

PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION OF OREGON  
STAFF REPORT  
PUBLIC MEETING DATE: May 22, 2018

REGULAR \_\_\_\_\_ CONSENT X EFFECTIVE DATE \_\_\_\_\_ N/A \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: May 9, 2018

TO: Public Utility Commission

FROM: Kathy Zarate *KZ*

THROUGH: Jason Eisdorfer *JE* and John Crider *JC*

SUBJECT: PACIFICORP: (Docket No. UP 369) Request PacifiCorp's application for approval of the sale of property related to certain agreements with Tinum Group, LLC.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

The Public Utility Commission of Oregon (Commission) should approve PacifiCorp's (or Company) Application for Approval of Certain Agreements with Tinum Group, LCC, subject to the following conditions:

1. PacifiCorp shall notify the Commission in advance of any substantive change to any agreement filed in this proceeding, including any material changes in price. Any changes to the terms that alter the intent and extent of activities under the agreements from those approved herein shall be submitted for approval in an application for a supplemental order (or other appropriate form) in this docket.
2. The Commission reserves the right to review, for reasonableness, financial aspects of this arrangement in any rate proceeding.
3. PacifiCorp shall provide the Commission access to all books of account, as well as documents, data, and records that pertain to the sale or agreement of the property with Tinum Group. In addition, PacifiCorp shall seek prior Commission approval for any future property transactions pursuant to ORS 757.480.
4. The final journal entry recording the transaction shall be submitted to the Commission within 60 days after the transaction closes.

## **DISCUSSION:**

### Issue

Whether the Commission should approve PacifiCorp's Application for an Approval of Certain Agreements with Tinum Group, LCC.

### Applicable Rule or Law

ORS 757.480(1) requires public utilities doing business in Oregon to seek Commission approval prior to the sale, lease, assignment or disposal of property valued in excess of \$100,000 that is necessary or useful in the performance of its duties to the public.

OAR 860-027-0025 sets forth the information required to support a request for the approval of sale, lease, assignment or disposal of utility property.

OAR 860-027-0025(1)(l) requires that the applicant show that the proposed transaction is consistent with the public interest. The Commission has interpreted the phrase "consistent with the public interest" as used in this rule to require a showing of "no harm to the public." See, e.g., *In re PacifiCorp*, OPUC Docket No. UP 168, Order No. 00-112 at 6 (Feb. 20, 2000); *In re Portland General Electric*, OPUC Docket No. UP 165, Order No. 99-730 at 7 (Nov. 29, 1999).

Finally, the Commission's authority, broadly speaking, is to obtain adequate service for customers at fair and reasonable rates while at the same time balancing the interests of the utility's investors. See ORS 756.040.

### Analysis

PacifiCorp filed its Application on April 9, 2018, requesting approval from the Commission for certain agreements with Tinum Group, LCC. PacifiCorp and Tinum intend to enter into a Pre-Closing Coal Inventory Purchase Agreement, a Coal Feedstock Purchase Agreement, a Refined Coal Supply Agreement, a Coal Handling and Consulting Agreement, and a License and Services Agreement (collectively, Agreements). The Agreements relate to a refined coal production facility, owned by Tinum, and is qualified to generate tax credits under Section 45 of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code, to be installed at PacifiCorp's Hunter power plant, and the sale and purchase of untreated and treated coal within that facility. PacifiCorp will receive benefits through the Coal Handling Agreement and the License Agreement for hosting Tinum's facilities at Hunter.

PacifiCorp and Tinuum identified an opportunity to install refined coal facilities on the Hunter property. Tinuum intends to install a refined coal treatment facility that would “straddle” approximately 6 feet of the moving incoming coal feedstock conveyor belt at the Hunter plant; so that a treatment can be applied as the coal is transported to the plant on the coal conveyor belt. Tinuum would also install a small service building to support the refining equipment, which would also house tanks on the proprietary refined coal chemical treatment facility.

Pursuant to the Agreements, PacifiCorp would sell Tinuum an initial amount of coal to establish a refined coal processing “stockpile,” under the Pre-Closing Coal Inventory Purchase Agreement. Thereafter, PacifiCorp would sell to Tinuum, from time to time, additional feedstock coal to allow Tinuum to produce refined coal for the Hunter plant. Title to the feedstock coal would pass from PacifiCorp to Tinuum, during which period Tinuum would treat the coal by spraying it with its proprietary coal chemical processes as the coal travels on the conveyor belt, and then after treatment, Tinuum would sell the refined coal back to PacifiCorp. The price for the feedstock coal sale to Tinuum and refined coal purchase from Tinuum will be nearly identical.

This transaction will not impair PacifiCorp’s ability to continue the provision of reliable electric service to its customers.

In review of the Company’s Application, Staff issued thirteen data requests.

Staff investigated the following issues:

1. Terms and Conditions of the Agreement;
2. Transfer Pricing;
3. Public Interest Compliance; and
4. Records Availability, Audit Provisions, and Reporting Requirements.

*Terms and Conditions of the Agreement*

Staff’s review of the Agreement did not identify any unusual or restrictive terms or conditions.

The refined coal pricing was established via a bi-lateral negotiation with Tinuum, and was compared against similar pro-forma information provided by an alternative refined coal provider, and was reviewed in light of a refined coal facility commercial engagement at PacifiCorp’s sister company in Iowa.<sup>1</sup> The monthly differences in price

---

<sup>1</sup> PacifiCorp’s response to Staff Information Request 1.

under the transaction will be netted to zero at the end of the term of the Agreement when Tinum resells the purchased coal back to PacifiCorp.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, the terms and conditions of the Agreements incorporate provisions to address unexpected operational impacts, should they arise.<sup>3</sup>

#### *Transfer Pricing*

As described in the Agreements, PacifiCorp will sell feedstock coal at cost to Tinum, and Tinum will sell refined coal to PacifiCorp at its weighted average price per ton for feedstock coal, resulting in a near-zero difference in price, which will net to zero at the conclusion of the Agreement.<sup>4</sup> The benefit to Tinum is the ability to take advantage of a \$7.03 per ton refined coal tax credit, which has no impact on PacifiCorp's customer's rates.<sup>5</sup>

In exchange for allowing Tinum to locate facilities on its property and for providing coal yard and support services to Tinum, PacifiCorp will be compensated pursuant to the Coal Handling Agreement and the License Agreement, which will result in a net reduction in PacifiCorp's cost of fuel for the Hunter plant. The contracted amounts for these payments from Tinum to PacifiCorp are confidential, but will be passed through to customers as a reduction to the Company's net power costs.

#### *Public Interest Compliance*

Staff finds that the transaction will not affect PacifiCorp's ability to perform its public duties, will not harm customers, and is consistent with the public interest. Moreover, customers will benefit from a reduction in fuel expense included in the Company's net power costs related to revenue from the Coal Handling Agreement and the License Agreement.

Staff also confirmed that there is no change to the coal quality that results from the application of emissions reduction reagents during treatment, and there is no expected operational impact at Hunter resulting from the operation of Tinum's refined coal facility.<sup>6</sup> If there is an unexpected operational impact, those issues are addressed by the Agreement. PacifiCorp is also not responsible for the installation or cost of any infrastructure or other modifications to Hunter plant related to the Agreement.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> PacifiCorp's response to Staff Information Request 6.

<sup>3</sup> PacifiCorp's response to Staff Information Request 4.

<sup>4</sup> PacifiCorp's Response to Staff Information Request 6.

<sup>5</sup> PacifiCorp's Response to Staff Information Request 3.

<sup>6</sup> PacifiCorp's response to Staff Information Requests 4 and 5.

<sup>7</sup> PacifiCorp's response to Staff Information Request 10.

PacifiCorp is not aware of any operational issues or negative impacts at any of its other operating refined coal locations.<sup>8</sup>

*Records Availability, Audit Provisions, and Reporting Requirements*

Staff further notes that the Commission retains the ability to review all property sales and lease agreements entered by the Company through general rate case filings. Staff Recommendation affords the Commission the ability to exam PacifiCorp's books and records concerning the Asset Exchange Agreement as necessary.

PacifiCorp has reviewed this memo and has not communicated any objections or concerns.

Conclusion

Based on the review of PacifiCorp's Application, Staff concludes that certain agreements between the Company and Tinuum Group, LLC, in accordance with terms of the agreement price, are reasonable. The public is not harmed because the Company will continue to be able to fulfill its obligation to provide safe and reliable electric service, and customers are benefitted by reduced net power costs at the Hunter plant. The Commission should approve the Agreement, subject to the following conditions:

1. PacifiCorp shall notify the Commission in advance of any substantive change to this Agreement, including any material changes in price. Any changes to the Agreement terms that alter the intent and extent of activities under the Agreement from those approved herein, shall be submitted for approval in an application for a supplemental order (or other appropriate form) in this docket.
2. The Commission reserves the right to review, for reasonableness, financial aspects of this arrangement in any rate proceeding.
3. PacifiCorp shall provide the Commission access to all books of account, as well as documents, data, and records that pertain to the sale or agreement of the property with Tinuum Group. In addition, PacifiCorp shall seek prior Commission approval for any future property transactions pursuant to ORS 757.480.
4. The final journal entry recording the transaction shall be submitted to the Commission within 60 days after the transaction closes.

---

<sup>8</sup> PacifiCorp response to Staff Information Request 5.

Docket No. UP 369  
May 9, 2018  
Page 6

**PROPOSED COMMISSION MOTION:**

Approve PacifiCorp's Application for an Approval of Certain Agreements, with Tinuum Group, LCC, subject to Staff's recommended conditions.

UP 369