

**PENNSYLVANIA
PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION
Harrisburg, PA 17105-3265**

Public Meeting held December 18, 2025

Commissioners Present:

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

Application of Mid-Atlantic Interstate Transmission, LLC for Approval to Site and Construct the Piney – Seward 115 kV Transmission Line Project in: Redbank Township, Armstrong County; Limestone, Porter, Redbank, Piney and Monroe Townships, Clarion County; Buffington, East Mahoning, East Wheatfield, Green, North Mahoning, Pine, Rayne, and West Mahoning Townships, Indiana County; Timblin Borough and Porter and Ringgold Townships, Jefferson County; and St. Clair Township, Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania

Docket Number:
A-2025-3054924

ORDER

BY THE COMMISSION:

History of the Proceeding

On April 11, 2025, Mid-Atlantic Interstate Transmission, LLC (MAIT), Utility Code 1117780, filed an Application to site and construct the transmission lines associated with the proposed Piney – Seward 115 kV Transmission Line Project, 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 MAIT to construct the transmission lines associated with the above project in Redbank Township, Armstrong County; Buffington, East Mahoning, East Wheatfield, Green, North Mahoning, Pine, Rayne, and West Mahoning Townships, Indiana County; Timblin Borough and Porter and Ringgold Townships, Jefferson County; Limestone, Porter, Redbank, Piney and Monroe Townships, Clarion County; and St. Clair Township, Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania. For the reasons expressed in this Order the filing is approved.

MAIT served copies of the Application on all affected governmental agencies and municipalities as required by 52 Pa. Code §57.74. MAIT also served notice of the 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 May 24, 2025, 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 July 31, 2025.

On August 4, 2025, the Commission held a pre-hearing conference for the filing. No parties other than MAIT were present.

In an Order dated August 6, 2025, Administrative Law Judge Chad L. Allensworth provided that no protests or petitions to intervene were filed in this proceeding. The ALJ determined that because the Application was unopposed and because MAIT served a copy of the Application on the property owners and notice of the Application and initial prehearing conference was published in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*, the matter should be assigned to the Commission's Bureau of Technical Utility Services.

MAIT submits that the Piney – Seward 115 kV Transmission Line Project involves reconstructing five single-circuit 115 kV transmission line segments spanning approximately 66.4 miles from the existing Piney Substation located in Piney Township, Clarion County to the existing Seward Substation located in East Wheatfield Township, Indiana County. MAIT also submits that the five segments are the Piney – Timblin 115 kV P1 Transmission Line, Timblin – Trade City 115 kV TTC Transmission Line, Trade City – Dixonville East 115 kV GTC1 Transmission Line, Dixonville East – Glory 115 kV GTC2 Transmission Line, and Glory – Seward 115 kV G1 Transmission Line. Application ¶¶7-8 and Exhibit 6, page 46.

Project Need

MAIT states that the subject project is needed to address the poor asset conditions of the existing Piney – Seward 115 kV transmission facilities, which are negatively impacting the reliability of MAIT’s system. MAIT also states that these concerns were identified by walkdown and aerial inspections of the line segments conducted between January 2023 and June 2023. Additionally, MAIT states that these inspections revealed degradation of the lines, including insulator strings that have been flashed or burnt, conductor degradation with evidence of burn marks and broken strands, and wood pole defects from cracking, deterioration, animal damage, and rot. Finally, MAIT states that these conditions have led to unplanned outages and declining reliability performance over the past five years. Application ¶¶10 and Statement No. 2, page 3.

MAIT submits that the existing transmission facilities were originally installed around 1940 and designed to support two 46 kV circuits which do not require the same physical spacing and configuration as 115 kV lines constructed today. MAIT also submits that the lattice tower segments were subsequently modified around 1960, to upgrade them to 115 kV in a six-wire configuration, and the wood pole structures were

installed thereafter. Additionally, MAIT submits that following the upgrade to 115 kV and subsequent trends in outages due to inadequate physical clearance, a project was conducted to extend the tower tops with the hope of mitigating the potential for future outage events. Finally, MAIT submits that while this effort did improve reliability, data shows that these efforts did not sufficiently mitigate the outages. Application, Statement No. 2, pages 3 & 9-11.

MAIT states that weather has induced a total of 31 unplanned outages across the lines in the past five years. MAIT also states that approximately 75 insulators have been damaged by lightning, 72 spans have shown evidence of lightning damage or previous phase-to-ground contact, and 102 structures have shown signs of degradation either from the environment or from animals. Additionally, MAIT states that these factors indicate that, while the lines remain in service today, their condition is declining, and repair is no longer adequate to sustain their operation. MAIT further states that wood poles are typically considered for replacement beginning around 40 years of age and lattice towers are typically considered for replacement around 70 years of age. Finally, MAIT states that based upon its engineering review of the inspection information, these transmission lines are very near end-of-life and require replacement. Application ¶¶23-24 and Statement No. 2, page 4.

MAIT submits that in order to address the identified reliability issues, the company proposes to rebuild the five existing 115 kV line segments to a single circuit, six-wire 115 kV configuration utilizing steel monopole structures. MAIT also submits that the proposed project will allow for increased physical clearance between phase wires and between phase and shield wires and will also provide adequate lightning protection. MAIT further submits that these factors will effectively mitigate the sources of unplanned outages that have been noted on this collection of lines. Finally, MAIT submits that the subject project was presented at PJM's Regional Transmission Expansion Plan meeting

in May 2018 and July 2018 and subsequently assigned supplemental project number s1672. Application ¶9; Statement No. 2, page 4; and Statement No. 6, page 9.

Route Selection

MAIT states that an alternative route analysis was conducted to select the most suitable proposed route between the existing Seward Substation and the existing Piney Substation, that also passes through the existing Glory, Dixonville East, Trade City, and Timblin Substations. MAIT also states that the alternative route analysis looks to identify alternative routes for evaluation that are environmentally sound, feasible from an engineering and economic perspective, and compliant with applicable regulations. Additionally, MAIT states that environmental soundness includes minimizing environmental impacts while maximizing siting opportunities. MAIT further states that engineering and economic feasibility includes minimizing engineering constraints, cost, and distance of the route. Finally, MAIT states that the proposed route is the route that, when considering all the constraints and opportunities, best minimizes the overall impact of the subject project. Application, Exhibit 6, pages 1-2.

MAIT submits that the alternative route analysis evaluated three potential routes referred to as the West Route, East Route, and Central Route. MAIT states that the West Route is approximately 79.0 miles in length and was developed to provide for a generally western alternative to the existing route, utilizing largely forested and agricultural land and maximizing avoidance of conservation and agricultural easements. MAIT submits that the East Route is approximately 79.7 miles in length and was developed to provide for a generally eastern alternative to the existing route, utilizing largely forested and agricultural land and minimizing residential area crossings. MAIT further submits that the Central Route is approximately 66.4 miles in length and was developed to provide for a generally central alternative, partially utilizing the existing transmission line route by

building on an offset to the east, west, or building on centerline. MAIT submits that the amount of new transmission route corridor required for the West Route, East Route, and Central Route is approximately 2,481 acres, 2,495 acres, and 1,297.8 acres, respectively. Application, Statement No. 3, pages 9-12 and Exhibit 6, page 46.

MAIT states that to evaluate the alternative routes, raw data was assembled for the routes using database software. MAIT also states that in order to put resource measurements on a relative scale and to obtain an impact score that could be compared across the different alternatives, the raw data is mathematically proportioned to a scale of 0 to 10. Additionally, MAIT states that because not all the criteria are equally important in evaluating the routes, especially as perceived by the public, the criteria are weighted to reflect the relative importance of that criterion in selecting a proposed route. MAIT further states that the relative scores achieved by each route for each criterion are multiplied by the criteria weighting factors to obtain impact scores and that the impact scores are summed to obtain an overall impact score for each alternative route. Finally, MAIT states that higher scores indicate greater overall environmental, land use, cultural, and engineering impact. Application, Statement No. 3, pages 7-8.

MAIT submits that in addition to the ranking evaluation of the three alternative routes, public feedback was solicited through a virtual open house for consideration in the selection of the proposed route. MAIT also submits that the estimated costs of the West Route, East Route, and Central Route are \$373 million, \$387 million, and \$272 million, respectively. Application ¶48 and Exhibit 6, page 52.

MAIT states that the Central Route scores as the most desirable route overall of the three potential routes. MAIT also states that the Central Route scores as the most desirable when only engineering constraints or land use constraints are considered and that the Central Route also scores as the second most favorable route when only

environmental constraints or cultural constraints are considered. Additionally, MAIT states that based on the resource evaluation methodology described above, the ranking analysis indicated that Central Route scored 8,957.4 which is 1,898.8 points better than the East Route and 2,061.5 points better than the West Route. MAIT further states that while public response was minimal, there was a preference to use the Central Route along the existing transmission line. As such, MAIT identified the Central Route as the proposed route, based on its overall minimization of impacts to engineering, land use, environmental, and cultural constraints. Application, Exhibit 6, pages 53-54.

Construction and Engineering

MAIT submits that the subject project consists of reconstructing the five 115 kV transmission line segments that make up the Piney – Seward transmission line to address the issue of aging infrastructure. MAIT also submits that the subject project requires the removal of approximately 347 existing transmission structures and the installation of approximately 336 new structures. Additionally, MAIT submits that the existing structures range from approximately 60 feet in height to approximately 113 feet in height and that the new structures range from approximately 60 feet in height to approximately 190 feet in height. Finally, MAIT submits that the average span length between structures will be approximately 1,000 feet and that the new transmission structures are designed as steel monopole structures. Application ¶16 and MAIT Data Request Response No. 1.

MAIT states that the new overhead 115 kV single circuit transmission line will utilize 1033.5 kcmil 54/7 aluminum conductor, steel reinforced (ACSR) conductors with a winter emergency capacity of 395 MVA. MAIT also states that the winter emergency capacity of the existing transmission line segments varies from 230 MVA to 334 MVA. MAIT further states that the terminal equipment at the Piney, Dixonville East, Glory,

Trade City, Timblin, and Seward substations will be upgraded to exceed the rating of the new conductor. Finally, MAIT states that in addition to the transmission conductors, the new transmission line will have one standard shield wire and one optical ground wire that will be located above the transmission conductors to protect the conductors from lightning strikes. Application ¶17 and MAIT Data Request Response Nos. 2 & 14.

MAIT submits that the subject 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. MAIT also submits that the subject project will involve numerous road crossings, including federal, state, and local roads and highways. Finally, MAIT submits that it will obtain the necessary Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) Highway Occupancy Permits, or equivalent type permits, for these road crossings prior to construction. Application ¶¶25 & 29.

MAIT states that the estimated cost for the construction of the subject project is approximately \$263 million in transmission work and an additional \$9 million in substation work and that all costs will be paid for by MAIT. MAIT also states that it proposes to start construction in January 2027, to meet an in-service date of July 2029. Application ¶40.

Protection of Natural Resources

MAIT submits that a Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory (PNDI) review of the subject project was conducted in and the results indicated that further coordination with the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC), Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC), and United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is needed. Application,

Exhibit 7.

MAIT states that a letter provided by the DCNR dated February 7, 2025, indicated that species or resources under DCNR's jurisdiction are located in the vicinity of the subject project. MAIT also states that the DCNR requested a botanical survey for 62 target species on December 1, 2022, and that surveys were conducted from May 2023 to July 2024. The DCNR also provided that based on the avoidance and minimization measures and monitoring detailed in the February 7th letter, DCNR has determined that no impact is likely. Application, Exhibit 7.

MAIT submits that the PFBC provided a letter dated January 9, 2023, which includes recommendations to avoid adverse impacts to twenty rare, candidate, threatened or endangered species. MAIT also submits that a permitted surveyor of the Eastern Massasauga was contracted to evaluate the habitats on site to determine their potential to support the species of concern. Finally, MAIT submits that according to the report the site does not contain potential habitat for the Eastern Massasauga, and the subject project will not result in adverse impacts to the Eastern Massasauga. Application, Exhibit 7.

MAIT states that the PGC identified potential impacts to the Eastern Small-footed Bat, Little Bown Bat, and Silver-haired Bat. MAIT also states that the PGC provided a letter which includes minimization and management strategies to meet the needs of the subject project and additionally provides that these mitigation techniques should avoid impacts to these species during construction. Application, Exhibit 7.

MAIT submits that the proposed route crosses a total of 84 stream segments. MAIT also submits that the proposed route directly crosses two stocked trout waters and six additional streams classified as stocked trout waters either upstream or downstream of the stocking limits. Additionally, MAIT submits that the proposed route also crosses one

stream listed as a Class A Wild Trout Water, as well as three stream segments that support wild trout reproduction. MAIT further submits that it will complete a wetland and stream field survey for the subject project. Finally, MAIT submits that during construction, MAIT will avoid impacts to streams to the extent practicable and secure permits for unavoidable temporary or permanent impacts from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, as appropriate. Application, Exhibit 6, pages 57-58.

MAIT states that according to the USFWS Environmental Conservation Online System, five federally threatened species and five endangered species may occur within the project study area. MAIT further states, in a letter from the USFWS, that based on survey results and provided the appropriate compensatory measures are followed, impacts to these species are indiscriminate or discountable. Application, Exhibit 6, page 20 and Exhibit 7.

MAIT submits that it will implement appropriate measures during construction and throughout the subsequent operation of the subject project to avoid or minimize impacts to environmental resources. MAIT also submits it will obtain all the relevant state and federal permits needed to construct the subject project and will adhere to the conditions set forth in those permits. Application ¶34.

Assignment of Easements and Rights-of-Way

MAIT states that the Piney – Seward 115 kV Transmission Line Project will partially occupy an existing transmission line right-of-way for its entire length. MAIT also states that where additional right-of-way is not needed, the proposed transmission line will be constructed on the existing transmission centerline and that the right-of-way is approximately 100 feet in width. Additionally, MAIT states that where new or

additional right-of-way has been acquired, the subject transmission line will be constructed adjacent and parallel to the existing transmission centerline and that the right-of-way will vary from approximately 173 feet in width to approximately 216 feet in width. Finally, MAIT states that it has reached agreements with all landowners, except for one parcel owned by PennDOT for which additional right-of-way is needed. Application ¶¶19-20.

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.

MAIT has met its burden to prove that its Application requesting approval to site and construct the proposed Piney – Seward 115 kV Transmission Line Project is

necessary or proper for the accommodation, convenience and safety of its patrons, employees and the public.

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

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

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

The formal MAIT 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:

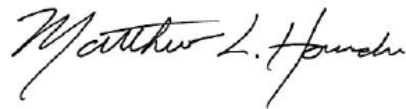
1. That the Application filed by Mid-Atlantic Interstate Transmission, LLC to site and construct the transmission lines associated with the Piney – Seward 115 kV Transmission Line Project in: Redbank Township, Armstrong County; Limestone, Porter, Redbank, Piney and Monroe Townships, Clarion County; Buffington, East Mahoning, East Wheatfield, Green, North Mahoning, Pine, Rayne, and West Mahoning Townships,

Indiana County; Timblin Borough and Porter and Ringgold Townships, Jefferson County; and St. Clair Township, Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, is hereby approved.

2. That upon completion of the subject project, Mid-Atlantic Interstate Transmission, LLC shall file the final project cost with the Commission.

3. That upon completion of Ordering Paragraph 2, this proceeding at Docket No. A-2025-3054924 be marked closed.

BY THE COMMISSION,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew L. Homsher". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M".

Matthew L. Homsher
Secretary

(SEAL)

ORDER ADOPTED: December 18, 2025

ORDER ENTERED: December 18, 2025