

Filing Receipt

Filed Date - 2026-10-04 08:20:29 PM

Control Number - 60319

Item Number - 52

PUC Docket No. 60319

PUBLIC COMMENT OF HEATHER JOHNSON

I own property at [redacted], near proposed Link 1R of El Paso Electric's Pine to McCloud 345 kV transmission line. Proposed Link 1R passes about 3700 feet from my property.

I oppose any route that uses Link 1R.

I am writing to formally and strongly oppose El Paso Electric's proposed Link R1 route for the 345 kV transmission line. As a 25-year area resident (property owner since 2006) and a local small business owner operating a campground and short-term rentals, I respectfully ask the Commission to protect the unique cultural, environmental, and economic fabric of the Hueco Valley.

I own 4 properties in the area. I purchased my properties specifically because of its location near Hueco Tanks State Park, the open and undeveloped character, and the expansive views across the Hueco Valley.

Hueco Tanks is a world-class destination that draws international travelers during the fall, winter, and spring. These visitors support the local economy by staying at our campground and other local businesses. Our business caters to visitors looking to enjoy Hueco Tanks State Park and the Hueco Valley area. We directly rely on travelers who come here for the pristine, undisturbed natural beauty of the Hueco Valley. The proposed power lines would destroy that entirely. Erecting industrial-scale power lines directly undermines the region's ecotourism economy.

This land is not merely vacant or undeveloped acreage; it is a vibrant, thriving desert ecosystem serving as a critical habitat for native wildlife, including mule deer, javelinas, raptors, and various desert reptiles.

The utility company must exhaust all other options before cutting a new path through this pristine land. They should prioritize routing lines alongside pre- existing industrial infrastructure, major highway easements (like US-62/180 or I-10), or existing lower-voltage corridors—rather than creating a brand-new swath of destruction through the Hueco Tanks area.

Archaeological / Cultural Resource Concerns

The archaeological significance of the broader Hueco Tanks area must also be taken seriously. This is a sacred location for multiple Native American tribes (including the Tigua/Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, Apache, and Comanche). Heavy construction, tower footings, and access roads risk physically destroying or unearthing undocumented artifacts and sacred sites.

Although the proposed route may not fall within the formal boundaries of Hueco Tanks State Park, this area is littered with archaeological evidence of people who lived here long before us. The specific stretch under evaluation is a suspected ancient hunting ground and an intermediary camp corridor linking Hueco Tanks to the western mountains. This area should be considered a protected cultural and archaeological area. Applicable state and federal laws and cultural resources requirements must be followed.

Construction activities—specifically deep tower footings and heavy access roads—risk permanently destroying or unearthing irreplaceable cultural artifacts. The PUCT should require comprehensive, independent archaeological surveys before any route approval, rather than relying on accidental discoveries during construction when the damage is already done.

Impact on Wildlife and Natural Habitat

Clearing, construction, and long-term maintenance of a 345 kV corridor will cause profound habitat fragmentation. The Commission must look beyond the physical footprint of individual towers and account for the cumulative disruption caused by heavy equipment, access roads, and ongoing vegetation clearing

Wildlife in this area includes mountain lion, bobcat, foxes, coyotes, javelinas, owls, hawks, rattlesnakes, bull snakes, Texas horned lizards, oryx, aoudad, mule deer, skunks, porcupines, badgers, and other native wildlife.

The presence of this variety of species demonstrates that this area functions as a meaningful wildlife habitat. Once a large transmission corridor is constructed, the habitat of these animals would be permanently altered. The Commission should therefore give serious consideration not only to the immediate footprint of

individual transmission structures, but also to the cumulative effects of construction, right-of-way clearing, access,

maintenance, noise, and long-term habitat fragmentation.

Proximity to Residences and Degradation of Quality of Life

The proposed 125-foot steel transmission towers will slice directly through the western horizon, obstructing views of the mountains from my home, my campground, and neighboring properties.

Residents chose this area specifically for its tranquility, dark skies, and open desert landscapes. Introducing a high-voltage industrial corridor directly adjacent to homes is not a minor aesthetic inconvenience; it is a fundamental, permanent degradation of our quality of life and personal well-being.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Commission not approve any transmission route

utilizing Link 1R and instead select a feasible alternative that minimizes impacts to private landowners, planned residential uses, small businesses, and the character of the Hueco Mountain Estates area. I respectfully ask the Public Utility Commission of Texas not to approve Link R1.

Heather Johnson
Area Resident & Local Business Owner
Continuous Resident since 2000 / Property Owner since 2006

Heather Johnson
October 4, 2026