

Media release

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New line in Ticino increases the future security of supply Swissgrid submits the planning approval procedure for Airolo – Lavorgo

Swissgrid is increasing the capacity of the extra-high voltage lines between the Ticino substations in Airolo and Lavorgo. The project is part of the «Strategic Grid 2025» and provides for a 380 kV overhead line. The existing 220 kV line between Airolo and Lavorgo will be dismantled once the new overhead line has been commissioned. It is the first time in Switzerland that a grid expansion project has been developed in such close cooperation with the canton.

The new line between Airolo and Lavorgo is part of Swissgrid's «Strategic Grid 2025» and will improve the transfer capacity as well as the security of supply in Ticino and throughout Switzerland. The new overhead line and the subsequent renewal of the lines in the Maggia Valley will remove all production restrictions for the Ticino hydropower plants. A 132 kV SBB line, which will be used to supply and ensure the operational reliability of AlpTransit Gotthard, will also be conducted along the new pylons between Airolo and Lavorgo. The submission of the building application to the Swiss Federal Inspectorate for Heavy Current Installations (ESTI) marks the start of the regular planning approval procedure.

Fewer overhead lines thanks to cooperation with the canton, Azienda Elettrica Ticinese (AET) and SBB

It is the first time in Switzerland that a grid expansion project has been developed in close cooperation with the canton. A corresponding study on the high and extra-high-voltage grid in the «Alto Ticino» area (between Magadino and the Bedretto Valley and on to Lavorgo) was developed between 2013 and 2015 in a collaborative project with Swissgrid, SBB and AET. This study considers the aspects of regional planning as well as the requirements of the security of supply. During the first phase of the study (Leventina and Maggia Valley), a solution was found that will ultimately make it possible to dismantle more than 60 kilometres of overhead lines once the corresponding grid elements have been put into operation.

New route far from residential areas

The project provides for the construction of a new 23-kilometre overhead line on the western side of the valley in the Leventina. The route was developed in cooperation with the municipalities and the citizens' communities. The locations of the pylons were optimised during various inspections so that they meet the demands of all the municipalities concerned. After the new line has been commissioned, the current extra-high voltage line, which passes close to residential areas, can be dismantled. Following commissioning of the new lines in the Maggia

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Valley, which is expected to take place from 2035, the Campolungo (Lavorgo – Peccia) line can also be dismantled.

As an alternative measure, the 50 kV AET overhead line in the municipalities of Quinto, Prato Leventina and Faido will be partly laid underground.

The project fits in with the connection between Chippis in Valais and Lavorgo in Ticino, which is currently under construction and secures the supply of electricity to Ticino with an additional 380 kV system. The overall investment for the Airolo – Lavorgo section amounts to 82 million Swiss francs.

Approval of the corridor by the Federal Council in March 2016

The planning corridor was approved by the Federal Council in March 2016 and provides for an overhead line on the western bank of the Ticino River. Swissgrid developed the final route based on this decision. The technical part of the project was prepared by Bouygues E&S EnerTrans AG, while Dionea SA was responsible for the environmental planning.

Swissgrid in dialogue with citizens

At the end of April 2020, Swissgrid submitted the dossier for the planning approval for the new 380 kV Airolo – Lavorgo line to the Swiss Federal Inspectorate for Heavy Current Installations (ESTI). From 5 June 2020, the dossier will be publicly displayed for 30 days in the municipalities of Airolo, Quinto, Prato Leventina, Dalpe and Faido. Due to the current situation with regard to the coronavirus (COVID-19), it will not be possible to hold a public information event. However, dialogue with citizens, the municipalities, citizens' communities and associations is very important to Swissgrid, so the company will provide information to citizens by means of a comprehensive brochure as well as via its website. Swissgrid is also available to answer any questions that citizens may have. Media representatives and the affected municipalities will be informed separately.

Further information on the grid project is available at:

www.swissgrid.ch/airolo-lavorgo

For more information, visit media@swissgrid.ch or call +41 58 580 31 00.

Powering the future

Swissgrid is the national grid company. As the owner of Switzerland's extra-high-voltage grid, it is responsible for operating the grid safely and without discrimination and for maintaining, modernising and expanding the grid efficiently and with respect for the environment. Swissgrid has more than 500 highly qualified people from 22 countries at its sites in Aarau, Prilly, Castione, Landquart, Laufenburg, Ostermundigen and Uznach. As a member of the European Network of Transmission System Operators for Electricity (ENTSO-E), it is also responsible for grid planning, system management and market design in the European exchange of electricity. The majority of Swissgrid's share capital is jointly held by various Swiss electricity companies.