

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 of)
Environmental Compatibility and Public Need for the) Case No. 20-1026-EL-BLN
South Canton 765kV Transmission Station Expansion)
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.

On March 17, 2020, an administrative law judge tolled the time period for automatic approval of this project and other accelerated projects during the state of emergency declared in Executive Order 2020-01D. (See case number 20-601-GE-UNC, the "Tolling Directive.") On May 20, 2020, the administrative law judge modified the Tolling Directive, finding that the tolling provisions should be terminated effective June 1, 2020, thereby again subjecting this matter to an automatic approval, unless suspended.

Staff recommends the application for automatic approval August 25, 2020, 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 25, 2020, which is the recommended automatic approval date.

Sincerely,



Theresa White
Executive Director
Ohio Power Siting Board

OPSB STAFF REPORT OF INVESTIGATION

Case Number: 20-1026-EL-BLN
Project Name: South Canton 765kV Station Expansion Project
Project Location: Stark County
Applicant: AEP Ohio Transmission Company
Application Filing Date: May 26, 2020
Filing Type: Letter of Notification
Inspection Date: August 5, 2020
Report Date: August 18, 2020
Recommended Automatic Approval Date: August 25, 2020
Staff Assigned: A. Holderbaum, J. Cross

Summary of Staff Recommendations (see discussion below):

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

Project Description and Need

AEP Ohio Transmission Company (Applicant) proposes to expand the existing South Canton 765 kilovolt (kV) Transmission Station fence line by approximately 20 percent. The fence is being upgraded to comply with AEP and industry standards and guidelines pertaining to public safety and security. The Applicant states the expansion is needed to bring the station up to current resiliency, safety, operational performance, and reliability standards.

The proposed facility was included in form FE-T8, characteristics of existing transmission lines of the Applicant's 2020 Long Term Forecast Report to the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio, filed in Case No. 20-1501-EL-FOR.¹

The Applicant anticipates that construction of this project would begin in the third quarter of 2020, and that the facility would be placed in service by June 2022. The total cost of the project is estimated at \$5,525,838.²

1. AEP Ohio Transmission Company, Inc., "Long-Term Forecast Report to the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio," Public Utilities Commission of Ohio Case No. 20-1501-EL-FOR, April 15, 2019.

2. The Applicant indicates that all of the cost of this project will be included in the Applicant's formula rate (i.e. the annual transmission revenue applicable under PJM Interconnection, LLC's (PJM) Open Access Transmission Tariff, Attachment H-20A) and would be assessed on all transmission customers within AEP East Transmission Companies.

Nature of Impacts

Land Use

The project is located just east of Interstate 77 on the north side of Brinker Street SW in Canton, Ohio. The surrounding area is made up of open space, forested land and agricultural land. The project is not located within any agricultural district lands. No residential structures are located within 100 feet of the project, and no structures would need to be removed to construct this project. There are no parks, churches, cemeteries, wildlife management areas, or nature preserve areas located within 500 feet of the project.

All work to be performed for this project is located on property owned by the Applicant. No additional easements are necessary to construct the project.

Cultural Resources

The Applicant's cultural resources consultant performed a literature review for the project. No cultural or historic resource were identified in the project area. The project would not involve or impact any significant cultural resources or landmarks. The findings were submitted to the Ohio Historic Preservation Office (OHPO). The OHPO responded to the consultant in concurrence that this project would have no adverse effects on historic properties and no further archaeological or cultural resource work is necessary. Staff agrees that no further cultural resource management work is necessary.

Surface Waters

The project area contains twenty-two wetlands, including two Category 1 wetlands and twenty Category 2 wetlands. Fourteen streams were identified within the project area, including one perennial stream, eleven ephemeral streams and two intermittent streams. No structures will be placed in surface water boundaries, no streams or wetlands would be crossed by construction equipment. No impacts to surface waters are anticipated for this project. The project does not cross a 100-year floodplain and no floodplain permit would be required.

Threatened and Endangered Species

The Applicant states 0.2 acres of tree clearing would be required for this project. The project area is within the range of 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, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recommend seasonal tree cutting dates of October 1 through March 31 for all trees three inches or greater in diameter. The ODNR and Staff recommend the Applicant follow the seasonal tree clearing guidelines in order to avoid impacts to these species.

Impacts to other state and federal listed species are not anticipated, due to no proposed in-water work and a lack of suitable habitats.

Recommended Findings

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 25, 2020, subject to the conditions below. 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.

Conditions:

- (1) The certificate authority provided in this case shall not exempt the facility from any other applicable and lawful local, state, or federal rules or regulations nor be used to affect the exercise of discretion of any other local, state, or federal permitting or licensing authority with regard to areas subject to their supervision or control.
- (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, unless coordination with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service allows a different course of action.
- (3) Prior to the commencement of construction activities in areas 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, on the case docket prior to commencement of construction.

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). 20-1026-EL-BLN

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