



ATCO Electric Ltd.

Mitsue Area Fibre Optic Project

July 11, 2023

Alberta Utilities Commission

Decision 28265-D01-2023

ATCO Electric Ltd.

Mitsue Area Fibre Optic Project

Proceeding 28265

Applications 28265-A001 and 28265-A002

July 11, 2023

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The Commission may, no later than 60 days from 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. to construct and operate a fibre optic telecommunications cable as the Mitsue Area Fibre Optic Project, designated as ELADFO020.

2 Introduction

2. ATCO applied to construct and operate an approximately five-kilometre underground fibre optic cable, designated as ELADFO020, between ATCO's existing Mitsue 732S Substation and Alberta PowerLine General Partner Ltd.'s existing Transmission Line 12L41, in the Mitsue area. This creates an interconnection between two existing communications facilities to enhance the telecommunications network and augment ATCO's capacity to manage services during planned and unplanned outages, and emergencies.

3. This initiative is part of the SOC2 Strategic Fibre Project, which aims to extend the fibre network and establish a high-capacity communications backbone connecting the Fort McMurray region with ATCO system operations centres. The overall project increases communications capacity, integrates with regional transmission facility operators, introduces regional route diversity in the north-central portion of ATCO's communications network, and ultimately improves overall system resilience. ATCO provided the cost estimate for the SOC2 Strategic Fibre Project in Proceeding 27062: ATCO Electric Transmission 2023-2025 General Tariff Application.¹

4. Construction of the Mitsue Area Fibre Optic Project is scheduled to commence in fall 2023 and the targeted in-service date is June 30, 2024.

3 Findings

5. For the reasons outlined below, the Commission finds that approval of the proposed project is in the public interest having regard to the social, economic, and other effects of the project, including its effect on the environment.

6. The Commission has determined that the information requirements specified in Rule 007: *Applications for Power Plants, Substations, Transmission Lines, Industrial System Designations, Hydro Developments and Gas Utility Pipelines* have been met.

7. ATCO notified and consulted with landholders, agencies, industries, and other potentially interested parties directly affected and directly adjacent to the proposed route right-of-way.

¹ Proceeding 27062, Exhibit 27062-X0196, 2-1 to 2-22 - TCM Business Cases, PDF page 723.

ATCO's consultation program did not include Indigenous consultation as there was no known potential impact on Indigenous rights and traditional uses. Further, the Government of Alberta's Aboriginal Consultation Office advised ATCO that no consultation was required for this project. ATCO did not receive any objection from any stakeholders. The Commission accepts ATCO's assertion that there will be no impacts on directly adjacent stakeholders, given that the project would be located underground and within existing transmission line and access road rights-of-way. The Commission finds that the participant involvement program for the proposed project meets the requirements of Rule 007.

8. The Commission agrees that the construction's effect on wildlife is expected to be minimal since the project site is situated near existing linear disturbances and there would be limited and localized vegetation removal. ATCO has affirmed that it will conduct a pre-construction survey of the wildlife in the area and build and maintain the proposed infrastructure while complying with all relevant environmental rules and regulations, as well as the conditions specified in the right-of-way agreements and easements.

9. ATCO prepared an environmental protection plan, which describes the mitigation measures to be employed. ATCO committed to implementing all mitigation measures outlined in the environmental evaluation and environmental protection plan. The Commission finds that the project's environmental impact will be minimal given that the cable will be located underground, is routed along pre-disturbed land below an existing transmission line and next to a road, and mitigation measures will be implemented.

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 Commission approves the applications, under sections 14, 15 and 18 of the *Hydro and Electric Energy Act*, and grants ATCO Electric Ltd. the following approvals set out in appendixes to this decision:

- Telecommunications Facilities Permit and Licence 28265-D02-2023, to construct and operate Fibre Optic Cable ELADFO020 (Appendix 1).
- Connection Order 28265-D03-2023, to connect Fibre Optic Cable ELADFO020 to Alberta PowerLine General Partner Ltd.'s Transmission Line 12L41 (Appendix 2).

12. The appendixes will be distributed separately.

Dated on July 11, 2023.

Alberta Utilities Commission

(original signed by)

Doug Hawkins
Acting Commission Member