

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 Muskingum River-Wolf Creek 138 ) 14-1073-EL-BLN  
kV Transmission Line Rebuild Project in Washington )  
County, Ohio. )

Members of the Board:

Chairman, Public Utilities Commission	Ohio House of Representatives
Director, Development Services Agency	Ohio Senate
Director, Department of Health	
Director, Department of Agriculture	
Director, Environmental Protection Agency	
Director, Department of Natural Resources	
Public Member	

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 **November 27, 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 **November 27, 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,



Patrick Donlon  
Interim 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:** 14-1073-EL-BLN  
**Project Name:** Muskingum River-Wolf Creek 138 kV Transmission Line Rebuild Project  
**Project Location:** Washington County  
**Applicant:** American Electric Power Ohio Transmission Company  
**Application Filing Date:** August 28, 2014  
**Filing Type:** Letter of Notification  
**Inspection Date:** November 14, 2014  
**Report Date:** November 19, 2014  
**Automatic Approval Date:** November 27, 2014  
**Applicant's Waiver Requests:** None  
**Staff Assigned:** J. Pawley, G. Zeto, A. Holderbaum

### 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 rebuilding the existing 138 kilovolt (kV) single circuit Muskingum River-Wolf Creek transmission line within existing 100 foot right-of-way. The project is approximately 4.3 miles total in length. Construction is anticipated to begin in January 2015, with an estimated in-service date of May 2015. The cost of the project is estimated at approximately \$5.05 million.

### Site Description

The project would be located entirely on existing AEP easements. No relocation of transmission lines is required, nor is any additional right-of-way required. The existing transmission line traverses maintained right-of-way consisting of grasslands, agricultural, forested, and residential land uses. This project will replace 26 existing wood H-frame structures with 25 steel H-frame structures. The project extends from structure 4 adjacent to the existing Muskingum River substation to the existing Wolf Creek substation.

### Need

#### *Facility Need*

The Muskingum River-Wolf Creek line upgrade is needed to meet system reliability requirements, due to the Muskingum River Coal Plant retirement. The proposed project was approved as a baseline reliability upgrade by the PJM Interconnection (PJM) Board of Directors. A PJM baseline reliability upgrade resolves a system reliability criteria violation, which was found by AEP, North American Electric Reliability Corporation, or PJM planning criteria.

## *PJM Regional Transmission Expansion Plan*

PJM is the Regional Transmission Organization charged with planning for upgrades to the regional transmission system in Ohio. PJM annually issues the RTEP report. The RTEP analyzes reliability criteria, operational performance of the transmission system, and economic and environmental factors. The RTEP provides for the construction of expansions and upgrades of the PJM transmission system, as needed to maintain compliance with reliability criteria and, when appropriate, to enhance the economic and operational efficiency of wholesale electricity markets in the PJM Region.

The proposed project was identified as a baseline upgrade in the 2013 PJM RTEP<sup>1</sup> and approved by the PJM Board of Directors. The Applicant's project was assigned upgrade ID b2286. Status of the project can be tracked on PJM's website<sup>2</sup>.

### **Nature of Impacts**

#### *Social*

The Applicant has proposed to rebuild the transmission line within existing right-of-way. Therefore, potential impacts are expected to be largely confined to access for structure replacement and line stringing and should be temporary in nature.

Aesthetic impacts are expected to be similar to those present. Wood H-frame structures currently support the Muskingum River-Wolf Creek 138 kV transmission line between the respective substations. These structures would be replaced by single circuit steel H-frame structures, placed in approximately the same locations.

The right-of-way abuts some residential areas, and crosses predominately agricultural properties and open fields, but does not cross any property currently within the limits of an Agricultural District.

The Applicant recently conducted a Phase I archaeological survey for this project. The applicant states that no cultural material or indications of cultural activity were present during the field testing, and recommends that no further archaeological investigation is necessary for this project.

#### *Surface Waters*

The electric transmission line right-of-way for the project crosses Hayward Run, West Branch Wolf Creek, Flint Run, and five unnamed tributary stream segments, totaling 3,197 linear feet. A total of 18 streams and three swales were identified within the survey area. Five of the streams were ephemeral, nine were intermittent, and seven were perennial streams. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) National Flood Hazard Layer (NFHL), the southern portion of the project is located within a 100-year flood zone. No poles are expected to be placed within the 100-year flood zone. No changes in flood elevations are anticipated as a result of the project.

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<sup>1</sup> "2013 Regional Transmission Expansion Plan," February 2014, 594, accessed November 13, 2014, <http://pjm.com/documents/reports/rtep-documents/2013-rtep.aspx>.

<sup>2</sup> "Transmission Construction Status," PJM Interconnection, accessed November 13, 2014, <http://pjm.com/planning/rtep-upgrades-status/construct-status.aspx>.

Eight wetlands were identified within the study corridor. This project would cross eight Category 1 and 2 wetlands, totaling 0.35 acre. Timber matting will be utilized for temporarily crossing some streams and wetlands for access to pole locations and to reduce and/or eliminate permanent impacts to these water resources. Wetlands would be clearly staked prior to the commencement of any clearing in order to minimize incidental vehicle impacts.

No ponds are located within the project right-of-way, and no national forests or parks designated or proposed wilderness areas, national wild and scenic rivers, wildlife areas, wildlife refuges, wildlife management areas, or wildlife sanctuaries were identified within 1,000 feet of the proposed project.

The Applicant has provided a construction access plan, which would be incorporated into a final Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP). Based on review of the construction access plan, Staff has determined that the Applicant's plan considered the locations of streams, wetlands, wooded areas, and sensitive plant species, as identified by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, and has illustrated appropriately how impacts to all sensitive resources would be avoided or minimized during construction. The SWPPP will be provided to the Ohio Power Siting Board under separate cover, after submission of this Letter of Notification.

The Applicant will utilize best management practices, as outlined in the SWPPP, to minimize impacts to surface waters. A Notice of Intent will be filed with the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency for authorization of construction stormwater discharges under General Permit OHC000004.

#### *Threatened and Endangered Species*

Preferred summer roosting habitat for the federal and state endangered Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*) is located in the project area. The Applicant has stated that there will be no potential roost trees removed as part of the required tree clearing for the project.

#### **Conclusion**

The Applicant's utilization of existing right-of-way and temporary access for the majority of the length of the project significantly minimizes potential adverse impacts. 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 November 27, 2014.

#### **Staff Recommended Conditions**

- 1) The Applicant shall not conduct mechanized clearing of trees within 25 feet of any stream channel;
- 2) 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 to ensure compliance with this condition;
- 3) The Applicant shall adhere to seasonal cutting dates of October 1 and March 31 for removal or trimming of suitable Indiana bat habitat trees if required, unless coordination

efforts with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reflects a different course of action;

- 4) The Applicant shall institute a public information program that informs affected property owners of the nature of the project, specific contact information for 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 seven days prior to work on the affected property;
- 5) 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 condition at the Applicant's expense. Severely compacted soils shall be plowed at the Applicant's expense, if necessary, to restore them to original condition.

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

**Commission of Ohio Docketing Information System on**

**11/19/2014 1:44:38 PM**

**in**

**Case No(s). 14-1073-EL-BLN**

Summary: Letter of Notification electronically filed by Mrs. Yvonne W Cooper on behalf of Staff of OPSB