

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND
ENERGY FACILITY SITING BOARD

In re: The Narragansett Electric Company :
F184N-4&5/E183-3 Bristol & Warren :
Tap 115kV Line Rebuild Project : Docket No. SB-2025-04
Warren and Bristol, Rhode Island :

DECISION AND ORDER

I. INTRODUCTION

On August 22, 2025, The Narragansett Electric Company (Narragansett Electric or Company) filed a Notice of Intent (“NOI”) Application with the Energy Facility Siting Board (EFSB or Board) pursuant to Rule 1.6(F) of the Board’s Rules of Practice and Procedure (“EFSB Rules”)¹ and the applicable provisions of Rhode Island General Laws §§ 42-98-1, et seq. for the review of a project consisting of the rebuild of approximately 5.2 miles of the existing transmission lines between the Massachusetts and Rhode Island state border in Warren and the Warren Substation and between the Warren Substation and the Bristol Substation. See *Notice of Intent Application* (Aug. 22, 2025) at 1. The scope of this Project includes the replacement of all the structures, wires, and shield wires along the same line. *Id.* Pursuant to the instant application, the Company requests that the Board determine that the Project is not an alteration of a major energy facility and thus not subject to the full Board permitting process pursuant to Rule 1.6(F).

II. STANDARD

Rule 1.6(F) of the Board’s Rules provides for an abbreviated review of an application for the construction of power lines of more than 1,000 feet, but less than 6,000 feet, or the modification or relocation of existing power lines. See EFSB Rules, *445-RICR-00-00-1.6(F)*.

¹ See EFSB Rules, *445-RICR-00-00-1.6(F)*.

Pursuant to Rule 1.6(F), a copy of the Notice of Intent must be filed with the Council of the municipality affected by the construction of said lines at least ninety days before construction is commenced. *Id.* Rule 1.6(F) also allows the municipality, or any intervenor, up to thirty days after the Notice to file an objection with the Board. *Id.*

In accordance with Rule 1.6(F), after an abbreviated application is filed and a public hearing held in one or more of the cities or towns affected by the project, the Board must make a determination within sixty days of the filing as to whether the project “may result in a significant impact on the environment or the public health, safety and welfare.” *Id.* If the Board finds no significant impact, the project does not constitute an alteration of a major energy facility, and the applicant may proceed without further review.

III. THE APPLICATION

In support of its NOI, the Company filed a Siting Report along with supporting documentation outlining the proposed Project.² As identified in the Application and more fully outlined in Section 3 of the Company’s Siting Report, the Project is described as including:

“(1) a rebuild of the existing F184N-4/5 and E183-3 Lines from the Massachusetts and Rhode Island border in Warren, Rhode Island to the existing Warren Substation at 34 Norbert Street in Warren and rebuilding the existing F184N-5 Line between the Warren Substation and the Bristol Substation located at 99 Gooding Avenue in Bristol, Rhode Island, a distance of approximately 5.2 miles (1.9 miles for the E183-3 Line); (2) replacing a total of 105 wooden structures with new single circuit steel galvanized structures; (3) reconfiguring the Warren Substation tap lines to shift some structures out of the salt marsh and avoid crossing 115 kV overhead lines west of the station; (4) replacing the conductors with new single 1113 kcmil Aluminum Conductor Steel “Finch” overhead conductor; (5) replacing existing overhead shield wire with dual overhead fiber Optical Ground Wire; and (6) restoring and stabilizing the affected areas within the right-of-way (“ROW”).”

² Appended to the Siting Report was the TNEC’s EMF Health Research Report prepared by Exponent, Inc., entitled “Status of Research on Extremely Low Frequency Electric and Magnetic Fields and Health, January 2022 through April 2024 (March 19, 2025), copies of correspondence with various agencies related to the proposed project as well as supporting figures of the proposed rebuild project. See *Siting Report*, Appendices A, B and C (Aug. 22, 2025).

Notice of Intent Application, at 3. See also Siting Report, at § 3. Detailed images of the proposed Bristol Warren Project route (including adjacent properties) can be found in the “Siting Report Figures” available on the docket page at <https://ripuc.ri.gov/Docket-SB-2025-04>.

The Company first proffers that the Lines have been identified for refurbishment because the wood structures have surpassed their life expectancy and are exhibiting signs of deterioration, such as signs of woodpecker holes, rotting, and pole top deterioration. The application is further based on evidence of failed insulators that the Company has identified through inspections of the structures. *Notice of Intent Application, at 2.* The conductors of the Lines are also showing signs of broken strands and eventual conductor failure. *Id.* The Company proffers in the NOI that any impact on environmental resources and/or the social environment, as more fully detailed in the Siting Report, will be negligible. *Id. at 5.* This potential impact on the natural and social environments is more fully described in Section 7 of the Siting Report. *Siting Report, at § 7.*

IV. PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Upon receipt of the NOI, the Board issued a First Set of Data Requests on September 25, 2025. These sixteen (16) requests explored and requested further information on different aspects of the NOI including the decisional process leading to the rebuild application and inspection reports. See *EFSB’s First Set of Data Requests* (Sept. 25, 2025). The First Set of Data Request further requested additional details of the proposed material and the rebuild plans and potential impact on the magnetic field levels. *Id.* The Company provided timely and complete responses on October 16, 2025. See *TNEC’s Response to EFSB’s First Set of Data Requests* (Oct. 16, 2025).

V. EVIDENTIARY HEARING

On January 13, 2025, after proper notice,³ a public evidentiary hearing in accordance with section 1.6(J) of the Rules⁴ was thereafter held. During the public hearing, the Company provided several witnesses who testified as to the history of the Warren Tap line as well as the poor performance of the line. As explained during the public hearing and identified in the Siting Report, the majority of the structures on the lines were installed in the 1980's while the conductor was installed in the 1960's. *Siting Report, at § 2.1*. Thus, the Company maintains the tap lines have reached the end of their expected useful life, while the assets are at or near the end of their expected useful life. According to the witnesses, inspection of the sixty-six years old, vintage pole wood structures and the original conductors and shield wires confirmed this and demonstrated considerable deterioration with the result being that this line had the worst performing circuits in Rhode Island. *Record Request, No. 1-8; Siting Report, at § 2.1*.⁵ In addition to the testimony produced at the public hearing, § 2.1 of the Siting Report specifically identifies the various outages and causes of the same. *Id.*

In addressing the potential impact on the environment or the public health, safety and welfare, the testimony revealed that the Project is subject to a number of environmental permits which, at the time of the hearing, had already been obtained or were expected shortly. For example, local soil erosion and sedimentation control permits were obtained from the Town of Warren by the Company prior to the public hearing, as well as the necessary Freshwater Wetland

³ See Notice of Public Hearing (Dec. 16, 2025).

⁴ Section 1.6(J) of the Rules provides that the Board “may at any time require the applicant, or the party responsible for filing a notice of intent as described above, to file additional information.”

⁵ In follow-up to questions posed and the Record Request made during the Public Hearing as to the transmission line performance rankings in Rhode Island and the criteria used to rank them, the Company submitted a response on January 30, 2026, that provided the Company's “Worst Performing Circuit” (“WPC”) list on a quarterly basis. *See Company's Record Request 1-1 (Jan. 30, 2026)*.

permit from the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) and Federal Water Quality Certificate. The Company reported that the Rhode Island Coastal Resource Management Commission's (CRMC) Category B assent had been approved at a Council hearing, and the Company was awaiting the issuance of CRMC's paper approval. The Army Corps of Engineers was also awaiting a copy of the CRMC Category B Assent as a necessary part of the individual permit from them. Because the right of way includes multiple saltmarsh areas, the Company reported that it had coordinated with the Warren Land Trust, a property owner along the property ROW, and the owners' advisor, Save the Bay as well as the CRMC to develop a specific restoration plan within the saltmarsh area. The protocol developed has been submitted as part of the CRMC Category B Assent application. The Company also reports that it has engaged an environmental monitor to assist and oversee the construction of the project. The environmental monitor is charged with "ensur[ing] compliance with applicable federal, state, and local permit conditions, to maintain strict adherence to The Narragansett Electric Company construction Best Management Practices (BMP), and to monitor the effectiveness of BMPs and make adjustments as necessary." *Siting Report, at 1.5*. The Company represented at the public hearing that this environmental monitor has the express authority to stop work should any issue arise that needs to be addressed during the construction phase.

During the Evidentiary Hearing, the Company presented Adam Rosenblatt, senior project manager and environmental scientist from VHB who testified that in his opinion the Project would not have a significant impact on the natural environment. The basis for this opinion included the fact that the Project was designed within an existing, cleared transmission ROW as well as the fact that the new structures are adjacent to the existing structure's location. Mr. Rosenblatt also explained that further limiting disruption of the environment during construction

is the fact that existing cleared paths of travel (to extent possible) will be utilized to access the ROW during construction and that the temporary construction matted access road's work pads have been designed to avoid rare, threatened endangered species. Mr. Rosenblatt also cited what he identified as a robust, comprehensive Soil and Erosion Sedimentation Control Plan to support his opinion and explained that it was designed to protect wetlands and other sensitive resources from construction-related impacts. Further impacting Mr. Rosenblatt's opinion of no significant impact on the natural environment is the fact that in addition to the environmental monitor to oversee the Project, the Company will provide special training to workers on the respective permit conditions as well having a plan for the restoration and revegetation of the ROW at the completion of the Project.

Andrew Louw, a registered landscape architect, also appeared at the Evidentiary Hearing on behalf of the Company and testified that there would not be a significant visual impact of the proposed Project in comparison to the impact of the current line. While acknowledging that there would be an increase in the height of the particular structures (elevating from the current 45-65 feet to 61-107 feet in height) as well as the material (wood H-frames to steel monopoles), the change in the height and material, in Mr. Louw's opinion, does not significantly affect the visibility impact. Supporting this opinion was the fact that there would be a reduction from 175 to 105 structures with the new Project, as well as a reduction in the number of guidewires under the new Project. This resulted in a reduction in visual noise in the landscape, according to Mr. Louw, which also supports his opining that there not be a significant visual impact of the proposed Project. The Company finally presented a real estate expert at the hearing who opined that the proposed Project is consistent with reasonable expectations of property owners adjacent

to the utility's ROW, in part because the construction work itself will be done during regular work hours.

It was also reported during the Evidentiary hearing that, in accordance with Rule 1.6, the Company's proposed Project was previously presented to the Towns of Warren. [See also 445-RICR-00-00-1.6(C).] In addition to meeting with Town officials, an open house was also held with notice to all abutters prior to the public hearing. Although the Company received calls for information, there were no attendees at the November 13, 2024, Open House. A properly noticed public hearing was subsequently also held in the Town of Warren on March 12, 2026. See *Notice of Public Comment* (Jan. 26, 2026). The Board received a written public comment on March 15, 2026, highlighting the Rhode Island Coastal Resource Management Council's file, along with comments from Save the Bay and the Warren Land Trust, on this proposed project. There were no objections to the NOI filed by either the municipality involved or any potential intervenor.

VI. DECISION

On March 26, 2026, the Board conducted a properly noticed Open Meeting to determine whether the project may result in a significant impact on the environment or the public health, safety and welfare.⁶ At that time, the Board members first opined that although the proposed Project encompasses a large area, there are very few residences affected by this proposed Project such to impact the public safety and health. The Board members also noted and agreed that the fact that the Project was subject to and following various avenues for other required permits, including environmental permits, supporting a finding that there would be no significant impact on the environment, such that anything outside the Board's jurisdiction would be handled appropriately. A motion was thus made for the finding that the project does not constitute an

⁶ Open Meeting Notice (March 11, 2026).

alteration of a major energy facility as defined by R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-98-4(b) in that it will not result in a significant impact on the environment or public health, safety, and welfare and that the Company may proceed without further review. The Motion was based upon the filings by the Company along with information obtained during January 13, 2025, evidentiary hearing as well as the Company's responses to the Board's Data Requests. The proposed Motion passed by unanimous vote.

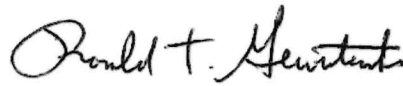
Accordingly, it is hereby

(174) ORDERED:

The Energy Facility Siting Board finds that the project does not constitute an alteration of a major energy facility as defined by R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-98-4(b) in that it will not result in a significant impact on the environment or public health, safety, and welfare and that the Narragansett Electric Company may proceed without further review.

DATED AND EFFECTIVE AT PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND ON MARCH 26, 2026, PURSUANT TO AN OPEN MEETING DECISION. WRITTEN ORDER ISSUED ON MAY 14, 2026.

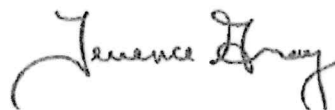
ENERGY FACILITY SITING BOARD



Ronald T. Gerwatowski, Chairman



Meredith E. Brady, Member



Terrence Gray, Member