

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF COLORADO

PROCEEDING NO. 25A-0069E

IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION OF PUBLIC SERVICE COMPANY OF COLORADO FOR A CERTIFICATE OF PUBLIC CONVENIENCE AND NECESSITY FOR THE BARKER SUBSTATION, 230 KV UNDERGROUND TRANSMISSION LINE, AND ASSOCIATED FINDINGS REGARDING NOISE AND MAGNETIC FIELD REASONABLENESS.

**INTERIM COMMISSION DECISION DEEMING
APPLICATION COMPLETE AND REFERRING MATTER
TO AN ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE**

Issued Date: March 31, 2025

Adopted Date: March 26, 2025

I. BY THE COMMISSION

A. Statement

1. On February 10, 2025, Public Service Company of Colorado (“Public Service” or the “Company”) filed an Application for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (“CPCN”) for facilities associated with the Barker Substation (“Application”).

2. By this Decision, we deem the Application complete for purposes of § 40-6-109.5, C.R.S., and refer the matter to an Administrative Law Judge (“ALJ”).

B. Discussion, Findings, and Conclusions

3. The Barker Substation (the “Project”) is a new substation intended to increase capacity of the network distribution system serving downtown Denver. The Company explains in the Application that the Project is needed to satisfy growth in demand caused by population

increases, high density demand, new all-electric residential buildings codes, and successful urban revitalization efforts.

4. The Project is located in Lower Downtown near Coors Field on property already owned by the Company from a 1990 purchase. It entails above ground substation transmission facilities, distribution transformers and capacity banks, and a 2,000 ft. double-circuit 230 kV underground transmission line connecting to another existing substation. The Project is expected to cost approximately \$213.6 million, with about \$100 million of that related to the transmission line and the transmission substation facilities.

5. Public Service intends to recover the costs associated with the transmission elements of the Project through its Transmission Cost Adjustment (“TCA”). The Company further anticipates to recover the distribution costs associated with the Project through its proposed Grid Modernization Adjustment Clause (“GMAC”), approval of which is pending in Proceeding No. 24A-0547E.

6. Public Service filed the application with the direct testimony of four witnesses.

7. On February 24, 2025, the Colorado Office of the Utility Consumer Advocate (“UCA”) filed an Intervention as of Right and Request for Hearing. UCA seeks to examine whether: the cost increase from \$18.1 million in 2017 to \$213.6 million as set forth in the Application is reasonable; the use of higher-cost, gas-insulated switchgear is necessary and reasonable; the use of an underground, double circuit transmission line is reasonable; some equipment can be deferred until later to reduce initial costs; and the proposed cost recovery mechanisms are reasonable.

8. On March 21, 2025, Trial Staff of the Colorado Public Utilities Commission (“Staff”) filed an Intervention as of Right and Request for Hearing. Staff states in its intervention

pleading that it is not in a position at this time to state whether it supports or opposes the Application. Instead, Staff lists some areas of inquiry it intends to examine, such as: whether the expanded scope of the original Barker Substation is still justified with higher costs; the estimated rate impacts, including those arising from using the TCA and the GMAC; whether ratepayers outside of the area served by the Project should be responsible in whole or part for paying for the upgrades; whether the cost estimates are accurate and sufficiently developed, especially considering ongoing global supply chain challenges, inflationary pricing pressures, and unknown impact of possible tariffs on material and equipment costs; whether the Company's project management plan is sufficiently developed to minimize project delays and maintain costs controls; whether the magnetic field and noise level mitigation measures are adequate to grant the Company's request for no additional mitigation measures; and whether the Company's assessment of alternatives and of the potential use of advanced transmission technologies is sufficient.

9. We find good cause to set the Application for hearing.

10. We find the Application meets the application requirements prescribed by Commission rule and decision and therefore deem the Application complete for purposes of the statutory timelines in § 40-6-109.5, C.R.S.

11. We refer this matter to an ALJ. The ALJ will set a hearing date and establish other procedures by separate decision(s).

12. Given its cost, we ask the ALJ to consider whether it is necessary and reasonable to adopt a performance incentive mechanism as a means to control the construction costs of the Project.

II. ORDER**A. It Is Ordered That:**

1. The Verified Application for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity for the Barker Substation Project filed by Public Service Company of Colorado on February 10, 2025, is deemed complete, for purposes of § 40-6-109.5, C.R.S.

2. The matter is referred to an Administrative Law Judge (“ALJ”) for disposition. The assigned ALJ shall set a hearing date and establish other procedures by separate Decision(s).

3. This Decision is effective immediately upon its Issued Date.

**B. ADOPTED IN COMMISSIONERS’ WEEKLY MEETING
March 26, 2025.**

(S E A L)



ATTEST: A TRUE COPY

Rebecca E. White,
Director

THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
OF THE STATE OF COLORADO

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MEGAN M. GILMAN

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Commissioners