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BEFORE THE POWER SITING BOARD OF THE STATE OF OHIO

In the Matter of the Letter of Notification Application)
of AEP Ohio Transmission Company for the)
Lemaster-Harrison 138 kV Transmission Line) Case No. 17-0631-EL-BLN
Relocation 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 July 3, 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 July 3, 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

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OPSB STAFF REPORT OF INVESTIGATION

Case Number: 17-0631-EL-BLN
Project Name: Lemaster-Harrison 138 kV Transmission Line Relocation Project
Project Location: Athens County
Applicant: AEP Ohio Transmission Company
Application Filing Date: April 3, 2017
Filing Type: Letter of Notification
Inspection Date: June 9, 2017
Report Date: June 23, 2017
Recommended Automatic Approval Date: July 3, 2017
Applicant's 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

AEP Ohio Transmission Company, Inc. (AEP Ohio Transco or Applicant) proposes to remove approximately 0.3 miles of existing Poston-Harrison 138 kilovolt (kV) transmission line and reroute approximately 0.3 miles of new Lemaster-Harrison 138 kV transmission line. This reroute is required because the existing Poston Substation is being removed and the lines relocated to the replacement Lemaster Substation on an adjacent parcel. The Lemaster Substation was approved in Case No. 16-2314-EL-BLN. The Poston Substation, which is in the process of being retired and removed, has been subject to flooding in the past, posing a safety concern. The Applicant anticipates that construction of the project would begin in September 2017 and the facility would be placed in service by June 2018. The estimated total cost of the project is \$1 million.

Basis of Need

AEP Ohio Transco states the Project is needed due to the planned retirement and removal of the Poston Substation. The Poston Substation was constructed in a floodplain and contains equipment which was installed in the 1940s and 1950s and no longer complies with AEP Ohio Transco safety standards. The retirement of the Poston Substation will require the relocation of several transmission lines to the Lemaster Substation.¹

1. *In the matter of the Letter of Notification Application of AEP Ohio Transmission Company, Inc. for the Lemaster 138 kV Station Project*, Case No. 16-2314-EL-BLN, December 21, 2016.

Long Term Forecast

The Ohio Administrative Code requires electric utilities and transmission owners annually to file a forecast report with the PUCO.² The report requires a 10-year plan of committed or tentatively projected projects on the bulk power transmission network. The Applicant identified the need for the proposed transmission line project in the *2017 AEP Ohio Transmission Company Long-Term Forecast Report to the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio*.³

PJM Interconnection

The Applicant submitted the proposed project to the PJM Interconnection (PJM) Subregional Regional Transmission Expansion Plan (RTEP) Committee on May 31, 2017.⁴ The project was submitted as a baseline project. The proposed line would be relocated to the Lemaster Substation. AEP Ohio Transco's project was assigned ID No. b2888. The status of the project can be tracked on PJM's website.⁵

Socioeconomic Impacts

The surrounding land use is a mix of old field, deciduous forest, and utility right-of way. There are no agricultural district parcels located in the project area. No residences, churches, schools, parks, preserves, or wildlife management areas are located within 1,000 feet of the project. The proposed transmission line removal would consist of removing two H-frame pole structures and one guyed three-pole structure, and would occur on land owned by the Applicant. All but a small portion of the proposed transmission line would occur on land owned by the Applicant, and would consist of installing four new steel pole structures. A section of the proposed transmission line crosses land owned by the Athens Country Port Authority. The Applicant has secured an option to purchase this property, as it is also the site of the new Lemaster Substation.

Cultural Resources

The Applicant's cultural resources consultant performed a literature review and Phase I cultural resource management investigation for the project in February and March 2017. The investigation was performed for the existing and new transmission line corridors. A 100-foot survey corridor was studied, and it was determined that the majority of the project area has been previously severely altered and disturbed. However, field studies did reveal one archaeological site on the western portion of the new substation site. Since the transmission line would enter the Lemaster Substation from the north, there would be no impact to this site (Site 33AT1057 is located approximately 800 feet west of the substation fence layout). The consultant has determined that the project would not involve or impact any significant cultural resources or landmarks, and that no further cultural resource management work is considered to be necessary.

2. Ohio Adm.Code 4901:5-5.

3. AEP Ohio Transmission Company "Long-Term Forecast Report to the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio," Case No. 17-1501-EL-FOR, April 17, 2017.

4. "5.31.2017 - Sub Regional RTEP Committee - Western Meeting," *PJM Interconnection*, accessed June 13, 2017, <http://pjm.com/committees-and-groups/committees/srrtep-w.aspx>

5. "Transmission Construction Status," *PJM Interconnection*, accessed June 13, 2017, <http://pjm.com/planning/rtep-upgrades-status/construct-status.aspx>.

Ecological Impacts

Surface Waters

The survey corridor does not contain any streams. No in-water work is planned in any streams, and no impacts are anticipated.

The survey corridor contains three wetlands totaling 0.8 acre. These include two Category 1 wetlands and one Category 2 wetland. None of the replacement structures would be located within wetlands, and no wetland fill is proposed for the project. Any equipment crossing required during construction would be accomplished using timber mats.

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

The project does not cross a 100-year floodplain and no floodplain permit would be required.

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.

Given a lack of suitable habitat and the fact that no in-water work would occur, impacts to other state and federal 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 July 3, 2017, provided that the following conditions are satisfied.

Conditions:

- (1) Prior to the commencement of construction activities in areas 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 adhere to seasonal cutting dates of October 1 through March 31 for removal of any trees three inches or greater in diameter, unless coordination efforts with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service allows a different course of action.