

ARAPAHOE COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
PUBLIC HEARING
May 19, 2026
6:30 P.M.

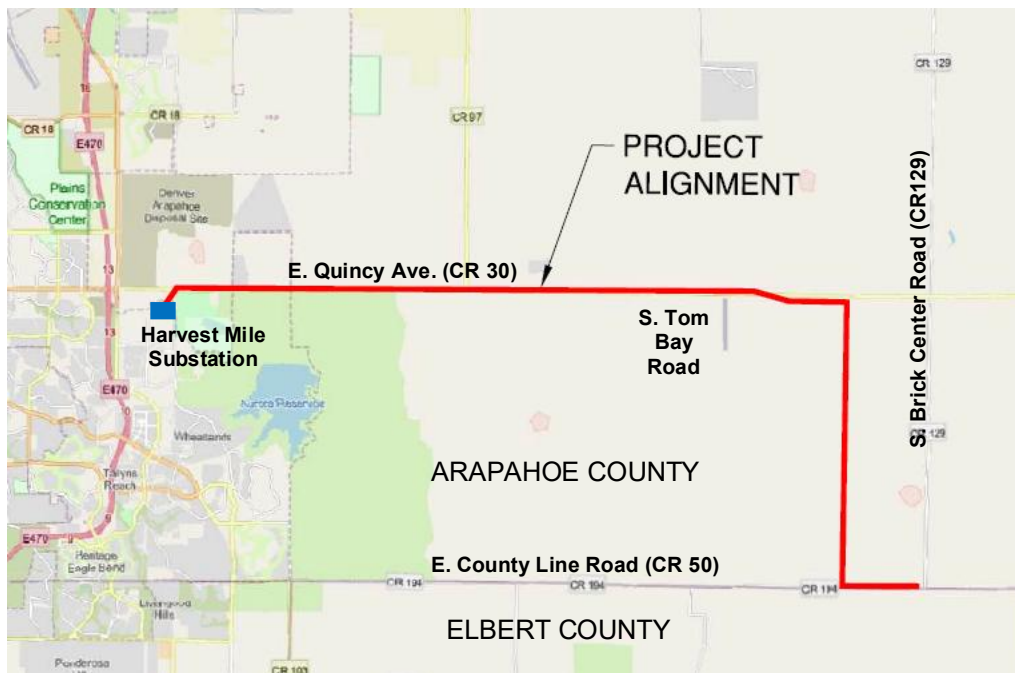
SUBJECT: CASE NUMBER: LE25-003 – COLORADO’S POWER PATHWAY 345-KV TRANSMISSION LINE LOCATION AND EXTENT

MOLLY ORKILD-LARSON, PRINCIPAL PLANNER

LOCATION AND VICINITY MAP

The proposed 354kV transmission power line commences at the Harvest Mile Substation (4455 S. Harvest Road) and then heads north to the north side of E. Quincy Avenue. The transmission line then continues east for approximately 10.8 miles and then crosses E. Quincy Avenue and travels east along this road. The transmission line then turns south between S. Tom Bay Road and S. Brick Center Road. The line continues south until E. County Line Road and then heads east approximately 1.3 miles before turning south into Elbert County.

The subject transmission line is situated in Commissioner District No. 3 and traverses parcels that are zoned Agricultural-One (A-1), Agricultural-Estate (A-E), Floodplain (F), Heavy Industrial (I-2), Heavy Industrial Planned Unit Development (I-2 PUD), and Open (O).



Transmission Line Alignment (shown in red above)

ADJACENT SUBDIVISIONS, ZONING, AND LAND USE

The adjacent parcels are primarily agricultural and zoned A-1, A-E, F, O, and Industrial (I-1, I-2, I-2 PUD).

PURPOSE AND REQUEST

The applicant, Public Service Company of Colorado (Xcel Energy), has submitted a Location and Extent application to locate and construct major facilities of a public utility. An Areas and Activities of State Interest (1041 Regulations) application is also being reviewed concurrently with this application.

Xcel Energy proposes approximately 18 miles of new 345-kV double-circuit electric transmission line (one mile is within the City of Aurora and was approved separately by the City of Aurora). The construction of this project will also include temporary construction areas associated with the construction of the transmission line, including a temporary eight-acre laydown yard (Beichle Laydown Yard). This laydown is located at the northwest corner of E. Quincy Avenue and S. Brick Center Road. It is being reviewed under a temporary use permit (ZTU-2025-0004) through the Zoning Division and is not being reviewed as part of the 1041 or Location and Extent applications.

The transmission lines will connect to the Harvest Mile Substation located at 4455 S. Harvest Road. The Harvest Mile Substation was approved in 2017 (ASI16-004 and L16-006), and the applicant has indicated that they are not altering from what was approved within the substation with the 1041 and Location and Extent applications.

The new 345-kV double circuit transmission line will be constructed using steel poles. A single pole will be used for most transmission pole locations; however, two poles will be required in certain locations where the weight of the conductor requires extra structural support. These are typically 'angle locations' where the line changes direction. Each pole will be placed on a concrete foundation. Voltage, conductor sag, pole type, terrain, length of span between transmission poles, and minimum clearances of existing buildings influence the necessary height of the transmission pole. The transmission poles will be weathering steel in a brown or rust color. The height of these poles ranges from 105 to 140 feet, with a maximum of 199 feet. The typical span between poles is 950 feet, but it can be up to 1,400 feet to avoid obstacles such as drainage areas and wetlands.

The transmission lines will be located within a 150-foot easement (75 feet on either side of the center line) and located outside the right-of-way of E. Quincy Avenue and E. County Line Road. Easement agreements with property owners will need to be solidified before the issuance of a construction permit.

Temporary Construction Areas (TCA) will be used during construction to stage equipment and materials, including construction trailers, cranes, water trucks, traffic control items, BMP materials, and transmission poles. These areas are located within or adjacent to the transmission line easement. Some TCAs may require grading to level out the area for equipment placement and materials storage. TCAs are also necessary when stringing the conductor wire. These areas are required at specific angles to ensure the conductor wire is pulled in line with the transmission poles, thereby limiting the strain on the poles. At the end of each construction phase, all equipment will be removed that was used for that construction phase. No proposed improvements at the TCAs will be permanent and will be restored to preconstruction conditions.

The Beichle Laydown Yard will be used for equipment delivery, storage, and assembly. This area will also be used as a helicopter fly yard, where helicopter assistance is required for transmission pole installation. The use of helicopters will occur during daylight hours, between 7:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., and comply with all FAA regulations. As mentioned above, this laydown yard is being reviewed through a Temporary Use Permit.

Construction of the transmission line is expected to occur in phases. It is anticipated that one 12-hour shift per day (Monday through Saturday) from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. will be worked during transmission line and substation connections. The applicant believes proposing shifts during daylight hours, from early morning to early evening, will assist in reducing disturbance to residential subdivisions in the area. If additional hours are required for a shift, a 24-hour work permit will be obtained in advance from Arapahoe County. The maximum number of construction workers on site for the substation and transmission line on any one day will be approximately 95 in total. At peak construction, there will be an estimated maximum of 30 construction workers at the Harvest Mile Substation.

Portable temporary bathrooms will be provided for the workers and serviced on a regular basis during the construction period. Portable toilets will be used within the transmission line easement and will be trailer-mounted and hauled to the easement in the morning and removed at the end of the workday.

Bottled water will be provided to employees at the Beichle Laydown Yard and also carried in vehicles in coolers. Bottled water is provided by a local commercial vendor.

BACKGROUND

The Harvest Mile Substation was approved in 2017 (ASI16-004, L16-006), and the applicant is not proposing to change what was approved within the substation.

The Eastern Plains region of Colorado is one of the nation's best areas for wind and solar energy generation, but it does not currently have a network transmission system that can integrate these new generation resources into the state's interconnected grid system, which is needed to meet the Colorado legislature's statutory clean energy targets. The Colorado Power Pathway project (Pathway) will support Xcel Energy's Clean Energy Plan (Xcel Energy 2021) that is estimated to deliver as much as an 85 percent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions by 2030 and add approximately 5,000 megawatts of new wind, solar, and other energy resources. Pathway is a critical component of Xcel Energy's efforts to meet the state's statutorily required clean energy targets as well as Colorado's growing electricity needs. Pathway will also improve safety, reliability, and energy affordability.

Xcel Energy proposes to construct, maintain, and operate Pathway in eastern Colorado. Pathway is a \$1.7 billion investment proposed by Xcel Energy to improve the state's open, interconnected electric grid and enable future renewable energy development around the state. Pathway includes:

- Installation of approximately 550 miles of new 345-kilovolt (kV) double-circuit transmission line in 12 counties.

- Construction of four new electric substations (Canal Crossing, Goose Creek, May Valley, and Sandstone).
- Expansion, equipment additions, or equipment upgrades at four existing electric substations (Fort St. Vrain, Pawnee, Harvest Mile, and Tundra).

Pathway will be constructed in five segments. Segment 5 includes approximately 124 miles of new 345-kV double-circuit electric transmission line within a 150-foot-wide easement, as well as permanent and temporary easements required for access during construction and for operation and maintenance, and temporary construction areas during construction. Segment 5 will be constructed within five counties, including Arapahoe, Elbert, El Paso, Lincoln, and Pueblo. Approximately 18 miles of Segment 5 are within Arapahoe County.

ANALYSIS OF THE LOCATION AND EXTENT APPLICATION

Staff review of this application included a comparison of the proposal to 1) applicable policies and goals outlined in the Comprehensive Plan; 2) submittal requirements; 3) review of pertinent Land Development Code regulations; and 4) analysis of referral comments.

1. The Comprehensive Plan

The transmission line crosses Lowry Trust Properties, Denver Arapahoe Disposal Site, Employment, Urban Development Area, Future Development Area, Heavy Industrial, and Tier 3, as identified in the Comprehensive Plan. Location and Extent apply to this application for major facilities of a public utility. Major public facilities include transmission lines, power plants, and substations of electrical utilities.

This proposal complies with the Comprehensive Plan as follows:

Policy PFS 6.1 – Continue Collaboration with Utility Companies in the Development Review Process

The applicant believes that this transmission line will improve the state’s electric grid and enable future renewable energy development by providing backbone transmission capacity. The Eastern Plains region of Colorado is one of the nation’s best areas for wind and solar energy generation, but it does not currently have a transmission network that can integrate these new generation resources into the state’s interconnected grid, which is needed to meet Colorado’s clean energy goals. This project will allow developers of energy generation projects to interconnect energy resources located in the areas of the state that are underserved by backbone transmission lines and allow Xcel Energy to deliver energy to electric customers.

Policy PFS 7.1 – Continue Collaboration with Service Providers to Ensure an Adequate Level of Service is Provided to Existing and New Development

Xcel Energy understands and agrees with this policy to ensure adequate levels of service are provided to existing and new development. The applicant indicates that they’re working with each Fire District crossed by the transmission line in Arapahoe County, including the Sable Altura Fire Protection District, the Aurora Fire Rescue District, and the Bennett-Watkins Fire Rescue District, and have obtained the Letters of Service provided by these fire districts.

Policy NL 5.1 – Implement Actions to Create a Countywide System of Connected Open Space, Public Parks, and Trails

The Powerline Trails Act (Act) was passed in 2022 to help raise awareness and create opportunities for Public Entities defined as “the state, a local government, or a district” to co-locate public recreation trails within transmission corridors.

The applicant has indicated that Xcel Energy is not in the business of building, owning, or maintaining public recreation trails, and its land rights typically do not give it the right to do so. Nor does the Act require transmission providers to allow a powerline trail or any other facility in any of its transmission corridors. Xcel Energy’s role under the Act is limited to facilitating the potential co-location of such trails by providing guidance to public entities. Public entities will ultimately construct powerline trails after consulting with Xcel Energy, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), and landowners about the safety and feasibility of such trails after the transmission corridor is constructed.

The Open Spaces Division has indicated that they are not interested in pursuing any trails with the transmission easements at this time, but may in the future.

Policy PFS 12.2 – Consider Utility Needs to Support Growth and Development of the Region

This project will also allow developers of energy generation projects to interconnect energy resources located in the areas of the state that are underserved by backbone transmission lines and allow Xcel Energy to deliver energy to electric customers.

Policy PFS 12.3 – Require Land Use Compatibility when Siting Local and Regional Utility Facilities

This project is sited within mainly agricultural and industrial zone districts within Arapahoe County, and where feasible, the transmission line’s route is co-located alongside existing infrastructure to minimize impacts to the surrounding area. Of the approximately 18-mile transmission line route in the County, approximately 13 miles (76 percent) is co-located along existing electric transmission infrastructure and existing roads.

The applicant has also indicated that they have been working with individual landowners to minimize impacts on their parcels.

Policy NL 2.1 – Require New Development to be Compatible with Existing Residential Neighborhoods

The applicant indicated that the avoidance of residential neighborhoods, subdivisions, and planned developments was a major factor in identifying the preferred and alternative routes.

Policy EH 1.2 – Encourage Environmentally Friendly Businesses and Jobs in Arapahoe County

This project will add a network transmission system that can integrate environmentally friendly wind and solar energy generation sources in the Eastern Plains region of Colorado, where they are most efficient, to where the energy demand is the highest. The applicant believes this project will increase electric service safety and reliability, boost the regional economy, and create jobs during construction.

Policy NCR 6.2 – Encourage the Development and Use of Alternative Energy Sources

This project will add a network transmission system that can integrate wind and solar energy generation sources in the Eastern Plains region of Colorado. By linking the best areas for generating wind and solar energy with where demand is, this project will improve the state’s electric grid and enable future renewable energy development in the Eastern Plains region of Colorado. This project will increase electric service safety and reliability, boost the regional economy, and create jobs during construction.

Policy T3 GM 1.1 – Retain Agricultural Uses in Tier 3

Construction and operation of the transmission line will not inhibit agricultural production or operations. The transmission line will result in minimal permanent impacts to agricultural lands. Aside from the transmission pole foundation footprint, areas under and around transmission lines/poles can continue to be used for agricultural operations after construction has been completed.

Through private agreements with individual landowners, the proposed alignment spans existing irrigation ditches and pivot irrigation in fields. It is designed adjacent to and parallel with section lines, parcel boundaries, and public right-of-way to limit impacts from the development on overall agricultural operation and production in the area.

2. Submittal Requirements

The applicant is in compliance with Section 2-26 of the Development Application Manual by submitting all of the required materials.

The Planning Division believes the application meets the Location and Extent approval criteria.

The Planning Commission is the deciding body for Location and Extent applications. Per Section 5-7.3.B.2.c of the Land Development Code, “If the Planning Commission disapproves the proposed public facility, or approves it with conditions the applicant is not willing to accept, the applicant may appeal such decision to the Board of County Commissioners, and the Planning Commission shall communicate the reasons for such disapproval to the Board, who may overrule such disapproval by a majority vote.” Should the Planning Commission deny the application, the applicant may appeal the decision to the Board of County Commissioners for a decision.

3. Land Development Code Review

Section 5-7.3 of the Land Development Code covers the policy and regulatory aspects of a Location and Extent. This includes a specific review of Location and Extent, Section 5-7.3.B – General Requirements and Procedure. The Location and Extent process does not have specific approval criteria, but may be approved upon the findings that:

5-7.3.B.1.a No road, park, public way, ground, or space, no public building or structure, and no major facility of a public utility shall be constructed or authorized in the unincorporated areas of Arapahoe County unless and until the proposed location and extent thereof have been submitted to and approved by the Arapahoe County Planning Commission.

A major facility of public utilities is required to be reviewed through the Location and Extent review process.

5-7.3.B.4.a The Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners, when applicable, may approve the facility as submitted, approve it with conditions, or deny the facility. The conditions to be imposed are those necessary, at the discretion of the Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners, to mitigate or eliminate any adverse impacts of the proposed facility on the surrounding area and may include the posting of sufficient performance guarantees with the County to guarantee the construction of any improvements.

4. Referral Comments

Comments received during the referral process are summarized in the chart attached to this report. Any late responses will be conveyed verbally at the public hearing. One public comment was received regarding this application through an email to staff.

This individual had concerns regarding the location of the powerline alignment near Box Elder Creek and believed the lines should be relocated to run along CR 129 to avoid impacts to wildlife on Box Elder Creek and ensure Buckley Air Force Base training can proceed safely without the concerns of powerlines. The initial alignment south of E. Quincy Avenue was moved to the east, away from Box Elder Creek and out of the training zone for the Air Force. The applicant conveyed this to this individual, and he no longer has any concerns.

5. Neighborhood Meetings and Outreach

On March 18, 2025, a neighborhood outreach meeting was held at the Arapahoe County Fairgrounds for the Arapahoe County 1041 and Location and Extent permit applications for Pathway. A total of seven people attended the meeting, and the only comment received is as follows:

- “I appreciate the experts they had on hand to answer all the questions. Great to see the private sector working so proactively to get information about the future expansion and needs of Colorado. Thank you!”

Staff believes the applicant has adequately fulfilled the requirement of neighborhood outreach.

STAFF FINDINGS

Staff has reviewed the plans, supporting documentation, referral comments, and citizen input in response to this application. Based upon the review of applicable policies and goals in the Comprehensive Plan, review of the development regulations, and analysis of referral comments, our findings include:

1. The Proposed LE25-003, Colorado’s Power Pathway 345-kV Transmission Line Location and Extent generally conforms to the Arapahoe County Comprehensive Plan.
2. The proposed LE25-003, Colorado’s Power Pathway 345-kV Transmission Line Location and Extent complies with the General Submittal Requirements contained in Section 2-26 enumerated in the Arapahoe County Development Application Manual.

3. The proposed LE25-003, Colorado’s Power Pathway 345-kV Transmission Line Location and Extent, meets the Arapahoe County Zoning Regulations and procedures, including those stated in Section 5-7.3 Location and Extent of the Land Development Code.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Considering the findings and other information provided herein, the staff recommends approval of Case No. LE25-003, Colorado’s Power Pathway 345-kV Transmission Line Location and Extent, subject to the following condition of approval:

1. Prior to the signature of the final copy of these plans, the applicant must update the Location and Extent Plan Set consistent with comments received from Public Works and Development staff as transmitted to the applicant on March 16, 2026, and add reception numbers to the Plan Set as per the email dated April 23, 2026.

ALTERNATIVES

The Planning Commission has alternatives that include the following:

1. Approve the proposed Location and Extent with conditions proposed by staff or with other conditions.
2. Continue to a date certain for more information.
3. Deny the proposed Location and Extent.

CONCURRENCE

The Public Works and Development Planning and Engineering Services Divisions have reviewed the application, and the Arapahoe County Public Works Department is recommending approval of this case.

PLANNING COMMISSION DRAFT MOTIONS – LE25-003, COLORADO’S POWER PATHWAY 345-KV TRANSMISSION LINE LOCATION AND EXTENT

Approve

In the case of LE25-003, Colorado’s Power Pathway 345-kV Transmission Line Location and Extent, I have reviewed the staff report, including all exhibits and attachments, and have listened to the applicant’s presentation and any public comment as presented at the hearing, and hereby move to approve this application based on the findings in the staff report, subject to the following condition:

1. Prior to the signature of the final copy of these plans, the applicant must update the Location and Extent Plan Set consistent with comments received from Public Works and Development staff as transmitted to the applicant on March 16, 2026, and add reception numbers to the Plan Set as per the email dated April 23, 2026.

Staff provides the following Draft Motions listed below as general guidance in preparing an alternative motion if the Planning Commission reaches a different determination:

Deny

In the case of LE25-003, Colorado’s Power Pathway 345-kV Transmission Line Location and Extent, I have reviewed the staff report, including all exhibits and attachments, and have listened to the applicant’s presentation and any public comment as presented at the hearing, and hereby move to deny this application based on the following findings:

1. *State new findings in support of denial as part of the motion.*

Continue to Date Certain:

In the case of LE25-003, Colorado’s Power Pathway 345-kV Transmission Line Location and Extent, I move to continue the hearing to [*date certain*], 6:30 p.m., to obtain additional information and to further consider the information presented.

Attachments:

Engineering Staff Report
Referral Comments and Applicant’s Response
Application Materials
Plan Set