



**BER Hand Hills Wind GP Inc.  
Facility Application**

**ATCO Electric Ltd.  
Facility Application**

**Hand Hills Wind Power Plant Connection**

**March 8, 2022**

**Alberta Utilities Commission**

Decision 27008-D01-2022: Hand Hills Wind Power Plant Connection

BER Hand Hills Wind GP Inc.  
Facility Application  
Application 27008-A001

ATCO Electric Ltd.  
Facility Application  
Application 27008-A002

March 8, 2022

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The Commission may, no later than 60 days of the date of this decision and without notice, correct typographical, spelling and calculation errors and other similar types of errors and post the corrected decision on its website.

## **1 Decision summary**

1. In this decision, the Alberta Utilities Commission approves applications from BER Hand Hills Wind GP Inc. (BER) and ATCO Electric Ltd. for the Hand Hills Wind Power Plant connection. For the reasons that follow, the Commission finds that approval of the applications, and specifically the preferred route for the new transmission line, is in the public interest, having regard to the social and economic effects of the project and its effect on the environment. The Commission finds that BER's application for an interconnection order is unnecessary and denies the application for the reasons that follow.

## **2 Introduction**

2. BER has approval from the Commission to construct and operate a 145-megawatt (MW) wind power plant, designated as the Hand Hills Wind Power Plant, in the Delia, Alberta area (the wind project).<sup>1</sup> It also has approval to construct and operate the wind project substation, designated as Highland 572S Substation.<sup>2</sup>

3. To connect the wind project to the Alberta Interconnected Electric System, BER requested system access from the Alberta Electric System Operator (AESO). In response to that request, the AESO filed a needs identification document (NID) application with the Commission proposing the construction of a 9.6-kilometre (km) transmission line to connect the Highland 572S Substation to existing Transmission Line 7L128 using a T-tap configuration and the addition or modification of other equipment needed to ensure proper integration of the wind project with the grid. On November 29, 2021, the Commission approved the NID application filed by the AESO and issued NID Approval 27000-D01-2021.<sup>3</sup>

4. To meet the need identified by the AESO, BER and ATCO filed facility applications requesting approval from the Commission for the detailed design, specific location, routing and equipment. Details of each application and the Commission's reasons for approving or denying them are provided in the sections that follow.

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<sup>1</sup> Power Plant Approval 26909-D02-2021, Proceeding 26909, Application 26909-A001, November 23, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Permit and Licence 26909-D03-2021, Proceeding 26909, Application 26909-A001, November 23, 2021.

<sup>3</sup> Needs Identification Document Approval 27000-D01-2021, Proceeding 27000, Application 27000-A001, November 29, 2021.

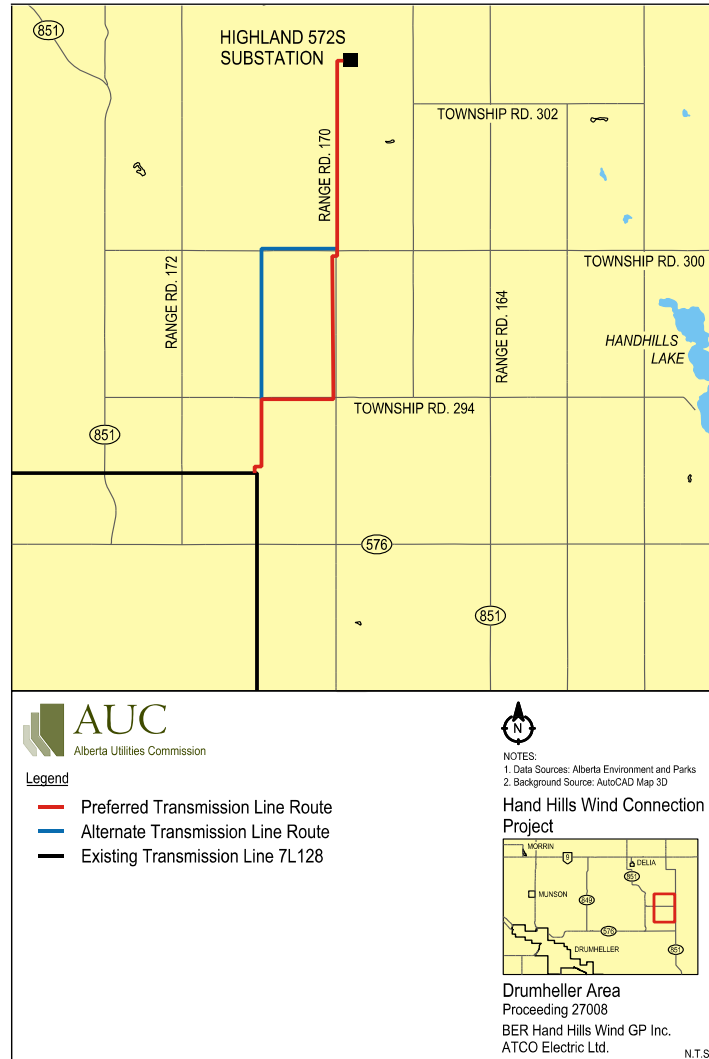
### 3 Applications

#### 3.1 BER Hand Hills Wind GP Inc. facility application

5. BER applied to the AUC for approval to construct and operate a 144-kilovolt transmission line, designated as Transmission Line 7LA128 (proposed transmission line), from Highland 572S Substation to Transmission Line 7L128. BER proposed a preferred route and an alternate route which are shown as red and blue lines, respectively, on the map in Figure 1. The alternate route shares 4.8 km of common routing with the preferred route. BER also applied for an order to connect the proposed transmission line to Transmission Line 7L128.<sup>4</sup>

6. BER, as an electricity market participant under Section 24.31 of the *Transmission Regulation*, would jointly operate the proposed transmission line with ATCO for approximately six months following construction completion. After this period of time, BER would transfer the ownership and operation of the proposed line to ATCO.

**Figure 1. Proposed preferred and alternate routes for Transmission Line 7LA128**



<sup>4</sup> Exhibit 27008-X0050, IR Round 1 Package, PDF page 7.

7. The Commission finds that the facility application filed by BER under sections 14, 15, 18 and 19 of the *Hydro and Electric Energy Act*, complies with the information requirements prescribed in Rule 007: *Applications for Power Plants, Substations, Transmission Lines, Industrial System Designations, Hydro Developments and Gas Utility Pipelines* and is consistent with NID Approval 27000-D01-2021 and the requirements identified in the AESO's functional specification.

8. The Commission is satisfied that BER's participant involvement program for the proposed transmission line meets the requirements of Rule 007. BER stated that the preferred and alternate routes were developed through an iterative process and stakeholders were notified and consulted at multiple stages of the route development process. The Commission issued a notice of applications in accordance with Rule 001: *Rules of Practice* and did not receive any submissions in response. Based on the foregoing, the Commission is satisfied that BER's participant involvement program met the objectives of effective consultation.

9. In making its determinations on BER's proposed transmission line, the Commission has carefully weighed the social, economic and environmental effects of the preferred and alternate routes, and has taken into account the stated reasons for BER's identification of the preferred route, in making its decision on the routing for Transmission Line 7LA128.

10. There are residences in proximity to both the preferred and alternate routes. The preferred route has three residences within 250 metres whereas the alternate route has two. However, the nearest residences to the centreline on the preferred and alternate routes are 97 and 75 metres away, respectively. In the absence of receiving statements of intent to participate from residents or residence owners about potential adverse impacts, the Commission finds that the preferred route would have slightly less or similar residential impacts since it is 22 metres further away from the nearest residence compared to the alternate route.

11. A greater length of the preferred route would be located along developed roads in comparison to the alternate route. BER stated that 3.2 km of the alternate route is within undeveloped road allowance and would require more brushing and would be less accessible from an operations and maintenance perspective. Further, BER stated that stakeholders indicated their preference for the transmission line to be sited along a developed roadway such as Township Road 170, which the preferred route follows.<sup>5</sup> The Commission finds that the preferred route would have a greater length of line located along developed road allowance thus making it more accessible from an operations and maintenance perspective. The Commission considers that following existing linear disturbances such as transmission lines, roads and highways is an effective approach to minimize the impacts of a proposed transmission line, especially when compared to a greenfield option where the transmission line would be a new disturbance.

12. Both the preferred and alternate routes require a 1.65 km distribution line to be salvaged. BER explained<sup>6</sup> that this distribution line serves only one landowner who said that since the line is rarely used, he would allow the salvage of the service line for the purpose of creating an alignment for the proposed transmission line. Further, the landowner has already submitted a line salvage request to ATCO. However, the alternate route requires relocation of an additional 1.6 km of distribution line compared to the preferred route. The Commission accepts BER's

<sup>5</sup> Exhibit 27008-X0006, Facility Application, PDF page 64.

<sup>6</sup> Exhibit 27008-X0002, Attachment 4.2 Siting Technical Report, PDF pages 10 and 11.

assertion that the preferred route requires less distribution construction co-ordination and would incur less relocation costs for the distribution line compared to the alternate route.

13. BER stated that the preferred route is considered the environmentally preferred route. BER retained Maskwa Environmental Consulting Ltd. to conduct an environmental evaluation and to develop an environmental protection plan for its proposed project. Maskwa's environmental evaluation found that the preferred route falls within the setback of a sharp-tailed grouse lek (210 metres) while the alternate route falls within the setback of a ferruginous hawk nest (105 metres). The environmental evaluation report noted that, on the preferred route, there is an existing high-grade gravel road and distribution line within the setback,<sup>7</sup> while the alternate route has minimal existing development within the setback.

14. BER confirmed that it would consult with Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) prior to any construction-related activities during the restricted activity periods for sharp-tailed grouse and ferruginous hawk. Also, BER stated that if construction needs to occur within the setback of a known and active wildlife feature, such as a lek or nest, a qualified wildlife monitor would be present and construction would only occur after consultation with AEP.

15. The Commission considers that with BER's diligent implementation of the mitigation measures outlined in both the environmental evaluation and environmental protection plan, the environmental effects of the proposed transmission line can be minimized to an acceptable level. The Commission finds that the environmental impacts favour the preferred route since it is further from a known wildlife feature and there is already existing disturbances within the setback for that wildlife feature.

16. Considering the foregoing, the Commission approves the route identified by BER as preferred having regard for its social, economic and environmental effects and finds approval of BER's application to construct and operate the proposed transmission line, to be in the public interest in accordance with Section 17 of the *Alberta Utilities Commission Act*.

17. As for BER's connection application, since BER will be the owner and operator of both the Highland 572S Substation and the proposed transmission line, a connection order is not necessary at this time. The Commission expects that when the transmission line ownership transfer is applied for by ATCO or BER, an application for a new connection order between Transmission Line 7LA128 and the Highland 572S Substation will also be filed.

### **1.1 ATCO Electric Ltd. facility application**

18. ATCO applied for approval to alter existing facilities to accommodate the connection of the proposed transmission line. Specifically, it applied to modify existing Transmission Line 7L128 to accommodate a T-tap connection to BER's proposed transmission line, and to install a new fibre optic cable, strung on the Transmission Line 7L128 structures, from the proposed T-tap location to the existing Coyote Lake 963S Substation. ATCO also applied for a connection order to connect its Transmission Line 7L128 to BER's proposed transmission line, thereby connecting the Hand Hills Wind Power Plant to the Alberta Interconnected Electric System.

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<sup>7</sup> Exhibit 27008-X0004, Attachment 6.1 Environmental Evaluation, PDF page 40.

19. The Commission finds that the facility application filed by ATCO under sections 14, 15, 18 and 19 of the *Hydro and Electric Energy Act*, complies with the information requirements prescribed in Rule 007 and that the proposed development is consistent with NID Approval 27000-D01-2021 and the requirements of the AESO's functional specification.

20. For these reasons, the Commission finds ATCO's proposed transmission development to be in the public interest in accordance with Section 17 of the *Alberta Utilities Commission Act*.

#### **4 Decision**

21. The Commission approves Application 27008-A001, under sections 14, 15 and 19 of the *Hydro and Electric Energy Act*, and grants BER Hand Hills Wind GP Inc. the following approval set out in an appendix to this decision:

- Transmission Line Permit and Licence 27008-D02-2022, to construct and operate Transmission Line 7LA128 (Appendix 1).

22. The Commission denies BER's application for a connection order as the necessary connection order will be issued to ATCO Electric Ltd.

23. The Commission approves Application 27008-A002, under sections 14, 15, 18 and 19 of the *Hydro and Electric Energy Act*, and grants ATCO Electric Ltd. the following approvals set out in appendices to this decision:

- Transmission Line Permit and Licence 27008-D03-2022, to alter and operate Transmission Line 7L128 (Appendix 2).
- Connection Order 27008-D04-2022, to connect Transmission Line 7L128 to Transmission Line 7LA128 (Appendix 3).

24. The appendices will be distributed separately.

Dated on March 8, 2022.

#### **Alberta Utilities Commission**

*(original signed by)*

Neil Jamieson  
Commission Member