

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 Lemaster 138 kV Substation) **16-2314-EL-BLN**
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 March 22, 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 March 22, 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: 16-2314-EL-BLN
Project Name: Lemaster 138 kV Substation Project
Project Location: Athens County
Applicant: AEP Ohio Transmission Company, Inc.
Application Filing Date: December 21, 2016
Filing Type: Letter of Notification
Inspection Date: March 3, 2017
Report Date: March 15, 2017
Recommended Automatic Approval Date: March 22, 2017
Applicant's 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

AEP Ohio Transmission Company, Inc. (Applicant) proposes to construct a new 138 kilovolt (kV) transmission substation to replace the existing Poston Substation. The Poston Substation, which will be retired and removed, has been subject to flooding in the past, posing a safety concern. The existing substation site also increases the difficulty of maintaining and repairing aging equipment that was installed in the 1940's and 50's. This equipment no longer complies with the Applicant's safety standards. The drivers for replacement of the equipment are age, dielectric strength breakdown, short circuit strength breakdown, and accessory damage. The new substation site would be located on approximately 5 acres and cost approximately \$13 million to construct. The substation would consist of one 138 kV to 12 kV transformer, four breaker strings, ten 138 kV breakers, two 138 kV capacitor banks, and a control building. The Applicant proposes to commence construction in May 2017 and place the new substation in service by June 2018.

Site Description

The project is located in York Township, Athens County, adjacent to the Poston Substation site along Poston Road (County Road 110) near the intersection with State Route 691. The Applicant intends to acquire the 5-acre substation site from a 22-acre parcel owned by the Athens County Port Authority. The Applicant would also purchase an additional easement for an access road to the site. No other property acquisition or easements would be required to construct and operate the new substation. The footprint of the substation site is presently open field, undeveloped and non-forested. There are six transmission lines that currently tie into the existing Poston Substation, portions of which will ultimately need to be relocated in order to tie into the new substation. The

Applicant will file separate applications with the Ohio Power Siting Board for those six transmission line tie-ins.

Nature of Impacts

Land Use

The substation would be confined to a single parcel. There are no residences within 1,000 feet of the substation, with the nearest residences being approximately 1,500 feet west of the substation site. The land use of the site consists of non-forested grassland, with no Agricultural District land present. There are no cemeteries, churches, schools, or other community facilities located within 1,000 feet of the substation site. A water filtration plant is located approximately 0.5 miles to the northeast of the site.

Cultural Resources

The Applicant performed a literature review and Phase I cultural resource management investigation for the project in October 2016. The investigation was performed for the entire 22-acre Athens County Port Authority property. The literature review identified no previously recorded archaeological sites on the station site, and one previously recorded architectural site (the EM Poston Generating Station), which is located adjacent to the project area. The Applicant's cultural resources consultant indicated that the generating station is not regarded as being a significant cultural resource.

The Phase I field work led to a determination that the majority of the project area has been previously severely altered and disturbed. Field studies did reveal one archaeological site on the western portion of the overall 22 acre site, however. The consultant recommends that this site either be avoided or that a Phase II archaeological assessment be performed. Since the outline of the 5-acre Lemaster Substation would not impact this site (Site 33AT1057 is located approximately 800 feet west of the substation fence layout), Staff recommends the Applicant avoid this site and place visible fencing between the substation project site and Site 33AT1057 to avoid accidental construction disturbance. The consultant has recommended that if Site 33AT1057 is avoided, no further cultural resources work is considered to be necessary for this project.

Surface Waters

Four streams are located within the vicinity of the project area, including three intermittent streams and one ephemeral stream. None of the streams are located within the footprint of the proposed substation and no in-water work is proposed. No wetlands were identified within the proposed project area. The Applicant anticipates submitting Notice of Intent for coverage under Ohio Environmental Protection Agency General National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System.

Threatened and Endangered Species

The project lies within the range of the federal and state endangered Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*) and federal threatened northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*). Indiana bat presence in the vicinity of the project has been confirmed. As tree roosting species, these species may be impacted by tree clearing during the summer months. Tree clearing is not anticipated, however the Applicant has committed to only clearing from October 1 through March 31 if tree clearing becomes necessary. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service states that if any caves or abandoned mines may be disturbed, further coordination with their office is requested to determine if fall or spring

portal surveys are warranted. Due to the fact that no in-water work is required and that there is a lack of suitable habitat, impacts to other federal and state listed species are not 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 March 22, 2017 provided that the following conditions are satisfied.

Conditions

- 1) Prior to construction in areas that require permits, the Applicant shall obtain and comply with all applicable permits and authorizations as required by federal and state entities. Copies of such permits and authorizations, including all supporting documentation, shall be provided to Staff to ensure compliance with this condition.
- 2) If any caves or abandoned mines may be disturbed, the Applicant shall coordinate with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to determine if fall or spring portal surveys are warranted.
- 3) The Applicant shall avoid archaeological site 33AT1057 during construction and operation of the substation facility. The Applicant shall install visible fencing west of the substation site to protect the site from construction equipment.

This foregoing document was electronically filed with the Public Utilities

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Case No(s). 16-2314-EL-BLN

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