

BEFORE THE POWER SITING BOARD OF THE STATE OF OHIO

**In the Matter of the Letter of Notification Application by)
American Transmission Systems, Incorporated for a)
Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public) Case No. 19-0585-EL-BLN
Need for the Darrow Substation Expansion)**

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 4906-6.

Staff recommends the application for automatic approval on August 21, 2019, 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 21, 2019, which is the recommended automatic approval date.

Sincerely,



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OPSB STAFF REPORT OF INVESTIGATION

Case Number: 19-0585-EL-BLN
Project Name: Darrow Substation Expansion
Project Location: Summit County
Applicant: American Transmission Systems, Incorporated
Application Filing Date: May 22, 2019
Filing Type: Letter of Notification
Inspection Date: July 9, 2019
Report Date: August 14, 2019
Recommended Automatic Approval Date: August 21, 2019
Applicant's Waiver Requests: none
Staff Assigned: J. O'Dell and F. Butt

Summary of Staff Recommendations (see discussion below):

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

Project Description

American Transmission Systems, Incorporated (Applicant or ATSI) proposes to expand the Darrow Substation by approximately 53,100 square feet, or approximately 62 percent, to facilitate the installation of new equipment. The new equipment would include replacing the existing single bus system with a 6-breaker ring bus. Upon project completion, the substation would encompass approximately 139,000 square feet. The capital costs of this proposed transmission project total approximately \$9,918,600, and those costs would be borne by the Applicant.

Need

This upgrade would help to provide system operational flexibility and enhance reliability of the transmission system in the area. In addition, this project would provide sufficient room for an additional transmission line exit for future use.

The replacement of the existing straight bus is necessary to upgrade dated equipment, which was installed in 1948. The existing straight bus configuration is not consistent with ATSI's current design requirements. Once the substation is upgraded to a ring bus, this eliminates the loss of three or more network elements due to a breaker failure or bus fault. In addition, the substation is beyond its useful expected service life and is composed of equipment with unacceptably high rates of

failure. Upgrading this substation provides increased reliability for the local area. This substation currently serves approximately 12,000 customers in the immediate area.

The Applicant included this project in their most recent Long Term Forecast Report, filed under Case No. 19-0806-EL-FOR. Additionally, the Applicant presented this project to PJM Interconnection, LLC as a Regional Transmission Expansion Project, under supplemental project number s1708. The construction status of the transmission project can be tracked on PJM Interconnection's website.^{1, 2}

Nature of Impacts

Land Use

The project area is located within the city of Hudson, Summit County. The substation is located within an industrial and commercial business park. ATSI has an existing easement on the proposed substation expansion parcel. That parcel is owned by Ohio Edison, a subsidiary of FirstEnergy Corporation, the Applicant's parent company.

Wood Hollow Metropark is located approximately 0.75 miles east of the project and a recreational path called the Bike & Hike Trail is located approximately 0.6 miles south of the substation. Neither of these recreational resources are expected to be impacted by the substation expansion.

Cultural Resources

ATSI conducted a cultural resource survey to ascertain potential impacts to historical properties and archaeological sites. The survey determined that adverse impacts to historical properties and archaeological sites are not expected.

Ecological Impacts

The Applicant's investigation concluded that it is unlikely that the proposed project would have a significant adverse impact on ecological resources. Adequate ingress and egress for construction is available from existing access roads. Significant amounts of vegetation removal would not be required. Some individual trees are present, and would likely be removed.

The Applicant's consultant identified five low quality wetlands features totaling 0.43 acres within the proposed substation expansion area. The Applicant would have to obtain a wetland mitigation permit from the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers to account for wetland impacts. This proposed wetland mitigation effort requires a wetland preservation ratio of 1.5/1.0 or approximately 0.6 acres. Best management practices would be employed to prevent soil erosion.

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 application on August 21, 2019. Staff notes that its recommendation for approval of this application should not be construed as a recommendation for approval of cost recovery in any ratemaking proceeding.

1. FirstEnergy 2019 Long Term Forecast Report, OPSB Case No. 19-0806-EL-FOR, April 15, 2019.
2. PJM Interconnection, "Transmission Construction Status," accessed August 12, 2019.

Conditions:

- (1) The Applicant shall adhere to seasonal cutting dates of October 1 through March 31 for removal of any trees greater than or equal to three inches in diameter, unless coordination efforts with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) allows a different course of action.
- (2) The Applicant shall have an environmental specialist on site during construction activities that may affect sensitive areas. Sensitive areas include, but are not limited to, areas of vegetation clearing, designated wetlands and streams, and locations of threatened or endangered species or their identified habitat. The environmental specialist shall be familiar with water quality protection issues and potential threatened or endangered species of plants and animals that may be encountered during project construction.
- (3) The Applicant shall contact the USFWS within 24 hours if state or federal threatened or endangered species are encountered during construction activities. Construction activities that could adversely impact the identified plants or animals shall be halted until an appropriate course of action has been agreed upon by the Applicant in coordination with the USFWS. Nothing in this condition shall preclude agencies having jurisdiction over the facility with respect to threatened or endangered species from exercising their legal authority over the facility consistent with law.

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Case No(s). 19-0585-EL-BLN

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