

BEFORE THE POWER SITING BOARD OF THE STATE OF OHIO

**In the Matter of the Letter of Notification Application
of AEP Ohio Transmission Company, Inc. for the
Corner Parkersburg 138 kV Transmission Line Rebuild
Project**)
) **16-1523-EL-BLN**
)

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 30, 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 30, 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: 16-1523-EL-BLN
Project Name: Corner-Parkersburg 138 kV Transmission Line Rebuild
Project Location: Washington County
Applicant: AEP Ohio Transmission Company, Inc.
Application Filing Date: August 1, 2016
Filing Type: Expedited Letter of Notification
Inspection Date: August 11, 2016
Report Date: August 23, 2016
Recommended Automatic Approval Date: August 30, 2016
Applicant's Waiver Requests: none
Staff Assigned: J. Whitis, A. Holderbaum, J. Cross

Summary of Staff Recommendations (see discussion below):

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

Project Description

AEP Ohio Transmission Company, Inc. (AEP Ohio Transco or Applicant) proposes to rebuild approximately 6.1 miles of the existing 138 kilovolt (kV) transmission line between AEP's Corner substation and First Energy's Parkersburg substation. This project includes a 0.2-mile rebuild of the Belpre 138 kV loop that extends from the Corner-Parkersburg transmission line to the Belpre substation. The project also includes a 0.4-mile rebuild of the Degussa 138 kV tap between the Corner-Parkersburg transmission line and the Degussa substation, and the replacement of the Degussa switch.

The entire proposed transmission line rebuild work will occur within AEP Ohio Transmission Company right of way. The Applicant stated that it has reached agreements with adjacent property owners to access the project area. No new right of way or easements are necessary. The Applicant proposes to begin construction on October 1, 2016 and place the line in-service by June 1, 2017. The Applicant estimates the total cost of the project to be \$6.3 million.

Site Description

The transmission line rebuild would begin at the Corner substation in Washington County, Ohio and continue to the Parkersburg substation in Parkersburg, West Virginia. Approximately 6.1-miles of the transmission line rebuild would occur in Ohio. The project involves removal of 42 existing wood poles and replacing them with 42 new steel structures: six single-circuit steel structures, seven three pole steel structures, seven braced post steel structures and twenty-one h-

frame steel structures. The Belpre loop rebuild involves replacing two existing wood pole structures and one tower with four steel structures. The Degussa 138 kV tap rebuild involves installing a new conductor and replacing two existing wood structures with two steel structures. The Degussa switch replacement involves replacing one wood three pole switch structure with one steel switch structure.

Basis of Need

AEP Ohio Transco states that the rebuild of the Corner-Parkersburg 138 kV transmission line is needed in order to meet system reliability requirements. The Applicant states that without the proposed transmission line rebuild, AEP Ohio Transco would be unable to comply with the required North American Electric Reliability Corporation and PJM planning criteria. The proposed transmission line rebuild would allow the transmission system to provide safe, reliable electric service, while meeting all the applicable planning criteria.

The PJM Regional Transmission Expansion Plan (RTEP) process revealed that under certain contingencies, transmission elements are loaded above their emergency capability.¹ This proposed project was identified as a baseline upgrade in the 2013 PJM RTEP, approved by the PJM Board of Directors,² and assigned ID No. b2254. The status of the project can be tracked on PJM's website.³

Nature of Impacts

Agricultural Land

The project is not located within agricultural district land.

Surface Waters

The Applicant delineated 33 streams within the project area – 17 intermittent, 10 ephemeral, and 6 perennial – totaling 4,983 linear feet. The Applicant states that no in-water work in streams would occur for this project and no fill would be necessary in streams for access roads.

Five wetlands were identified within the project area: two Category 2 wetlands and three Category 1 wetlands, totaling 0.101 acre. The Applicant states that no in-water work in wetlands would occur for this project and no permanent fill would be necessary in wetlands for access roads. The Applicant also states that no tree clearing in forested wetlands would occur.

The Applicant would submit a Notice of Intent for coverage under the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency for authorization of construction storm water discharges under General Permit OHC000004. Wetland and stream impacts would be covered under the Permit #12 from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers without the need to submit a pre-construction notification.

¹ PJM Interconnection, LLC is the regional transmission organization charged with planning for upgrades to the regional transmission system in Ohio. PJM annually issues an RTEP report which 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.

² “2013 Regional Transmission Expansion Plan,” PJM Interconnection, accessed August 8, 2016, <http://pjm.com/planning.aspx>.

³ “Transmission Construction Status,” PJM Interconnection, accessed August 8, 2016, <http://pjm.com/planning/rtep-upgrades-status/construct-status.aspx>.

Threatened and Endangered Species

State and federally-listed species and/or suitable habitat that may be found in the project area include the Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*) and the Northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*). The Applicant has agreed to limiting tree clearing to the seasonal clearing dates of October 1 through March 31. If tree clearing cannot be completed within the seasonal clearing dates, the Applicant has committed to consulting with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service prior to clearing.

The project is within the range of the federal and state endangered sheepsnose (*Plethobasus cyphus*), fanshell (*Cyprogenia stegaria*), pink mucket (*Lampsilis orbiculata*), and snuffbox (*Epioblasma triquetra*); the state endangered washboard (*Megaloniaias nervosa*), butterfly (*Ellipsaria lineolata*), elephant-ear (*Elliptio crassidens*), long-solid (*Fusconaia maculata maculata*), sharp-ridged pocketbook (*Lampsilis ovata*), Ohio pigtoe (*Pleurobema cordatum*), pyramid pigtoe (*Pleurobema rubrum*), and monkeyface (*Quadrula metanevra*); and the state threatened black sandshell (*Ligumia recta*), threehorn wartyback (*Obliquaria reflexa*), and fawnsfoot (*Truncilla donaciformis*). Impacts to streams would be avoided, and, therefore impacts to these species are not anticipated.

The project is within the range of the federal species of concern and state endangered blue sucker (*Cycleptus elongatus*); the state endangered western banded killifish (*Fundulus diaphanus menona*), northern madtom (*Noturus stigmosus*), Ohio lamprey (*Ichthyomyzon bdellium*); and the state threatened paddlefish (*Polyodon spathula*), mountain madtom (*Noturus eleutherus*), river darter (*Percina shumardi*), channel darter (*Percina copelandi*), and Tippecanoe darter (*Etheostoma tippecanoe*). Due to the fact that no in-water work is proposed in a perennial stream, no impacts to these species are anticipated.

The project is within the range of the federal and state endangered eastern hellbender (*Cryptobranchus alleganiensis alleganiensis*), the federal species of concern and state endangered timber rattlesnake (*Crotalus horridus horridus*), and the state endangered eastern spadefoot toad (*Scaphiopus holbrookii*) and black bear (*Ursus americanus*). Due to the location, the type of work proposed, the mobility of the species, and the fact that no in-water work proposed in a perennial stream, this project is not likely to impact these species.

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 30, 2016, provided that the following condition is satisfied.

Condition

- (1) Prior to the commencement of construction activities that require permits or authorizations by federal or state laws and regulations, the Applicant shall obtain and comply with such permits or authorizations. The Applicant shall provide copies of permits and authorizations, including all supporting documentation, to Staff within seven days of issuance or receipt by the Applicant.

This foregoing document was electronically filed with the Public Utilities

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Case No(s). 16-1523-EL-BLN

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