

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 Bixby-Groves 138 kV Transmission ) 14-0142-EL-BLN  
Line Rebuild Project in Franklin County, Ohio. )**

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 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 **June 30, 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 **June 30, 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,



Patrick Donlon  
Interim Executive Director  
Ohio Power Siting Board  
(614) 466-6692  
[ContactOPSB@puc.state.oh.us](mailto:ContactOPSB@puc.state.oh.us)

## OPSB STAFF REPORT OF INVESTIGATION

**Case Number:** 14-0142-EL-BLN  
**Project Name:** Bixby-Groves 138 kV Transmission Line Rebuild Project  
**Project Location:** Franklin County  
**Applicant:** American Electric Power Ohio Transmission Company  
**Application Filing Date:** March 31, 2014  
**Filing Type:** Letter of Notification  
**Inspection Dates:** May 22, 2014 & June 12, 2014  
**Report Date:** June 20, 2014  
**Automatic Approval Date:** June 30, 2014  
**Applicant's Waiver Requests:** None  
**Staff Assigned:** J. Pawley, J. Cross, C. Burri, A. Holderbaum

### Summary of Staff Recommendations (see discussion below):

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

### Project Description

The purpose of this project is to rebuild the existing 138 kilovolt (kV) transmission line between the Bixby Substation and Groves Substation. The total length of the rebuilt transmission line is approximately 4.4 miles, replacing 37 existing structures (19 steel monopole structures and 18 steel lattice tower structures) with 26 new steel monopole structures. The cost of the overall project is estimated at \$9.4 million. Construction of the rebuild project is expected to commence September 1, 2014, and be completed by June 1, 2015.

### Site Description

The project centerline is located on existing AEP easements in the city of Columbus and the city of Groveport, and unincorporated areas of Franklin County. Some landowner permissions and roadway permits will be needed for access to existing structures in order to minimize impacts to drainage ways, wetlands, etc. All impacted land owners and applicable public officials have been notified of the project. Significant crossings include U.S. Highway 33, Interstate 270, Winchester Pike, Blacklick Creek, Big Walnut Creek, and Mason Run.

### Need

#### *Facility Need*

The proposed 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 project will maintain and improve the quality of electric service and reliability in Central Ohio.

### *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 Regional Transmission Expansion Plan (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 2009 PJM RTEP<sup>1</sup> and approved by the PJM Board of Directors. The Applicant's project was assigned upgrade ID b1048. Status of the project can be tracked on PJM's website.<sup>2</sup>

### **Nature of Impacts**

#### *Social*

The Applicant has proposed to construct the entire line within existing right-of-way. Therefore, potential impacts are expected to be largely confined to construction access and should be temporary in nature. Adjacent residential aesthetic impacts are expected to be similar to present conditions, as there is an existing 138 kV transmission line located within the 100-foot right-of-way for the entire length of the project.

There were no Agricultural District parcels identified in the project limits and minimal agricultural field crossing.

The Applicant had a Phase I archaeological survey performed for the route in December 2013. Due primarily to the temporary nature of the access roads, replacement of existing structures, and work within the existing right-of-way, no additional archaeological survey work was recommended in the Phase I report. In January 2014, the State Historical Preservation Office concurred with this recommendation.

#### *Surface Waters*

No temporary or permanent impacts to project area streams are anticipated. No in-water work is proposed, and no stream crossings would be necessary. No permanent impacts to wetlands are anticipated for the proposed project. Two wetlands would be temporarily crossed using timber matting to ensure that wetland impacts would be minimized during stringing and structure replacement activities.

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

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<sup>1</sup> PJM 2009 Regional Transmission Expansion Plan. p.294. Retrieved April 17, 2014, from <http://pjm.com/planning.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> PJM Transmission Construction Status. <http://pjm.com/planning/rtep-upgrades-status/construct-status.aspx>

required to provide a construction access plan for review prior to the preconstruction conference. The plan would consider the location of streams, wetlands, wooded areas, and park lands and explain how impacts to all sensitive resources would be avoided or minimized during construction, operation, and maintenance.

The Applicant anticipates submitting a Notice of Intent for coverage under the Ohio EPA General National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit.

### *Threatened and Endangered Species*

The federal and state listed species and/or suitable habitat that may be found in the project area include the following species: Indiana bat and upland sandpiper.

In order to reduce potential impacts to the Indiana bat, Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and Staff recommend that the Applicant be required to adhere to seasonal clearing dates of October 1 through March 31 for the clearing of trees that exhibit suitable Indiana bat habitat unless coordination efforts with the ODNR and the USFWS reflects a different course of action (e.g.; an authorized deviation from seasonal tree cutting dates for a period of time). The project right-of-way has been previously cleared for maintenance. Indiana bat habitat trees were cleared for maintenance during the seasonal clearing dates of October 1 through March 31. The Applicant does not anticipate any additional clearing as part of this project.

ODNR stated that the project is within the range of the upland sandpiper, a state endangered bird. Nesting upland sandpipers utilize dry grasslands including native grasslands, seeded grasslands, grazed and ungrazed pasture, hayfields, and grasslands established through the Conservation Reserve Program. If this type of habitat would be impacted, ODNR and Staff recommend that construction must be avoided in this habitat during the species' nesting period of April 15 to July 31. In response to ODNR's comments and Staff's data requests, the Applicant has committed to completing a presence / absence survey for the upland sandpiper in areas of suitable habitat. The Applicant would provide Staff with the results of the survey. Based on the results of the survey, the Applicant would minimize any impacts to the upland sandpiper by avoiding areas of suitable habitat during the species' nesting period of April 15 to July 31.

### *Ecologically-Sensitive Areas*

The project route crosses through Three Creeks Metro Park, within the existing transmission line right-of-way. In response to Staff's data requests, the Applicant has stated that there has been coordination with park staff. There would be no impacts to the park beyond temporary construction noise and traffic.

The proposed project is within three 100-year floodplain areas: Blacklick Creek, Big Walnut Creek, and Mason Run. In response to Staff's data requests, the Applicant is coordinating with the Groveport local floodplain administrator.

## **Conclusion**

The Applicant's utilization of existing right-of-way for the entire length of the project significantly 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 June 30, 2014.

**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. Copies of such permits and authorizations, including all supporting documentation shall be provided to Staff;
2. The Applicant shall submit results of the upland sandpiper presence / absence survey to Staff. Based on survey results, the Applicant shall avoid areas of suitable habitat during the species' nesting period of April 15 to July 31;
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.

**This foregoing document was electronically filed with the Public Utilities**

**Commission of Ohio Docketing Information System on**

**6/20/2014 1:09:30 PM**

**in**

**Case No(s). 14-0142-EL-BLN**

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