

BEFORE THE POWER SITING BOARD OF THE STATE OF OHIO

**In the Matter of the Letter of Notification Application            )**  
**of American Electric Power Ohio Transmission                )**  
**Company, Inc. for the Hanging Rock 138 kV                    )** **16-1527-EL-BLN**  
**Transmission Line Project    )**

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 Ohio Power Siting Board (Board) rules. The 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 recommended for automatic approval on August 29, 2016 unless suspended by the Board's chairperson or an administrative law judge. If suspended, the Board must render a decision on the application within 90 days from the date of suspension.

Please present any concerns you or your designee may have with this case to my office at least four business days prior to August 29, 2016, which is the automatic approval date.

Sincerely,



Patrick Donlon  
Director, Rates and Analysis  
Public Utilities Commission of Ohio  
180 East Broad Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215  
(614) 644-8932

## OPSB STAFF REPORT OF INVESTIGATION

**Case Number:** 16-1527-EL-BLN  
**Project Name:** Hanging Rock 138 kV Transmission Line Project  
**Project Location:** Lawrence and Scioto counties  
**Applicant:** American Electric Power Ohio Transmission Company, Inc.  
**Application Filing Date:** July 29, 2016  
**Filing Type:** Expedited Letter of Notification  
**Inspection Date:** August 4, 2016  
**Report Date:** August 19, 2016  
**Recommended Automatic Approval Date:** August 29, 2016  
**Applicant's Waiver Requests:** none  
**Staff Assigned:** J. Pawley, J. Cross, G. Zeto

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

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

### Project Description

American Electric Power Ohio Transmission Company, Inc. (AEP Ohio Transco or Applicant) proposes to install a second circuit on the existing Hanging Rock 138 kilovolt (kV) transmission line in Lawrence and Scioto counties. The existing Hanging Rock transmission line was built on steel lattice towers in the 1960s and, while designed for a double circuit, only one circuit was actually placed into service at that time. The new circuit would be approximately four miles in length, and would be placed on existing lattice towers via helicopter onto the open arm side of the existing towers. The project involves 19 existing steel lattice towers, all of which will remain in place. Access road improvements would be needed for eight of the tower locations, in order to provide access for light trucks that would be used to get equipment and workers into position to work on the towers. The cost of the transmission line project is estimated at \$3.1 million. The Applicant has indicated that construction would start in September 2016.

AEP Ohio Transco would need to obtain easements from property owners along the route where needed for access roads. The Applicant sent notification about the project to area public officials and potentially affected property owners.

### Basis of Need

This project involves the installation of a second circuit from the Hanging Rock generation plant substation to the South Point-Portsmouth 138 kV transmission line. This circuit is needed in order to increase the electric capacity in the area and provide greater service reliability to customers.

## **Nature of Impacts**

### *Socioeconomic Impacts*

The project would be located along existing right-of-way easements for the Hanging Rock 138 kV transmission line. Some new right-of-way would be needed for access roads. The Applicant has indicated that a helicopter would be used to install the new circuit on the existing towers, primarily because of the rough, hilly terrain in the area. The Applicant has submitted an access plan to Staff detailing improvements that would be made to existing access roads in order to provide access to the existing towers.

There are no occupied residences within 100 feet of the transmission line right-of-way. No churches, schools, cemeteries, parks, or wildlife management areas were identified by the Applicant within the vicinity of the project area. The northern portion of the project extends into the Wayne National Forest. Predominate land use in the project area consists of agricultural fields, hay fields and forest. The project is not located within registered agricultural district lands.

The Applicant would secure all approvals and permits as needed for helicopter use, road crossings, and storm water pollution prevention prior to construction.

### *Cultural Resources*

The Applicant performed a Phase I cultural resource management investigation for the project in July 2016, concluding that the project would not affect any historic properties or landmarks and that no further cultural resources work is considered to be necessary for this project.

### *Surface Waters*

As the project consists of installing a second circuit on existing structures, surface water impacts would be limited to access roads that extend to tower structures. Access roads would cross one intermittent stream and one category 1 wetland. Little to no vegetation clearing would be required in wetlands or riparian areas. Timber matting will be utilized for temporary stream and wetland crossings in order 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.

The Applicant has provided a preliminary construction access plan. Based on review of the construction access plan, Staff has determined that the plan appropriately considers the locations of streams, wetlands, wooded areas, and sensitive plant species, as identified by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR). 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*

The federally and state-listed species and/or their suitable habitat that may be found in the project area include the state and federal endangered Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*) and the federal threatened Northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*). Limited tree clearing would be necessary for construction access. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) stated that Indiana bat presence has been confirmed in the project vicinity. The USFWS recommended that removal of any trees greater than three inches in diameter only occur from October 1 through March 31. Further the USFWS stated that if any caves or abandoned mines may be disturbed, further coordination with their office

is requested to determine if fall or spring surveys are warranted. The Applicant has initiated coordination with the ODNR, but as of the date of this report has not received a response. Staff recommends that prior to construction, the Applicant complete coordination with the ODNR and Staff regarding state listed species to assure impacts are avoided.

### **Conclusion**

Staff's review of the application included consideration of the requirements listed in Ohio Revised Code Section 4906.10. Based on Staff's review, the application meets the necessary criteria for granting a certificate. Staff recommends automatic approval of this case on August 29, 2016, provided that the following conditions are satisfied.

### **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 to ensure compliance with this condition.
- (2) The Applicant shall adhere to seasonal cutting dates of October 1 through March 31 for removal of any trees greater than three inches in diameter.
- (3) If any caves or abandoned mines may be disturbed, the Applicant shall coordinate with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to determine if fall or spring surveys are warranted.
- (4) Prior to construction, the Applicant shall coordinate with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and Staff to determine if any further action is necessary to avoid impacts to state listed species.

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

**Commission of Ohio Docketing Information System on**

**8/19/2016 11:33:05 AM**

**in**

**Case No(s). 16-1527-EL-BLN**

Summary: Staff Report of Investigation electronically filed by Mrs. Yvonne W Cooper on behalf of Staff of OPSB