

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

THE NARRAGANSETT ELECTRIC COMPANY :
NOTICE OF INTENT APPLICATION : **DOCKET NO. SB-2024-02**
TIVERTON TAP REBUILD PROJECT :

DECISION AND ORDER

On June 21, 2024, The Narragansett Electric Company (Narragansett Electric 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 to rebuild the existing L14 and M13 115 kilovolt (kV) Tiverton Tap Lines, (Tiverton Tap or Taps) located solely within the Town of Tiverton and traveling a distance of approximately 2.1 miles (Project).²

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 June 21, 2024, Narragansett Electric filed the Notice of Intent with the Tiverton Town Clerk for distribution to the Town Councilors. 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.

² The Notice of Intent and supporting documentation can be found at <https://ripuc.ri.gov/Docket-SB-2024-02>.

In its application, the Company explained that the purpose of the project is to improve the condition and performance of the Tiverton Tap Lines between the Tiverton Substation and the Massachusetts/Rhode Island state border. The Tiverton Tap Lines were identified for refurbishment, because the wood structures supporting the lines showed signs of deterioration during inspection. The two circuits, Tiverton Taps M13-1 and L14-1 and Tiverton 2 Taps M13-3 and L14-3 contain a total of 64 structures which are primarily wood H-frame that need to be replaced. The Company represented that failure to improve the existing assets could result in future reliability issues. The Project consists of rebuilding the existing 115 kV Tiverton Tap from the Fall River, MA and Tiverton border to the Tiverton Substation, a distance of approximately 2.1 miles, and includes a total of 58 structures to be replaced. Additionally, the Company will re-conductor with 1113.0 kcmil ACSS overhead conductor and replace the existing overhead shield wire with new Optical Ground Wire on double-circuit structures that will each have dual shielding. Lastly, the Company will restore and stabilize the disturbed areas within the existing right-of-way (ROW). The height of the current structures range from 31 to 71 feet. The new structures will range in height from 65 to 89 feet and will consist of steel monopoles and H-frame steel structures.

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. Narragansett Electric 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 Town 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 to complete certain activities. Narragansett Electric 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 planned 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 the Town to provide details about the project. Narragansett Electric anticipates the project to cost approximately \$8.059 million. Planning and Engineering began in Q4 2022; construction is expected to begin in Q4 2024 and be completed in Q2 2025. Facilities are expected to be in service by Q2 2025, and the area fully restored by Q3 2025.

Three alternatives were considered by the Company: 1) no action, 2) a new underground route; and 3) the parallel circuit transmission line rebuild (the preferred alternative). The no action alternative was rejected because the Company concluded that it would not meet existing safety and reliability standards. The Company maintained that failure to address the deteriorated

condition of the tap lines has a high risk of failure that will impact customer interruptions and pose a severe risk to public safety. The new underground route alternative would require the excavation of two trenches within the ROW and intersect the high-pressure Algonquin natural gas pipeline crossing. The impacts to the natural environment would be significantly more than the preferred alternative. This alternative was rejected for the above identified reasons, as well as the cost, which is approximately ten times more than the preferred alternative. Thus, the chosen alternative was found to be superior because it would resolve the condition and reliability issues with the existing lines.

A public hearing was held on August 21, 2024 in the Town of Tiverton. At the public hearing, the Company presented the following witnesses: 1) Amr El-Hakim, the Project Manager with Narragansett Electric and 2) Jamie Durand, a senior environmental project manager with POWER Engineers to support the details in the application and the Environmental Report and to respond to inquiries.

Mr. El-Hakim reiterated the details set forth in the Notice of Intent, noting that the Company will replace 58 H-frame structures with steel monopoles and approximately 60 year old conductors and will add dual shield wiring. He explained why the project was needed, the alternatives considered, and why the chosen alternative was preferable. He described the construction sequence and projected that the project should be online by May 2025. He also noted that the Company outreach has begun and will include all of the abutters along the project route and thus far there has been no opposition from any abutter to the project.³

Mr. Durand described the environmental impacts to the 2.1 mile long project span. He noted that ROW is approximately 250 feet wide but the cleared width is approximately 150 feet

³ Hr'g Tr. at 6-14 (Aug. 21, 2024).

wide. In evaluating the area, he mapped a 5,000-foot study area around the ROW and identified watersheds, wetlands, rare species, herbaceous vegetation, land use, and cultural resources. He discussed the various mitigation measures the Company would engage in during construction. He indicated that Narragansett Electric will minimize construction impacts like noise, dust, and traffic which will all be temporary. Lastly, he provided that the Company had submitted an application for a wetlands permit which was currently being reviewed by the Department of Environmental Management.⁴

Following the Company's presentation at the August 21, 2024 hearing, the Chairman solicited public comment. No member of the public appeared to provide comment.

On September 23, 2024, 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. The Board finds the proposed improvements to the existing transmission assets to be necessary due to the age of the assets. This is a positive and necessary step in ensuring reliability for 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

⁴ *Id.* at 17-32.

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. Narragansett Electric may proceed without further review.

Accordingly, it is hereby

(165) 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 SEPTEMBER 23, 2024, PURSUANT TO AN OPEN MEETING DECISION. WRITTEN ORDER ISSUED OCTOBER 7, 2024.

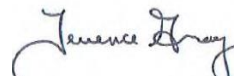
ENERGY FACILITY SITING BOARD



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