structures, and one three-pole structure with brace wires where the line turns, for a total of 17 poles. This line has been there since approximately 1952.

Q. In his direct testimony, at page 7, Mr. Tregnago states that it is not difficult to farm around transmission lines, that it's "a small swerve to get around the poles", that he loses only negligible land, and that it's easier to farm around a tree than a transmission pole.

And at page 4 of his direct testimony, Mr. Wilcox states that transmission structures are not a problem for him. "I do it all the time and anyone with these structures knows that you just adjust to it."

Do these statements reflect your own experiences dealing with farming around transmission lines?

A. No, they do not. To begin with, the way I read Mr. Tregnago's testimony, he believes it is easier to farm around a pole than a tree. In my part of the world, there aren't any trees on crop land, except for an occasional high producing pecan tree. Most trees on crop land have been removed, so as to avoid the same type of inconvenience we face when farming around transmission poles. Unfortunately, we do not have the same option to remove the transmission poles.

On our pasture land, we have left some trees to provide needed shade for cattle. So I have to farm around both trees and poles. While a pecan tree is a pain to farm around, it definitely is not as bad as a transmission pole. The trees are generally big enough that you are far enough from the trunk of the tree not to hit it and the limbs are high enough that you shouldn't hit them with machinery either. And if you do hit a limb with your machinery, the limb will bend and shouldn't do any damage to the machinery.

Q. How does that differ from farming around transmission poles?

A. We farm parallel, perpendicular and at an angle to the transmission line and there isn't an easy way to farm around the poles. I guess you could "swerve" around the poles, but making the curves would be extremely hard on the machinery. And you wouldn't have anything but a big weedy mess and a substantial loss around the poles.

Q. Then how do you manage to farm around the poles on your property?

A. I take pride in my farming, as it is my livelihood. Working around the poles is much the same process, whether you are talking about tillage, planting, spraying, haying or any operation around the poles. And the wider the implement, the harder it is to judge distance from the pole. Unfortunately, it seems as though it never works out when planting, that the rows on the side of the field you're planting from come close to the edge of the poles.

So you have to plant to fill in the gap left between the pole and the row closest to the pole. The gap can vary from 5 feet to 35 feet. If it's 5 feet or less I leave it, but anything beyond that I plant into the gap. Well, you've planted past the poles, leaving a 10 foot gap and when you come back across the field you're headed right into the poles. So I stop with the planter approximately 40 feet from the poles. I raise the planter up, back up enough that I can pull forward, and then back up moving over to miss the poles when going forward while aligning with the previously planted rows. I then lower the planter, plant forward 80 feet or so, stop, raise the planter and make a big turn coming back in perpendicular to the just planted rows so that I am aligned to miss the poles a minimum of 2 feet. Once again, I'll lower the planter, go forward planting just past the poles, stop, raise the planter, and make another big turn coming back in perpendicular to the rows just planted so as to miss the poles again. Then I have to stop, lower the planter,

plant forward 80 feet or so, stop, raise the planter, and make another big turn coming back in perpendicular to the just planted rows. Then I stop, lower the planter, plant forward missing the poles, and plant across where I left off at the start. I stop again, raise the planter, then I go around the poles, find the mark the planter marker left on the previous pass, and align the planter with that mark by going past the already planted rows. I will have to stop and back up again because it's just too tight to get aligned pulling forward without leaving an unplanted space.

After doing all of this, I've compacted the soil more, over-applied seed and chemicals where I overlapped, and run over and killed some plants. In addition, I then have a space around and between the poles that weeds grow in. And hopefully, I haven't hit, damaged or knocked out any poles or brace wires with the machinery, which would make for a very bad day for me and many others. Then I can go on planting peacefully until the next set of poles. Maybe some people adapt to these poles, but for 40-plus years they have been a nuisance and potential danger to me, taking up very valuable time when you're working with the weather and Mother Nature.

Q. Do others share your views about the problems of planting around transmission line poles?

A. Some certainly do. Just ask custom applicators of fertilizer and chemicals about working around electric poles, or machinery dealerships about how much equipment they repair that has been damaged by hitting electric poles.

Q. Mr. Tregnago also states at page 7 of his testimony that he had a dairy operation on his farm, and that aside from a cow rubbing her back on the poles

from time to time, there was no impact on his livestock. Does this reflect your own experience with your cattle operation?

A. No, it does not. Cattle will often congregate around the base of the transmission poles, rubbing on them and killing out the grass where they stand and push. Once the grass is killed, then it gets dusty and the wind blows some dirt out from around the poles. Eventually it rains and gets muddy around the poles. Well, then the cattle come back, get in the mud, it gets on their feet and they carry out more dirt from around the poles. Now there's a mud hole and the cattle like to stand in them in hot weather. These mud holes are just another place for mosquitoes to breed and cattle to get foot rot.

Q. Does this complete your testimony?

A. Yes, it does.

BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
OF THE STATE OF MISSOURI

In the Matter of the Application of Grain Belt Express Clean Line LLC for a Certificate of Convenience and Necessity Authorizing it to Construct, Own, Operate, Control, Manage, and Maintain a High Voltage, Direct Current Transmission Line and an Associated Converter Station Providing an interconnection on the Maywood-Montgomery 345 kV Transmission Line	)	Case No. EA-2016-0358

Affidavit of James Edwards

STATE OF MISSOURI)
) SS
COUNTY OF CHARITON)

James Edwards, being first duly sworn on his oath states:

1. My name is James Edwards.

2. Attached hereto and made a part hereof for all purposes is my testimony submitted to the Missouri Public Service Commission.

3. I hereby swear and affirm that my answers contained in the attached testimony to the questions therein asked are true and accurate to the best of my knowledge, information and belief.

James Edwards

Subscribed and sworn before me this 27 day of December, 2016.

DIANE BENNETT
Notary Public - Notary Seal
State of Missouri
Commissioned for Charlton County
My Commission Expires: August 20, 2020
Commission Number: 12459842

Notary Public

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