

BEFORE THE POWER SITING BOARD OF THE STATE OF OHIO

In the Matter of the Construction Notice Application of)
Ohio Power Company for the Devola-Gorsuch 138 kV) Case No. 20-0006-EL-BNR
Transmission Line Project #2)

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. However, pursuant to the Entry issued on March 17, 2020, in Case No. 20-0601-GE-UNC, such automatic approval has been tolled.

Staff recommends the application for approval, 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.

Sincerely,



Raymond W. Strom
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Public Utilities Commission of Ohio
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OPSB STAFF REPORT OF INVESTIGATION

Case Number: 20-0006-EL-BNR
Project Name: Devola-Gorsuch 138 kV Transmission Line Project #2
Project Location: Muskingum Township, Washington County
Applicant: Ohio Power Company
Application Filing Date: January 9, 2020
Filing Type: Construction Notice
Report Date: April 2, 2020
Recommended Automatic Approval Date: n/a
Applicant's Waiver Requests: None
Staff Assigned: J. Pawley, S. Halter, G. Zeto

Summary of Staff Recommendations (see discussion below):

Application: ☐ Approval ☐ Disapproval ☒ Approval with Conditions
Waiver: ☐ Approval ☐ Disapproval ☒ Not Applicable

Project Description

The Applicant, Ohio Power Company, proposes to construct a new single-circuit 138 kilovolt (kV) transmission line approximately 0.1 mile in length. The new line would span between the Devola substation and the Devola-Riverview 138 kV transmission line.

The Devola substation is presently under construction (see Case No. 18-0034-EL-BLN). As a result of final grading plans for the substation, the Applicant determined that structure locations originally proposed for the Devola-Gorsuch transmission line (see Case No. 18-1799-EL-BNR) needed to be shifted. This currently proposed project reflects those shifts. The project would require a 100-foot right-of-way and would consist of a single circuit 138 kV transmission line and two monopole steel structures with concrete foundations, directly adjacent to the substation.

On February 20, 2020, the OPSB approved an entry to withdraw Case No. 18-1799-EL-BNR, Devola-Gorsuch 138 kV transmission line (#1), after changes to the route were identified by the Applicant. This current application reflects those changes to the route and establishes Ohio Power Company as the owning entity of the transmission line extension.

Site Description

Construction would occur on property owned by the Applicant and would cross one undeveloped parcel, for which the Applicant has already acquired an easement. The Applicant proposes to begin construction in June 2020 and to place the facility in service by October 2020. The Applicant estimates the total cost of the project to be approximately \$1 million.

The proposed transmission line route is located in Muskingum Township, Washington County. The proposed route starts just west of the Devola substation and trends northwest, and then turns southwest to tap into the existing Devola-Riverview 138 kV transmission line. The surrounding land use is a mix of upland forest, brush, existing utility right-of-way, maintained lawn, and identified waterbodies. The entire length of the transmission line would be maintained within a 100-foot right-of-way.

Basis of Need

The proposed project is needed to tap the existing Devola-Riverview 138 kV transmission line in order to connect to the Devola substation to a 138 kV source and enhance reliability in the area by upgrading the existing 23 kV system to a 138 kV system. The Applicant would be able to meet system demand by improving service reliability, enhancing customer service, decreasing the number of power interruptions throughout the area, providing for more efficient and effective service recovery when outages occur, and supporting local economic growth.

This project was included in AEP's 2019 Long Term Forecast Report. This project is integral to the Applicant's overall plan that would ultimately connect the Mill Creek, South Caldwell, and Devola substations. This project was submitted to PJM as a supplemental and was given project number s1125. Its progress can be tracked on PJM's website.¹

Nature of Impacts

Socioeconomic Impacts

The Applicant sent notification about the project to area public officials, libraries, and affected property owners. The proposed project location is approximately 2.4 miles north of the city of Marietta.

The site is adjacent to a substation that is presently under construction, and an existing transmission line. The nearest residence is located approximately 675 feet south of the proposed centerline of the project and approximately 1,200 feet southwest of the Devola substation site. There is dense mature vegetation between the substation, this project, and the nearest residence, which would provide screening. No residences or structures would need to be removed as a result of this project. There are no cemeteries, churches, schools, or other community facilities located within 1,000 feet of the proposed project.

Agricultural Land

The proposed project area is not located within any agricultural land. Therefore, construction and operation of the electric transmission line extension is not expected to impact agricultural district land or agricultural production.

Cultural Resources

This extension has been studied for the presence of archaeological resources and historic impacts, and no significant adverse impacts on cultural resources are expected. The State Historic

1. PJM Interconnection, "Project Status & Cost Allocation – Beta," accessed March 23 2020, <https://www.pjm.com/planning/project-construction.aspx>.

Preservation Office concurs that the project would not be expected to have an adverse effect on cultural resources.

Surface Waters

The survey corridor contains five ephemeral streams. No poles would be located in streams. No in-water work is planned, and no impacts to streams are anticipated. The survey corridor contains one Category 1 wetland. The wetland is not located within the right-of-way and no impacts to wetlands are anticipated.

The project would impact less than 1 acre of land and would not require coverage under the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency General National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit. The project location is outside of 100-year floodplain areas and no floodplain development permitting would be required.

Threatened and Endangered Species

Some tree clearing may be required for this project. The project area is within the range of state and federal 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. In order to avoid impacts to the Indiana bat and northern long-eared bat, Staff recommends that the Applicant adhere to seasonal tree cutting dates of October 1 through March 31 for all 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. The proposed project is expected not to impact any bat hibernacula.

Impacts to other state and federally listed species are not anticipated, due to no proposed in-water work and a lack of suitable habitats.

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 approval of this application subject to the following conditions. Staff notes that its recommendation for approval of this application should not be construed as a recommendation for approval of cost recovery in any ratemaking proceeding.

Conditions:

- (1) The certificate authority provided in this case shall not exempt the facility from any other applicable and lawful local, state, or federal rules or regulations nor be used to affect the exercise of discretion of any other local, state, or federal permitting or licensing authority with regard to areas subject to their supervision or control.
- (2) The Applicant shall adhere to seasonal cutting dates of October 1 through March 31 for removal of any trees greater than three inches in diameter, unless coordination with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service allows a different course of action.

This foregoing document was electronically filed with the Public Utilities

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4/2/2020 9:25:14 AM

in

Case No(s). 20-0006-EL-BNR

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