

BEFORE THE POWER SITING BOARD OF THE STATE OF OHIO

In the Matter of the Application of AEP Ohio)
Transmission Company for an Amendment to the)
Barnesville-Summerfield 138 kV Transmission Line) **Case No. 19-1068-EL-BTA**
Rebuild 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 rules. The application in this case is subject to an approval process as required by Section 4906.03 of the Ohio Revised Code.

Respectfully submitted,



Tamara S. Turkenton
Director, Rates and Analysis
Public Utilities Commission of Ohio

OPSB STAFF REPORT OF INVESTIGATION

Project Name: Amendment to the Barnesville-Summerfield 138 kV Transmission Line Rebuild Project
Case Number: 19-1068-EL-BTA
Project Location: Belmont, Guernsey and Noble counties
Applicant: AEP Ohio Transmission Company
Application Filing Date: May 29, 2019
Inspection Date: August 9, 2019
Report Date: October 8, 2019
Applicant's Waiver Requests: None
Staff Assigned: J. Pawley, G. Zeto

Summary of Staff Recommendations (see discussion below):

Application: ☐ Approval ☐ Disapproval ☒ Approval with Condition

Waiver: ☐ Approval ☐ Disapproval ☒ Not Applicable

Application Description and Need

AEP Ohio Transmission Company (Applicant or AEP Transco) is proposing an amendment to the Barnesville-Summerfield 138 kilovolt (kV) Transmission Line Rebuild Project, which was approved by the Ohio Power Siting Board on February 2, 2017, in Case No. 16-0438-EL-BTX. Proposed adjustments are proffered following final detailed engineering, land surveying, and property owner discussions regarding the approved route. The type of transmission equipment would not change. The Applicant states that the economic impact would not change as a result of these adjustments. The need for the facility and grid impacts associated with the facility remain the same as was approved in Case No. 16-0438-EL-BTX.

Revisions requested in this amendment were placed by the Applicant into three categories: engineering adjustments, shifts within existing right-of-way, and rerouting outside of the existing right-of-way. Construction began on this project in March 2017 and has since been halted in areas impacted by the following requested modifications.

Engineering Adjustments

There are seven proposed engineering adjustments. The Applicant states that these adjustments are the result of actual field conditions and final engineering of structure locations and necessary conductor clearances. The structure location shifts range up to 75 feet from the previously approved preferred centerline as follows:

- Adjustment 1 involves a shift of structures 11 through 15 and was the result of final engineering of structures that would have conflicted with a natural gas pipeline right-of-way location. The shifts range from 4 to 75 feet away from the approved

centerline. The Applicant states that the shift of structures 12 through 14 would move the centerline closer to two existing residences, however, still not within the 100-foot right-of-way. It should be noted, however, that there is an existing transmission line that would be removed that is located at the same distance that this adjustment would be located. The adjusted line would be located at the centerline of the existing line. The Applicant states that there are no new significant environmental impacts and all new right-of-way needed for these adjustments has been obtained.

- Adjustment 2 involves a shift of structures 59 through 62 and was the result of final geotechnical survey data and engineering of structures along the existing centerline. The maximum shift for this section would be 19 feet at structure 62 away from the approved centerline. The Applicant states that there are no new significant environmental impacts, although it is noted that 0.1 acres of additional tree clearing would be necessary, nor are there any additional landowners or new right-of-way needed for these adjustments.
- Adjustment 3 involves a shift of structures 93 through 104 and was the result of the need for clearance of a distribution line and the location of underground utilities in the area. The maximum shift is 38 feet from the approved centerline at structure 103. This adjustment has been constructed. The Applicant states that there are no new significant environmental impacts nor are there any additional landowners or new right-of-way needed for these adjustments.
- Adjustment 4 involves a shift of structures 126 through 132 and was the result of survey work and final engineering of the structure locations. The shifts range from one to 11 feet away from the approved centerline. This adjustment has been constructed. The Applicant states that there are no new significant environmental impacts nor are there any additional landowners or new right-of-way needed for these adjustments.
- Adjustment 5 involves a shift between structures 215 and 217 and was the result of final design to avoid an existing well head at structure 216 not seen at the time of the original application. Structure 216 was adjusted 8 feet off approved centerline to avoid the well head. This adjustment has been constructed. The Applicant states that there are no new significant environmental impacts nor are there any additional landowners or new right-of-way needed for these adjustments.
- Adjustment 6 involves a shift between structures 218 and 220 and was the result of final design avoidance of an existing gas line near structure 219 not seen at the time of the original application. Structure 219 was adjusted ten feet off approved centerline to avoid the gas line right-of-way. This adjustment has been constructed. The Applicant states that there are no new significant environmental impacts nor are there any additional landowners or new right-of-way needed for these adjustments.
- Adjustment 7 involves a shift between structures 236 and 240 and was the result of final engineering and to improve clearances to existing power lines near an existing substation. Structure 238 was adjusted 17 feet east of the approved centerline, the maximum distance for this adjustment away from the approved centerline. Structure 239 is located approximately 10 feet east of the approved centerline, and approximately 50 feet north of the existing structure location. This adjustment has been constructed. The Applicant states

that there are no new significant environmental impacts nor are there any additional landowners or new right-of-way needed for these adjustments.

Shifts within the existing right-of-way

There are four instances of shifts to the approved preferred route, either back to the existing centerline or offset to the other side of the existing centerline. The Applicant states that all new pole locations are located within existing right-of-way and were made to accommodate property owners. The requested shifts are as follows:

- Shift 1 involves placing the new line in tangent with adjacent structure locations. The property owner has granted the Applicant an easement that would keep structures 22 through 26 in a straight line, rather than along the certificated route that is approximately 50 feet to the northwest. The Applicant states that the proposed shift would require an expanded right-of-way, which has been obtained. No additional parcels or landowners would be impacted. The expanded right-of-way would require an additional 0.9 acres of tree clearing.
- Shift 2 was withdrawn from consideration for this application for an amendment by the Applicant on August 21, 2019.
- Shift 3 has already been constructed. This shift involves a modification to the centerline, in order to provide an additional structure to attach to the existing Barnesville Switch station. The shift is between structures 83 and 84, and is approximately 40 feet off center, within right-of-way at the existing line and the Barnesville Switch station. The Applicant states that the proposed shift is within the existing right-of-way and would not add any additional parcels or landowners. No new significant environmental impacts have been identified.
- Shift 4 has already been constructed. This shift involves placing the new line adjacent to the existing centerline between the locations for structures 132 and 137. The property owner has granted the Applicant an easement that would move the locations for structures 132 through 137 to form a straight line parallel to the existing centerline. This shift is approximately 50 feet off-center, for a length of approximately 2,000 feet. The Applicant states that the proposed shift would require an expanded right-of-way, which has been obtained. The Applicant states that the proposed shift would not add any additional parcels or landowners. No new significant environmental impacts have been identified.
- Shift 5 involves shifting the new line about 50 feet back to the existing centerline for 1.6 miles between structures 160 and 194 to reduce the number of turns and due to property owners' requests. The Applicant states that the proposed shift is within the existing right-of-way and would not add any additional parcels or landowners. Approximately 200 additional feet of Category 1 wetland would be crossed. The shift would also move the centerline further from existing residential properties.

Rerouting outside the existing right-of-way

There is one instance of rerouting the approved preferred route outside of the existing right-of-way.

- Reroute 1 involves moving structure locations 51 through 56 to the edge of wetland 10 and is proposed at the result of property owner requests. This reroute encompasses approximately 0.6 miles. The reroute shifts the centerline less than 100 feet to the northern side of the approved route. The Applicant states that there are no new significant environmental impacts, such as tree clearing or wetland impacts. All new right-of-way needed for this reroute has been obtained.

Application Review

Social Impacts

Staff finds that the proposed adjustments are not expected to significantly alter existing land uses, including agricultural land, or to increase the estimated capital costs for the project. The proposed adjustments are proposed as a result of property owner preference, and the Applicant has secured all new right-of-way needed for these adjustments. The number of residential structures identified within 100 feet of the right-of-way range from 8 for the approved route to 11 for the amended route, however no residences would be located within the right of way requiring their removal. The nearest residence to the amended centerline would be approximately 55 feet away, compared to 75 feet for the original approved project. The number of structures located within 200 feet of the amended right of way would drop from 159 to 152.

These revised alignment sections have been studied for the presence of archaeological resources and historic impacts and no significant adverse impacts on cultural resources are expected.

Staff finds that the purposes of adjustments, shifts and reroutes to avoid features not known at the time of the approval, and at the request of affected property owners are reasonable. The amended alignment would result in a lower percentage of agricultural land being crossed, and approximately 3 percent more road and utility right-of-way being paralleled than the originally approved project.

Surface Waters

The approved route right-of-way contains 67 streams, including eight perennial streams, 22 intermittent streams, and 37 ephemeral streams. The approved route right-of-way contained 16,308 linear feet of streams, including 8,043 linear feet of perennial streams. The proposed adjusted route crosses two new ephemeral streams crossings and eliminates three previously existing ephemeral stream crossings. The proposed adjusted route right-of-way contains 15,548 linear feet of streams, including 8,126 linear feet of perennial streams.

The approved route right-of-way contains 27 wetlands, with 9.9 total acres of wetland within the right-of-way. The proposed adjusted route eliminates one wetland crossing and adds two previously uncrossed wetlands within the right-of-way. The proposed adjusted route right-of-way contains approximately 9.6 acres of wetlands. All delineated wetlands are category 1 and category 2 wetlands. However, the certificated line does cross a large high-quality category 2 scrub-shrub wetland adjacent to Leatherwood Creek (wetland 10). The Applicant has rerouted this segment of the line to the edge of wetland 10, which would reduce the number of poles within the boundary of the wetland. This reroute also reduced the area of wetland 10 within the right-of-way from 6.35 acres to 5.54 acres.

Adherence to the conditions of the original certificate as well as implementation of the Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan would minimize impacts to surface water resources that would occur as a result of the proposed adjustments.

Threatened and Endangered Species

Staff has reviewed the proposed revised structure locations in relation to ecological information that was provided in the application in Case No. 16-0438-EL-BTX, as updated in the current application. The proposed adjustments would not result in increased impacts to listed wildlife species. Adherence to the conditions of the original certificate would minimize impacts to listed species.

Recommended Findings

The Applicant began construction under the certificate approved in Case 16-0438-EL-BTX in 2017. During construction, the Applicant determined that certain sections of the certificated route needed to be adjusted. The current amendment application deals with these sections. Also, during construction of the overall route, segments of the currently proposed amended route were installed outside of the certificated project area. Construction was at that time halted. Staff notes that AEP Ohio Transco has had other instances of constructing outside the Board certificated project area in the recent past as noted in the Opinion and Order for Case No. 19-0972-EL-BTA.

While Staff recommends that the Board approve the amended certificate upon satisfaction of the following condition, Staff also recommends that the Board continue to give further consideration to AEP Ohio Transco's construction practices pursuant to R.C. 4906.97 through 4906.99.

Condition:

- (1) The Applicant shall continue to adhere to all conditions of the Opinion, Order, and Certificate in Case No. 16-0438-EL-BTX, as amended through this application.

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Case No(s). 19-1068-EL-BTA

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