

BEFORE THE POWER SITING BOARD OF THE STATE OF OHIO

In the Matter of the Letter of Notification Application)
of American Electric Power Ohio Transmission)
Company for a Certificate of Environmental) **Case No. 19-0043-EL-BLN**
Compatibility and Public Need for the Gristmill-Gemini)
138 kV Transmission 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 Ohio Revised Code (R.C.) 4906.03 and Ohio Administrative Code (Ohio Adm.Code) 4906-6.

Staff recommends the application for automatic approval on April 23, 2019, 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 April 23, 2019, which is the recommended automatic approval date.

Sincerely,



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OPSB STAFF REPORT OF INVESTIGATION

Case Number: 19-0043-EL-BLN
Project Name: Gristmill-Gemini 138 kV Transmission Project
Project Location: Auglaize County
Applicant: American Electric Power Ohio Transmission Company
Application Filing Date: January 22, 2019
Filing Type: Letter of Notification
Inspection Date: March 29, 2019
Report Date: April 16, 2019
Recommended Automatic Approval Date: April 23, 2019
Applicant's Waiver Requests: none
Staff Assigned: J. Pawley, J. Cross, R. 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 provide a new 345/138 kilovolt (kV) stepdown substation (Gristmill Substation), a 4-mile long 138 kV transmission line (Gristmill-Gemini), and a 0.25-mile long extension of the 345 kV Southwest Lima-Miami transmission line to the Gristmill Substation.

This project would function as the electric supply to the previously approved Gemini Substation (Case No. 18-1637-EL-BLN), which is being developed to provide a new electric delivery point for an existing wholesale customer, the city of Wapakoneta.

The Applicant held a public open house in July 2018 regarding the project in coordination with the City of Wapakoneta (City). The Applicant anticipates that construction of this project would begin in the fourth quarter of 2019, and that the facility would be placed in service by July 2020. The cost of the project is estimated at \$33 million.

Basis of Need

The purpose of these projects is to bolster the areas transmission system for economic development efforts led by the City of Wapakoneta. Specifically, the projects will allow the City to bolster electrical service for a developing industrial center. The transmission lines would provide energy

to the Gristmill Station and connect the Gristmill Station to the previously approved Gemini Station.¹

This project was included in the Applicant's most recent Long-Term Forecast Report filing, Case No. 18-1501-EL-FOR, and was submitted to PJM Interconnection, LLC (PJM) as a supplemental project. The Project has yet to be issued a supplemental PJM upgrade ID. Upon issuance of the upgrade ID, the construction status of transmission project could then be tracked on PJM's website.^{2, 3}

Nature of Impacts

Land Use

The Gristmill Substation would be located on a greenfield site along the north side of Wapak Fisher Road, between Brown Road and Town Line Lima Road. The portion of this property to be purchased by AEP Ohio Transco would be 17 acres in size. The Applicant states that the fenceline for the substation would enclose an area of approximately 5 acres. The 345 kV transmission line extension would be located in existing right-of-way and in the 17 acre parcel to be purchased by AEP Ohio Transco. The new 138 kV transmission line would be located on entirely new right-of-way between the Gristmill and Gemini Substations.

The 138 kV transmission line portion of the project would cross approximately 18 acres of agricultural district lands. Twenty-two homes were identified within 1,000 feet of the project. One residence, listed as being owned by the City of Wapakoneta, is located 51 feet from the centerline of the Gristmill-Gemini transmission line. The Applicant states that this residence is currently being rented. The remaining 21 residences are located between 158 and 926 feet of the proposed centerline. No parks, schools, churches, wildlife management areas, or nature preserves are located within 1,000 feet of the project. One cemetery is located approximately 650 feet southwest of the proposed transmission line route along Cemetery Road.

Cultural Resources

The Applicant's cultural resources consultant performed a literature review and Phase I cultural resource management investigation (archaeology and history/architecture) for the project. The consultant determined that the project would not involve nor impact any significant cultural resources or landmarks, and that no further cultural resource management work was considered to be necessary. The findings were submitted to the Ohio Historic Preservation Office (OHPO). The OHPO responded to the consultant in concurrence that this project would not affect historic properties.

Surface Waters

One Category 1 wetland was identified within the project area. Three streams were identified within the project area including two intermittent streams and one ephemeral stream. One pond was identified within the project area. No structures would be placed in any of these resources. All

1. *In the Matter of the Letter of Notification Application for the Gemini Station 138 kV Substation Project*, Case No. 18-1637-EL-BLN, (Staff Report)(December 11, 2018)

2. AEP Ohio Transmission Company, "Long-Term Forecast Report to the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio," Public Utilities Commission of Ohio Case No. 18-1501-EL-FOR, April 24, 2018.

3. "Transmission Construction Status," PJM Interconnection website <http://pjm.com/planning/rtep-upgrades-status/construct-status.aspx>.

three streams and the pond would be spanned by the proposed transmission line. None of these resources would be crossed by construction vehicles. The project would not occur within a Federal Emergency Management Agency 100-year floodplain.

The Applicant stated that it will submit a Notice of Intent to the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency for authorization of construction stormwater discharges under the General Permit OHCD000005.

Threatened and Endangered Species

The project area is within the range of the federal and state endangered Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*), and the federal threatened northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*). As tree roosting species in the summer months, the habitat of these species may be impacted by the project. Presence of the Indiana bat has been established in the area east of Dixie Highway and south of Weimert School Road, and therefore additional summer surveys would not constitute presence/absence in the area of the project east of Dixie Highway and south of Weimert School Road. The Applicant states that 2.03 acres of tree clearing is anticipated for the project. In order to avoid impacts to the Indiana bat and the northern long-eared bat, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Staff recommend the Applicant adhere to seasonal tree cutting dates of October 1 through March 31 for removal of any trees greater than or equal to three inches in diameter.

The project lies within the range of several listed mussel and fish species, including the state threatened greater redhorse (*Moxostoma valenciennesi*). Due to no in-water work proposed for the project, no impacts to these species are anticipated.

The project lies within the range of the state endangered lark sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*). This species nests in grassland habitats with scattered shrub layers, disturbed open areas, as well as patched bare soil. These summer residents normally migrate out of Ohio shortly after their young fledge or leave the nest. If this type of habitat would be impacted, construction should be avoided in this habitat during the species' nesting period of May 1 to June 30. Due to the lack of suitable habitat along the project area and the type of work proposed, no impacts to this species are anticipated.

A known record of a great blue heron rookery lies within the project boundary. Nesting great blue herons are protected under the Migratory Bird Treat Act of 1918. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Wildlife recommends a 100-yard wide no activity buffer be maintained around the rookery during the breeding season in order to avoid impacts to great blue herons. Due to the project being three miles away from the rookery and thus beyond the 100-yard wide buffer, no impacts to this species are 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. Subject to the following conditions, Staff recommends automatic approval of this application on April 23, 2019.

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 greater than or equal to three inches in diameter, unless coordination efforts with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service allow a different course of action.
- (3) The Applicant shall file in the record of this case the PJM Interconnection supplemental upgrade ID.

This foregoing document was electronically filed with the Public Utilities

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4/16/2019 2:23:54 PM

in

Case No(s). 19-0043-EL-BLN

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