



ATCO Electric Ltd.

Big Sky Transmission Project

January 6, 2023

Alberta Utilities Commission

Decision 27852-D01-2023: Big Sky Transmission Project

ATCO Electric Ltd.

Proceeding 27852

Applications 27852-A001 to 27852-A003

January 6, 2023

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The Commission may, no later than 60 days of the date of this decision and without notice, correct typographical, spelling and calculation errors and other similar types of errors and post the corrected decision on its website.

1 Decision summary

1. In this decision, the Alberta Utilities Commission approves applications from ATCO Electric Ltd. for the transmission facilities related to the Big Sky Solar Connection Project. The project consists of a new transmission line, a transmission line alteration and a connection of the Big Sky Solar Project to the Alberta Interconnected Electric System.

2 Introduction

2. Big Sky Solar GP Inc. (Big Sky Solar), a wholly owned subsidiary of Renewable Energy Systems Canada Inc., has approval from the Commission to construct and operate the 140-megawatt (MW) Big Sky Solar Power Plant¹ and associated Bullseye 1004S Substation,² located in the Municipal District of Acadia No. 34, approximately 2.5 kilometres northwest of the hamlet of Acadia Valley.

3. Big Sky Solar submitted a system access service request to the Alberta Electric System Operator (AESO) to connect the Big Sky Solar Power Plant to the Alberta Interconnected Electric System. The AESO determined a technical solution to meet the need, which consists of a new 144-kilovolt transmission line connecting the Bullseye 1004S Substation to existing Transmission Line 7L760. On December 2, 2022, under ISO Rules Section 501.3 – *Abbreviated Needs Approval Process*, the AESO issued a letter of approval for the need for the transmission development.³

4. ATCO Electric Ltd. applied to the Commission for approval to construct and operate a 144-kilovolt transmission line, which would be designated as Transmission Line 7LC760. The new line would be approximately 65 metres in length and run from existing Transmission Line 7L760 to Big Sky Solar’s approved Bullseye 1004S Substation.

5. ATCO also filed applications to alter existing Transmission Line 7L760 to accommodate the connection. The alteration would consist of salvaging two existing wishbone structures and replacing them with new H-frame structures. ATCO also stated that two switch structures would be added to allow for isolation of Transmission Line 7LC760.

¹ Power Plant Approval 27594-D02-2022, Proceeding 27594, Application 27594-A001, October 24, 2022.

² Substation Permit and Licence 27594-D03-2022, Proceeding 27594, Application 27594-A002, October 24, 2022.

³ Exhibit 27852-X0012, ATCO-Atch08-BigSky-AESO-ANAP-Approval-Letter, PDF pages 1 to 3.

3 Findings

6. For the reasons that follow, the Commission finds that approval of the proposed development is in the public interest having regard to the social, economic, and other effects of the proposed facilities, including their effect on the environment.

7. ATCO's participant involvement program meets the requirements of Rule 007: *Applications for Power Plants, Substations, Transmission Lines, Industrial System Designations, Hydro Developments and Gas Utility Pipelines*. The Commission accepts that no Indigenous consultation was required as the project is located on private land, will not impact Crown land, and there are no Indigenous-owned lands within 800 metres of the project area. Based on the nature of the applications, and that ATCO stated there are no outstanding or unresolved stakeholder concerns regarding the project, the Commission determined that its decision would not directly and adversely affect the rights of a person. Therefore, neither a notice of applications nor a hearing were required pursuant to Section 9 of the *Alberta Utilities Commission Act*.

8. ATCO retained Golder Associates Ltd. to conduct an environmental evaluation. Golder concluded that the potential effects of the project on vegetation, wetlands, wildlife and wildlife habitat would not be significant provided that the environmental protection measures ATCO has committed to are implemented.⁴ ATCO stated that it will revise its project-specific environmental protection plan prior to construction, which will consider additional project details such as timelines, execution details, and additional regulatory and stakeholder requirements.

9. The Commission finds that ATCO's applications comply with the information requirements set out in Rule 007 and the proposed development is consistent with meeting the approved need and the requirements of the AESO's functional specification.

10. Based on the foregoing, the Commission considers the applications to be in the public interest in accordance with Section 17 of the *Alberta Utilities Commission Act*.

4 Decision

11. The permit and licence for existing Transmission Line 7L760, AP 78-02,⁵ is a legacy licence, which names a different transmission line (259L) and owner (Alberta Power Limited). As part of the approval of these applications, the Commission will issue a licence reflecting ownership of the line by ATCO and redesignating the transmission line as 7L760.

12. The Commission approves the applications under sections 14, 15, 18, 19 and 21 of the *Hydro and Electric Energy Act*, and grants ATCO Electric Ltd. the following approvals:

- Transmission Line Permit and Licence 27852-D02-2023, to construct and operate Transmission Line 7LC760 (Appendix 1).

⁴ Exhibit 27852-X0002, ATCO-Atch02-BigSky-EnvironmentalEvaluation, PDF page 60.

⁵ Permit and Licence AP 78-02, Application 770829, March 31, 1978.

- Transmission Line Permit and Licence 27852-D03-2023, to alter Transmission Line 7L760 (Appendix 2).
- Connection Order 27852-D04-2023, to connect Transmission Line 7LC760 to Big Sky Solar GP Inc.'s Bullseye 1004S Substation (Appendix 3).

13. The appendices will be distributed separately.

Dated on January 6, 2023.

Alberta Utilities Commission

(original signed by)

Matthew Oliver, CD
Commission Member