

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-West Lancaster 138 kV Transmission Line)
Extension Project Update)
Case No. 17-2438-EL-BLN

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 Ohio Revised Code (R.C.) 4906.03 and Ohio Administrative Code 4906-6.

Staff recommends the application for automatic approval on January 9, 2018, unless suspended by the Board, an administrative law judge, or the chairperson or executive director of the board for good cause shown. 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 January 9, 2018, which is the recommended automatic approval date.

Sincerely,



Tamara S. Turkenton
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: 17-2438-EL-BLN
Project Name: Lemaster-West Lancaster 138 kV Transmission Line Extension Project Update
Project Location: Athens County
Applicant: AEP Ohio Transmission Company
Application Filing Date: December 11, 2017
Filing Type: Expedited Letter of Notification
Inspection Date: December 8, 2017
Report Date: January 2, 2018
Recommended Automatic Approval Date: January 9, 2018
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. (AEP Ohio Transco or Applicant) proposes to remove approximately 0.31 miles of existing Poston-West Lancaster 138 kilovolt (kV) Transmission Line and reroute 0.4 miles of new Lemaster-West Lancaster 138 kV Transmission Line. This reroute is required because the existing Poston Substation is being removed and the transmission line needs to be relocated to the replacement Lemaster Substation, which is under construction. The Lemaster Substation was approved in Case No. 16-2314-EL-BLN, and an updated layout was approved in Case No. 17-2281-EL-BLN. A realignment of the Lemaster-West Lancaster 138 kV Transmission Line was originally approved in April 2017 in Case No. 17-0632-EL-BLN. This filing updates and supersedes the original approval in Case No. 17-0632-EL-BLN to align with the updated Lemaster Substation layout.

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. The proposed transmission line would be constructed on land owned by the Applicant, and would include the installation of four new steel pole structures. The Applicant anticipates that construction of the project would begin in January 2018, and the facility would be placed in service by September 2018. The estimated total cost of the project is \$1 million.

Basis of Need

The Applicant states the project is needed due to the retirement and removal of the Poston Substation and its replacement with the new Lemaster Substation, which is currently under construction.¹ The planned project was included in the Applicant's most recent Long-Term Forecast Report filing, Case No. 17-1501-EL-FOR. Additionally, PJM Interconnection, LLC (PJM) approved this project as a baseline project. PJM assigned the project upgrade ID No. b2888. The status of the project can be tracked on PJM's website.^{2, 3}

Nature of Impacts

Socioeconomic

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 Applicant states that no property acquisition or easements are required to construct and operate the proposed transmission line extension.

A public comment regarding a watermain was filed in the case docket on December 12, 2017. This letter was from an engineer with the Le-Ax Water District and expressed concern over potential damage to an underground watermain located to the south of the Lemaster Substation. In order to assure damage to the watermain is avoided, Staff recommends the Applicant use timber matting in the event that construction equipment or facility component deliveries would cross the watermain where a paved road does not already exist.

Cultural Resources

The Applicant's cultural resources consultant performed and filed a literature review and Phase I cultural resource management investigation for the original project (Case No. 17-0632-EL-BLN) in February and March 2017. Additional studies were performed and filed for the new substation layout and 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. Original field studies did reveal one archaeological site on the western portion of the substation site. Because the transmission line would enter the Lemaster Substation from the north, there would be no impact to this site (Site 33AT1057 is located over 1,200 feet west of the updated 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.

Surface Waters

The survey corridor, which includes the entire project area, does not contain any streams. No in-water work is planned in any streams, and no impacts are anticipated.

1. In the matter of the Letter of Notification Application of AEP Ohio Transmission Company, Inc. for the Lemaster 138 kV Station Update Project, Case No. 17-2281-EL-BLN, (Staff Report)(December 5, 2017)

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

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

The survey corridor contains three wetlands totaling 0.6 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 plans to 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 the 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 clearing only 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 federal and state listed species are not anticipated.

Conclusion

Staff's review of the application included consideration of the requirements listed in R.C. 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 January 9, 2018, 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) 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.
- (3) The Applicant shall use timber matting in the event that construction equipment or facility component deliveries cross the watermain, which was identified in the December 12, 2017 public comment, where a paved road does not already exist.

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in

Case No(s). 17-2438-EL-BLN

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