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OPSB Staff Report of Investigation

Case No.: 12-0308-EL-BLN
Project: Gahanna-West Millersport 138 kV Circuit Project
Applicant: American Electric Power

Report Date: February 7, 2012

Automatic Approval Date: February 15, 2012 (Expedited Letter of Notification process)

Waiver Requests: None

Inspection Date(s): February 3, 2012

Staff Assigned: J. Pawley, D. Rostofer, J. Whitis

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

Application: ☐ Approval ☐ Disapproval ☒ Approval with Conditions
Waiver: ☐ Approval ☐ Disapproval ☒ Not Applicable

Projected Docket Closure Date (if approved by the Board): May 30, 2016

Investigation Report

Project Description: This project consists of creating a new 138 kV circuit between AEP's West Millersport Station and the Gahanna Station. AEP is proposing to rebuild portions of existing transmission lines and energizing a section of existing de-energized line. The project is proposed in five sections (from north to south):

Gahanna 138 kV Extension: This portion will rebuild the existing Gahanna 138 kV line on existing centerline between the Gahanna Substation and the Muskingum River-Central 345 kV line for 1.2 miles. Existing structures will be replaced with steel poles to support double circuit 138 kV lines.

Muskingum River-Central 345 kV Line: This portion will re-energize 11.1 miles of existing 345 kV line at 138 kV. No new structures or wire stringing are required for this portion.

Bixby-Corridor 345 kV Line: This portion will rebuild the existing 345 kV line on existing centerline for 1.3 miles. The existing H-frame structures will be replaced with steel poles to support the existing 345 kV line and new 138 kV circuit.

Conesville-Bixby 345 kV Line: This portion will rebuild the existing 345 kV line on existing centerline for 5.1 miles. The existing H-frame structures will be replaced with steel poles to support the existing 345 kV line and new 138 kV circuit.

West Millersport-Heath 138 kV Line: This portion will rebuild 2.9 miles of existing line on existing centerline. Existing H-frame structures will be replaced with steel poles to

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support double circuit 138 kV lines.

Site Description: This project is located within existing AEP easements/right-of-way in Franklin, Fairfield and Licking Counties, Ohio. Land use along the rebuild includes residential and agricultural uses. There is a portion of wooded area that will require clearing (near the I-70 crossing) where existing right-of-way needs to be supplemented to accommodate the intersection of lines.

Discussion/Comments/Concerns:

The project traverses through residential areas and agricultural district parcels within existing right-of-way. The new pole structures will leave a smaller footprint than existing H-frame structures, and farming operations will be able to continue after construction. Care should be taken with regards to construction and equipment while working in close proximity to residential areas. Notification should be given to property owners affected by this project. Suitable habitat for the federal and state endangered Indiana bat, and the Eastern massasauga rattlesnake, a state endangered and federal candidate species, exists within the corridor of the Bixby 345 kV Line. Staff would require the Applicant to adhere to seasonal tree cutting dates (September 30th to April 1st) for clearing of suitable Indiana bat habitat. Additionally, Staff would require that an ODNR approved professional herpetologist conduct a presence/absence survey for the Eastern massasauga, prior to commencement of construction within the Bixby 345 kV corridor. 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, define material staging and work areas, crossing plans for I-70 and 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. That prior to construction, the Applicant shall obtain an update on the status of bald eagle activity within the area from ODNR-DOW, Crane Creek Wildlife Research Station. If a nest is located within a half mile of the project area, then coordination with the ODNR-DOW and OPSB staff is required;
6. That prior to construction of the corridor of the Bixby 345 kV Line rebuild, an ODNR approved professional herpetologist shall conduct a presence/absence survey for the Eastern massasauga rattlesnake. If suitable habitat or the species is

- present within the project area, then further coordination with the ODNR-DOW and OPSB staff is required;
7. That the Applicant shall have an environmental specialist on site at all times that construction is being performed in or near any environmentally sensitive areas such as streams, wetland, and wildlife habitat (Eastern massasauga);
 8. That an archaeological Phase I Survey program for the project be submitted to Staff in coordination with the State Historic Preservation Office for review and approval, prior to construction;
 9. That a public information program be instituted that informs affected property owners of the nature of the project, specific contact information of Applicant personnel who are familiar with the project, the proposed timeframe for project construction, and a schedule for restoration activities. Notification to property owners shall be given at least 30-days prior to work on the affected property;
 10. That the Applicant shall avoid, where possible, any damage to field drainage systems resulting from construction of the facility in agricultural areas. Damaged systems shall be repaired to at least original conditions at Applicant's expense. Severely compacted soils shall be plowed, if necessary, to restore them to original condition;
 11. That the Applicant shall remove all temporary gravel and other construction laydown area and access road materials shortly after completing construction activities.