

## **THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY**

### **COUNTERING TRANSCO'S NARRATIVE ABOUT THE SOUTHEAST SUPPLY ENHANCEMENT PROJECT**

#### **About Transco and SSEP**

Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Company (“Transco”) is owned by The Williams Companies, a gas giant responsible for transporting nearly one-third of the gas in the United States across its 33,000 miles of pipeline. With the Southeast Supply Enhancement Project (“SSEP”), Transco seeks to transport an additional 1.6 million dekatherms per day of gas by building two new segments of pipeline in Virginia and North Carolina, known as the Eden and Salem Loops, and significantly expanding its compressor stations across five Southern states. About 93% of the gas will go to three large companies and be used for power generation.

Below are some questions raised by Transco’s characterization of the Project, and some responses that offer crucial context and details.

#### **1. How big of a project is this?**

Transco consistently downplays the full scope and impacts of SSEP, describing it as primarily an incremental expansion made up of modifications to its existing facilities. In reality, the proposed project is massive. In total, it will entail construction on 1,500 acres of land, with new pipeline permanently occupying nearly 1,000 acres. It would span five states (Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia) and transport 1.6 million dekatherms per day of gas—more than the Atlantic Coast Pipeline would have carried. Burning that gas will produce hundreds of millions of metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions over the project’s lifetime. Moreover, the size of the pipeline—42 inches in diameter—will be the same as the Mountain Valley Pipeline. This may even allow Transco to transport gas for exports.

#### **2. Is gas really cleaner than coal?**

Transco claims that increasing gas supply is good for the climate because gas replaces coal-fired power on the grid. While burning gas produces less carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) than burning coal, gas isn’t necessarily any better for the planet. Methane, the primary ingredient in what the gas industry calls “natural gas,” is a fossil fuel and greenhouse gas, and is 80-times more potent than carbon dioxide when it comes to trapping heat in the atmosphere over the short term. Methane is released across the natural gas supply chain—from the wells that produce it, the pipes that carry it, even the appliances that use it. Methane alone is responsible for one-third of global warming. And burning methane still releases carbon dioxide, the primary driver of climate change.

On top of climate impacts, gas extraction and consumption produce dangerous pollutants that contaminate the air and water. Some of the pollutants Transco’s gas-fired compressor stations will emit, such as fine particulates and formaldehyde, are unsafe at any level of exposure and can cause long-term harm to respiratory and cardiovascular health.

### **3. How will the project impact environmental justice communities?**

Transco claims in its Application that “while increased emissions may affect local air quality within EJ communities near Compressor Stations 150 and 155, the changes to air quality are not expected to represent an adverse and disproportionate impact.” But Transco has not reckoned with the fact that these communities are already overburdened with pollution. The Environmental Protection Agency uses a mapping tool called EJScreen to estimate the severity of environmental justice impacts. The higher the index value (given as a percentile), the more severe the impact. Compressor Station 150 ( Mooresville, NC) is within one mile of one area in the 78<sup>th</sup> percentile (compared to the rest of the state) for limited English-speaking population and one area in the 76<sup>th</sup> percentile (compared to the rest of the state) for low-income population. Both areas are also in high percentiles for harmful pollutants like ozone and PM2.5. Similarly, Compressor Station 155 (Lexington, NC) sits just across the street from an area with an EJ index in the 73<sup>rd</sup> percentile (compared to the rest of the state) for low-income population; this area is also in high percentiles for harmful pollutants like ozone and PM2.5. These communities are over-burdened with pollution *now*, and burning more gas at these compressor stations will make already poor air quality worse. Electric motor-driven compressor units, which emit very low amounts of pollution, would better serve these communities.

### **4. Is renewable energy a reasonable alternative to gas?**

Transco claims that renewable energy is too expensive and unreliable to be a reasonable alternative to the project, but it hasn’t done enough work to evaluate whether that’s true. Transco’s environmental documents thus far spend just over a page discussing renewable energy alternatives to the pipeline expansion project. As proposed, SSEP will cause hundreds of millions of metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions and lock the region’s customers into fossil-fuel infrastructure for decades to come. Transco owes it to its customers to at least give a thorough explanation of why this is the only possible way forward.

### **5. Are there reasons to be worried about the safety of the project?**

Transco claims that the SSEP’s construction and operation will be safe, but Transco doesn’t have a very good safety record in general and it hasn’t examined some key features of SSEP that raise additional safety concerns. For example, gas pipelines are under high pressure and always have the potential to rupture, catch fire, and/or explode. Transco has not discussed how this project would increase those risks, given that the planned Eden and Salem loops would be located close to several other high-pressure, high-diameter pipelines. This co-location might impact how widespread damage would be in the event of a pipeline failure. Finally, the Pipeline Safety Trust pointed out in its scoping comments that of all the gas pipeline operators in the United States that have recorded incidents in the past, Transco holds one of the worst records not only in the number of incidents, but also in terms of fatalities, cost per incident, and gas spills per incident.