PENNSYLVANIA
PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Public Meeting held February 19, 2026

Commissioners Present:

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

Letter of Notification of PPL Electric Utilities Corporation for approval to reconstruct a section of the Frackville – Columbia 230 kV Transmission Line located in Catawissa, Cleveland, Conyngham, Franklin, Hemlock, Locust, Montour, and Roaring Creek Townships, Columbia County, and Butler Township, Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania	Docket Number: A-2025-3057843

ORDER

BY THE COMMISSION:

On October 6, 2025, PPL Electric Utilities Corporation (PPL Electric), Utility Code 110500, filed a Letter of Notification pursuant to 52 Pa. Code § 57.72(d)(1)(i) of the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission's (Commission) transmission line siting regulation. For the reasons expressed in this Order, the Letter of Notification is approved.

Copies of the Letter of Notification were served in accordance with Section 57.72(d)(3) and 57.74(b) & (c), 52 Pa. Code §§ 57.72(d)(3), 57.74(b) & (c). No protests were filed. No hearings were held.

PPL Electric requests approval to reconstruct a section of the Frackville – Columbia 230 kV Transmission Line located in Catawissa, Cleveland, Conyngham, Franklin, Hemlock, Locust, Montour, and Roaring Creek Townships, Columbia County, and Butler Township, Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania. PPL Electric submits that the subject project proposes to rebuild approximately 26.7 miles of the Frackville – Columbia line extending from the existing Columbia 230-69 kV Substation to existing Structure 118 outside the Frackville 230-69 kV Substation. PPL Electric also submits that the only section to remain consists of existing structure 118 to existing structure 124 which were previously rebuilt under a maintenance program and Docket No. A-2023-3040694. Application, Attachment 2, pages 1-2.

PPL Electric states that the reconstruction of the Frackville – Columbia line is necessary to resolve significant asset health condition concerns across the single-circuit transmission line associated with the presence of pack-out rust in the existing COR-TEN steel lattice towers. PPL Electric also states that the Frackville – Columbia transmission line was constructed in the early 1970s and includes 116 weathering-steel COR-TEN lattice structures spanning approximately 26.7 miles. PPL Electric further states that 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. Lastly, PPL Electric states that these towers had an expected service life of approximately 75 years at the time they were installed. Application ¶¶9 & 16.

PPL Electric submits that independent field investigations and assessments were conducted in 2013 and 2019 on PPL Electric's 230 kV system and in 2024 on the

Frackville – Columbia transmission line. PPL Electric also submits that the investigations and assessments were conducted by separate third party entities and revealed that the aging COR-TEN structures on the 230 kV system including the Frackville – Columbia transmission line facilities are showing signs of accelerated deterioration. Additionally, PPL Electric submits that based on the results of these assessments, the issue with COR-TEN lattice towers has accelerated the deterioration of these structures and has brought the assets to the end of their service life much sooner than would have been anticipated. PPL Electric further submits that at roughly 50 years of age, the COR-TEN lattice towers that comprise the Frackville – Columbia line have exceeded their useful life and can no longer be relied upon to safely operate as designed. Application ¶¶19, 22, & 25.

PPL Electric states that the asset health concerns discovered by the 2013 assessment were heightened by the discovery of pack-out rust in the section joints of the subject COR-TEN lattice towers. PPL Electric also states 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. PPL Electric further states that this now well-known inherent problem with COR-TEN steel is also being seen in other infrastructure where two pieces of COR-TEN steel overlap at joints, such as those present on lattice towers. Application ¶18.

PPL Electric submits that the accelerated deterioration of the asset health of the COR-TEN lattice towers has been further corroborated by a recent study prepared by RTR Energy Solutions, Inc. (RTR) in 2024. PPL Electric also submits that RTR was contracted to perform a condition assessment on the Frackville – Columbia transmission line. Additionally, PPL Electric submits that the sample set for the assessment consisted of all 116 of the COR-TEN structures on this line. PPL Electric further submits that of the structures evaluated on the Frackville – Columbia line, approximately 91.4% were determined to have a condition rating of severe, which indicates that greater than 50% of the

existing structure's joints contain pack-out rust. Finally, PPL Electric submits that the majority of pack 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. Attachment 1, page 11.

PPL Electric states that in order to resolve the identified COR-TEN lattice tower health conditions, it proposes to rebuild the existing single circuit Frackville – Columbia transmission line. PPL Electric also states that the reconstruction project includes removing the existing COR-TEN transmission structures and existing conductor and rebuilding the Frackville – Columbia line as a double circuit 230 kV transmission line to accommodate future load growth. Additionally, PPL Electric states that it presented its plan to address COR-TEN needs on its 230 kV system at PJM's October 2020, Transmission Expansion Advisory Committee. Finally, PPL Electric states that the presentation included the reconstruction of the Frackville – Columbia line and was subsequently assigned supplemental project number s2367. Application ¶29 and Attachment 1, pages 17-18.

PPL Electric submits that in addition to rebuilding the Frackville – Columbia transmission line, it considered two alternative solutions, structure replacement, and structure restoration. PPL Electric also submits that the estimated total cost of ownership over a 45-year period for the two alternative solutions is approximately $383.0 million and $348.1 million, respectively. Accordingly, PPL Electric submits that the two alternatives were rejected for a solution which addresses the aging infrastructure in a cost-effective manner. Finally, PPL Electric submits that the 45-year cost of the chosen solution is approximately $332.1 million. Application Attachment 1, Section 5.0 and Table 1-3.

PPL Electric states that as part of rebuilding the Frackville – Columbia transmission line it will remove the existing conductors and 117 existing transmission structures on the section of line to be rebuilt and install new conductors supported on 116 new steel

monopole structures. PPL Electric also states that the new conductors consist of three double bundle 1590 kcmil, 54/19 stranding, "Falcon" aluminum conductor steel reinforced (ACSR) conductors. Additionally, PPL Electric states that the existing structures range from approximately 96 feet in height to approximately 191 feet in height and the new transmission structures will range from approximately 90 feet in height to 195 feet in height. PPL Electric further states that the subject project has been designed and will be built entirely within the existing right-of-way for the Frackville – Columbia transmission line. Finally, PPL Electric states that the right-of-way varies from approximately 175 feet in width to approximately 350 feet in width. Application ¶36 and Attachment 2, page 4 and Table 2-1.

PPL Electric asserts that the Frackville – Columbia Rebuild Project will be designed, constructed, operated and maintained in a manner that meets or surpasses all applicable PPL Electric and National Electrical Safety Code minimum standards and all applicable legal requirements. Application ¶34.

PPL Electric submits that the total estimated cost for the Frackville – Columbia Rebuild Project is approximately $144 million and that all costs will be paid for by PPL Electric. PPL Electric also submits that construction of the subject project is anticipated to commence in March 2026 with a proposed in-service date of January 2029. Application, Attachment 1, page 2.

Section 57.72 authorizes the abbreviated Letter of Notification siting application process in lieu of an application for the following:

(i) An HV line which is proposed to be located entirely on an existing transmission line right-of-way, so long as the size, character, design, or configuration of the proposed HV line does not substantially alter the

right-of-way.

(ii) An HV line which is proposed to be located entirely within a public road.

(iii) An HV line which is proposed to be located entirely within applicant's existing transmission line right-of-way and the property of the sole customer to be served by the line, so long as the size, character, design, or configuration of the proposed HV line does not substantially alter the right-of-way.

(iv) A line for which the voltage is proposed to be increased above its present levels so long as the size, character, design, or configuration of the proposed HV line does not substantially alter the right-of-way.

(v) An HV line which is to be reconductored or reconstructed so long as the size, character, design or configuration of the proposed HV line does not substantially alter the right-of-way

(vi) An HV line having a proposed route of 2 miles or less.

52 Pa. Code § 57.72(d).

We agree with PPL Electric that the formal PPL Electric Letter of Notification and manner in which it was filed conforms to the requirements of 52 Pa. Code § 57.72(d)(1)(i) because the subject project reconstructs a portion of the existing Frackville – Columbia line in such a manner that it does not substantially alter the existing right-of-way. 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 and, therefore, to be in the public interest.

We also note that our approval of the Letter of Notification does not address the issues of accounting treatment, and cost recovery; **THEREFORE,**

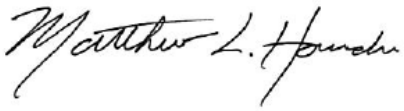
IT IS ORDERED:

1. That the Letter of Notification filed by PPL Electric Utilities Corporation for approval to reconstruct a section of the Frackville – Columbia 230 kV Transmission Line, located in Catawissa, Cleveland, Conyngham, Franklin, Hemlock, Locust, Montour, and Roaring Creek Townships, Columbia County, and Butler Township, Schuylkill 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-2025-3057843 be closed.

BY THE COMMISSION,



Matthew L. Homsher
Secretary

ORDER ADOPTED: February 19, 2026

ORDER ENTERED: February 19, 2026