

# Underground high-voltage line nears approval

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By Jim Planck Columbia-Greene Media The Daily Mail

GREENE COUNTY — The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has finished its Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) on the Champlain Hudson Power Express (CHPE) Transmission Line Project, and proposes to issue the project's necessary Presidential permit, upon satisfactory conclusion of the FEIS review period, which winds up on Sept. 15.

A product of Albany-based Transmission Developers Inc. (TDI), the CHPE project started back in 2008, and has since been working its way up through the regulatory and environmental review process, including obtaining approval from the NYS Public Service Commission (PSC), until it has now, six years later, all but cleared its final step.

As previously reported over those years, the project proposes a 336-mile high-voltage direct current (DC) delivery of 1,000 megawatts of power from Canada down to the NYC metropolitan area, using mostly an underwater route down Lake Champlain and the Hudson River.

The cable will actually be buried below the bed of both water bodies, however, and not lie on the bottom of either.

The project has undergone exhaustive review over the years, and TDI Chief Executive Officer Donald Jessome said the firm is very happy to be approaching the construction stage.

"We are extremely pleased," said Jessome, "that after years of comprehensive review, the Department of Energy has released the FEIS and concluded that the project can, and should, move forward."

"We welcomed the review and dialogue it generated," Jessome said, "with federal and state agencies, as well as local stakeholders."

At the federal level, those agencies included the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Coast Guard, while both the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and NYS Department of Public Service were on board at the state level, thus an indication of the level of review to which Jessome referred.

"A great many people within these agencies, and at the state and local level," he said, "went to great effort evaluating the project, and we thank them for their time and thoughtful consideration."

The route has four segments — the Lake Champlain Segment, the Overland Segment, the Hudson River Segment, and the NYC Metropolitan Area Segment. Locally, Greene County is part of the Overland Segment, a title that is somewhat misleading, as the line will actually be buried underground.

That portion begins at the south end of Lake Champlain and follows NYS Department of Transportation (DOT) and railroad rights-of-way to skirt around Albany, coming south through Greene County on the CSX right-of-way.

It comes down from South Bethlehem and Ravena, and runs through the towns of New Baltimore, Coxsackie, Athens, and Catskill, until it re-enters the river on the south side of the Town of Catskill, near Alsen.

The FEIS is viewable on-line at <http://chpexpresseis.org/library.php>, and the local map route is shown on Maps 42 (Ravena) through 47 (Germantown).

It is unclear why the latter is called Germantown instead of Cementon, as the underwater route goes nowhere near any portion of the Town of Germantown, staying in Greene County waters as it heads south, and barely catches a quarter of a mile underwater segment of Columbia County, in the middle of the river, at the far southwest corner of the Town of Clermont.

All the above maps are included within and downloadable at "Volume II: Appendix A (2 of 2)" on the FEIS website page.

The project's anticipated completion date is 2017.