

Office of the Governor

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NEWS RELEASE

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Whitman Urges Feds to Deny Permit for Transco Pipeline

Gov. Christie Whitman today asked the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to deny the request of Transco to construct 90 miles of natural gas transmission lines in New Jersey.

In testimony submitted to FERC, the Governor said that, "the potential for environmental disruption and the safety risks inherent in such construction are at their highest in New Jersey, the nation's most densely populated state."

According to the Governor, the construction corridor will cross five major bodies of water in the state, affect fisheries and wildlife habitat and lie only a short distance from thousands of residents. "More than 400 homes would be within 50 feet of the pipeline, 165 of which would be within 25 feet," she said.

Gov. Whitman urged the committee to "evaluate all factors bearing on the public interest and to carefully examine the environmental, health and safety consequences of the pipeline. When you do, I am certain you will agree with me that construction of the pipeline through our state cannot be justified at this time."

A copy of the Governor's testimony is attached.

STATEMENT BY GOVERNOR CHRISTINE TODD WHITMAN

FERC PUBLIC CONFERENCE

SEPTEMBER 29, 1999

In determining whether to grant or deny Transco's application to construct over 90 miles of high pressure natural gas transmission lines in New Jersey, the FERC is required to evaluate all factors bearing on the public interest. Under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, FERC must examine all potential environmental impacts, including effects on health and safety, and to consider reasonable alternatives to avoid environmental harm. I appreciate the opportunity to highlight the primary issues affecting the public interest and to review with you my earlier comments about the environmental problems with this pipeline.

Clearly, the potential for environmental disruption and the safety risks inherent in such construction are at their highest in New Jersey, the nation's most densely populated state. In our state the proposed pipeline extends from the Delaware River across the state through farmland, lands preserved as open space using public funds, extremely valuable environmentally sensitive wetlands, and then through some of the most densely populated areas in the nation to its terminus

near the Hudson River. The construction corridor will cross five major bodies of water in New Jersey, affect fisheries and wildlife habitat and will lie only a short distance from thousands of residences. More than 400 homes would be within 50 feet of the pipeline, and in 164 cases within 25 feet.

This project should not be approved absent a compelling demonstration of actual necessity including proof of market demand and proof that there are no feasible alternative routes that would avoid the extensive negative environmental and social impacts of the proposed construction and the increased risk of future accidental injury to New Jersey citizens and their property from a high pressure gas line explosion. The record in this matter raises serious questions, thus far not fully answered, concerning whether there is sufficient incremental market demand to warrant construction of the pipeline.

Other stakeholders, including members of our Congressional Delegation, local officials, the New Jersey Coalition for Pipeline Safety and other members of the public are also questioning the need for the pipeline. In fact, in the proposed Energy and Water Appropriations bill, Congress called for detailed long-term analyses of future pipeline needs prior to FERC approving new pipelines.

The environmental impact on our state could be dramatic. More than 50 properties that have been preserved as open space using public funds will be affected. These properties are in 29 different jurisdictions in my state. Of the 26 acres of land that would be disturbed, less than half include existing rights of way.

The pipeline is also slated to run through the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge where high quality wetlands will be disturbed, including the destruction of forested wetlands and vernal ponds. Endangered species have been identified in this area of the Great Swamp, including the Red Shouldered Hawk and the Blue Spotted Salamander.

And the pipeline may threaten key historic preservation areas in our state. The pipeline will affect a half dozen historic districts, including four on the National Historic Register,, but we do not yet know the extent of the impact.

We in New Jersey also continue to be concerned about pipeline safety. Our state has enacted the most stringent safety requirements on intrastate gas, but we are barred from mandating these requirements on interstate pipelines. In response to specific safety recommendations made by the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities, Transco has informally indicated that it is willing to institute four of the five suggested safety measures. However, compliance with safety rules for the installation and maintenance of gas transmission lines and with our Underground Facility Protection Act - our One Call Program - is not an absolute guarantee against an accident, such as the disastrous 1994 Edison explosion and fire. There is no justification for exposing New Jerseyans to the increased risk caused by siting of new high pressure gas pipelines in densely populated neighborhoods, absent a compelling need for the facility.

I, therefore, urge careful evaluation of the purported, but unproved, need for the Marketlink Pipeline. I also urge you to exercise your authority to evaluate all factors bearing on the public interest and to carefully examine the environmental, health and safety consequences of this pipeline. When you do, I am certain you

will agree with me that in light of the dramatic environmental health and safety impacts of the pipeline combined with questions about the need for it, construction of the pipeline through our state cannot be justified at this time.

