

DOCKET NO. 97 - AN APPLICATION : Connecticut Siting
SUBMITTED BY NORTHEAST UTILITIES :
SERVICE COMPANY, AS AGENT FOR THE : Council
CONNECTICUT LIGHT AND POWER COMPANY, :
FOR A CERTIFICATE OF ENVIRONMENTAL : February 14, 1989
COMPATIBILITY AND PUBLIC NEED FOR
THE RECONSTRUCTION OF AN OVERHEAD
115-KV TRANSMISSION LINE BETWEEN
FARMINGTON SUBSTATION IN FARMINGTON
AND NORTH BLOOMFIELD SUBSTATION IN
BLOOMFIELD.

O P I N I O N

The Connecticut Light and Power Company (CL&P), acting by its agent, the Northeast Utilities Service Company (NU) applied to the Connecticut Siting Council on June 30, 1988, for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need for the reconstruction of an overhead 115-kV electric transmission line along a route between Farmington Substation in Farmington and North Bloomfield Substation in Bloomfield. Public hearings on the application were held in West Hartford on October 31, 1988, and November 1, 1988. Members of the Council made an inspection of the proposed route on October 31, 1988.

Under Section 16-50p of the General Statutes of Connecticut (CGS), in deciding this application, the Council must consider the need for the transmission line reconstruction and the nature of its probable environmental impact, "including a specification of every significant adverse effect, whether alone or cumulatively with other effects, on, and conflict with the policies of the state concerning, the natural environment, ecological balance, public health and safety, scenic, historic and recreational values, forests and parks, air and water purity and fish and wildlife...." The Council may not grant a Certificate unless it finds that these adverse effects or conflicts with state policies are not sufficient to deny the application. The Findings of Fact which accompany this Opinion contains the Council's findings regarding the need for the facility, its adverse impacts, and its consistency with relevant state policies. For the reasons stated in this Opinion, the Council has concluded that a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need should be issued, based on the need for the reliability of the electric transmission system and the absence of significant environmental impacts sufficient to deny the application.

The reconstruction would help meet growing load demands in the Central Connecticut area, and would greatly enhance the reliability of the power distribution system. Although the likelihood of a simultaneous forced double outage of the Millstone-Southington and Haddam Neck-Southington, 345-kV transmission lines is slim, the possible occurrence of a cascading widespread blackout without the reconstruction is unacceptable.

Because of these reasons, the rebuild is consistent with state energy policy and public need for reliable electricity at the lowest reasonable cost.

The Council sympathizes with the residential property owners in Simsbury whose homes would be closer to the rebuilt lines and more exposed as a result of the reconstruction. Although the rebuild would bring the line closer to the residential property owners in Simsbury, the Council does not believe that the loss of trees would have a significant effect on the forest, wetlands, and wildlife of the area. Since the three subdivisions in question were designed, approved, and developed after the CL&P easements in these areas were acquired and the lines were constructed, the Council must acknowledge the rights of the applicant to rebuild the line in the manner submitted in the application within and according to their easements in the residential areas.

Given the high cost of the underground alternates submitted in the application, the proposed reconstruction is superior to the alternatives considered by the applicant.

Considering the expense of the residential alternatives, the Council believes that ratepayers should not subsidize the incremental costs of construction when the residential alternatives only benefit a few individuals with no bearing on long-term, overall environmental benefits.

Given the increase in risk to reliability and the additional cost of construction associated with the pole-for-pole replacement alternative from Connecticut Route 185 north to the temporary connection 0.5 miles from North Bloomfield Substation, the proposed reconstruction is more reliable for customer service, and superior in terms of low-cost service for the ratepayers.

The Council is most concerned with the impact on wetland areas, removal of trees for the new line, and possible erosion as a result of construction activities. Given the proposed location of the new line, the Council believes that measures to minimize the impacts with a detailed development and management (D&M) plan would be acceptable if implemented properly.

By imposing a strict D&M plan, the Council feels that the transmission line can be built without a significant long-term effect on the natural environment.

Based on the foregoing, the Council concludes that a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need is warranted for the proposed transmission line, and hereby directs that such a Certificate be issued subject to the terms, limitations, and conditions of the Decision and Order that accompanies this Opinion.