

Frequently Asked Questions

Lowell Area Gas Modernization Project

April 2019

What is the Lowell Area Gas Modernization Project?

The Lowell Area Gas Modernization Project (LAGMP) is a program of work to implement state-of-the-art in-line inspection technology along an approximately six-mile-long gas main that runs between National Grid facilities on Chapman Road in Tewksbury and Wilbur Street in Lowell. Once the project is complete, we will be able to conduct inspections using an in-line inspection device, or “Smart Pig”, that can travel along the inside of the main and provide detailed information about its internal and external condition. The use of in-line inspection is rapidly becoming an industry best practice for this type of main.

Where will this work take place?

Most of the work will take place within an approximately two-and-a-half mile stretch of existing right-of-way between Riverneck Road in Chelmsford and Wilbur Street in Lowell. Minor upgrades to the existing main will be made at Whipple Road in Tewksbury and Brick Kiln Road in Chelmsford. Finally, Smart Pig launching and receiving devices will be installed at National Grid’s Chapman Street and Wilbur Street facilities.

When is this project expected to begin?

This project has been in development for several years. After all Federal, State and Local Permitting processes are reviewed and are complete, National Grid expects construction to begin in the late Fall 2019, with completion in Winter 2020.

How is the main currently inspected?

The current inspection process consists of above ground testing and excavation at selected intervals along the pipe. This current method only allows us to evaluate the exterior of the main, with the ability to do more detailed testing at specific locations as necessary. In-line inspection is an industry best practice because it provides us detailed information about both the external and internal condition of the entire main.

Does the current, and proposed inspection method comply with safety regulations?

Yes, Absolutely. At National Grid, the safe and reliable operation of our energy delivery system that serves our customers is our top priority. When we have an opportunity to invest in our infrastructure and utilize state-of-the-art technology, we believe that it is important to consider them. We have proposed this project and have been developing it for the past several years because we believe that in-line inspection will provide us useful data about the pipe condition, which will greatly enhance our existing inspectional capabilities, and align with industry best practices.

How are other areas of the distribution system inspected for safe operations?

National Grid Gas Operations maintains and inspects all our gas infrastructure regularly. National Grid engineers and technicians monitor, respond to, as well as repair and maintain the gas distribution system so that it continues to operate safely while meeting, and exceeding operating standards and regulations.

Is this a Growth Project for National Grid to get additional gas to the distribution system?

The purpose of this project is to enhance the reliability and safety of our gas network by enabling in-line inspection. The portion of main that we are replacing will standardize the main to a uniform 12" diameter between the two points (Chapmans St, Tewksbury and Wilbur St, Lowell) to enable the inspection.

What is Horizontal Directional Drilling? Is it harmful to the environment?

Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) is a method of installing underground pipe, conduit, or cables in locations where trenching or excavating is not practical – for example, to cross underneath major highways. A specialized drill is used to create an opening under the work area, and then a pipe is pulled through that opening. The process uses a drilling mud made of clay and water, no chemicals that could contaminate soil or groundwater are used in the process.

National Grid will be using HDD to replace the part of main that runs underneath Route 495 and the Lowell Connector. National Grid has used this process many times to install electric cables and natural gas pipes that cross bodies of water, roads, and other areas where there are obstacles, as well as areas where the surface cannot be disturbed.

Will the pressure within the main be increased?

No, the current maximum operating pressure of the main will remain the same upon completion of the project.

Is this main part of the interstate pipeline system?

No. This main is part of National Grid's existing local delivery system. It serves only to transport gas into the Lowell area distribution system and it does not transport gas interstate.

How does National Grid get gas to serve its customers?

The natural gas delivered to National Grid's local distribution system is sourced from multiple locations within the United States as well as from Canada. We also receive gas which is delivered to our LNG (liquefied natural gas) facilities throughout our operating territory.

As an abutter and community member, what can I expect to see, and experience during construction?

Most of proposed construction will occur within the existing Right of Way (ROW) within Lowell and Tewksbury. There will be additional work for the In-line Inspection Launcher and Receiver locations at National Grid facilities on Wilbur Street, Lowell and Chapman Street, Tewksbury. The HDD work will be occurring under Route 495 and the Lowell Connector. National Grid operates under strict environmental guidelines and procedures. In areas where the existing main will be replaced in Lowell, the crews will utilize swamp matting which protects the land and wildlife from construction equipment and excavation.

Over time, some of the vegetation within the existing ROW has grown and there are some areas that have been identified for tree clearing and vegetation management so that the crews can temporarily work in these areas. It is expected that the vegetation will regrow after the project is complete.

Some noise from the construction is typical and expected but is temporary. The crews will continue to move along the ROW. Additional discussions with abutters and community members will be held so that full expectations can be relayed and discussed specifically to each area of the project.

Will my gas service be interrupted during construction?

No, there are no expected interruptions to our customer's gas service during construction on this project.

Will there be opportunities to receive updates and talk to the project team if I still have questions?

Yes, we want to hear from you! You can reach the project team by calling our toll-free hotline at 1-844-LOWELL-1 (844-569-3551), or by emailing info@lowellareamodernization.com. You can also provide us your contact information through the dedicated project website (www.lowellareamodernization.com) to opt into receiving all email updates from the project team.

How can I learn more about National Grid's commitment to Clean Energy?

National Grid is well-positioned and committed to facilitating all parts of the transition – from infrastructure to grid intelligence, from energy efficiency deployment to renewable energy integration, and from EV charging to cleaner home heating options. But National Grid cannot do it alone. Active customer engagement, aggressive industry partnerships, and comprehensive policy and regulatory frameworks will be necessary to guide the economy-wide transformation.

To read more about National Grid's commitment, please visit:

https://www.nationalgridus.com/media/pdfs/our-company/18ngr02_ebook_ic14_digital_app_med.pdf