

FILE

**OPSB Staff Report of Investigation**

**Case No.:** 11-4934-EL-BLN  
**Project:** Lima - Sterling 138 kV Transmission Line  
**Applicant:** American Electric Power

**Report Date:** October 27, 2011

**Automatic Approval Date:** November 5, 2011 (Letter of Notification process)

**Waiver Requests:** None

**Inspection Date(s):** October 18, 2011

**Staff Assigned:** J. Pawley

**Summary of Staff Recommendations (see report text for discussion):**

Application: [ ] Approval [ ] Disapproval [X] Approval with Conditions  
Waiver: [ ] Approval [ ] Disapproval [X] Not Applicable

**Projected Docket Closure Date (if approved by the Board):** June 15, 2014

**Investigation Report**

**Project Description:** This project consists of replacing nearly six (6) miles of existing 138 kV line and structures with new structures capable of holding a double circuit 138 kV line. The new line will remain a 138 kV single circuit and will be located in existing easements. Any future second circuit will need to come before the OPSB for consideration by the Board. Based on the age, condition and conductor size, AEP is replacing the existing 138 kV conductor with a more substantial 138 kV conductor. Due to the heavier nature of the new line, wood structures will need to be replaced with steel monopole structures at existing structure locations. The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) is widening a portion of I-75 through Lima that is parallel to this line. As such, AEP is planning on relocating a portion of this existing line within their existing right-of-way to avoid conflicts with ODOT's I-75 road work.

**Site Description:** This project is located within existing AEP easements/right-of-way in Perry Township, Allen County, Ohio. The project is on the east side of Lima, Ohio, and is in the vicinity of and parallel to I-75. No additional right-of-way is required. Land use along the line includes light industrial and residential uses, wooded areas (with previously cleared right-of-way for the existing 138 kV line) and highway use.

**Discussion/Comments/Concerns:**

The project traverses along a large deciduous wood lot near Johnny Appleseed Metro Park District property. Staff would require the Applicant to coordinate with the park for the removal of park trees (if necessary) to install new structures and line. Additionally, Staff would require the Applicant to use seasonal cutting dates (September 30 to April 1) for the clearing of any potential Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*) summer roosting and/or rearing habitat. There is a record for the state threatened Peregrine falcon

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(Falco peregrines) within three miles of this project. Based on the proximity of the nest and lack of foraging habitat, it is not likely that this species will be impacted by this project. This project crosses the Ottawa River, a large perennial stream that flows to the Auglaize River and ultimately to Lake Erie. In order to reduce sedimentation into this river and to downstream surface water resources, Staff would require the Applicant to use best management practices (BMPs) when work adjacent to this resource. Staff would also require the Applicant to provide an access and stream crossing plan. Along the east side of I-75, there are a number of sheds and out-buildings that have been located under the existing line over the past several decades (located in AEP right-of-way). The applicant will need to remove these structures in order to rebuild the 138 kV line and should work closely with residents to ensure open communication regarding this activity. With the following conditions, this project should pose only minimal negative social and environmental impacts.

**Summary of Staff Recommended Conditions:**

1. The applicant shall conduct a pre-construction conference with staff in attendance, discussing in detail, but not limited to: appropriate Best Management Practices (BMP's) to control runoff in drainage areas, any tree removal plans along existing right-of-way, protection of natural resources - parkland and walkway systems, to define material staging and work areas, crossing plans for the Ottawa River and detailed access plans for each structure.
2. The Applicant shall adhere to seasonal cutting dates of September 30 to April 1 for the clearing of any suitable Indiana bat habitat, if avoidance measures cannot be achieved.
3. The Applicant shall coordinate all traffic related issues with the appropriate entities (including the Ohio Department of Transportation) to ensure that traffic will be maintained along public roadways and private entrance drives during construction.
4. That prior to construction, the Applicant shall obtain all applicable permits and authorizations as required by Federal and State entities for any activities where such permit or authorization is required, including but not limited to road crossing permits and stormwater control.
5. The applicant shall conduct a literature review for staff review of cultural resources along and adjacent to the route prior to construction.
6. The applicant shall coordinate with the Johnny Appleseed Metro Park District regarding work in and around parkland, including the elevated walkway system and post construction reclamation of any damaged parkland.
7. The applicant shall coordinate with ODOT regarding placement of structures in relation to expanded highway lanes, new ODOT sound wall barriers, interchange rework, and drainage area basins.