

**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND
ENERGY FACILITY SITING BOARD**

THE NARRAGANSETT ELECTRIC COMPANY :
NOTICE OF INTENT APPLICATION : **DOCKET NO. SB-2022-01**
V-148S 115 kV TRANSMISSION LINE :
ASSET CONDITION REFURBISHMENT :
PROJECT

DECISION AND ORDER

On March 4, 2022, The Narragansett Electric Company (TNEC 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).¹ The application proposed refurbishment of the entire V148S 115 kV Transmission Line (V148S Line or Line) that extends approximately 4.8 miles and runs from the Washington #126 Substation in Lincoln, RI through Cumberland, RI to the Massachusetts state line.

A copy of the Notice of Intent to Construct or Relocate Power Lines of More than 1,000 feet is required by 445-RICR-00-00-1.6(F) of the Rules to be filed with the Council of the municipality affected by the construction of said lines at least ninety days before construction is to commence. On March 4, 2022, TNEC filed the Notice of Intent with the Lincoln Town Clerk and the Cumberland Town Clerk for distribution to the Town Councils. The Rule also allows the municipality, or any intervenor, up to thirty days after the filing to file an objection with the Board. No such objection was received by the Board.

¹ 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, and the applicant may proceed without further review.

In its application, the Company explained that the purpose of the project is to maintain the Company's existing assets, lines, and structures, in order to continue to provide reliable service. The V148S Line was originally constructed between 1914 and 1946 as a 69 kV line that was upgraded to a 115 kV line in 1959. Currently, the Line uses a combination of wood and steel lattice structures to support the conductors. Over time, the wood structures have deteriorated due to weather, storm damage, and woodpecker damage. The existing conductors and shield wire also need to be reconducted to be able to provide high-speed communications between substations. The project will consist of a new switch structure, fifty-eight (58) structures being replaced, and six existing structures being removed. With the exception of four structures being replaced with steel H-frame structures, all new structures will be steel davit arm types, and the existing switch will be replaced with a standard horizontal flyover structure.

A number of construction maintenance practices will be implemented to avoid or minimize environmental impacts. Prior to construction commencing, vegetation mowing in the right-of-way (ROW) will occur and certain trees will be trimmed or removed. An environmental monitor will be present to supervise throughout the project. Soil erosion and sediment controls will be installed to mitigate disruption to the environment and will be removed upon completion of the project. TNEC plans to use existing access roads. As much as possible of the construction debris will be recycled, and what cannot be recycled will be properly disposed off-site. Once construction is complete, the ROW will be restored to pre-construction conditions to the extent possible.

The Company provided that intermittent and temporary additional traffic may occur during the construction period. It will work with the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) to develop a traffic management plan for work within the state highways and with the Towns for work on local streets and roads. Construction is scheduled to occur between 7:00 a.m.

and 7:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, and when necessary, between 7:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. on weekends but may be required outside of those timeframes if needed to complete certain activities. TNEC has committed to notifying landowners, abutters, municipal officials, Town Public Works staff, and Town Police and Fire Chiefs of all planned construction.

The Company has implemented and begun its community outreach efforts to inform and educate residents, businesses, and municipal officials about the project. Outreach includes meetings with municipalities and relevant governmental organizations, community open house events, a door-to-door campaign and canvassing, a user-friendly website, a project hotline, fact sheets, door hangers, FAQs, timelines, and advertising. The Company has met with state and local officials in both Towns to provide details about the project. TNEC anticipates the project to cost approximately \$41.8 million. Planning and Engineering began in November 2020; construction is expected to begin in August 2022 and be completed in May 2023. Facilities are expected to be in service by May 2023, and the area fully restored by July 2023.

Three alternatives were considered by the Company: 1) no action, 2) partial upgrade and repair of existing assets; and 3) V148S Line Asset Condition Refurbishment and OPGW Installation Project. The no action alternative was rejected because the Company concluded that failure to replace the structures could result in major damage to the lines and a dangerous loss of clearance beneath the lines. Further, the no action alternative would not address the need to upgrade the transmission system to avoid overloading conductors and to provide reliable service. The partial upgrade alternative was rejected because the age of the existing structures and clearance requirements would not support the new conductor without substantial modifications to those structures. Thus, the chosen alternative was found to be superior because it would meet reliability needs and be the lowest cost over the long term.

Public hearings were held on June 22, 2022 in the Town of Cumberland and on June 29, 2022 in the Town of Lincoln. At the June 22, 2022 hearing, the Company presented the following witnesses: 1) Kevin Buffi, the Project Manager with TNEC and 2) Allison Milliman, an ecological scientist and project manager with BSC Group, Incorporated to support the details in the application and the Environmental Report and to respond to inquiries.

Mr. Buffi reiterated the details set forth in the Notice of Intent and explained why the project was needed and the conditions that would occur if no action was taken. He described the route as 4.8 miles, beginning at the Washington substation in Lincoln and ending at the state line in Cumberland. He also explained each of the alternatives reviewed and why each, other than the chosen one, was rejected. He described the construction sequence and noted that construction is planned to begin in July/August 2022 and was expected to be completed within a year. He also noted that the Company outreach has begun and will include all of the abutters along the project route.

Ms. Milliman described the environmental impacts. She highlighted that all of the main water bodies along the route have some type of impairment. She noted that the majority of impact to the wetland and stream resource areas within the project right-of-way would be caused by construction matting and would be temporary in nature and explained the environmental controls that would be implemented to ensure protection of environmental resources. Ms. Milliman testified that the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) identified two plants that were state-listed species of concern that would be avoided. She also provided that the Company's plan avoids direct impacts to one subsurface sensitive resource area identified by a cultural resources consultant. Both DEM and the Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission approved TNEC's plans which avoid the environmentally and culturally sensitive areas. Ms. Milliman noted

that construction noise will be temporary and intermittent and if extended work hours are needed, TNEC will communicate that to the appropriate town official. Construction equipment will be staged and most of the traffic associated with the project will occur within the ROW.

Following the Company's presentation at the June 22, 2022 hearing, the Chairman solicited public comment. One member of the public attended and asked for clarification regarding the specific location of some of the activities and references on the drawings, to which the Company representatives responded. On June 29, 2022, a second public comment hearing was held in Lincoln. No member of the public appeared to provide comment.

On July 18, 2022, the Board conducted an Open Meeting which was properly noticed. For the reasons described below, the Board found that the project does not constitute an alteration of a major energy facility.

The Company's Notice of Intent application filed pursuant to Rule 1.6(F) seeks a finding from the Board that the modification of an existing power line does not constitute an alteration requiring further review by the Board. While it is a significant modification as defined by § 42-98-4(b), the Board finds that based on the evidence presented, the proposed work will not result in significant impact to the environment or public health, safety, or welfare. The Board finds the proposed refurbishment of the entire V148S 115 kV Line to be necessary due to the age of the assets. This is a positive and necessary step in ensuring reliability to the area and in bringing the electric transmission system up to current standards.

Based on the evidence provided, the Board finds the project will not have a significant impact on the environment or public health, safety, and welfare. The social and environmental impacts resulting from the construction will be temporary and minimal. Moreover, the Board was assured and is confident that the Company will engage in appropriate mitigation measures to

minimize any disturbances to vegetation and soil and to the social environment. Accordingly, the Board unanimously finds that the project will not cause a significant impact on the environment, public health, safety, or welfare and, thus, is not an alteration of a major energy facility. TNEC may proceed without further review.

Accordingly, it is hereby

(155) ORDERED:

The Energy Facility Siting Board finds that the project does not constitute an alteration of a major energy facility as defined by R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-98-4(b) in that it will not result in a significant impact on the environment or public health, safety, and welfare and that The Narragansett Electric Company may proceed without further review.

DATED AND EFFECTIVE AT PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND ON JULY 18, 2022, PURSUANT TO AN OPEN MEETING DECISION. WRITTEN ORDER ISSUED AUGUST 9, 2022.

ENERGY FACILITY SITING BOARD



Ronald T. Gerwatowski

Ronald T. Gerwatowski, Chairman

Meredith Brady
Meredith Brady (Aug 9, 2022 09:19 EDT)

Meredith E. Brady, Member

Terrence Gray

Terrence Gray, Member