

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, Inc. for the Windfall Switch-North Waldo** ) **16-1775-EL-BLN**  
**138 kV Transmission Line 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 Section 4906.03 of the Ohio Revised Code.

The application will be recommended for automatic approval on February 1, 2017 unless suspended by the Board's chairperson or an administrative law judge. 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 February 1, 2017, which is the automatic approval date.

Sincerely,



Patrick Donlon  
Director, Rates and Analysis  
Public Utilities Commission of Ohio  
180 East Broad Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215  
(614) 644-8932

## OPSB STAFF REPORT OF INVESTIGATION

**Case Number:** 16-1775-EL-BLN  
**Project Name:** Windfall Switch-North Waldo 138 kV Transmission Line Project  
**Project Location:** Marion County  
**Applicant:** AEP Ohio Transmission Company, Inc.  
**Application Filing Date:** November 2, 2016  
**Filing Type:** Letter of Notification  
**Inspection Date:** January 6, 2017  
**Report Date:** January 25, 2017  
**Recommended Automatic Approval Date:** February 1, 2017  
**Applicant's Waiver Requests:** None  
**Staff Assigned:** J. Pawley, J. Cross, 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 portion of the Mount Vernon to South Kenton 138 kilovolt (kV) transmission line that extends from the Windfall Switch Station to the North Waldo Substation. The total length of this rebuild project is approximately 3.8 miles. Thirty-three existing wood H-frame structures would be replaced by steel structures (single pole, three pole, and H-frame). The rebuild project would also include the installation of new 138 kV conductors. The transmission line project would be built concurrent with the Fulton-Windfall project (see case number 16-1774-EL-BLN). The cost of this portion of the rebuild project is estimated at \$8.9 million. Construction is expected to commence in November 2018 and be completed by December 2020.

### Site Description

The 138 kV transmission line rebuild project is proposed entirely within existing AEP Ohio Transmission Company (AEP Ohio Transco) right-of-way in Marion County. The Applicant states that agreements have been reached with adjacent property owners to access the existing right-of-way, and that no additional easements, options, or other land use agreements would be needed for construction of this project. All land owners and applicable public officials have been notified of the project. Significant crossings for this project would include various state, township, and county roads, as well as the Olentangy River.

## **Basis of Need**

The Applicant states the Windfall Switch-North Waldo 138 kV project is needed to meet system reliability requirements in north central Ohio. Without the proposed project, the Applicant may be unable to comply with the required North American Electric Reliability Corporation and PJM planning criteria, making the system unstable and unreliable.

PJM Interconnection (PJM) assigned upgrade ID Number s1201 to the Applicant's project. The status of the proposed project can be tracked on PJM's website.<sup>1</sup> The proposed project would allow the transmission system to provide safe, reliable electric service, while meeting all the applicable planning criteria.

## **Nature of Impacts**

### *Social/Land Use*

The Applicant has indicated that the new transmission line would be rebuilt within existing right-of-way, which would greatly minimize land use impacts. Potential impacts include access, pole replacement, and line stringing, and should be temporary in nature.

Post construction residential aesthetic impacts would be similar to present conditions, because there is an existing 138 kV transmission line in place. Land use along the transmission line right-of-way predominately consists of open areas, agricultural fields consisting of primarily cultivated crops and a golf course. Five parcels crossed by the project are registered with Marion County as agricultural district lands. The land use of these parcels would not change, however, as there is an existing transmission line present.

Several residences located along the transmission line rebuild, as well as the golf course, would likely experience temporary disturbances from construction, access, and line stringing. There are currently 31 occupied residences located within 1,000 feet of the centerline of the project. Two churches and three cemeteries are also located within 1,000 feet of the centerline of the project. One church presently has a wood H-frame structure located in the parking area for the existing transmission line. The Applicant is exploring ways to span this parking lot with the new transmission line, removing the wood H-frame structure from the parking area. No schools, parks, preserves, or wildlife management areas are located within 1,000 feet of the centerline of the project.

The Applicant had a phase I cultural resources survey performed for the rebuild project between March and May 2016 and supplemented in August 2016. A copy of the phase I reports and recommendations were included with the application. The Applicant's cultural resources consultant concluded that no historic properties would be adversely affected by this project, and that no further cultural resource management work is considered necessary for this project, unless there are changes to the current plans.

### *Surface Waters*

The electric transmission line right-of-way contains one stream crossing (Olentangy River). The Olentangy River would be aerial spanned by the transmission line and no structures would be placed within the river. The Applicant would avoid in-water work in the Olentangy River.

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<sup>1</sup> "Transmission Construction Status," PJM Interconnection, accessed January 19, 2017, <http://pjm.com/planning/rtep-upgrades-status/construct-status.aspx>.

However, since the existing and replacement transmission line cross the Olentangy River, the Applicant is evaluating the potential need for a Section 10 Permit and has committed to coordinating with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), as necessary.

The right-of-way does not contain any wetlands. One pole and an access road would be replaced within the Olentangy River floodplain. The Applicant is evaluating the potential need for a floodplain permit at this location and has committed to coordinating with the Marion County Floodplain Administrator, as necessary.

The Applicant would submit a Notice of Intent for coverage under the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency General National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit.

#### *Threatened and Endangered Species*

State and federally listed species and/or suitable habitat that may be found in the project area include the Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*) and the northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*). The Ohio Department of Natural Resources and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service recommends that the Applicant adhere to the seasonal tree clearing restriction dates between October 1 and March 31 for all necessary tree clearing.

The project lies within the range of the federally threatened and state endangered eastern massasauga (*Sistrurus catenatus catenatus*). Due to the location and the type of work involved, no impacts to this species are anticipated.

The project lies within the range of the federally and state endangered rayed bean (*Villosa fabalis*), snuffbox (*Epioblasma triquetra*) and clubshell (*Pleurobema clava*), the state endangered rabbitsfoot (*Quadrula cylindrical cylindrical*), and the state threatened pondhorn (*Uniomerus tetralasmus*). Due to the fact that there is no in-water work planned in perennial streams for the project, no impacts to these species are anticipated.

#### **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 case on February 1, 2017, provided that the following conditions are satisfied.

#### **Conditions**

1. The Applicant shall obtain and comply with all applicable permits and authorizations as required by federal and state laws and regulations for any activities where such permit or authorization is required, including floodplain permits and/or Section 10 river crossing permit, as deemed necessary. Copies of such permits and authorizations, including all supporting documentation, shall be provided to Staff.
2. The Applicant shall adhere to seasonal cutting dates of October 1 through March 31 for the removal of any trees greater than three inches in diameter, unless coordination efforts with the ODNR and the USFWS reflect a different course of action.
3. The Applicant shall avoid, where possible, any damage to field drainage systems resulting from construction of the facility in agricultural areas. Damaged systems shall be repaired to at least original conditions at Applicant's expense. Severely compacted soils shall be

plowed, if necessary, or otherwise reconditioned if necessary in order to restore them to original condition.

4. 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, including the golf course crossed by this project, 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**

**1/25/2017 11:51:35 AM**

**in**

**Case No(s). 16-1775-EL-BLN**

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