

**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS  
ENERGY FACILITY SITING BOARD**

**IN RE: THE NARRAGANSETT ELECTRIC COMPANY :**  
**D/B/A NATIONAL GRID'S NOTICE OF INTENT :**  
**APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL J16 : DOCKET NO. SB-2015-04**  
**115KV TRANSMISSION LINE :**  
**RECONDUCTORING PROJECT :**

**DECISION AND ORDER**

On July 1, 2015, the Narragansett Electric Company d/b/a National Grid (National Grid or Company) filed a Notice of Intent Application with the Energy Facility Siting Board (EFSB or Board) pursuant to Rule 1.6(f) of the Board's Rules of Practice and Procedure (Rules).<sup>1</sup> The application<sup>2</sup> proposes to reductor<sup>3</sup> approximately 2.2 miles of the existing J16 115kV line located between the Riverside Substation in Woonsocket, Rhode Island and the Highland Park Substation in Cumberland, Rhode Island. The project includes the replacement of existing conductors with larger conductors capable of carrying more power; the replacement of four

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<sup>1</sup> Rule 1.6(f) provides for an abbreviated review of an application for the construction of power lines of more than 1,000 feet, but less than 6,000 feet, or the modification or relocation of existing power lines. After the application is filed and a public hearing held in one or more of the cities or towns affected by the project, the Board must make a determination within sixty days of the filing as to whether the project "may result in a significant impact on the environment or the public health, safety and welfare." If the Board finds no significant impact, the project does not constitute a major alteration. The applicant will, accordingly, be licensed to proceed without further review.

<sup>2</sup> The application provides a detailed description of the work to be performed as well as an extensive analysis of the impacts upon the natural and social environments and electromagnetic field levels. At the public hearing, the application and the various parts of the application at issue here were marked as full exhibits, National Grid Exhibit 1A, 1B, and 1C. Additionally, the Board marked National Grid's Response to Data Requests as Exhibit 2, the Fact Sheet as Exhibit 3, and the slide presentation as Exhibit 4. The application and attachments are available at the Public Utilities Commission located at 89 Jefferson Boulevard, Warwick, Rhode Island or on-line at [http://www.ripuc.org/efsb/2015\\_SB\\_4.html](http://www.ripuc.org/efsb/2015_SB_4.html).

<sup>3</sup> Reconductoring is the replacement of conductors on an existing transmission line and may involve the replacement or reinforcement of existing towers and/or poles.

existing, double-circuit steel lattice tower structures with single pole double-circuit dead-end structures; the addition of one new, direct embedded double-circuit steel two-pole davit arm suspension structure; and the reinforcement of nineteen existing steel lattice tower structures to support the new conductors. The project is needed to maintain firm and reliable electric supply to the loads of the northern Rhode Island area by avoiding overload of the transmission line conductors during certain contingency operating conditions. As required by the Rules and after public notice published in the local newspaper in each community, the Board held a public hearing in Woonsocket.

At the public hearing, the Company presented two witnesses: Nelson Antunes, National Grid's Project Manager, and Adam Rosenblatt, a project manager and senior environmental scientist with Vanesse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. (VHB), to describe the project and its effects as set forth in the Application and the Environmental Report and to respond to inquiries by the Board. Mr. Antunes described the need for and the location of the project and explained the construction process and schedule. He identified the portion of the J16 line involved in the project as the 2.24 mile section of the transmission line that extends from the Riverside substation in Woonsocket, Rhode Island to the Highland Park substation in Cumberland, Rhode Island.<sup>4</sup> He noted that 99% of the section of the line being reconfigured is in Woonsocket.<sup>5</sup> In addition to upgrading the line, Mr. Antunes noted, the Company would replace four structures and install one new structure. He stated that minor maintenance work, such as painting or some of the structures and cosmetic work around the foundations would also occur.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Hr'g Tr. 4-6 (Aug. 26, 2015). The entire J16 transmission line is 3.8 miles long. It originates at the Riverside Substation in Woonsocket and terminates at the Staples substation in Cumberland. See Environmental Report at 8 – which is on-line at [http://www.ripuc.org/efsb/2015\\_SB\\_4.html](http://www.ripuc.org/efsb/2015_SB_4.html).

<sup>5</sup> *Id.* at 7.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.* at 8.

The project was necessary, Mr. Antunes explained, to avoid thermal overloads under contingency conditions that could result in outages; to comply with industry standards; and to maintain safe, firm, and reliable electric supply to National Grid's customers.<sup>7</sup> Mr. Antunes discussed the project timeline, noting that National Grid expected completion of the project within six months of commencement.<sup>8</sup> Phyllis Wall, a transmission project engineer for National Grid, stated that the project was expected to commence during the fall of 2016.<sup>9</sup> Lastly, Danielle Aretz, another Company representative, discussed the Company's community outreach that commenced in December 2014, noting that outreach would continue through the life of the project.<sup>10</sup>

Mr. Rosenblatt described the natural and social environment of the project area, mitigation measures, and anticipated impacts. He described the existing right-of-way and the process for studying the environmental conditions. He identified impacts to the environment as including soil disturbance, which would be limited by a soil erosion/sediment control plan; wetlands impacts that would be mitigated with the use of swamp mats, and the temporary displacement of wildlife that usually returns to repopulate an area after it has been vacated.<sup>11</sup>

When asked about the impacts on the natural environment, Mr. Rosenblatt reiterated that there would be no permanent impacts from the project and that the temporary impacts would be mitigated through the implementation of the soil erosion sediment control plan and monitoring. He explained that no permanent impacts on the social environment were expected to occur.<sup>12</sup> During the Company's presentation, the Director of Public Works from the Town of Cumberland

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<sup>7</sup> *Id.* at 8-9.

<sup>8</sup> *Id.* at 9.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.* at 12.

<sup>10</sup> *Id.* at 13-15.

<sup>11</sup> *Id.* at 19-21.

<sup>12</sup> *Id.* at 21-23.

asked several questions which were treated as public comment and responded to by the Company.<sup>13</sup>

After the Company's presentation ended, the Chairperson solicited further public comment but none was offered.

Immediately upon conclusion of the public hearing, the Board conducted an open meeting, which had been properly noticed. The Board found that the project is necessary to avoid thermal overloads under contingency conditions that could result in outages; to comply with industry standards; and to maintain safe, firm, and reliable electric supply to National Grid's customers. It also found that the project will not result in a significant impact to the environment or public health, safety, and welfare. The social and environmental impacts resulting from the construction will be negligible. Moreover, the Board is assured that National Grid will engage in appropriate mitigation measures to minimize any disturbances to vegetation and soil and to the social environment. Board member Flynn moved that the Board find the project would result in no significant impact to the environment or public health, safety, and welfare and that a license be granted. The motion was seconded by Chairperson Curran and approved.

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<sup>13</sup> *Id.* at 24-26.

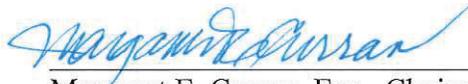
ACCORDINGLY, it is:

( 75 ) ORDERED:

The Energy Facility Siting Board hereby grants to the Narragansett Electric Company d/b/a National Grid a license under R.I. Gen. Laws §42-98-11 to authorize it to reconductor the J16 115 kV Transmission Line, as previously described, subject to the Narragansett Electric Company d/b/a National Grid's receipt of all other permits required for the Project.

DATED AND EFFECTIVE at Woonsocket, Rhode Island on August 26, 2015, pursuant to an open meeting decision. Written Order issued September 22, 2015.

ENERGY FACILITY SITING BOARD



Margaret E. Curran, Esq., Chairperson  
Energy Facility Siting Board



Kevin M. Flynn, Associate Director  
Division of Planning

Janet Coit, Director\*  
RI Department of Environmental Management

\*Director Coit did not participate in this decision.