

**PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17120**

**Letter of Notification of
PPL Electric Utilities
Montour – Saegers 230 kV**

**Public Meeting held July 24, 2025
3055194-TUS
Docket No. A-2025-3055194**

MOTION OF CHAIRMAN STEPHEN M. DeFRANK

Before the Commission is PPL Electric Utilities Corporation's (PPL or Company) Letter of Notification (LON) filed on May 15, 2025. PPL requests approval to reconstruct the Montour – Saegers 230 kV Transmission Line (Montour Line) located in portions of Montour, Northumberland, and Lycoming Counties. The Company states that reconstruction of the Montour Line is necessary to resolve significant asset health condition concerns across the double-circuit transmission line associated with the presence of pack-out rust in the existing COR-TEN steel lattice towers.

The Montour Line was constructed in the early 1970s and includes 37 weathering-steel COR-TEN steel lattice towers and 74 steel monopoles spanning approximately 12.7 miles. COR-TEN lattice towers were commonly installed by the industry during this time because it was believed that the corrosion-resistant properties of weathering-steel would reduce future maintenance needs and costs. The COR-TEN towers were expected to have a service life of approximately 75 years at the time they were installed.

PPL submits that independent field investigations and assessments were conducted in 2013 and 2019 on PPL's 230 kV system and in 2024 on the Montour Line. These were conducted by separate third party entities and revealed that aging COR-TEN structures on the Montour Line are showing signs of accelerated deterioration. Based on these assessments, these towers have been brought to the end of their service life much sooner than anticipated and can no longer be relied upon to safely operate as designed.

The Company submits that when the presence of pack-out rust becomes too severe, it can deform steel members and connecting hardware, it can also shear off bolts, cause loss of structural integrity, cause members to disconnect from the tower, and even result in tower failure. The 2024 assessment of all the 37 COR-TEN towers on the Montour Line determined that 78% of the structures were in severe condition, indicated by 50% of their joints containing pack-out rust. PPL further states that the majority of the pack-out rust observed on each structure was found in the lower sections of the post leg where horizontal and diagonal members are bolted to the post leg.

The Montour Line's 74 steel monopoles have an average estimated useful life of 50-60 years. All but three of these 74 monopoles are 54 years of age. Visual inspections of these structures in 2019 showed chipping of their lead-based paint. This chipping leaves the structure vulnerable to corrosion caused by atmospheric conditions.

In order to resolve these health conditions, most notably those presented by the pack-out rust on the COR-TEN towers, PPL proposes the instant LON to reconstruct the entire Montour Line. The proposed reconstruction will result in the installation of 108 new steel pole structures ranging in height from 80 to 175 feet. PPL projects the total 45-year cost to own and operate the line given approval of this LON rebuild at \$180.8 million.

The Company has presented various alternative cost projections to operate and own the Montour Line over a 45-year period. They are included below:

- Partial structure replacement with full reconductoring - \$230.3 million
- Structure restoration - \$256.1 million
- Partial structure replacement with partial reconductoring - \$181.6 million

This is not the first time this Commission has been presented with issues regarding PPL's COR-TEN transmission infrastructure, having approved a PPL LON filing on March 27, 2025, regarding similar issues on the Company's Mountain – Jenkins – Stanton 230 kV Transmission Line.

Upon review of the instant LON, I submit that it conforms to the requirements of 52 Pa. Code § 57.72(d)(1)(i) because the project reconstructs the Montour Line in a manner that does not substantially alter the existing right-of-way. Further, given the clear risk presented by the health conditions of the COR-TEN structures on the Montour Line, the fact that the majority of steel monopoles on the Montour Line are at the end of their useful life, along with the costs associated with the proposed LON when compared to its alternatives, I find approval of this LON to be necessary and in the public interest.

THEREFORE, I MOVE THAT:

1. The Letter of Notification filed by PPL Electric Utilities Corporation for approval to reconstruct the Montour – Saegers 230 kV Transmission Line located in Anthony and Derry Townships, Montour County, Lewis Township, Northumberland County and Clinton and Muncy Creek Townships, Lycoming County, Pennsylvania is hereby approved.
2. Upon completion of the subject project, PPL Electric Utilities Corporation shall file the final project cost with the Commission.
3. Upon completion of Ordering Paragraph 2, this proceeding at Docket No. A-2025-3055194 be closed.
4. The Bureau of Technical Utility Services draft an Order consistent with this Motion.

July 24, 2025
Date



Stephen M. DeFrank
Chairman