

BEFORE THE POWER SITING BOARD OF THE STATE OF OHIO

In the Matter of the Letter of Notification Application)
of AEP Ohio Transmission Company for a Certificate) **Case No. 18-0156-EL-BLN**
of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need for)
the Ginger Switch Repair and Upgrade 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 Ohio Revised Code (R.C.) 4906.03 and Ohio Administrative Code (Ohio Adm.Code) 4906-6.

Staff recommends the application for automatic approval August 31, 2018, unless suspended by the Board, an administrative law judge, or the chairperson or executive director of the board for good cause shown. 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 31, 2018, which is the recommended automatic approval date.

Sincerely,



Raymond W. Strom
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Public Utilities Commission of Ohio
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OPSB STAFF REPORT OF INVESTIGATION

Case Number: 18-0156-EL-BLN
Project Name: Ginger Switch Repair and Upgrade Project
Project Location: Ross County
Applicant: AEP Ohio Transmission Company
Application Filing Date: June 1, 2018
Filing Type: Letter of Notification
Inspection Date: June 28, 2018
Report Date: August 24, 2018
Recommended Automatic Approval Date: August 31, 2018
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

AEP Ohio Transmission Company, Inc. (AEP Ohio Transco or Applicant) proposes to replace four structures on the existing Berlin-Ross 69 kilovolt (kV) transmission line to address the failure of a switch on one of the structures. The replacement work would occur along the line adjacent to the existing Ginger Switch station, located west of Ginger Hill Road in Ross County. The length of the rebuild project is 0.5 mile. The project would require a 100-foot right-of-way, and would be constructed at the edge of the existing 50-foot right-of way for the 69 kV transmission line. This would be done so that the existing 69 kV line could remain in service during construction. As such, additional right-of-way is needed to expand from 50 to 100 feet.

The project is located in Springfield Township, in Ross County and the rebuilt project would cross Ginger Hill Road. Four new structures would be located west of Ginger Hill Road, and three structures would be located to the east of Ginger Hill Road. The existing switch pole, two wood H-frame structures, and a wood single pole structure would be removed. These structures would be removed so that this replacement project can bypass the failed switch, and also transition to the rebuild work as proposed in the Ross-Ginger Switch project (Case No. 17-0637-EL-BTX) and the Ginger Switch-Vigo project (Case No. 17-0638-EL-BTX).

The Applicant anticipates that construction of this project would begin in October 2018, and the facilities would be placed in service by December 2018. The estimated total cost of the project is \$700,000.

Basis of Need

The proposed facility is part of the Applicant's broader Ross-Jackson Area Improvements Project (Ross-Jackson Project). The goal of the Ross-Jackson Project is to modernize and improve the reliability of the Applicant's transmission system in Ross and Jackson Counties. The proposed facility would replace a switch that failed on structure 203. The Applicant installed a temporary radial feed to bypass the failed switch and supply power to the Ginger Station. The Applicant states that while the switch is not in service, there is a reliability concern.

This project was included in the Applicant's most recent Long-Term Forecast Report filing, Case No. 18-1501-EL-FOR, and was submitted to PJM as a supplemental project. PJM assigned the project upgrade ID No. s1432. The construction status of transmission project can be tracked on PJM's website.^{1, 2}

Nature of Impacts

Socioeconomic

The surrounding land use is mainly rural (agricultural/row crop, woodland and old field pasture) with some rural residential properties in the vicinity. The project would be directly adjacent to the Ginger Switch Station. The project is not located within any agricultural district lands. No residences, churches, schools or parks are located within 1,000 feet of the project. The project would require an additional 50 feet of right-of-way for a total right-of-way width of 100 feet. The land within the expanded right-of-way is presently used for agricultural purposes.

Cultural Resources

The Applicant's cultural resources consultant performed a literature review and Phase I cultural resource management investigation (archaeology and history/architecture) for the project in March and August 2017. The consultant determined that the project would not involve or impact any significant cultural resources or landmarks, and that no further cultural resource management work was considered to be necessary. The findings were submitted to the Ohio Historic Preservation Office (OHPO). The OHPO responded to the consultant in concurrence that this project would not affect historic properties.

Surface Waters

The project area contains one ditch, which the applicant has proposed to be jurisdictional to the US Army Corps of Engineers. No structures would be located in streams, and no permanent impacts are anticipated. The proposed transmission line would not cross a 100-year floodplain.

The project area contains one category 1 wetland. No wetland fill is proposed for this project. Further details about how the wetland would be protected from indirect construction stormwater impacts using erosion and sedimentation controls would be outlined in the Applicant's Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan to be submitted as part of the required National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit.

1. AEP Ohio Transmission Company, "Long-Term Forecast Report to the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio," *Public Utilities Commission of Ohio Case No. 18-1501-EL-FOR*, April 24, 2018.

2. PJM Interconnection, "Transmission Construction Status," accessed August 10, 2018, <http://pjm.com/planning/rtep-upgrades-status/construct-status.aspx>.

Threatened and Endangered Species

Some tree clearing would be required for this project. The project area is within the range of the state and federal endangered Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*) and the federal threatened northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*). As tree roosting species in the summer months, the habitat of these species would be impacted by the project. In order to avoid impacts to the Indiana bat and northern long-eared bat, Staff reiterates the recommendation that the Applicant adhere to seasonal tree cutting dates of October 1 through March 31 for all trees three inches or greater in diameter, unless coordination efforts with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service allows a different course of action. The proposed adjustment is expected not to impact any bat hibernacula.

Due to no proposed in-water work and a lack of suitable habitat, impacts to other state and federal listed species are not anticipated.

Conclusion

Staff's review of the application included consideration of the requirements listed in R.C. 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 31, 2018, provided that the following condition is satisfied.

Condition:

- (1) 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, unless coordination with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service allows a different course of action.

This foregoing document was electronically filed with the Public Utilities

Commission of Ohio Docketing Information System on

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in

Case No(s). 18-0156-EL-BLN

Summary: Staff Report of Investigation electronically filed by Mr. Matt Butler on behalf of Staff of OPSB