

**PENNSYLVANIA
PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION
Harrisburg, PA 17120**

Public Meeting held June 13, 2024

Commissioners Present:

Stephen M. DeFrank, Chairman
Kimberly Barrow, Vice Chair
Ralph V. Yanora
Kathryn L. Zerfuss
John F. Coleman, Jr.

Application of PPL Electric Utilities Corporation, for
Approval to site and construct the Williams Grove –
Allen 115 kV Transmission Line in Monroe and Upper
Allen Townships, Cumberland County, Pennsylvania

Docket Number:
A-2023-3044071

ORDER

BY THE COMMISSION:

History of the Proceeding

On November 3, 2023, PPL Electric Utilities Corporation (PPL Electric), Utility Code: 110500, filed an application to site and construct the Williams Grove – Allen 115 kV Transmission Line, pursuant to the regulations of the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (Commission) at 52 Pa. Code Chapter 57, Subchapter G. The application seeks siting approval for PPL Electric to construct the approximately 3.9-mile-long

Williams Grove – Allen line in Monroe and Upper Allen Townships, Cumberland County, Pennsylvania.

PPL Electric served copies of its application on all affected governmental agencies and municipalities as required by 52 Pa. Code §57.74. PPL Electric also served notice of its application and relevant supporting maps and documents on all affected property owners as required by 52 Pa. Code §57.74. Notice of the application was published in the December 2, 2023, issue of the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*. The notice informed interested parties of the date and time of the prehearing conference. Protests and petitions to intervene were due on or before January 19, 2024.

On January 25, 2024, the Commission held a pre-hearing conference for the application. No parties, other than PPL Electric, appeared at the pre-hearing conference. No protests were filed, and no hearings were held. In an Order dated March 14, 2024, Administrative Law Judge Mary D. Long determined that the application was unopposed and reassigned it to the Bureau of Technical Utility Services for appropriate action.

PPL Electric states that the Williams Grove – Allen transmission line project consists of constructing a new 115 kV transmission line. PPL Electric also states that the new line will extend approximately 3.9 miles from PPL Electric’s existing Williams Grove 230-69 kV Substation to the existing Allen 115-13 kV Substation owned by Mid-Atlantic Interstate Transmission, LLC (MAIT), Utility Code 1117780. Application, page 1.

Project Need

PPL Electric states that construction of the 115 kV line is needed to address multiple contingencies on the MAIT transmission system. PPL Electric also states that in

July 2021, PJM opened a proposal window to solicit proposals to address, among other things, transmission reliability issues on the MAIT 115 kV system. PPL Electric states that PJM identified voltage magnitude and voltage drop violations for multiple N-1-1 contingencies. PPL Electric also states that the loss of the Gardeners – Hunterstown 115 kV Transmission Line and the subsequent loss of the Cly – Newberry – Roundtop 115 kV Transmission Line results in voltage violations around the Round Top, Allen, Dillsburg, PPGI, and Gardners substations. Finally, PPL Electric states that the violations exist regardless of the order in which the failures occur. Application, Attachment 2, Section 3.2 and PPL Electric Response to Data Request No. 1.

PPL Electric submits that these issues violate MAIT’s Transmission Owner Criteria and North American Electric Reliability Corporation Standard TPL-001-4. PPL Electric also submits that it and PJM have determined that constructing the new Williams Grove – Allen 115 kV Transmission Line is the optimal solution to mitigate the contingency scenarios. PPL Electric also submits that the overall solution includes the installation of a new 300 MVA 230 kV/115 kV transformer at the Williams Grove Substation, construction of the new 115 kV transmission line, and modifying the Allen Substation to a four-breaker ring bus arrangement. Finally, PPL Electric submits that the substation modifications are not a part of this application and that the work on the Allen Substation will be performed by MAIT. Application ¶¶7, 25.

PPL Electric states that in August 2022, it accepted construction responsibility from PJM for PPL Electric to complete the work within Williams Grove Substation and the construction of the proposed 115 kV transmission line scope under PJM baseline project numbers b3715.1 and b3715.2. Application ¶¶25, 32.

Route Selection

PPL Electric states that the preferred route and alternate route have been evaluated independently using a combination of information collected in the field, GIS data sources, public input, and supporting documents. PPL Electric also states that the goal of the alternative analysis study is to gain a detailed understanding of the opportunities and constraints in the project study area to facilitate the development of potential routes, evaluate potential impacts associated with each route, and select a preferred route from one or more alternative routes. Finally, PPL Electric states that the preferred route is the route that reasonably minimizes adverse effects on the natural and human environments, minimizes special design requirements and unreasonable costs, and can be constructed and operated in a safe, timely, and reliable manner. Finally, PPL Electric states that after evaluating the potential route network, it selected two potential routes, Route A and Route B. Application ¶¶49, 51 and Application, Attachment 4, Section 1.3.

PPL Electric submits that both Route A and Route B cross a limited area of mapped wetland (0.2 to 0.5 acre). However, PPL Electric also submits that potential forested wetland impacts compared between the routes indicate that Route A would impact one acre more of modeled forested wetlands when compared to Route B. Finally, PPL Electric submits that no emergent wetlands are crossed by either of the routes. Application, Attachment 4, Section 4.1.1.

PPL Electric states that about 93% of land crossed by Route A and close to 92% of land crossed by Route B consists of grassland or pasture and cultivated crops. PPL Electric also states that in these areas, any new construction requiring permanent vegetation loss will be limited to the transmission structure footprint and construction of the project would not result in permanent changes to habitat. Finally, PPL Electric states that based on a review of aerial imagery, both routes would require a similar amount of

tree clearing, with Route B slightly higher, by 0.1 acre, within the right-of-way. Application, Attachment 4, Section 4.1.2.

PPL Electric submits that each route crosses agricultural land for approximately 90 percent of their alignment, avoiding developed land and forest cover to the best extent practicable. PPL Electric also submits that both routes require approximately two acres of right-of-way tree clearing, which accounts for approximately 5% of their proposed right-of-way. PPL Electric submits that since a portion of its alignment parallels Williams Grove Road, Route B is likely to affect the viewshed of slightly more residences within 500 feet of the centerline when compared to Route A. Finally, PPL Electric submits that landowner feedback obtained during the project's public open houses favored Route B over Route A. Application, Attachment 4, Section 4.2.4.

PPL Electric states that from a combined engineering and constructability perspective, both routes are similar for most evaluation criteria. PPL Electric also states that both routes are similar in length, resulting in similar right-of-way acquisition needed. PPL Electric further states that each route crosses minimal steep slopes, requires six road crossings, requires approximately two acres of right-of-way tree clearing, and requires one 230 kV crossing and one 500 kV crossing. Finally, PPL Electric states that Route B requires fewer angle structures greater than 20 degrees. Application, Attachment 4, Section 4.3.4.

PPL Electric states that Route B parallels existing compatible linear corridors for most of its total alignment. PPL Electric also states that Route B parallels local roads and the abandoned Cumberland Valley Railroad for a greater duration than Route A, making it more accessible during construction and operation of the transmission line. Finally, PPL Electric states that the new 230 kV crossing required by Route B is in a more favorable location when compared to the new 230 kV crossing by Route A due to

topography concerns. PPL Electric also submits that from a combined social and financial impact perspective, responses gathered during the public open houses indicated that Route B was preferred by the landowners impacted by the project, thereby reducing potential risks and costs during right-of-way negotiations. Application, Attachment 4, Section 4.4.

PPL Electric submits that while both routes are either identical or similar for most of the siting evaluation criteria, PPL Electric believes that the cumulative environmental, engineering and constructability, and social and financial impacts associated with constructing Route B are more favorable when compared to Route A. Application, Attachment 4, Section 4.4.

Construction and Engineering

PPL Electric submits that the proposed project consists of constructing a new 115 kV transmission line to mitigate the multiple N-1-1 violations. PPL Electric also submits that the new 115 kV line will extend approximately 3.9 miles and be supported on approximately 36 new transmission structures. Application ¶27.

PPL Electric states that the structures to support the line will be primarily single-shaft steel poles and that the structures will range from approximately 40 feet-in-height to 95 feet-in-height with an average of approximately 77 feet-in-height. PPL Electric also states that the average span distance is approximately 600 feet between structures and that the right-of-way for the new transmission line is approximately 100 feet-in-width. Finally, PPL Electric states that the total right-of-way required for the project is approximately 48 acres. Application ¶¶27, 82.

PPL Electric maintains the proposed project will be designed, constructed,

operated, and maintained in a manner that meets or exceeds the requirements specified in the National Electrical Safety Code, Occupational Safety and Health Administration safety standards, and all applicable legal requirements. Application ¶89.

PPL Electric states that the estimated cost for the construction of the Williams Grove – Allen transmission line is approximately \$8.5 million and that the total estimated cost for the project is approximately \$23.1 million. PPL Electric also states that all costs will be allocated to MAIT. However, PPL Electric states that it will own, operate, and maintain the Williams Grove – Allen transmission line. Finally, PPL Electric states that it proposes to start construction in Fall 2025, to meet an in-service date of Spring 2026. Application ¶31 and Attachment 2, Section 1.0.

Protection of Natural Resources

PPL Electric states that it has coordinated with the Pennsylvania Game Commission, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, and Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) using the Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory process. PPL Electric further states that the first three agencies indicated that no further consultation is necessary. Application, Attachment 14, page 14-1.

PPL Electric submits that it conducted further consultation with the DCNR, as requested, regarding the two state-listed species known to occur in proximity to the project: the red-head pondweed, a state threatened species, and the white water-crowfoot, a state species of concern. PPL Electric also submits that in their response, the DCNR indicated no red-head pondweed or white water-crowfoot were identified along the proposed route and that no further consultation is necessary. Application, Attachment 14, page 14-1.

Assignment of Easements and Rights-of-Way

PPL Electric states that the Williams Grove – Allen line will be located on new right-of-way and that PPL Electric has obtained easements or possesses all necessary right-of-way from six of the seven property owners. PPL Electric also states that the parcel where an easement has not been acquired is owned by MAIT.

Application ¶¶84, 88.

Disposition

The Commission will grant an application for approval of the siting and construction of a high voltage transmission line if it finds and determines, pursuant to 52 Pa. Code §57.76(a), the following:

- (1) That there is a need for the high voltage transmission line.
- (2) That the high voltage transmission line will not create an unreasonable risk of danger to the health and safety of the public.
- (3) That the high voltage transmission line is in compliance with applicable statutes and regulations providing for the protection of the natural resources of the Commonwealth.
- (4) That the high voltage transmission line will have minimum adverse environmental impact, considering the electric power needs of the public, the state of available technology and the available alternatives.

PPL Electric has met its burden to prove that its application requesting approval to site and construct the Williams Grove – Allen 115 kV Transmission Line is necessary or proper for the accommodation, convenience and safety of its patrons, employees, and the public.

PPL Electric has met its burden to prove that the location and construction of the 115 kV transmission line would not create an unreasonable risk of danger to the health and safety of the public.

PPL Electric has met its burden to prove that the siting and construction of the 115 kV transmission line is in compliance with applicable statutes and regulations providing for the protection of the natural resources of this Commonwealth.

PPL Electric has met its burden to prove that construction of the 115 kV transmission line would have a minimum adverse environmental impact, considering the electric power needs of the public and the available alternatives.

PPL Electric has met its burden of proof that the route selected is reasonable, considering all of the factors involved in the selection of a route and that the Preferred Route is superior to the other studied routes.

The formal PPL Electric Utilities Corporation application and manner in which it was filed conforms to the requirements of 52 Pa. Code § 57.72. Moreover, the Commission has reviewed the filing and does not find it to be inconsistent with the applicable law or Commission policy regarding transmission line siting; **THEREFORE,**

IT IS ORDERED:

1. That the application filed by PPL Electric Utilities Corporation to site and construct the Williams Grove – Allen 115 kV Transmission Line in Monroe and Upper Allen Townships, Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, is hereby approved.
2. That upon completion of the subject project, PPL Electric Utilities Corporation shall file the final project cost with the Commission.
3. That upon completion of Ordering Paragraph 2, this proceeding at Docket No. A-2023-3044071 be closed.

BY THE COMMISSION,



Rosemary Chiavetta
Secretary

(SEAL)

ORDER ADOPTED: June 13, 2023

ORDER ENTERED: June 13, 2024