

DOCKET NO. 159 - An application of the : Connecticut
Department of Public Safety, Division of :
State Police for a Certificate of : Siting
Environmental Compatibility and Public : Council
Need for the construction, operation, :
and maintenance of telecommunications :
facilities located off of Bald Hill Road :
at an existing Northeast Utilities tower : June 29, 1993
site approximately 2,000 feet north from :
Route 190 in Union, and at the new Troop C
Barracks on Route 74 approximately 2,500 feet
west from Exit 69 off of Interstate 84 in
Tolland, Connecticut.

ORIGINAL

OPINION

On February 1, 1993, the Connecticut Department of Public Safety, Division of State Police (CSP) applied to the Connecticut Siting Council (Council) for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need (Certificate) for the construction, operation, and maintenance of telecommunications facilities in Union and Tolland, Connecticut.

The CSP has demonstrated a statewide need to upgrade its current telecommunications system. The existing system is compromised by a host of shortcomings, including skip interference, co-channel interference, and lack of growth capacity. To eliminate these shortcomings and to prepare for communications needs of the future, the CSP has proposed a statewide network of 800 megaHertz (MHz) two-way mobile radio and digital microwave. The proposed facilities would be part of this statewide system by serving the Troop C area encompassing the Towns of Somers, Stafford, Union, Ashford, Willington, Tolland, Vernon, Ellington, Coventry, and Mansfield.

Due to the fact that the Union facility would be located on an existing telecommunications facility site, minimal physical changes to the existing site would be necessary for the construction of the CSP's 180-foot above ground level (AGL) self-supporting lattice tower and equipment building. These changes would not have any significant environmental effects on the site. Furthermore, the CSP has met the tower sharing objectives of the Council by proposing use of an existing telecommunications site and getting the existing user, Northeast Utilities, to share not only the tower itself, but the costs of construction.

Although not significant when compared to need, the most notable effect associated with the construction of the Union facility would be visibility. The height of the tower plus its location on a hill of high elevation would cause the tower to be partially visible in all directions, including portions of

Interstate 84. In addition, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), may require the tower to be lighted and marked, thereby adding additional prominence to the tower's visibility. However, reducing the height of the tower would force the CSP to reroute their microwave path in a manner that would decrease system redundancy and possibly isolate Troop D during a crisis. In addition, lighting and marking requirements may be necessary for aviation safety. Nonetheless, in an attempt to minimize the visual effects of this tower, we will order the CSP to apply to the FAA to reconsider aviation safety criteria for an amendment to waive the lighting and marking requirements.

Although the CSP investigated three alternative sites, including an existing telecommunications facility site owned by Continental Cablevision, we believe that the possibility of increased costs, increased environmental effects, and the questionable reduction of visual effects of a new CSP tower at the Continental Cablevision site that would require FAA lighting and marking similar to the proposed tower, are sufficient reasons to accept the justification used by the CSP to choose the proposed site.

The proposed CSP Tolland facility has been designed to provide a microwave link from Troop C to the CSP statewide microwave network. The proposed location of the 120-foot AGL lattice tower at the Tolland site, would be located at the new Troop C barracks which is to be located adjacent to the Nye-Holman State Forest. Although the Council might otherwise reject the location of a facility so close to State forest land, we do not object in this case because of the imminent presence of the Troop C barracks and proximity to Interstate 84. Furthermore, the site the CSP has chosen for the Tolland facility will already be cleared in conjunction with the construction of Troop C, thereby minimizing any adverse environmental effects associated with the tower construction.

Any substantial effects associated with the visibility of the Tolland tower would be mitigated by the surrounding forest and the tower's relative distance to nearby residences. Furthermore, the tower and barracks would be compatible with the Interstate 84 right-of-way.

We considered thinner and visually less obtrusive monopole type towers for use at these sites; however, the proposed lattice towers in this application are most appropriate to support the proposed microwave dish antennas, any future expansion by the CSP, and tower sharing by the proposed and other future users.

There are no known existing populations of Connecticut Species of Special Concern or State and federal endangered or threatened species occurring at the proposed Union and Tolland sites. The construction of the proposed facilities would have no effect on State's historic, architectural, or archaeological resources listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Moreover, there has not been any evidence

that the development of these facilities will have any substantial effect on the natural environment of the sites, including effects on the quality of the air, water, or ecology.

Although electromagnetic radio frequency power density is a concern of the Council, the power density levels at these sites would be well below the American National Standards Institute exposure limits for the proposed frequencies.

Based on its record in this proceeding, the Council finds that the effects associated with the construction, operation, and maintenance of telecommunications facilities and associated equipment buildings at the proposed Union and Tolland sites, including effects on the natural environment; ecological integrity and balance; public health and safety; scenic, historic, and recreational values; forests and parks; air and water purity; and fish and wildlife are not disproportionate either alone or cumulatively with other effects when compared to need, are not in conflict with State policy, and are not sufficient reasons to deny the application. Therefore we will issue a Certificate for the proposed facilities at the proposed sites.

The Council will require the CSP to submit a Development and Management (D&M) plan for approval prior to the commencement of any facility construction at the proposed Union and Tolland sites. This D&M plan shall include detailed plans for the placement of the towers and equipment buildings, tower heights, access roads, utility line installation, erosion and sediment controls, fencing, and site landscaping. The Council will also require that the CSP apply to the FAA for an amendment to waive lighting and marking requirements at the Union site.