

ORIGINAL

DOCKET NO. 85 - An application of the Connecticut Light and Power Company for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need for the construction of a 115-kV underground transmission line to interconnect the proposed Dexter Corporation Cogeneration Facility to the Windsor Locks Substation. : Connecticut Siting Council : February 5, 1988

OPINION

The Connecticut Light and Power Company (CL&P) has applied to the Connecticut Siting Council (Council) for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need (Certificate) for the construction of a 115-kV underground transmission line to interconnect the proposed Dexter Corporation Cogeneration Project (Dexter Project), Windsor Locks, Connecticut, to the existing CL&P 1300 circuit at the Windsor Locks Substation (Substation).

The proposed line is needed to provide the Dexter Project and the C. H. Dexter Division Mill with electricity and enable the Dexter Project to transmit approximately 39 MW of electricity to the utility's transmission grid. The Dexter Project is under construction and is expected to commence operation in January 1990. Testing of the facility would begin in August 1989.

Under Section 16-50p of the General Statutes of Connecticut (CGS), the Council must consider the public need for the proposed underground transmission line and the nature of any probable environmental impacts created by the construction and

operation of this line. The Council may not grant a Certificate unless it finds that conflicts with state environmental policies or adverse environmental effects are not sufficient to deny the application.

Connecting the Dexter Cogeneration Project to CL&P's electric transmission system will implement the Council's decision to certificate the construction of the Dexter Project, thus contributing to state electric power supply, helping reduce dependence on imported energy resources, diversifying the state's energy supply mix, and enhancing supply system reliability. The construction and line operation costs will be paid by the Dexter Project's private investors.

Council interest focused upon the adequacy and reliability of the proposed line, its effect on CL&P's electrical transmission service, and its impact on the surrounding environment. Special attention centered on the effects the line would produce on the physical nature of the historic Windsor Locks Canal (Canal) which runs close to the route of the proposed line. Due to the physical location of the Dexter Project within the community, an interconnection to CL&P's transmission system would be most physically and economically possible by constructing a line to the nearest substation, which is the Windsor Locks Substation located south of the Dexter Project. Difficulties in the construction of such a line would be encountered when crossing the Canal, an AMTRAK railroad line, and Route 159, a busy highway. Initially, overhead alternatives were designed and considered by

Dexter and CL&P. These alternatives would pass over the physical obstructions previously mentioned and run parallel and in close proximity to the Canal wall. Several tall support structures would be required and present substantial visual impact on the historic and scenic appearance of the Canal, a nationally registered historic landmark.

Several agencies opposed the overhead options and supported the design and construction of an underground line. Their primary concern centered upon the visual effects an overhead line of this size would present within the historic district of the Canal.

The Council considered the potential environmental, historic, archaeological, scenic, and recreational impacts of the construction and operation of the proposed and alternative lines. The Council found that adverse effects on the environmental resources could be minimized by careful construction and restoration of the line right-of-way following completion of construction. The Council is concerned that construction activities in close proximity to the Canal be undertaken with care, thereby maintaining the structural integrity and character of the Canal and Amtrak railroad. The Council believes the design and route of the proposed underground line offers the best solution for connecting the Dexter Project to CL&P's electrical grid.

The proposed construction is within an industrial area, that includes a mix of land uses. The Council believes that

the potential construction-related effects, including noise, dust, erosion, traffic control, and greenery cutting will be temporary and minimal. Other siting criteria, including historical, archaeological, architectural, recreational flooding, safety, and reliability factors have been sufficiently addressed. The Council will require CL&P to meet specifications addressed in the Decision and Order accompanying this Opinion.

The Council finds that the public need for this line outweighs any potential environmental effects and concludes that a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need is warranted for the construction of the proposed transmission line. The Council hereby directs that such Certificate be issued subject to the terms, limitations, and conditions of the Decision and Order which accompanies this Opinion.