Note:
This summary was last updated on
February 1, 2026
For current information, follow this link:
PSC Docket Case #9818

PE Messick Road to Ridgeley Project
(Allegany County)
PSC Case Number 9818

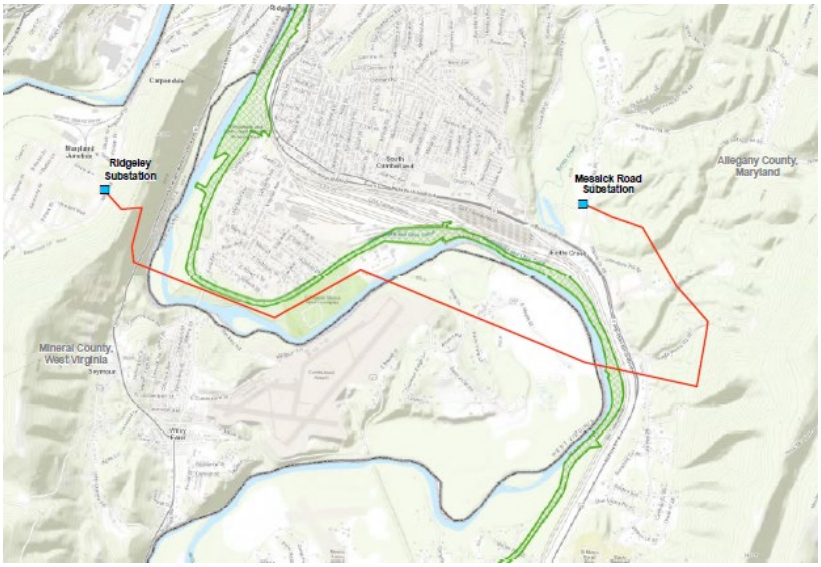
Note:
This summary is based on information provided in the CPCN Application dated ***October 3, 2025****, and the Applicant's Responses to PPRP Data Requests No. 1 and 2, which is subject to change and has not yet been fully reviewed by PPRP.*

CPCN Timeline
CPCN Application filed on October 3, 2025
Pre-Hearing Conference: January 6, 2026
Staff, OPC, and PPRP File Direct Testimony: October 2, 2026
Public Hearing Date: TBD
Settlement Status/Status Update Due: November 3, 2026
PSC Evidentiary Hearing (if uncontested): November 17, 2026

Project Location:

The Project is in Allegany County and includes two segments of a 4.0-mile transmission line that runs from the west to the east sides of Cumberland along the North Branch Potomac River, totaling approximately 2.0 miles in Maryland. The line starts east of Ridgeley Substation (Google Map Link) in Mineral County, West Virginia (WV), then runs approximately 0.4 miles southeast before crossing the North Branch Potomac River into the southern side of Cumberland, Allegany County, Maryland (MD). The route continues eastward for approximately 1.4 miles before crossing the river again and re-entering Mineral County, WV. The line then skirts north around Cumberland Airport and continues east in WV for approximately 1.5 miles before crossing the North Branch Potomac River to enter Allegany County, for the final time. The route continues east for another 0.5 miles before terminating approximately 1.25 miles south of the Messick Road Substation (Google Map Link) in MD.

Figure 1: Project Location



Source: PE Messick Road to Ridgeley Project Environmental Review Document

Project Overview:

Potomac Edison (PE) filed for a CPCN to rebuild an existing 138 kV overhead transmission line from the Messick Road Substation in Allegany County, Maryland, to the Ridgeley Substation in Mineral County, West Virginia. The Applicant states that the Project is needed to enhance the transmission system's reliability and to provide additional transmission capacity in Maryland and West Virginia.

The existing wooden H-frame structures and a single-circuit 138 kV line conductor would be removed and replaced with new wooden H-frame structures to support a new, upgraded 138 kV line. The new 138 kV circuit would be installed within 5-15 feet of the existing positions. Project components include:

- Removal of 10 existing wooden H-frame structures and 2 wooden 3-pole structures ranging from approximately 61 feet to 83 feet tall
- Removal of the existing 138 kV transmission line that utilizes a 556 kcmil Aluminum Conductor Steel Reinforced (ACSR) conductor
- Installation of 9 new wooden H-frame structures and 3 new wooden 3-pole structures, ranging in height from 65 feet to 92 feet
- Installation of a new single-circuit 138 kV line that is upgraded with 954 kcmil 45/7 ACSR conductor
- Installation of new insulators and conductor hardware at one existing steel pole and two wooden H-frame structures.

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MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Site Description

The Project consists of overhead transmission line work primarily within an existing 100-foot-wide Right-of-Way (ROW) corridor in Allegany County. The total acreage of the ROW corridor in Maryland is approximately 24.2 acres. Land uses along the Project ROW include sparsely populated rural, recreational, agricultural, and industrial areas, as well as institutional features and forested land. The route crosses the North Branch Potomac River three times. PE anticipates construction to begin around September 2027 and for the project to be in operation by June 2028.

Impact Assessment Highlights

Electrical Need, Reliability, and Costs

- The Applicant states that the PJM Interconnection LLC (PJM) selected the Project to mitigate and prevent anticipated thermal overload violations that could occur on the existing 138 kV line under NERC Category P2 conditions (a faulted 500 kV circuit breaker at Bedington Substation).
- By increasing the loadability of the 138 kV line, the Project helps assure future reliability of PE's transmission system and allows additional transmission capacity into Maryland.
- PE estimates the Maryland portion of the Project will cost approximately $9 million, and the annual operating cost will be approximately $1 million.

Air Quality

- The emissions associated with the Project construction are temporary and limited to the transmission corridor. The Applicant will use Best Management Practices to control dust, and vehicles will have required emission control equipment.

Biological

- The Applicant completed a wetland delineation within the Project corridor and access roads in January, February, August, and September 2024. The survey identified 6 wetlands (totaling 572 linear feet) and 4 streams (totaling 0.626 acres) within the Project corridor, including the North Branch Potomac River. Given that the new structures will be placed in the same positions or in close proximity to the existing structures, the Applicant anticipates that most wetlands and streams in the Project Area will be avoided during construction.
- The Applicant states that temporary access, construction staging, and structure installation sites will avoid wetland and stream impacts to the extent practicable. If wetlands or streams cannot be avoided during construction, appropriate Best Management Practices will be implemented, and necessary authorizations will be obtained from the Maryland Department of the Environment and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.
- The existing corridor crosses within 100-year floodplain areas associated with the Potomac River as well as one of its tributaries. The Applicant states that applicable permits and approvals will be secured prior to construction. The Applicant proposes to use temporary bridges and timber matting to mitigate impacts to crossings of wetlands, floodplains, and streams.
- The Project is not located within any Tier II watersheds.
- The Project is not located within the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area.
- DNR Land Acquisition and Planning Unit determined that there is no change in the scenic quality of the North Branch Potomac River due to the Project.
- The Applicant consulted with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Wildlife Heritage Service (WHS), which indicated that it had no records for State or Federal listed, candidate, proposed, or rare, plant or animal species within the Project area. Additionally, the DNR Freshwater Fisheries and Hatcheries Division determined that there is no concern about the Project.
- The Applicant consulted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to identify sensitive wildlife species near the Project. The USFWS identified that three federally listed endangered or proposed endangered species are reasonably certain to occur within the Project Area. USFWS concluded that implementing a time-of-year restriction on tree clearing will not result in a take of the protected species. Additionally, the Applicant states consultation with USFWS is ongoing to identify potential needs for additional surveying or protection methods to minimize impacts to the species.
- The Applicant states the Project does not involve any areas designated for tree clearing.
- The Applicant states that the Project ROW will be maintained in accordance with First Energy Service Company's Transmission Vegetation Management Program (TVMP).

Economic and Fiscal

- PE estimates that the Project will create approximately 10-25 jobs during the Project construction period.
- The Applicant anticipates that the annual real estate property tax for the Project will be approximately $68,440.

Transportation

- Access roads will be located within and adjacent to the ROW, when possible. Proposed access roads will be surfaced with either stone or timber matting and restored to, or near, existing conditions as practicable upon completion of the project. No laydown areas are proposed in Maryland.
- There are two public-use airports (Mexico Farms Airport, south of Cumberland, Maryland, and the Greater Cumberland Regional Airport, Wiley Ford, West Virginia) located within approximately 1 mile of the Project. PE consulted with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and the agency determined that there are no hazards to air navigation associated with the Project. The Applicant intends to consult with the Maryland Aviation Administration (MAA) to ensure the Project complies with applicable regulations.

Land Use

- The Project will be constructed entirely within the existing ROW; therefore, the Applicant will not need to acquire any property or property rights to construct the Project.
- Most of the temporary access roads for the proposed rebuild project can be made through the existing PE-owned easements.
- There are approximately 10.1 acres of prime farmland and 0.15 acres of farmland of statewide importance within the Project ROW.

Cultural and Aesthetic

- The Applicant has communicated with the Maryland Historic Trust (MHT), which has initially determined that the Project will not affect archaeological resources or alter the setting of any above-ground historical properties that may be present within the 0.5-mile Area of Potential Effect. However, given that the Project will perform construction work on the National Park Service (NPS) Chesapeake and Ohio (C&O) Canal National Historical Park's property and crosses the North Branch Potomac River multiple times, the Applicant is required to consult with and obtain necessary permits from NPS and the US Army Corps of Engineers and provide documentation and additional project information to MHT for final determination.
- The Project is expected to have minimal visual quality impacts, primarily due to the new structures being located in close proximity to the existing positions, and the use of the same structural type with minor changes in structural height.
- The Project crosses the C&O Canal National Historical Park near its eastern terminus and is adjacent to the park in several areas. Additionally, the Project center line is located within a quarter mile south of the C&O Canal Scenic Byway. The Project is anticipated to be obscured from the byway's view due to the presence of vegetation and buildings. However, the line will be visible from the C&O Canal National Historical Park, the North Branch Potomac River, and the area where it runs adjacent to the Eugene Mason Sports Complex.