

BEFORE THE POWER SITING BOARD OF THE STATE OF OHIO

In the Matter of the Construction)	
Notice Application of AEP Ohio Transmission)	
Company, Inc. for the Salerno 138 kV Line)	Case No. 21-0678-EL-BNR
Extension Project)	

Members of the Board:

Chair, Public Utilities Commission	Ohio House of Representatives
Director, Department of Development	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 September 14, 2021, 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 September 14, 2021, which is the recommended automatic approval date.

Sincerely,



Theresa White
Executive Director
Ohio Power Siting Board

OPSB Staff Report of Investigation

Case Number: 21-0678-EL-BNR
Project Name: Salerno 138 kV Line Extension Project
Project Location: Richland County
Applicant: AEP Ohio Transmission Company, Inc.
Application Filing Date: June 15, 2021
Filing Type: Construction Notice
Inspection Date: September 1, 2021
Report Date: September 7, 2021
Recommended Automatic Approval Date: September 14, 2021
Applicant's Waiver Requests: None
Staff Assigned: T. November, T. Crawford, J. Pawley, A. DeLong

Summary of Staff Recommendations (see discussion below):

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

Project Description and Need

The AEP Ohio Transmission Company, Inc. ("AEP Ohio" or the "Applicant") has proposed to build two new 138 kilovolt (kV) single-circuit transmission circuits that would connect the existing Academia-North Lexington 138 kV transmission line to the new, non-jurisdictional Salerno Station. The two circuits would be referred to as the Salerno 138 kV Extension North Line and the Salerno 138 kV Extension South Line. The lengths of the lines from the Salerno Station to the Academia-North Lexington transmission line would be 0.08 and 0.05 miles, respectively. The right-of-way required for this project is located on property owned by an affiliate company; the Ohio Power Company, so no new easements would be required.

The Applicant claims the building of the Salerno 138 kV Extension North Line and the Salerno 138 kV Extension South Line would create an in-and-out transmission loop which will add support for the anticipated high growth rate of 12 kV load in the Lexington area. The Applicant further states that the North Lexington transformer #1 would be overloaded by 2022, and the completion of this project would avoid overload conditions and would provide the ability to service additional load growth. The project would also provide adequate contingency infrastructure and topology for distribution system reliability support.

Upgrades and modifications to the transmission system are part of PJM Interconnection, LLC's (PJM) Regional Transmission Expansion Planning (RTEP) process.¹ The need and solution were presented and reviewed with stakeholders at the January 17, 2020 and the July 17, 2020 PJM SRRTEP Western meeting.² The PJM number assigned for this Project is s2343, and its progress can be tracked on PJM's website. It should be noted that PJM has assigned s2343.1 through s2343.3 to the three components of the solution proposed by the Applicant.³

The Applicant states that the Project was identified in the Company's Long-Term Forecast Report (LTFR) to the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio, filed in Case No. 21-0501-EL-FOR.⁴

The Applicant proposes to begin construction in September 2021 and expects to place the Project in-service in May 2022. The capital cost estimate of the line extension is approximately \$670,000 using a Class 4 estimate.⁵

Nature of Impacts

Land Use

The proposed project is located in Washington Township, Richland County, Ohio. The Project would be on a parcel that is owned by Ohio Power Company. The land use of the parcel is Commercial Vacant Land categorized by Richland County Auditor Geographic Information System (GIS) data. The Project Area is primarily pastureland (1.88 acres), and deciduous forest (0.13 acres) which will be cleared between October 1 and March 31, in accordance with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) recommendations. The proposed Project is not anticipated to impact any streams or wetlands. There are no residences, cemeteries, churches, schools, or other institutional land uses within 1,000 feet of the Project area. There are also no public or protected natural areas such as nature preserves, wildlife refuges, or parks within 1,000 feet of the Project area.

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

1. PJM is the regional transmission organization charged with planning for upgrades to the regional transmission system in Ohio. Significant alterations to the transmission system located in the PJM control area are required to submit planned projects for review of their system impacts.

PJM's RTEP identifies transmission system additions and improvements needed to keep electricity flowing to the millions of customers throughout PJM's region. See PJM Regional Transmission Expansion Plan, <https://www.pjm.com/library/reports-notice/rtep-documents.aspx> (Accessed June 21, 2021).

2. The Subregional RTEP Committee (SRRTEP) review and provide input on subregional RTEP projects and provide recommendations to the Transmission Expansion Advisory Committee (TEAC) concerning regional RTEP projects. See PJM Submission of Supplemental Projects for Inclusion in the Local Plan, <https://www.pjm.com/-/media/committees-groups/committees/teac/2020/20201104/20201104-teac-info-only-aep-local-plan-submission-of-the-supplemental-projects-for-2020-rtep.aspx> (Accessed June 21, 2021).

3. PJM Manual 14B: PJM Region Transmission Planning Process, Rev. 48, Effective Date: October 1, 2020 states that Supplemental Projects refer to transmission expansion or enhancements not needed to comply with PJM reliability, operational performance, FERC Form No. 715, economic criteria or State Agreement Approach projects. Page 19/163. See <https://www.pjm.com/-/media/documents/manuals/m14b.aspx> (Accessed June 21, 2021).

4. AEP Ohio Power Company, inc. "Long-Term Forecast Report", Public Utilities Commission of Ohio Case No. 21-0501-EL-FOR, April 15, 2021, Form FE-T10, page 92.

5. The Applicant indicates the costs of the project are projected to be transmission plant and included in the Applicant's FERC formula rate (Attachment H-20 to the PJM Open Access Transmission Tariff) and would be allocated to all customers in the AEP Zone.

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 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, and that no additional cultural resources studies are needed for the extension project. Staff agrees that no further cultural resources management work is necessary.

Agricultural Land

The proposed project is not located within or adjacent to any agricultural land. Therefore, construction and operation of the proposed substation expansion is not expected to impact agricultural district land or agricultural production.

Surface Waters

AEP'S consultant Stantec identified one intermittent stream totaling 439 linear feet within the Project area. No impacts would be anticipated to this delineated stream as it would be outside of the proposed Project footprint. No wetlands⁶ were delineated within the Project area. A notice of Intent would be filed with the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency for coverage under a General Permit OHC000005 and a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) would be prepared prior to the start of construction. The project is not within a 100-year floodplain and therefore no floodplain permitting would be required.

Threatened and Endangered Species

Consultation with the ODNR and the USFWS did not identify any concerns regarding impacts to listed plant or animal species due to a lack of suitable habitat within the project area. Furthermore, impacts to state and federally listed mussel and fish species would not occur due to no proposed in-water work. It is anticipated that approximately 0.13 acres of deciduous forest tree line would be cleared for project construction. AEP Ohio Transmission Company Inc. has committed to adhere to ODNR and USFWS recommended tree clearing dates of October 1 and March 31 in order to avoid impacts to listed bat species. During the winter months, bats hibernate in caves and abandoned mines, also known as hibernacula. The proposed Project is not expected to impact any bat hibernacula.

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 on September 14, 2021 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.

6. Wetlands falling within the purview of the Clean Water Act are regulated within Ohio by R.C. 6111, et seq. and Ohio Adm.Code 3745-1-50, et seq. Ohio Adm.Code 3745-1-54 establishes wetland categories.

- (2) The Applicant shall adhere to seasonal cutting dates of October 1 through March 31 for the removal of trees three inches or greater in diameter to avoid impacts to listed bat species, unless coordination with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service allows a different course of action. If coordination with these agencies allows clearing between April 1 and September 30, the Applicant shall docket proof of completed coordination on the case docket prior to clearing trees.

This foregoing document was electronically filed with the Public Utilities

Commission of Ohio Docketing Information System on

9/7/2021 12:56:00 PM

in

Case No(s). 21-0678-EL-BNR

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