

Alliant Energy(LNT)

\$46.03 (As of 05/21/20)

Price Target (6-12 Months): **\$48.00**

Long Term: 6-12 Months

Zacks Recommendation:

Neutral

(Since: 04/16/19)

Prior Recommendation: Outperform

Short Term: 1-3 Months

Zacks Rank: (1-5)

3-Hold

Zacks Style Scores:

VGM:B

Value: D

Growth: B

Momentum: B

Summary

Alliant Energy's first-quarter earnings were better than expected and increased from the year ago-quarter. The year-over-year increase was due to higher margins as result of an expanded rate base. Alliant Energy has plans to invest \$5.2 billion over the next four years to strengthen its infrastructure and efficiently meet demand of its expanding customer base. Its strong liquidity will enable it to meet near-term obligation. Shares of Alliant Energy have outperformed its industry in the past 12 months. However, dependence on third party electric transmission systems remains headwind for Alliant Energy. COVID-19 exposes the company to lower commercial and industrial sales and higher bad debt expenses. The company is also subject to stringent regulations and fulfilling the new conditions could further increase operating expenses.

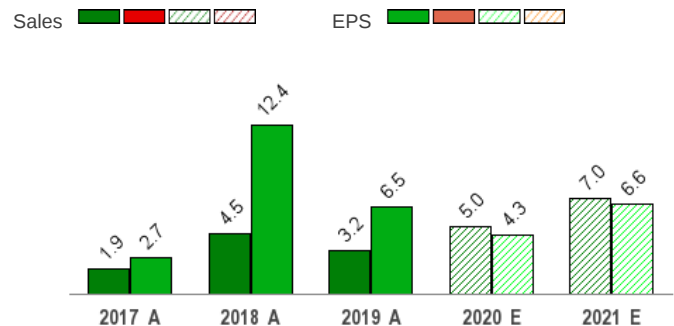
Price, Consensus & Surprise



Data Overview

52 Week High-Low	\$60.28 - \$37.66
20 Day Average Volume (sh)	1,480,451
Market Cap	\$11.5 B
YTD Price Change	-15.9%
Beta	0.41
Dividend / Div Yld	\$1.52 / 3.3%
Industry	Utility - Electric Power
Zacks Industry Rank	Top 30% (76 out of 254)

Sales and EPS Growth Rates (Y/Y %)



Last EPS Surprise	30.9%
Last Sales Surprise	NA
EPS F1 Est- 4 week change	-0.8%
Expected Report Date	08/06/2020
Earnings ESP	0.0%

Sales Estimates (millions of \$)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2021					4,098 E
2020	916 A				3,830 E
2019	987 A	790 A	990 A	880 A	3,648 A

EPS Estimates

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2021					\$2.57 E
2020	\$0.72 A				\$2.41 E
2019	\$0.53 A	\$0.40 A	\$0.94 A	\$0.44 A	\$2.31 A

*Quarterly figures may not add up to annual.

P/E TTM	18.4
P/E F1	19.1
PEG F1	3.6
P/S TTM	3.2

The data in the charts and tables, except sales and EPS estimates, is as of 05/21/2020. The reports text and the analyst-provided sales and EPS estimates are as of 05/22/2020.

Overview

Founded in 1917, Madison, WI-based, **Alliant Energy Corporation** (LNT) is a holding company with subsidiaries engaged in regulated electric and natural gas services. The company operates primarily through four wholly owned subsidiaries – Interstate Power and Light Company (IPL), Wisconsin Power and Light Company (WPL), Resource and Corporate Services. Alliant Energy provides services to 970,000 electric and 420,000 natural gas customers in the Midwest.

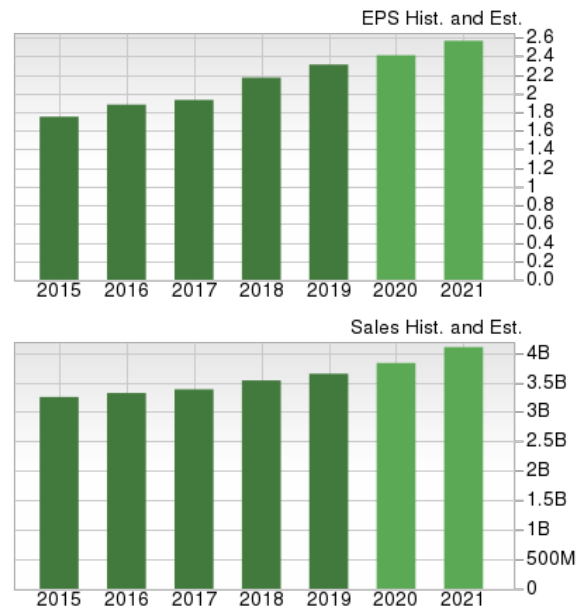
Utility Business:

This segment includes the operations of IPL and WPL. Both the utilities have a diversified fuel mix which consists of coal, natural gas and renewable resources. The output from these generating facilities is supplemented with purchased power.

IPL is primarily engaged in the generation and distribution of electricity and distribution and transportation of natural gas in select markets in Iowa and southern Minnesota. This subsidiary is also engaged in the generation and distribution of steam for two customers in Cedar Rapids, IA. In 2019, contribution from this subsidiary came in at \$2,089.6 million or 57.3% of total revenues.

WPL's businesses include generation and distribution of electricity and the distribution and transportation of natural gas in select markets in southern and central Wisconsin. WPL's consolidated subsidiary – WPL Transco – holds Alliant Energy's investment in American Transmission Company (ATC). The subsidiary's contribution amounted to \$1,475.7 million or 40.4% of total 2019 revenues.

Non-regulated, Parent and Other: Revenues from this segment were \$82.4 million in 2019, representing 2.3% of total revenues.



Reasons To Buy:

- ▲ Despite COVID-19 scare, Alliant Energy's earnings growth prospects look attractive due to ongoing additions to electric and natural gas customer volumes. Its geographic location and favorable regulatory developments bode well for the development of wind projects and long-term earnings growth. During the first quarter, the company added 400 MW wind assets for its Iowa customers. Many of its customers are going through financial hardships due to the outbreak of novel coronavirus. The company offered assistance to Iowa and Wisconsin customers by temporarily suspending disconnections. Continuation of utility services will help them focus on health issues instead of payment of utility bills. Shares of Alliant Energy have lost 5.7% narrower compared with the industry's 8.1% decline in the past 12 months.

Alliant Energy's investment in regulated natural gas and renewable energy assets, and strong state economies in its service territories are tailwinds.

As the company is not experiencing any disruption in supply chain, it currently targets long-term annual earnings growth in the range of 5-7% through 2023 from 2018 levels. We expect Alliant Energy to keep up the good performance till 2022 on the back of its capital expenditure plan, modest sales growth and constructive regulatory outcomes.

- ▲ During 2019 release, Alliant Energy announced plans to invest \$5.2 billion over the next four years to strengthen the electric and gas distribution network, and add natural gas and renewable assets to its generation portfolio. Out of the total outlay, the company has plans to invest \$2.7 billion during the next four years in a bid to strengthen its electric and natural gas distribution systems.

The company is successfully completing major construction projects on time and at or below budget. Alliant Energy is on track to add another 200 MW of wind projects in its production portfolio by end of 2020 and serve its customers in Iowa and Wisconsin. Constructive regulatory environment will enable the company will help the company to recover the capital expenditures.

- ▲ Alliant Energy is consistently investing in renewable and natural gas-based electricity generation, and gradually lowering its coal-based generation assets. Stringent emission standards are forcing utilities to lower their dependence on coal-fired production units. In August 2018, the company announced its voluntary goal to retire all the existing coal-fired generation units within 2050, with an objective of lowering emissions from 2005 levels by 40% and 80% within 2030 and 2050, respectively. Alliant Energy is making strong progress with clean energy initiatives and has already lowered carbon dioxide emissions by 35% in 2019 from 2005 levels. The company permanently retired 30% of its fossil fuel generation capacity since 2005.

The company is replacing the retired Wisconsin coal generation with a combined cycle natural gas facility. Notably, construction of the 730-MW West Riverside Energy Center and a natural gas facility will complement its renewable assets in 2020. Alliant aims to add 1000 MW of solar powered production in its portfolio within 2023. Pollution-less electricity generation units are expected to drive the company's performance.

- ▲ The regulated nature of Alliant Energy's operation provides strong earnings visibility, which has enabled the company to increase the annual dividend rate for more than a decade. The company has paid out dividends since 1946 without fail. Nearly 99% earnings of the company are generated from regulated operations, which give an excellent visibility of its upcoming earnings.

Alliant Energy has a long-term dividend payout target of 60-70%. The company's quarterly dividend rate is 38 cents, which resulted in an annualized dividend rate of \$1.52 per share.

- ▲ The company's total liquidity as of Apr 30, 2020 was \$1,155 million, which is sufficient to meet its near-term debt obligations. Only \$350 million debt is maturing in 2020 and there is no material debt maturity for the company in 2021. The debt to capital of the company was 53.1% at the end of first quarter 2020, improving sequentially from 54.7% at 2019-end.

The times interest earned ratio of the company at the end of first-quarter 2020 was 3.3, flat over the last nine months. The times interest earned ratio of more than 1 indicates that the company will have financial strength to meet debt obligations in the near future. At a time when every entity is looking forward to preserve liquidity amid uncertainty as a result of the outbreak of COVID-19, this strong times interest earned ratio is reassuring for investors.

Reasons To Sell:

- ▼ Alliant Energy is subject to extensive environmental regulations at both federal and state levels. This could impact the company's operations and its ability to recover costs from customers on a timely basis and hence the rate of return.

Increased competition from self-generation by large industrial customers, customer- and third party-owned generation (e.g. solar panels), and alternative energy sources can lower demand for its services in Iowa and Wisconsin.

- ▼ Alliant Energy's utility operations – IPL and WPL – use the interstate electric transmission system that they do not own or control. Rates charged to these subsidiaries are regulated by FERC. In case transmission costs go up and the company is unable to recover those costs from its customers, operational expenses are bound to rise.
- ▼ In addition, successful implementation of its strategic plan is dependent on its ability to access the capital markets under competitive terms and rates. Undoubtedly, the current rate decline served as a relief for this capital-intensive company. However, servicing the existing high interest debts will lower its profit levels and hurt margins. Also, disruption and uncertainty related to timely completion of the ongoing projects add to the woes.
- ▼ The company is yet to ascertain the full impact of novel coronavirus on demand. The trend so far indicates that residential group demand will improve primarily due to stay at home directives, while demand from commercial and industrial (C&I) group is expected to decline. Taking into consideration more significant pandemic-related sales declines through the end of the second quarter and a slow recovery through the end of the year, Alliant Energy forecasts nearly 5% lower overall retail sales this year.

Increased competition, adverse impact of COVID-19, dependence on third-party assets, stringent regulations and rising debt are concerns.

Last Earnings Report

Alliant Energy Q1 Earnings Beat, Sales Decline Y/Y

Alliant Energy Corporation reported first-quarter 2020 operating earnings of 72 cents per share, surpassing the Zacks Consensus Estimate of 55 cents by 30.9%. Earnings also improved 35.8% year over year.

The year-over-year growth in earnings was attributed to increasing rate base at Interstate Power and Light Company (IPL), as well as Wisconsin Power and Light Company (WPL).

GAAP earnings in the reported quarter were 70 cents compared with 53 cents per share in the year-ago period. The difference between GAAP and operating earnings was due to a charge of 2 cents related to credit loss.

Quarter Ending **03/2020**

Report Date	May 07, 2020
Sales Surprise	NA
EPS Surprise	30.91%
Quarterly EPS	0.72
Annual EPS (TTM)	2.50

Total Revenues

Total first-quarter revenues came in at \$915.7 million, declining 7.2% year over year.

Operational Highlights

Total operating expenses were \$727.4 million in the reported quarter, decreasing 10.3% from \$810.4 million in the year-ago period. The decline was due to lower costs of electric production fuel and purchased power in the reported quarter.

Operating income was \$188.3 million, up 6.5% from \$176.8 million in the year-ago quarter.

Interest expenses were \$68.9 million, increasing 3.9% from \$66.3 million in the prior-year quarter.

During the first quarter, the company's retail electric and gas utility customers grew 0.6% and 0.5% year over year, respectively. The increase in its customer count had a positive impact on electric volumes sold, which improved 0.6% year over year. However, due to lower consumption from residential, commercial and industrial customer classes, gas volumes dropped 1.8% year over year.

Financial Update

Cash and cash equivalents were \$55.2 million as of Mar 31, 2020, up from \$16.3 million on Dec 31, 2019.

Long-term debt (excluding current portion) was \$5,833.9 million as of Mar 31, 2020, higher than \$5,533 million on Dec 31, 2019.

In the first three months of 2020, cash flow from operating activities was \$160.2 million compared with \$181.1 million in the comparable year-ago period.

Guidance

Alliant Energy reiterated its 2020 earnings guidance in the range of \$2.34-\$2.48 per share. The guidance takes into account normal temperature in its service territories, and commercial and industrial sales decline due to COVID-19, offset by higher residential sales through June, with gradual sales improvement through the end of year.

Valuation

Alliant Energy shares are down 15.8% in the year to date period and down 5.6% over the trailing 12-month period. Stocks in the Zacks sub-industry and the Zacks Utility sector are down 15.6% and 17.5% in the year to date period, respectively. Over the past year, the Zacks sub-industry was and sector are down 8.1% and 22.1% respectively.

The S&P 500 index is down 8.3% in the year to date period but up 4.4% in the past year.

The stock is currently trading at 18.63X forward 12-month earnings, which compares to 12.58X for the Zacks sub-industry, 11.89X for the Zacks sector and 21.54X for the S&P 500 index.

Over the past five years, the stock has traded as high as 24.66X and as low as 14.49X, with a 5-year median of 19.52X. Our Neutral recommendation indicates that the stock will perform in-line with the market. Our \$48 price target reflects 19.43X forward 12-month earnings.

The table below shows summary valuation data for LNT

Valuation Multiples - LNT					
		Stock	Sub-Industry	Sector	S&P 500
P/E F12M	Current	18.63	12.58	11.89	21.54
	5-Year High	24.66	15.53	15.32	21.54
	5-Year Low	14.49	11.12	11.4	15.23
	5-Year Median	19.52	13.23	13.78	17.49
P/S F12M	Current	3.05	2	2.53	3.33
	5-Year High	3.37	2.45	3.29	3.44
	5-Year Low	1.78	1.54	1.75	2.53
	5-Year Median	2.62	1.88	2.04	3.01
P/B TTM	Current	2.09	1.7	3.33	4.03
	5-Year High	2.78	1.94	4.05	4.56
	5-Year Low	1.7	1.21	2.01	2.83
	5-Year Median	2.3	1.57	2.61	3.65

As of 5/21/2020

Industry Analysis Zacks Industry Rank: Top 30% (76 out of 254)



Top Peers

Company (Ticker)	Rec	Rank
Ameren Corporation (AEE)	Neutral	3
The AES Corporation (AES)	Neutral	3
Entergy Corporation (ETR)	Neutral	3
Fortis Inc. (FTS)	Neutral	3
Hawaiian Electric Industries, Inc. (HE)	Neutral	4
NRG Energy, Inc. (NRG)	Neutral	3
Pinnacle West Capital Corporation (PNW)	Neutral	3
Vistra Energy Corp. (VST)	Neutral	2

Industry Comparison Industry: Utility - Electric Power				Industry Peers		
	LNT	X Industry	S&P 500	AEE	AES	PNW
Zacks Recommendation (Long Term)	Neutral	-	-	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
Zacks Rank (Short Term)	3	-	-	3	3	3
VGM Score	B	-	-	C	B	C
Market Cap	11.48 B	6.99 B	20.19 B	17.11 B	8.19 B	8.13 B
# of Analysts	2	3	14	4	3	3
Dividend Yield	3.30%	3.58%	2.11%	2.86%	4.66%	4.33%
Value Score	D	-	-	C	A	C
Cash/Price	0.00	0.07	0.07	0.00	0.29	0.01
EV/EBITDA	11.83	9.20	12.15	10.59	12.10	8.69
PEG Ratio	3.56	3.29	2.71	2.96	1.24	2.99
Price/Book (P/B)	2.09	1.49	2.74	2.08	1.73	1.45
Price/Cash Flow (P/CF)	9.79	7.65	10.98	8.84	3.58	6.49
P/E (F1)	19.10	17.18	20.17	20.12	8.79	15.49
Price/Sales (P/S)	3.21	1.81	2.07	2.95	0.83	2.40
Earnings Yield	5.24%	5.72%	4.73%	4.96%	11.37%	6.46%
Debt/Equity	1.06	1.05	0.76	1.14	4.00	0.87
Cash Flow (\$/share)	4.70	4.15	6.96	7.84	3.44	11.14
Growth Score	B	-	-	C	C	C
Hist. EPS Growth (3-5 yrs)	7.03%	4.94%	10.87%	7.69%	4.07%	6.12%
Proj. EPS Growth (F1/F0)	4.33%	1.56%	-10.31%	2.84%	2.94%	-2.17%
Curr. Cash Flow Growth	10.43%	3.90%	5.46%	2.50%	4.43%	-2.09%
Hist. Cash Flow Growth (3-5 yrs)	6.17%	5.54%	8.55%	6.59%	0.82%	6.02%
Current Ratio	0.55	0.88	1.29	0.62	1.06	0.47
Debt/Capital	50.57%	50.78%	44.54%	53.27%	80.00%	46.60%
Net Margin	17.12%	10.48%	10.54%	13.51%	2.97%	16.22%
Return on Equity	12.03%	9.54%	16.27%	9.62%	23.42%	9.92%
Sales/Assets	0.22	0.22	0.54	0.20	0.29	0.18
Proj. Sales Growth (F1/F0)	0.00%	0.00%	-2.49%	3.02%	3.54%	3.13%
Momentum Score	B	-	-	B	B	B
Daily Price Chg	-1.35%	-0.18%	-0.76%	-1.46%	-5.09%	-0.67%
1 Week Price Chg	-4.25%	-3.27%	-4.56%	-2.96%	-8.70%	-3.32%
4 Week Price Chg	-8.11%	-2.40%	5.52%	-6.59%	-2.99%	-4.67%
12 Week Price Chg	-16.23%	-15.33%	-8.54%	-15.04%	-32.70%	-22.79%
52 Week Price Chg	-5.62%	-12.84%	-6.30%	-8.47%	-26.68%	-25.73%
20 Day Average Volume	1,480,451	479,061	2,645,192	2,017,529	6,038,353	1,235,608
(F1) EPS Est 1 week change	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	-2.57%
(F1) EPS Est 4 week change	-0.82%	-0.15%	-3.80%	-0.07%	-1.18%	-2.51%
(F1) EPS Est 12 week change	-1.23%	-3.88%	-16.57%	-0.78%	-3.89%	-3.88%
(Q1) EPS Est Mthly Chg	NA%	-1.01%	-7.64%	0.00%	0.00%	8.70%

Zacks Stock Rating System

We offer two rating systems that take into account investors' holding horizons: Zacks Rank and Zacks Recommendation. Each provides valuable insights into the future profitability of the stock and can be used separately or in combination with each other depending on your investment style.

Zacks Recommendation

The Zacks Recommendation aims to predict performance over the next 6 to 12 months. The foundation for the quantitatively determined Zacks Recommendation is trends in the company's estimate revisions and earnings outlook. The Zacks Recommendation is broken down into 3 Levels; Outperform, Neutral and Underperform. Unlike many Wall Street firms, we have an excellent balance between the number of Outperform and Neutral recommendations. Our team of 70 analysts are fully versed in the benefits of earnings estimate revisions and how that is harnessed through the Zacks quantitative rating system. But we have given our analysts the ability to override the Zacks Recommendation for the 1200 stocks that they follow. The reason for the analyst over-rides is that there are often factors such as valuation, industry conditions and management effectiveness that a trained investment professional can spot better than a quantitative model.

Zacks Rank

The Zacks Rank is our short-term rating system that is most effective over the one- to three-month holding horizon. The underlying driver for the quantitatively-determined Zacks Rank is the same as the Zacks Recommendation, and reflects trends in earnings estimate revisions.

Zacks Style Scores

The Zacks Style Score is as a complementary indicator to the Zacks rating system, giving investors a way to focus on the highest rated stocks that best fit their own stock picking preferences.

Academic research has proven that stocks with the best Value, Growth and Momentum characteristics outperform the market. The Zacks Style Scores rate stocks on each of these individual styles and assigns a rating of A, B, C, D and F. We also produce the VGM Score (V for Value, G for Growth and M for Momentum), which combines the weighted average of the individual Style Scores into one score. This is perfectly suited for those who want their stocks to have the best scores across the board.

Value Score	D
Growth Score	B
Momentum Score	B
VGM Score	B

As an investor, you want to buy stocks with the highest probability of success. That means buying stocks with a Zacks Recommendation of Outperform, which also has a Style Score of an A or a B.

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