

BEFORE THE POWER SITING BOARD OF THE STATE OF OHIO

**In the Matter of the Letter of Notification Application by)
American Electric Power Ohio Transmission Company for a)
Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need) Case Number
for the Melmore-Tiffin Center 138 kV Line Improvement) 13-2009-EL-BLN
Project in Seneca County, Ohio.)**

Members of the Board:

Todd Snitchler, Chairman, PUCO
David Goodman, Director, ODSA
Dr. Ted Wymyslo, Director, ODH
David Daniels, Director, ODA
Craig Butler, Interim Director, Ohio EPA
Jim Zehringer, Director, ODNR
Jeffery J. Lechak, PE, Public Member

Peter Stautberg, State Representative
Sandra Williams, State Representative
Michael Skindell, State Senator
Bill Seitz, State Senator

To the Honorable Power Siting Board:

Please review the attached Staff Report of Investigation, which has been filed in accordance with the Board's rules. The applicant's accelerated certificate application in this case is subject to an automatic approval process as required by Section 4906.03 of the Ohio Revised Code.

Pursuant to 4906-5-02, et seq., Ohio Administrative Code, the time period required prior to automatic approval is being advanced for this application because Staff has completed its investigation prior to the automatic approval date.

The application will be automatically approved on January 15, 2014, unless suspended by the Board's chairperson, the executive director, or an administrative law judge. If suspended, the Board must render a decision on the application within 90 days.

The staff report includes recommended conditions of the certificate. Prior to the automatic approval date, the applicant must file a supplement to its application that adopts these conditions. Absent such supplement, Staff will recommend that the case be suspended.

Any concerns you or your representative may have with this case must be presented to the Executive Director of the Power Siting Board at least four business days prior to January 15, 2014, which is the automatic approval date. To contact the Executive Director with concerns, you can reply to the email to which this document was attached, or use the ContactOPSB email address listed below.

Sincerely,



Kim Wissman
Executive Director
Ohio Power Siting Board
(614) 466-6692
ContactOPSB@puc.state.oh.us

OPSB STAFF REPORT OF INVESTIGATION

Case Number: 13-2009-EL-BLN
Project Name: Melmore-Tiffin Center 138 kV Line Improvement Project
Project Location: Seneca County, Ohio
Applicant: American Electric Power Ohio Transmission Company
Application Filing Date: October 29, 2013
Filing Type: Letter of Notification
Inspection Date: December 18, 2013
Report Date: January 8, 2014
Automatic Approval Date: January 15, 2014
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: This project consists of replacing existing 138 kV structures between the Applicant's Tiffin Center Station and proposed Melmore Station structure for structure, for approximately 7.2 miles. The existing structures need to be replaced in order to reinforce the existing 138 kV circuit system and add a second 138 kV circuit. Existing structures consist of two pole wood H-frames and will be replaced with single pole steel structures to support the double circuit 138 kV line. The project is estimated to cost approximately \$6.1 million.

Site Description: All new structures will be located within existing transmission line right-of-way located in Seneca County, Ohio. Land use along the rebuild includes predominately residential, rural and agricultural uses with some newer light commercial complexes near the right-of-way. A laydown area has been designated for this project and the property will also function as a laydown yard for a concurrent 69 kV line project (non-jurisdictional to the OPSB) adjacent to this 138 kV line.

Need:

Facility Need

The proposed Melmore - Tiffin Center 138 kV Line Improvement Project is a baseline reliability upgrade approved by the PJM Interconnection (PJM) Board of Directors as a part of the Regional Transmission Expansion Plan (RTEP) to meet system reliability requirements. A PJM baseline reliability upgrade resolves a system reliability criteria violation, which was found by ATSI, North American Electric Reliability Corporation, or PJM planning criteria.

The proposed project will reinforce AEP's transmission system in parts of the Fremont-Fostoria area of Seneca County to accommodate growth in the region and maintain reliable transmission service in northwestern Ohio.

Long Term Forecast Report

The Ohio Administrative Code requires electric utilities and transmission owners to annually file a forecast report with the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO). The report requires a 10-year plan of committed or tentatively projected projects on the bulk power transmission network. The proposed transmission line project was identified in the 2013 *AEP Ohio Transmission Company's Long-Term Forecast Report to the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio*. The PUCO assigned this document case number 13-1501-EL-FOR.¹

PJM Regional Transmission Expansion Plan

PJM is the Regional Transmission Organization charged with planning for upgrades to the regional transmission system in Ohio. PJM annually issues the RTEP report. The RTEP 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.

The proposed project was identified as a baseline upgrade in the 2011 PJM RTEP² and approved by the PJM Board of Directors on September 19, 2011. The Applicant's project was assigned upgrade ID b1667. Status of the project can be tracked on PJM's website³.

Nature of Impacts:

The Applicant has proposed to re-construct the entire line within existing right-of-way. Therefore, potential impacts are expected to be largely confined to line stringing and construction access and should be temporary in nature. Aesthetic impacts are expected to be similar to the present, as there is an existing 138 kV circuit on H-frames along the entire length of right-of-way for this project.

The Applicant studied a 2,000 foot land-use corridor along the existing transmission line, and found that 18 parcels (belonging to 8 different land owners) within this study corridor are registered in the State of Ohio Agricultural District Land program. The majority of the route is located in areas comprised of agricultural, residential and commercial land uses. Some development has occurred near the right-of-way, but generally the area is rural in nature. The existing right-of-way has been maintained over the years. The Applicant will ensure that the project meets all National Electrical Safety Code standards for clearance between the line sag and any encroaching structures.

¹ AEP Ohio Transco 2013 LTFR. <http://dis.puc.state.oh.us/CaseRecord.aspx?CaseNo=13-1501-EL-FOR>

² PJM 2011 Regional Transmission Expansion Plan. February 28, 2013. p.224. Retrieved December 11, 2013, from <http://pjm.com/planning.aspx>

³ PJM Transmission Construction Status. <http://pjm.com/planning/rtep-upgrades-status/construct-status.aspx>

The Applicant had a Phase I archaeological survey performed for the route in October, 2013. Due primarily to the temporary nature of the access roads, limited structure replacement, and work within existing right-of-way, no additional archaeological survey work was recommended in the Phase I report. The Ohio Historic Preservation Office has concurred with this recommendation.

Conclusion:

The Applicant's utilization of existing right-of-way for the entire length of the project centerline minimizes potential adverse impacts. With the following conditions, the construction of this project should pose only minimal negative social and ecological impacts. Staff recommends automatic approval of this case on January 15, 2014.

Staff Recommended Conditions:

- (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;
- (2) The Applicant shall utilize best management practices when working in the vicinity of environmentally sensitive areas. This includes, but is not limited to, the installation of silt fencing (or similarly effective tool) prior to initiating construction near streams and wetlands. The installation shall be done in accordance with generally accepted construction methods and shall be inspected regularly;
- (3) The Applicant shall institute a public information program that informs affected property owners of the nature of the project, specific contact information for Applicant personnel who are familiar with the project, the proposed timeframe for project construction, and a schedule for restoration activities. Notification to property owners shall be given at least seven days prior to work on the affected property;
- (4) The Applicant shall adhere to seasonal cutting dates of October 1 and March 31 for removal of suitable Indiana bat habitat trees, if avoidance measures can not be achieved.

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Case No(s). 13-2009-EL-BLN

Summary: Report of investigation electronically filed by Mr. Adam S Bargar on behalf of Staff of OPSB