

Decision No. 84120

ORIGINAL

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In the Matter of the Application
of PACIFIC GAS AND ELECTRIC
COMPANY for a certificate of
public convenience and necessity,
under General Order No. 131, for
a 230 kv transmission line from
Applicant's Midway Substation
facility to Applicant's Kern
230/115/70 kv Substation
adjacent to Applicant's Kern
Power Plant.

Application No. 53708
(Filed November 22, 1972)

Kathy T. Graham, Attorney at Law,
for Pacific Gas and Electric
Company, applicant.
Vincent V. MacKenzie, Attorney at
Law, and Kenneth J. Kindblad,
for the Commission staff.

OPINION AND ORDER

Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) requests authority under the provisions of General Order No. 131 to construct, operate, and maintain a 20.8 mile 230 kv transmission line. The proposed transmission line (Midway-Kern No. 3, a 230 kv line) would supply transmission input from Midway Substation to Kern 230/115/70 kv Substation. The proposed project area is in Kern County, west of Bakersfield.

The application alleges that the public health and safety require the construction of the proposed 230 kv transmission line for the following reasons: The City of Bakersfield and its environs are supplied from Kern 230/115/70 kv Substation, Kern Power Plant

(thermal) and Kern Canyon Powerhouse (hydro). Kern Substation receives input via existing Midway-Kern No. 1 and No. 2 230 kv lines and Midway-Kern No. 1 and No. 2 115 kv lines. Based upon the estimated peak summer load for 1974, an outage of one 230 kv line would result in a 10 percent overload of one Midway-Kern 230 kv line. The applicant has acquired a 129-foot-wide right-of-way contiguous to a 130-foot-wide corridor containing the 115 kv and 230 kv transmission lines. The proposed project will include installation of 105 lattice steel towers parallel to a double row of similar towers carrying the existing lines.

The staff counsel advised the examiner on September 17, 1974 that the Commission staff is of the opinion that the application sets forth sufficient facts on the issues relating to public convenience and necessity. Based upon a review of the applicant's allegations and the information obtained by the staff pursuant to data requests, the staff counsel advises that hearings on the issues relating to public convenience and necessity are not required.

Environmental Considerations

The proposed 20.8 mile transmission line will be contiguous to existing transmission lines. Commencing easterly from Midway Substation, the proposed line will parallel a proposed 500 kv transmission line for approximately 10 miles (in addition to the existing Midway-Kern lines). For approximately the first eight miles easterly from Midway Substation the transmission line will lie in an alkali sink. The transmission corridor traverses the Central Valley floor in an east-west orientation. The eastern 13 miles passes through cultivated croplands and scattered residential areas.

PG&E filed an Environmental Data Statement on July 23, 1973, and a motion for a negative declaration on July 30, 1973. The staff filed written opposition to applicant's motion on August 14, 1973. A public hearing was held on December 19, 1973 at Bakersfield, California, on the question of whether the project may have a significant impact on the environment.

Based upon the evidence presented at the hearing, the Commission staff withdrew its opposition to the motion on March 12, 1974. The examiner filed a negative declaration on September 30, 1974. A notice of intent (with negative declaration attached) was mailed to all parties on September 30, 1974 as required by the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970, as amended (CEQA).

No requests for further hearings have been received by the Commission.

Findings

1. The construction, operation, and maintenance of the 230 kv transmission line described in the application is required to provide sufficient capacity to meet one-line-out contingencies at estimated peak loads.

2. The proposed project would ordinarily be expected to have a significant effect on the environment.

3. The California Public Utilities Commission is the lead agency for the proposed project.

4. The proposed project will have no significant effect on the environment due to circumstances peculiar to the project, as set forth in the Negative Declaration issued by Examiner Mattson on September 30, 1974. The Commission has considered the contents of the Negative Declaration in making its decision on the project, and adopts the Negative Declaration. In addition to the matters set forth in the Negative Declaration, we find that the project will have no significant effect upon the environment because:

(a) The only environmental impact is aesthetic-visual.

(b) The construction of 20.8 miles of transmission line parallel to two existing lines in a sparsely populated rural area will have a short-term impact during the construction period but will have no significant permanent effect. The additional towers will be in a corridor adjacent to an existing double row of towers. Each tower will require twenty square feet of land. Presently existing access roads will be used.

- (c) The present aesthetic impact of the existing towers will not be significantly changed by the construction of a third row of similar towers contiguous to the existing transmission lines.
- (d) Under the circumstances, the alternative of attempting to construct the third transmission line underground is not a practical alternative due to excessive costs, the remote location (in an alkali sink and flat agricultural land) and the fact that two existing rows of towers will remain visible.
- (e) The increased reliable capacity resulting from the project is required in order to enable applicant to meet its obligation to provide reasonable service to the public. The project may accommodate increased demands upon applicant, but will not itself induce growth in the area.
- (f) No objections to the proposed project have been received by the Commission. Notice of Intent issued September 30, 1974 pursuant to the requirements of CEQA.

5. Applicant's proposal is in the public interest; public convenience and necessity now require and will require the construction of the 230 kv transmission line as requested in the application; a public hearing on public convenience and necessity is not required.

Conclusion

The authorization granted by this decision is for the purpose of this proceeding only, and is not to be construed as indicative of amounts to be included in proceedings for the determination of just and reasonable rates.

IT IS ORDERED that:

1. The Secretary of the Commission shall file a Notice of Determination with the Secretary for Resources and the planning agencies of any city or county which will be affected by the project authorized by this decision.

2. A certificate of public convenience and necessity is granted to Pacific Gas and Electric Company to construct and operate approximately 21 miles of 230 kv transmission line from Midway Substation to Kern 230/115/70 kv Substation, together with related appurtenances, as described in the application.

3. The authorization granted by this decision shall expire if not exercised within three years from the date hereof.

The effective date of this order is the date hereof.

Dated at San Francisco, California, this 19th
day of FEBRUARY, 1975.

Vernon L. Sturgeon
President
William J. Quinn
Leonard R. Ross
Commissioners