

BEFORE THE POWER SITING BOARD OF THE STATE OF OHIO

**In the Matter of the Letter of Notification Application by )  
American Electric Power Ohio Transmission Company )  
for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and ) Case Number  
Public Need for the Ohio Central 138 kV Loop Project in ) 14-0053-EL-BLN  
Muskingum County, Ohio. )**

Members of the Board:

Todd Snitchler, Chairman, PUCO  
David Goodman, Director, ODSA  
Dr. Ted Wymyslo, Director, ODH  
David Daniels, Director, ODA  
Craig Butler, Interim Director, Ohio EPA  
Jim Zehringer, Director, ODNR  
Jeffery J. Lechak, PE, Public Member

Peter Stautberg, State Representative  
Sandra Williams, State Representative  
Michael Skindell, State Senator  
Bill Seitz, State Senator

To the Honorable Power Siting Board:

Please review the attached Staff Report of Investigation, which has been filed in accordance with the Board's rules. The applicant's accelerated certificate application in this case is subject to an automatic approval process as required by Section 4906.03 of the Ohio Revised Code.

The application will be automatically approved on February 25, 2014, unless suspended by the Board's chairperson, the executive director, or an administrative law judge. If suspended, the Board must render a decision on the application within 90 days.

The Staff Report includes recommended conditions of the certificate. Prior to the automatic approval date, the applicant must file a supplement to its application that adopts these conditions. Absent such supplement, Staff will recommend that the case be suspended.

Any concerns you or your representative may have with this case must be presented to the Executive Director of the Power Siting Board at least four business days prior to February 25, 2014, which is the automatic approval date. To contact the Executive Director with concerns, you can reply to the email to which this document was attached, or use the ContactOPSB email address listed below.

Sincerely,



Kim Wissman  
Executive Director  
Ohio Power Siting Board  
(614) 466-6692  
[ContactOPSB@puc.state.oh.us](mailto:ContactOPSB@puc.state.oh.us)

## OPSB STAFF REPORT OF INVESTIGATION

**Case Number:** 14-0053-EL-BLN  
**Project Name:** Ohio Central 138 kV Loop Project  
**Project Location:** Muskingum County, Ohio  
**Applicant:** American Electric Power Ohio Transmission Company  
**Application Filing Date:** January 27, 2014, supplemented February 12, 2014  
**Filing Type:** **Expedited** Letter of Notification  
**Inspection Date:** January 14, 2014  
**Report Date:** February 14, 2014  
**Automatic Approval Date:** February 25, 2014  
**Waiver Requests:** None  
**Staff Assigned:** J. Pawley, G. Zeto

### Summary of Staff Recommendations (see discussion below):

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

**Project Description:** This project will consist of a new 138 kV electric double-circuit transmission line loop from the existing Philo-Howard 138 kV transmission line to the Ohio Central substation. As part of this project, 10 steel pole structures will be installed on concrete foundations, and will range in height between 100-190 feet tall. The project is estimated to cost approximately \$2.1 million, and extends for approximately 0.9 miles. The Ohio Central substation was recently expanded under OPSB Case No. 13-0013-EL-BLN. Construction is anticipated to begin in March, 2014 with right-of-way clearing, and pole/foundation work beginning in June 2014. The anticipated in-service date of the line is September 24, 2015. The Applicant states that the new line loop will help to alleviate loading on the Ohio Central 138 kV circuits and provide flexibility to the system power flows.

**Site Description:** The project is located immediately north of the AEP Dresden Power Plant in Muskingum County, Ohio. Land use along the route includes predominately rural, residential and agricultural uses along or adjacent to the right-of-way. There are several industrial businesses in the area. An open gravel lot at the Dresden Power Plant has been designated for this project as a laydown yard. No clearing or grading is needed at this laydown/storage site.

### Nature of Impacts:

#### *Social*

The Applicant studied twelve candidate routes for the project, before selecting the proposed 0.9 mile route as proposed in this application. The route selection study was included in the filing, and analyzed various factors such as ecological, cultural, and land use impacts, as well as technical considerations. The project primarily parallels a 345 kV transmission line that was the

subject of OPSB Case No. 13-2036-EL-BLN, so aesthetic impacts will be minimal. The project is in close proximity to the Dresden Power Plant and twelve existing transmission lines running out of the plant and nearby Ohio Central substation. The Applicant will ensure that the project meets all National Electrical Safety Code standards for clearance between the line sag and the numerous existing transmission lines in the area. Due to line clearance issues that arose during engineering since the application was filed in January, 2014; the proposed route was adjusted on AEP's property in February, 2014. Staff is amenable to this shift, as the transmission line is within studied corridors and remains on the Applicant's property (supplement filed February 12, 2014).

The Applicant had a literature review and Phase I archaeological field work performed for the route between September and October, 2013. One previously recorded and relocated site adjacent to Northpointe Drive was verified, but no new and previously unrecorded archaeological sites were identified. Phase II archaeological assessment of any unavoidable and impacted portions of this site (33MU929) was recommended to determine impacts resulting from this project.

### **Ecological Considerations:**

#### *Surface Waters*

The electric transmission line r-o-w contains two intermittent streams and two ephemeral streams. Several streams would need to be crossed by construction equipment using timber mat bridges. No in-water work is proposed. The Applicant would not conduct mechanized clearing within 25 feet of any stream channel. Stumps would be left in place to help maintain bank stability. To further limit impacts to these streams, tree clearing, which would be conducted by hand, would be limited to those trees that are perceived as posing an imminent risk to the construction and operation of the facility.

The r-o-w also contains 8 wetlands with no high quality wetlands (Category 2/3 or Category 3) located along the route. Wetlands would be clearly staked prior to the commencement of any clearing in order to minimize incidental vehicle impacts. Operation of heavy mechanized equipment is not planned within any identified wetland, although some construction equipment would need to cross wetlands using timber matting. Selective hand-clearing would be required to remove woody vegetation in wetlands that may impede construction, or interfere with operation of the transmission line.

The Applicant would utilize best management practices (BMPs) to minimize impacts to surface waters. The proposed BMPs would be outlined in the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan and a copy would be provided to the Board's Staff. Staff also recommends that the Applicant be required to provide a final construction access plan for review prior to construction. The plan would consider the location of streams, wetlands, wooded areas, and explain how impacts to all sensitive resources would be avoided or minimized during construction, operation, and maintenance.

#### *Threatened and Endangered Species*

With the exception of the federal and state endangered Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*), no federal and state listed species and/or their suitable habitat would be impacted by this project. In order to avoid impacts to the Indiana bat, the Applicant would adhere to seasonal cutting dates of October

1 and March 31 for removal of suitable Indiana bat habitat trees, if avoidance measures cannot be achieved.

**Conclusion:**

With the following conditions, the construction of this project should pose only minimal negative social and ecological impacts. Staff recommends automatic approval of this case on February 25, 2014.

**Staff Recommended Conditions:**

- (1) Prior to construction, the Applicant shall obtain and comply with all applicable permits and authorizations as required by Federal and State entities for any activities where such permit or authorization is required, including any permits necessary for aviation clearance. Copies of such permits and authorizations, including all supporting documentation shall be provided to Staff;
- (2) The Applicant shall utilize best management practices when working in the vicinity of environmentally sensitive areas. This includes, but is not limited to, the installation of silt fencing (or similarly effective tool) prior to initiating construction near streams and wetlands. The installation shall be done in accordance with generally accepted construction methods and shall be inspected regularly;
- (3) The Applicant will coordinate with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and Staff to determine if prehistoric Site 33MU929 will be impacted by this project, and if Phase II fieldwork will be needed where impacts might be unavoidable;
- (4) The Applicant shall adhere to seasonal cutting dates of October 1 and March 31 for removal of suitable Indiana bat habitat trees, if avoidance measures can not be achieved;
- (5) The Applicant shall not conduct mechanized clearing within 25 feet of any stream channel;
- (6) The Applicant shall submit to the Staff, for review and approval, a final project construction access plan prior to construction. This plan shall include all laydown areas, residential and environmentally sensitive area access points (walk in locations only), and any locations where vegetation clearing is required.

**This foregoing document was electronically filed with the Public Utilities**

**Commission of Ohio Docketing Information System on**

**2/14/2014 3:31:59 PM**

**in**

**Case No(s). 14-0053-EL-BLN**

Summary: Report of investigation electronically filed by Mr. Adam S Bargar on behalf of Staff of OPSB