

State Environmental Quality Review
NEGATIVE DECLARATION
Notice of Determination of Non-Significance

Project: Phase 2 of the Distribution Automation Radio Repeater Installation Project – the Proposed Action

Date: August 3, 2021

This Notice is issued in accordance with Article 8 (State Environmental Quality Review Act) of the Environmental Conservation Law and its implementing regulations at 6 NYCRR Part 617 and 21 NYCRR Part 10052.

The Long Island Power Authority (“LIPA”) has determined, based on information provided by PSEG Long Island and the Environmental Assessment (“EA”) prepared by PSEG Long Island in conjunction with TRC Consultants, Inc. that Phase 2 of the Proposed Action described below will not have a significant adverse impact on the environment and the preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement will not be required.

Name of Action: Phase 2 of the Distribution Automation Radio Repeater Installation Project – the Proposed Action

Location: Phase 2 – Two (2) Project Sites in Nassau and Suffolk County, New York

SEQR Status: Type 1

Conditioned Negative Declaration: No

Proposed Action Description:

PSEG Long Island manages and operates LIPA’s DA radio communications system. The system allows operators to quickly reroute the flow of electricity around a problem to minimize the size of outages, particularly during storms and severe weather events, by remotely operating distribution circuit switches from a central location. From the centralized location, a radio frequency (“RF”) signal is transmitted to the appropriate DA radio antenna that re-transmits the signal to the appropriate nearby switch(es) which operate as directed. The existing LIPA DA radio communications system consists of approximately (1,910) radio-controlled distribution switches that are operated through approximately (149) existing DA radio antennas that are installed on a variety of existing structures, such as distribution poles, free-standing monopoles, free-standing towers and guyed towers.

As part of the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (“FEMA’s”) storm hardening initiatives, approximately (894) additional distribution switches have been installed. Storm

hardening initiatives include strengthening the overall system, upgrading equipment and increasing resilience to future storm damage thereby reducing the number of customers impacted by service interruptions when storm damage occurs. The existing DA radio communication system does not have the capacity to operate these new switches nor provide the geographic coverage to adequately serve customers across Long Island. A comprehensive engineering review of the existing DA radio communications system determined that additional DA radio transmitters are needed for certain areas of Long Island to provide complete RF coverage necessary to extend digital automation benefits throughout LIPA's service area. The Proposed Action will install the additional necessary DA radio transmitters at locations (herein referred to as "Project Sites") that will supplement DA radio coverage throughout Long Island.

Phase 1 of the Proposed Action encompassed 15 Project Sites and is currently under construction. When completed, Phase 1 of the DA Project will provide the additional necessary DA radio coverage for most of Long Island. Phase 2 of the Proposed Action includes the installation of DA radio transmitters at two Project Sites to provide DA radio coverage for additional areas of Long Island to supplement coverage. A third phase (Phase 3) of the project will involve additional DA radio coverage after Phase 1 and Phase 2. However, the Project Sites for Phase 3 have not yet been determined. The Phase 3 Project Sites will be proposed in locations where distribution switches cannot be controlled by existing DA equipment installed during Phases 1 and 2.

Given the anticipated distances between all Project Sites (Phase 1, 2 and 3), and the limited potential impacts identified in Phases 1 and 2, no cumulative impacts are anticipated between Phases 1 and 2, and Phase 3. A SEQRA review will be conducted for Phase 3 once Project Sites are established. The Phase 3 SEQRA review will include an evaluation of potential cumulative impacts for all three phases. Therefore, the SEQRA review of Phase 3 will be no less protective of human health and the environment.

The location of the Phase 1 and Phase 2 Project Sites are depicted on Figure 1. The Phase 2 installations will utilize the same structures, equipment and technologies that were used for Phase 1, but will be located at different Project Sites (with the exception of the Baldwin Project Site which was also evaluated in Phase 1). Phase 2 includes the installation of new radio equipment at two LIPA-owned properties in Nassau and Suffolk Counties, New York, as follows:

- Both of the Project Sites involve the installation of a new monopole in two (2) standard heights – 100 ft. (Baldwin) and 150 ft. (West Babylon), and the installation of new antennas (20 ft. in length, 2.75 in. in diameter (at the base)) on these monopoles, resulting in overall heights at these sites of 120 and 170 ft., respectively.
- Both Project Sites involve the installation of ground-based equipment to support the DA radio communications system – a communications shelter building (with heating, ventilation and air conditioning ("HVAC") equipment), emergency generator and an aboveground propane tank (500 gallon) to fuel the generator in case of power loss (see Figure 2).

Table 1 identifies each of the Phase 2 Project Sites by name, address, and DA equipment to be installed.

Table 1 Proposed Action Project Sites – Phase 2

Project Site Name	Project Site Address	Scope of Work	Structure - Total Height in Feet - Monopole / Tower and Antenna
Baldwin	2285 Harrison Avenue Baldwin, NY	New steel monopole antenna and ground- based equipment	120
West Babylon	5A Bahama Street West Babylon, NY	New steel monopole, antenna and ground-based equipment	170

Reasons Supporting This Determination:

PSEG Long Island, in conjunction with TRC Companies, Inc., reviewed Phase 2’s scope of work (construction and operation) and undertook a SEQRA assessment to evaluate whether the Proposed Action has the potential to result in significant adverse environmental impacts. The Proposed Action is classified as a Type I Action as defined in SEQRA. A Full Environmental Assessment Form (“FEAF”) was prepared for Phase 2 including site-specific information for each of the Project Sites. The EA evaluated the effect of Phase 2 upon visual resources and character of the area, energy use, environmental hazards, and human health resources.

Visual

A Visual Resource Assessment was prepared for each Project Site in accordance with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) Program Policy “Assessing and Mitigating Visual Impacts” Program Policy DEP-00-2 (July 31, 2000). Viewshed assessments (five-mile radii) were prepared for each of the Project Sites where new monopoles will be installed. Photosimulations were prepared from multiple street-level locations at each Project Site to show the existing visual environment compared to the proposed environment with the new monopole and antenna. The viewshed assessments and the visual simulations show that Phase 2 will not have a significant adverse impact on the character of the surrounding communities or significantly impair the visual landscape from scenic or aesthetic resources. Similarly, the public’s enjoyment and/or appreciation of the appearance of scenic resources will not be significantly interfered with nor substantially reduced.

Historic

Based on a review of the New York State (NYS) Cultural Resource Information System database, the Phase 2 Project Sites are not within designated “archaeological sensitive areas”. The construction disturbance will occur within previously disturbed areas and will not adversely impact any previously documented archaeological resources. The NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (“OPRHP”) determined that the Phase 2 Project Sites will have “No Effect / No Adverse Effect” on archaeological and/or architectural resources.

Land

It was assumed for a conservative analysis that each Project Site will disturb an approximate area of 900 sq. ft. (0.02 acres). Thus, the aggregate area for all the Project Sites disturbed by construction amounts to approximately 1,800 sq. ft. (0.04 acres). The final ground cover will consist of concrete and compacted blue stone. Excess soil will either remain onsite stabilized with vegetative cover or will be removed and disposed in compliance with applicable federal and state regulations. The existing groundcover varies somewhat by Project Site, including asphalt, blue stone and bare earth. Any temporary disturbances to surrounding groundcovers from staging/laydown activities will be restored to pre-construction conditions.

Ecology

Since Phase 2 of the Proposed Action involves locations with existing, operating electrical facilities, the Project Sites already have active vegetation management programs to maintain required safety and operational clearances, which may include tree trimming, weed-whacking, herbicide treatment and/or mowing. The construction and operation of the Phase 2 Project Sites will not result in any significant loss of flora or fauna, nor any significant adverse impacts to threatened, endangered, and special concern species or critical habitats.

Floodplain

Both of the Phase 2 Project Sites are located outside of designated floodplains. Construction adjacent to designated floodplains and/or adjacent to surface waters will not cause any significant adverse impacts to these resources. Associated ground disturbances and structure footprints will be minimal and best management practices (BMPs) for sediment and erosion control will be followed.

Coastal Zone

None of the Phase 2 Project Sites are located in the New York State coastal zone. Therefore, Phase 2 will not result in significant adverse impacts to the New York State Coastal Zone.

Groundwater

The Project Sites are located over the Nassau-Suffolk Sole Source Aquifer which lies beneath Nassau and Suffolk Counties. The new monopoles will be installed into holes drilled to depths ranging from approximately 18 to 25 ft. below the ground surface, which will be backfilled with concrete. At Baldwin, groundwater is located deeper than the monopole hole. At West Babylon, groundwater may be encountered, and dewatering and

water disposal will be undertaken. No impacts to groundwater are expected as BMPs will be followed.

Critical Environmental Areas (CEA)

The West Babylon Project Site is located adjacent to, but outside of, the Santrapogue Creek Freshwater Wetland CEA. Based on the West Babylon Project Site scope of work and its location within a previously disturbed and/or developed area, no significant adverse impacts to this CEA are anticipated.

Energy

The power supply to each of the Project Sites will be provided by existing electric equipment through a newly installed service connection from an existing distribution line. The primary cause of energy consumption is expected to be the HVAC system attached to the communications shelter (estimated at 17.322 kilowatt hours (“kWhrs”) or 152 Megawatt hours per year (“MWhrs/yr”) at each Project Site, as applicable.

In the event of an electrical outage, backup power supply will be provided by the proposed 35-kilowatt (“kW”) emergency generator fueled by the aboveground propane tank. Due to the flammable nature of propane, the tanks will have a 10-foot spark clearance and will be routinely checked and maintained after installation. PSEG Long Island will fuel the propane tanks and service the generators according to their Standard Operating Procedures. The Substation’s Health and Safety Plan will be updated to include the physical hazard(s) associated with fuel storage and proper safety protocols for site maintenance. Based on the low power level required and safety procedures that will be adhered to, operation of the Proposed Action including Phase 2 will not result in a significant adverse effect on the environment from additional energy demand.

Construction – Temporary Traffic, Air & Noise

Phase 2 construction activities will not cause any significant adverse environmental impacts. Brief traffic disruptions may be experienced at some locations when construction equipment is entering or exiting a Project Site and will be addressed by deploying flaggers to regulate local traffic. If a temporary electrical outage is required during connection of new wiring to existing substation equipment, potentially affected customers will be notified in advance. The duration of the potential outage during construction depends on site-specific factors such as voltage and distance to distribution and transmission lines. The worst-case scenario would be an 8-hour outage although it is expected that most locations would require a shorter outage, if any.

Construction for Phase 2 is anticipated to take a total of approximately 6 months to complete with a projected completion date towards the end of 2021. The construction phase at each Project Site will last approximately three (3) months. The typical work schedule will be from 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday.

Excess and/or unsuitable excavated soil resulting from construction activities, if any, will be temporarily stored onsite, and then disposed offsite according to all federal and state regulations. It is expected that all construction activities including parking, staging, and laydown areas will occur on Phase 2 Project Sites and therefore, no significant construction-related traffic impacts are anticipated.

Noise

During construction activities, a minor increase in noise levels is anticipated for sites with pole and/or equipment shelter installation, primarily during excavation and/or drilling, and concrete pouring activities.

Potential operation of the proposed 35kW emergency backup generator during electrical power outages and equipment test events will produce a noise level of approximately 59 – 61 decibels (“dBA”) in exercise mode and 73 dBA when operating in emergency conditions at a distance of 23 feet. At 110 feet from the generator, the maximum sound level under emergency conditions will be approximately 59 dBA, comparable to normal daytime noise levels (50 – 60 dBA) in a typical suburban community. Although the generator will result in increased noise levels, it will be only in operation under temporary infrequent circumstances and therefore will not cause a significant adverse impact. The likelihood of an outage at the substation would be very low. The closest residential properties to the West Babylon sites are located approximately 600 feet away therefore there will be no discernable noise increase from the Proposed Action at this site. The closest residential property is 60 feet from the Baldwin site. Given the temporary nature of the generator in operation and the vegetation south and east of the compound, the increase in noise will not create a negative adverse impact. The addition of noise at the same or lower decibel level than the existing noise levels does not have a significant impact on the ambient noise level. Additionally, for each new communications shelter, an HVAC system will be installed on the exterior to heat and cool the structure. Similar HVAC systems have noise levels of up to 50 - 60 dBA (level associated with a normal conversation) at a distance of one (1) meter (3.3 feet) from the HVAC system. Reflective surfaces may lower or raise the decreasing effect of distance in some directions. Given the distance from the HVAC system to the closest residential neighborhoods at each Project Site, the HVAC equipment does not have any potential for causing a significant noise impact. If the emergency generator and HVAC equipment run concurrently, the maximum sound levels will be an increment of only several decibels above the generator’s sound level, which is expected to be within the range of typical suburban communities.

Air

Construction activities may result in temporary minor increases in emissions. Minimization measures such as reducing idle time of vehicles will reduce any potential impacts. The back-up emergency generators will only operate in the event of a power outage and for regular testing. Based on the size and anticipated usage of the proposed generators, no state or federal air permits are required. The new generators and fuel tanks will be regularly inspected and maintained by PSEG Long Island.

Electromagnetic Field (EMF)

The operation of the DA antenna will generate RF radiation. RF radiation is a form of non-ionizing electromagnetic radiation like visible light. The RF antenna radiation from the proposed DA antenna results in exposure levels that are regulated by the Federal Communications Commission (“FCC”). Antennas operate at one or more wavelengths with a specific Effective Radiated Power (“ERP”). The FCC guidelines require that an EMF study be undertaken for facilities that operate at a 70-centimeter (“cm”) wavelength if they have 70 watts or greater ERP, and at a 33-cm wavelength if they have a 150 watts or greater ERP. The DA antenna will operate at 70 cm and 33 cm wavelengths, both with an ERP of approximately 50 watts. Both Project Sites will be under these criteria from both individual and cumulative perspectives. Therefore, there will be no significant adverse environmental effects as a result from EMF radiation.

Human Health/Spill & Remediation Sites

A review of the NYSDEC Remedial Sites and Spill Incidents Database Search was completed to identify remediation sites and/or past spill reports on or in the vicinity of the Project Sites. One Project Site (West Babylon) is located within 2,000 feet of a remediated site. The West Babylon Project Site is situated adjacent to NYSDEC ID Site 152181. Spills were identified within or adjacent to the Baldwin and West Babylon Project Sites. However, all were reported as closed.

Due to the limited ground disturbance, closed incident statuses/completed remediation, and distances, Phase 2 of the Proposed Action is not expected to cause adverse human health impacts from exposure to any solid or hazardous substances or contaminants.

Cumulative Review of Phase 1 and Phase 2 Activities

A review of both phases of the project was conducted in order to assess the overall cumulative impact of the DA Project. Phase 1 encompassed 15 Project Sites. Phase 2 will encompass two Project Sites, including one (Baldwin) that was partially evaluated as part of Phase 1, prior to scope modification. The scope and extent of the Phase 2 activities is significantly less than that of Phase 1. Collectively, the Phase 2 Project Sites will involve less ground disturbance and fewer equipment installations than Phase 1.

The Phase 2 Project Sites are geographically separated from the Phase 1 sites (with the exception of the Baldwin Substation Project Site which was also included in Phase 1). Any impacts associated with the Phase 2 Project Sites are local to the respective location of each site. The distance between each site, as well as intervening topography, development and vegetation, would reduce any cumulative impact to a level that would not be considered significant. Further, the minimum distance between any two Project Sites is 1.8+ miles, which is the distance between the Babylon Project Site (Phase 1) and the West Babylon Project Site (Phase 2).

The addition of two Project Sites does not significantly increase the severity of any potential impact previously identified in the Phase 1 EA, and any new potential impacts evaluated as part of Phase 2 will not increase the impact of the overall Proposed Action to a level that would be considered significant.

Due to the limited disturbance at each Project Site, the distance between the Phase 1 and Phase 2 Project Sites, and the nature of the Proposed Action activities, no new or cumulative significant adverse impacts on the environment, flora, fauna, community character or human health has been identified as a result of the overall Proposed Action.

For Further Information:

Contact Person: Erin Gorman, Manager, Environmental Projects & Permitting
PSEG Long Island

Address: 175 East Old County Road, Hicksville, NY 11801

Telephone Number: (800) 490-0025

E-mail: PSEGLongIslandSEQR@PSEG.com

/s/ Billy Raley
Billy Raley
Senior Vice President, Transmission and Distribution System Oversight

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