

House Bill 430 Proponent Testimony

Chairman McColley, Vice Chair Schuring, Ranking Member Williams, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Scott Currier and I am the Director of Pipeline Integrity Threats and Engineering for the US Natural Gas Business Unit of TC Energy. Thank you for providing TC Energy with the opportunity to offer testimony on behalf of HB 430 today.

TC Energy supports this important bill and believes its provisions increase public and operator safety while preventing the potential for damage to natural gas transmission pipelines. The communication framework established in this bill affords pipeline operators the advanced data necessary to continue supporting the safe and reliable transportation of natural gas within the state of Ohio.

For more than 70 years, TC Energy has transported natural gas to consumers across the continent. In Ohio, our Columbia Gas Transmission and ANR Pipeline systems span 4,800 miles of gas transmission lines, representing nearly half of the total gas transmission mileage in the state.

In fact, TC Energy operates approximately 58,000 miles of natural gas transmission pipelines in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. This infrastructure supplies more than 25 percent of the natural gas demand in North America.

The natural gas industry's strong safety record relies not solely on the stringent oversight of its regulatory authority, but from the commitment of its subject matter and field experts to continuously improve operations. Our industry demands the proactive demonstration of a questioning attitude and the leveraging of best practices to strengthen the processes designed to ensure operator and public safety. The best practice feedback, provided from these critical stakeholders and included in this legislation, are an example of why TC Energy strongly supports the provisions outlined in HB 430.

There are more than 300,000 miles of natural gas transmission pipeline in the United States; approximately 10,000 of those pipeline miles pass through Ohio. Transmission lines are a critical piece of the state's energy infrastructure, and pipelines are the safest and most effective means of transporting this natural gas to consumers.

The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) regulates natural gas transmission pipeline operators and promulgates new regulations to improve pipeline safety.

A key component of PHMSA's regulations require that gas transmission line operators consider population density and surrounding land uses in determining the class location of a pipeline segment. Class location of a pipeline is determined on a recurring basis by evaluating the number of structures or other areas intended for human occupancy within a corridor that runs continuously along the pipeline.

Four different class locations are recognized in PHMSA's regulations, ranging from Class One to Class Four, providing an approximation of a damaged pipeline's risk potential to its surroundings. The class location assigned to a pipeline segment affects the applicable design, construction, testing, operation and ongoing maintenance practices, processes and procedures.

HB 430 promotes a heightened commitment to public and operator safety by requiring developers to provide gas transmission line operators with the advanced information needed to better adhere to PHMSA's guidelines. Operators that have prior notice of impending changes in land use are better informed and prepared to implement the additional operations and integrity maintenance activities that often accompany class changes. Additionally, notification of impending changes in land use allows operators to collaborate and discuss potential solutions in a manner that limits related pipeline changes.

Third-party damage, generally caused during construction and excavation activities, remains a leading cause of pipeline incidents. The communication framework established in HB 430 greatly reduces the risk of third-party damage to pipeline infrastructure by requiring affected stakeholders to collaborate and exchange information at the earliest possible opportunity.

The advanced notification of proposed development allows operators to mark the location of existing pipelines and provide developers with maps and other data that can prevent third-party damage during subsequent construction and excavation. It also proactively takes into consideration the property's use after a development is constructed. Advanced notification provides operators with the opportunity to assess whether the proposed development requires any modifications in the operation or maintenance of the existing pipeline facility.

The Ohio Utilities Protection Service has been a key partner in further developing early notification provisions in a way that fit Ohio's statutes and standards through current 811 and design ticket processes. We at TC Energy appreciate their support and efforts in this bill.

The safety, integrity and reliability of gas transmission lines in Ohio will be improved if operators receive the information contemplated in HB 430's early notification provisions.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 430 and I would be happy to respond to any questions.

Sincerely,

Scott Currier
Director of Pipeline Integrity, Threats and Engineering