

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) Case Number
Public Need for the Ohio Central 345 kV Extension) 13-2036-EL-BLN
Project in Muskingum 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.

The application will be automatically approved on February 4, 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 February 4, 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: 13-2036-EL-BLN
Project Name: Ohio Central 345 kV Extension Project
Project Location: Muskingum County, Ohio
Applicant: American Electric Power Ohio Transmission Company
Application Filing Date: November 5, 2013
Filing Type: Letter of Notification
Inspection Date: January 14, 2014
Report Date: January 27, 2014
Automatic Approval Date: February 4, 2014
Waiver Requests: None
Staff Assigned: J. Pawley, G. Zeto, J Cross

Summary of Staff Recommendations (see discussion below):

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

Project Description: This project will consist of a new electric double-circuit transmission line loop from the existing Conesville-Bixby 345 kV transmission line to the Ohio Central substation. As part of this project, 25 steel pole structures will be installed on concrete foundations, and will range in height between 150-190 feet tall. The project is estimated to cost approximately \$9.1 million, and extends for approximately 2.19 miles. The line will be located directly adjacent to the existing Philo-Howard 138 kV right-of-way for over half of the length of the project. The Ohio Central substation was recently expanded under OPSB Case No. 13-0013-EL-BLN. Construction is anticipated to begin in March, 2014 with right-of-way clearing, and pole/foundation work beginning in June 2014. The anticipated in-service date of the line is September 24, 2014.

Site Description: The project is located immediately north of the AEP Dresden Energy Facility in Muskingum County, Ohio. Land use along the route includes predominately rural, residential and agricultural uses along or adjacent to the right-of-way. There are several industrial businesses in the area. An open gravel lot at the Dresden Energy Facility has been designated for the project as a laydown yard. No clearing or grading is needed at this laydown/storage site.

Nature of Impacts:

Social

The Applicant studied four candidate routes for the project, before selecting the proposed 2.19 mile route as proposed in this application. The route selection study was included in the filing, and analyzed various factors such as ecological, cultural, and land use impacts, as well as technical considerations. Aesthetic impacts are expected to be similar to the present, as this line

will parallel the existing right-of-way of an existing transmission line for over half of the length of the project. The project is also in close proximity to the Dresden Energy Facility and numerous existing transmission lines running out of the plant and nearby Ohio Central substation. The Applicant will ensure that the project meets all National Electrical Safety Code standards for clearance between the line sag and the numerous existing transmission lines in the area.

The Applicant had a literature review and Phase I archaeological field work performed for the route between September and October, 2013. One previously recorded and relocated site adjacent to Northpointe Drive was verified, but no new and previously unrecorded archaeological sites were identified. Phase II archaeological assessment of any unavoidable and impacted portions of this site (33MU929) was recommended to determine impacts resulting from this project.

Need:

Facility Need

The proposed Ohio Central 345kV Extension 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 AEP, North American Electric Reliability Corporation, or PJM planning criteria. The proposed Ohio Central 345 kV loop will relieve overloads in the Wooster and Zanesville area.

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.

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

The proposed project was identified as a baseline upgrade in the 2012 PJM RTEP² and approved by the PJM Board of Directors on June 14, 2012. The Applicant's project was assigned upgrade ID b2018. Status of the project can be tracked on PJM's website.³

Ecological Impacts:

Surface Waters

The electric transmission line r-o-w contains three intermittent streams and 14 ephemeral streams. Several streams would need to be crossed by construction equipment using timber mat bridges. No in-water work is proposed. The Applicant would not conduct mechanized clearing within 25 feet of any stream channel. Stumps would be left in place to help maintain bank stability. To further limit impacts to these streams, tree clearing, which would be conducted by hand, would be limited to those trees that are perceived as posing an imminent risk to the construction and operation of the facility.

The r-o-w also contains 8 wetlands with no high quality wetlands (Category 2/3 or Category 3) located along the route. Wetlands would be clearly staked prior to the commencement of any clearing in order to minimize incidental vehicle impacts. Operation of heavy mechanized equipment is not planned within any identified wetland, although some construction equipment would need to cross wetlands using timber matting. Selective hand-clearing would be required to remove woody vegetation in wetlands that may impede construction, or interfere with operation of the transmission line.

The Applicant would utilize best management practices (BMPs) to minimize impacts to surface waters. The proposed BMPs would be outlined in the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan and a copy would be provided to the Board's Staff. Staff also recommends that the Applicant be required to provide a final construction access plan for review prior to construction. The plan would consider the location of streams, wetlands, wooded areas, and explain how impacts to all sensitive resources would be avoided or minimized during construction, operation, and maintenance.

Threatened and Endangered Species

With the exception of the federal and state endangered Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*), no federal and state listed species and/or their suitable habitat would be impacted by this project. In order to avoid impacts to the Indiana bat, the Applicant would adhere to seasonal cutting dates of October 1 and March 31 for removal of suitable Indiana bat habitat trees, if avoidance measures cannot be achieved.

Conclusion:

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 February 4, 2014.

² PJM 2012 Regional Transmission Expansion Plan. February 28, 2013. p.329. Retrieved January 3, 2014, from <http://pjm.com/planning.aspx>

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

Staff Recommended Conditions:

- (1) Prior to construction, the Applicant shall obtain and comply with all applicable permits and authorizations as required by Federal and State entities for any activities where such permit or authorization is required, including any permits necessary for aviation clearance. Copies of such permits and authorizations, including all supporting documentation shall be provided to Staff;
- (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 will coordinate with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and Staff to determine if prehistoric Site 33MU929 will be impacted by this project, and if Phase II fieldwork will be needed where impacts might be unavoidable;
- (5) 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;
- (6) The Applicant shall not conduct mechanized clearing within 25 feet of any stream channel;
- (7) The Applicant shall submit to the Staff, for review and approval, a final project construction access plan prior to construction. This plan shall include all laydown areas, residential and environmentally sensitive area access points (walk in locations only), and any locations where vegetation clearing is required.

This foregoing document was electronically filed with the Public Utilities

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in

Case No(s). 13-2036-EL-BLN

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