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PUBLIC COMMENT OF ALEXANDRA BALLESTER

I often visit Hueco Tanks State Park, near proposed Link 1R of El Paso Electric's Pine to McCloud 345 kV transmission line. I oppose any route that uses Link 1R.

Link 1R would run near Hueco Tanks State Park and Historic Site, one of the most culturally and naturally significant places in Texas. I ask the Commission to reject any route that includes this link for the following reasons:

The Commission's own criteria. Texas law (Public Utility Regulatory Act § 37.056) requires the Commission to consider community values, recreational and park areas, historical and aesthetic values, and environmental integrity when approving a transmission route. Link 1R conflicts with every one of these factors. Where other route options exist, the Commission should choose one that does not put Hueco Tanks and its surroundings at risk.

Cultural and sacred significance. Hueco Tanks is not just a park. It is sacred land to Native peoples, including the Ysleta del Sur Pueblo (Tigua), Mescalero Apache, and Kiowa, whose connection to this place goes back thousands of years. The area holds one of the most important collections of rock art in North America. Large steel towers and high-voltage lines in view of this landscape would disrupt a place that people still visit for spiritual and cultural reasons, and that disruption cannot be undone.

Destruction of native plants. Building a 345 kV line means clearing right-of-way, grading access roads, and pouring tower foundations. Chihuahuan Desert vegetation recovers extremely slowly, often over decades, and disturbed ground invites invasive species. The plant communities around Hueco Tanks are part of what makes this area unique and should not be scraped away for a line that could be routed elsewhere.

Harm to wildlife. The rock basins at Hueco Tanks hold rare water in the desert and attract birds, reptiles, mammals, and other animals that depend on this habitat. Transmission lines are a known collision and electrocution hazard for birds, especially raptors, and construction and maintenance fragment habitat and disturb wildlife.

Visual and scenic harm. This is a stunning, open landscape, and that view is part of its value. Tall transmission towers would permanently industrialize the setting for residents like me and for the visitors who come from around the world to hike, climb, and learn at Hueco Tanks. Visitors also support local businesses, and a degraded landscape is a loss to the whole community.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Commission to reject any route using Link 1R and to approve a route that avoids the Hueco Tanks area.

My personal connection to Hueco Tanks. Hueco Tanks is not an abstract place to me. I was engaged there. For the past decade, I have returned every year and spent more than a year of my life among its rocks, trails, and open desert. Over the years I have come to know this landscape and the stillness that makes it unlike anywhere else. It holds some of the most important moments of my life, and it is a very special place in my heart. I am not alone in this. Many people return to Hueco Tanks year after year because it offers something that cannot be found elsewhere or rebuilt once it is damaged. Placing a 345 kV transmission line near this place would permanently change it for everyone who loves it.

Respectfully submitted,

Alexandra Ballester
10.1.2026