

MahwahPatch

Residents' Pipeline Project Concerns To Be Heard Thursday

Tennessee Pipeline Gas Company project would lay pipe through Ramapo County Reservation

By Jessica Mazzola July 27, 2011

The [Bergen County Parks Department](#) is hosting a public hearing Thursday on a proposed gas pipeline expansion project that would lay down new lines through mostly county-owned land in Mahwah.

The [Northeast Upgrade Project](#) seeks to add 40 miles of pipeline to the existing [Tennessee Pipeline's](#) 300-line, a methane-transporting line that has been in the area since the mid-1950's.

"You can only fit so much gas in a pipe before you need to expand it. Building a new one would be very expensive, so this project is a looping project," explained Loren Locher, the Stakeholder Outreach Coordinator for Tennessee's parent company, the El Paso Corp.

"The new pipeline would attach to the existing one, loop around to basically add more space and augment what is already there, and then reattach to the existing pipe."

The pipe would end up at the Mahwah Compression Station, where distributors would pick up gas to transport to their customers.

The project, which has been in the works for about a year and a half, would take three to three and a half years.

An "undetermined" amount of compensation would be given to the state, county, township, and a few individual property owners whose land would be affected by the expansion project.

"In terms of what compensation the town would get, it would be modest," said Mahwah town council president John Roth.

"Since the vast majority of affected land is county and state land, they will really be making the decisions about this, and being compensated for the land."

The Tennessee Pipeline Gas Company has filed a request with the [Federal Energy Regulatory Commission](#) to get approval for the project. The company also needs the approval of the [NJ Department of Environmental Protection](#), which has named the land in question as part of the [Green Acres Open Space Program](#). Thursday's hearing is a necessary component of the company's application, without which the DEP would not approve the project.

Tennessee has tried to show the economic benefits the project will bring to Mahwah, as well as

other areas in NJ and Pennsylvania which would have pipeline laid in them.

The company commissioned a Rutgers University economic impact study that found the project would bring New Jersey 695 jobs, about \$36.6M in salaries, and \$18.1M in tax revenue. Most will go to the federal government, with about \$5.3 million going to state and local governments.

Environmental organizations have expressed concerns about the potential impact the project might have on the environment, especially considering Ramapo's location in the Highlands watershed.

“We won't know what the extent of the permanent impairments to the water supply will be,” Elliott Ruga, a program coordinator with the [NJ Highlands Coalition](#), said.

The Coalition has applied, alongside the [Sierra Club](#) and the [Delaware Riverkeeper Network](#), for a Motion to Intervene, which, if granted, will allow them to review the project.

“We are against this project because the disturbance it will create will be extensive and permanent. Plus, this is important land. We should not just be giving it away,” Ruga, who said the Coalition will be at Thursday's meeting, said.

Residents interested in finding out more about the proposed project can visit the Northeast Upgrade Project website, and go to the Hampton Inn on Route 17 South at 7 p.m. this Thursday, July 28. Public comments will be taken on the proposal.

Written comments will also be taken through August 9.

Comments can be mailed to Adam Strobel, Director of the Bergen County Open Space Division, One Bergen Plaza, 4th Floor, Hackensack, NJ 07601. A copy must also be provided to the NJDEP, Green Acres Program, Bureau of Legal Services and Stewardship, PO Box 412 Trenton, NJ 08625.

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