

HumeLink

May 2022
Project Update

What is HumeLink?

HumeLink is a once in a generation investment in Australia's energy future, increasing the amount of renewable energy that can be delivered to consumers and helping to facilitate the transition to a low carbon future.

This newly proposed 500 kV transmission line would connect Wagga Wagga, Bannaby and Maragle and would be one of the nation's largest energy infrastructure projects, with about 360 km of proposed new transmission lines and new or upgraded infrastructure at the three substations.

In this issue:

- Project update
- Corridor refinement
- Project timeline
- Community engagement
- Project field work
- Upcoming activities

Project update

Refining the 200 m corridor

We recently announced that the proposed HumeLink project corridor has been narrowed to a preferred 200 m corridor in most areas. We have contacted all landowners to advise them of what this means for their property.

This is a significant decision with a range of factors considered as we continue to assess and refine the HumeLink study corridor. These factors include environmental and cultural heritage impacts, proximity to residences, feedback gathered during our engagement activities.

The route refinement process

Choosing the optimal route for the HumeLink project is a complex and ongoing process. In selecting the proposed route, technical and environmental information is collected and assessed. We also consult with landowners, local community groups and Traditional Owners to bring their feedback, knowledge and concerns into our assessments to see where we may alter or amend the route.

In refining the route, we look at social, environmental and geographical considerations that include:

- the location of built-up areas, airports, community services and cultural heritage
- native flora and fauna as well as physical environmental factors such as soils, hydrology and topography
- existing and future planned land use for agriculture, tourism and industry.

The corridor aims to minimise impacts where possible and:

- keep the transmission line straight
- keep the route between two substations short
- is parallel to existing transmission easements
- uses public land.

Following Transgrid’s comprehensive selection process several options for the route were proposed: Tumut North, Bannaby, Pejar Dam and Green Hills. Fact sheets that explain our route refinement decisions are available on the HumeLink website in the resources section.

Responding to local landowner concerns, Transgrid engaged GHD Pty Ltd (GHD) to carry out an independent assessment that compared alternative routes and make a recommendation on the optimal route for the HumeLink project.



Tumut North route options

Tumut North

GHD assessed three possible route options:

- Maragle to Yass via Tumut North
- Maragle to Yass via Blowering
- Wondalga to Maragle to Yass via Kosciuszko National Park (Option 2F).

GHD used a multi-criteria analysis tool, called 'InDeGO' to critically assess and compare the potential environmental and social impacts of Transgrid's route options through Tumut North and Blowering. They also reviewed the community proposed alternative routes, known as 'Option 2F', both inside and outside of the study corridor and considered the use of public land.

GHD's report concludes that Tumut North is the recommended route option, having both the lowest impact and lowest cost. To see the [full report](#), or go to the Resources section on our website.

Option 2F

Option 2F from Wondalga to Maragle to Yass via Kosciuszko National Park was found to be the least optimal route due to the significant environmental impacts on the national park and heritage sites. It also contained higher costs associated with constructing the transmission line through the alpine region.

Pejar Dam

We heard from the community about their concerns of the potential visual impact to visitors of the Pejar Dam. Based on this feedback, we investigated an alternative approach, and have moved the line so that it parallels with the existing line, reducing the visual impact in this area.

Green Hills State Forest

Transgrid is committed to reducing impact to landowners, wherever possible. We have changed the route and it now runs through Green Hills State Forest. This new route means five less landowners are impacted by the project and there are no residences within 500 m of the proposed line.

Bannaby

In determining the refined route through the Bannaby area, a range of options was reduced to three final options including an alternative route proposed by Bannaby residents that traversed through the Tarlo River National Park (Bannaby 1).

Our technical assessment found that the Bannaby 1 line, would impact a similar number of private landowners and have a greater number of residences within 500 m of the line. Our preferred route (Bannaby 3) has a lower impact on endangered and protected flora and fauna. It also covers a shorter distance in high bushfire risk areas and is therefore the better option for maintaining a reliable network.

For more information, visit our [Resources](#) page where you will find further information on the route refinement process.

Underground Feasibility Study

In 2021, we listened to your requests to consider placing the proposed HumeLink project underground. Responding to community concerns, a community-led steering committee engaged the consultancy GHD/Stantec to conduct a feasibility study. Amplitude was nominated by the steering committee as the independent technical advisor the steering committee. We expect the report will be finalised in mid-2022.

Project timeline as at May 2022

2019

- Options for proposed project are developed and investigated
- Regulatory Investment Test – Transmission (RIT-T) process starts

2020

- 1 km study corridor identified and landowners within the study corridor are contacted for ongoing engagement

2021

- Ongoing landowner engagement and environmental and technical investigations start
- Regulatory Investment Test – Transmission (RIT-T) process finishes
- Community Consultative Group established

2022

- Landowner negotiations on easement acquisition to start
- Environmental, heritage, hydrology, traffic and other technical and field studies continue
- Scoping Report submitted to NSW Department of Planning and Environment (DPE)
- Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) issued
- Australian Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment determined HumeLink a controlled action
- Australian Energy Regulator public consultation on the Contingent Project Application
- Refined 200 m study corridor announced
- Landowner and community information webinars begin
- Undergrounding Feasibility Study completed
- Geotechnical investigations start

2023

- Environmental Impact Statement on public display for submissions
- 70 m easement announced
- Submissions Report provided to DPE for approval Australian and NSW governments' project planning approvals expected

2024

- Construction starts, pending planning approvals

2025

- Construction continues

2026

- Construction finishes and connection to extended Snowy Hydro Scheme enabled

This is subject to change

Community Engagement

We are committed to more robust, transparent and effective community engagement on the HumeLink project. We have engaged with local residents, landowners, the broader community and have incorporated feedback wherever possible to the project design:

Community Consultative Groups (CCGs)

In October 2021, Transgrid created three Community Consultative Groups (CCGs) that included volunteer representatives from Snowy Valleys, Wagga Wagga and Upper Lachlan shire areas. These groups were set up to provide another opportunity for the community to feedback on the project and for us to listen to that feedback.

If you are interested in submitting a question or topic to be discussed at a future meeting, please contact Brendan Blakeley at the independent CCG Secretariat at brendan.blakeley@wsp.com.

To read all the previous meeting minutes, find out who your local member is and how to contact them, visit the [HumeLink website](#) or call us on 1800 317 367 to speak to one of our team.

HumeLink Business Register

Businesses are now invited to register their interest to participate in the market sounding phase of the project. We are also looking to hear from local and Indigenous businesses.

The market sounding process involves initial engagement with participants prior to Transgrid commencing the procurement phase.

If you are a local or Indigenous businesses, we would like to hear from you. Register your interest by filling in this [questionnaire](#). Once the questionnaire has been completed, please send it to humelink.opportunities@transgrid.com.au or go to the [HumeLink website for more information](#). By registering your interest, it allows us to maximise local employment and procurement opportunities wherever possible for the HumeLink project.

Support services for landowners

We recognise that the HumeLink project may have increased levels of stress and anxiety for some landowners. We are committed to supporting the wellbeing of landowners, and have engaged an external service provider, Assure Programs to assist.

The service is anonymous and Transgrid does not receive any information about who uses these services. To access this service dial 1800 808 374 and advise them you are a Landowner from a Transgrid project.

Project field work

We carry out environmental field surveys as part of our technical investigations for the project's Environment Impact Statement (EIS) and to support refining the corridor.

We have been carrying out biodiversity surveys to:

- Map the condition and extent of plant community types
- Assess the vegetation integrity of plant community types and to confirm the presence of threatened ecological communities
- Record potential habitat for threatened species including recording the presence/absence of important habitat constraints such as tree hollows, nests, rocks, caves, observations such as the availability of foraging and nesting resources and any signs of fauna activity like scats and tracks
- Undertake targeted searches for threatened plants using grid and transect-based methods

- Spotlighting and stag watching for mammals, owls and bats
- Active searches and call playback for frogs
- Active searches and rock rolling for reptiles
- Koala and Golden Sun Moth surveys

Two species that have been recorded to date as a part of field surveys are the Yass Daisy and Squirrel Glider.

Yass Daisy is a rosette-forming perennial herb that occurs in dry forest, Box-Gum Woodland and secondary grasslands. To learn more about the Yass Daisy, [visit](#).

Squirrel Glider is small possum that has distinctive membranes of skin stretching between their front and hind legs that enable them to glide. To learn more about the Squirrel Glider, [visit](#).

Thank you to landowners for providing access to their properties so our team could carry out this important work.



Yass Daisy
Photo courtesy of the NSW Office of Environment & Heritage



Squirrel Glider
Photo courtesy of the NSW Office of Environment & Heritage

Upcoming activities

May

- Autumn ecological field surveys
- Contingent Project Application submissions sought via Australian Energy Regulator – submissions close 30 May 2022

June

- Landowner easement compensation negotiations – phase 1 starts
- Landowner easement and compensation information webinars – phase 1
- Initial bushfire management workshop
- Community Consultative Group meetings

July

- Community webinars – Introduction to the project
- Community webinars – Planning approval process
- Community webinars – Regulatory approval process
- Community Partnership Program applications open
- Winter ecological field surveys

Connect with us

Transgrid is committed to working with landowners and communities through the construction of HumeLink. Please connect with us if you need any information.



1800 31 73 67 (free call)
humelink@transgrid.com.au
transgrid.com.au/humelink

HumeLink Community
Engagement Team, PO BOX A1000,
Sydney South, NSW 1235