DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

[Docket Nos. CP97–315–000, et al., CP97–319–000, CP98–200–000, and CP98–540–000]

Independence Pipeline Company; Supplemental Notice of Intent To Prepare a Combined Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Independence Pipeline and Market Link Expansion Projects, Request for Comments on Environmental Issues Associated With the Market Link Expansion Project, and Notice of Public Scoping Meetings and Site Visit

July 28, 1998.

The staff of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC or Commission) has determined that the proposed Independence Pipeline and Market Link Expansion Pipeline Projects are environmentally related projects and will be combined into one environmental impact statement (EIS) pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act.[1] This EIS will be used by the Commission in its decision-making process to determine whether the proposed actions are in the public convenience and necessity. This Notice opens another environmental scoping comment period (see below). If you have already provided environmental comments as an affected property owner, interested party, agency, or intervenor for the Independence Pipeline Project, we request that you not submit additional scoping/environmental comments. We are specifically requesting comments only from those affected property owners and interested parties in the Market Link Expansion Project, project area.

If you are a landowner whose property will be crossed by the proposed Market Link Expansion Project, you may be contacted by a pipeline company representative about the acquisition of an easement to construct, operate, and maintain the proposed facilities. The pipeline company may seek to negotiate a mutually acceptable agreement relative to land use and access. However, if the project is approved by the Commission, the pipeline has the right to use eminent domain. Therefore, if negotiations fail to produce an agreement between the pipeline company and landowner, the pipeline company would initiate condemnation proceedings in accordance with state law. A fact sheet addressing a number of typically asked questions, including the use of eminent domain, is attached to this notice as appendix 1.

Summary of the Proposed Project

On March 9, 1998, the Commission issued a ''Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Independence Pipeline Project, Request for Comments on Environmental Issues, and Notice of Public Scoping Meetings and Site Visit (NOI).'' The NOI described the Independence Pipeline Project facilities proposed by ANR Pipeline Company, Independence Pipeline Company, and National Fuel Gas Supply Corporation. This Notice will only describe those facilities proposed by Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Corporation (Transco) in its Market Link Expansion Project. Please refer to the NOI of March 9, 1998 for additional detail and project information concerning the Independence Pipeline Project.

The facilities discussed below are proposed by Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Corporation (Transco) in its Market Link Expansion Project, and will be incorporated into the Commission staff's Independence Pipeline Project EIS:

- 24.19 miles of 42-inch-diameter pipeline loop between mileposts 161.29 and 185.48 in Lycoming and Clinton Counties, Pennsylvania (Haneyville Loop); [2]
- 13.23 miles of 42-inch-diameter pipeline loop between mileposts 129.51 and 142.74 in Lycoming County, Pennsylvania; and 1.79 miles of 36-inch-diameter pipeline between mileposts 142.74 and 144.53 in Lycoming County (Williamsport Loop); [2]
- 17.73 miles of 42-inch-diameter pipeline loop between mileposts 28.56 and 115.18 in Luzerne and Columbia Counties, Pennsylvania (Benton Loop);
- 6.27 miles of 42-inch-diameter pipeline loop between mileposts 30.29 and 36.56 in Northampton County, Pennsylvania (Allentown Loop);
- 29.23 miles of 42-inch-diameter pipeline loop between mileposts 0.14 and 29.37 in Somerset and Warren Counties, New Jersey (Clinton Loop);
- 23.88 miles of 42-inch-diameter pipeline loop between mileposts 1789.53 and 1812.36 in Somerset and Morris Counties, New Jersey (Stirling Loop);
- 18.81 miles of 36-inch-diameter pipeline loop between mileposts 1820.66 and 1839.47 in Bergen and Essex Counties, New Jersey (Roseland Loop);
- 5.46 miles of 36-inch-diameter pipeline loop between mileposts 1802.73 and 1808.19 in Middlesex and Union Counties, New Jersey (Woodbridge Loop)[2]
- 7.10 miles of 36-inch-diameter pipeline between mileposts 18.96 and 26.06 in Burlington County, New jersey (Bordentown Loop); and [2]
- 0.30 miles of 42-inch-diameter pipeline loop crossing the Raritan River between mileposts 1794.70 and 1795.00 in Middlesex County, New Jersey (Raritan River Loop).

Transco also proposes to:

- Replace about 6.3 miles of 12-inch-diameter pipeline (in the same trench) with a new 36-inch-diameter pipeline between mileposts 30.53 and 36.83 in Burlington County, New Jersey (Mt. Laurel Replacement); [2]
- Install a 36-inch-diameter interconnect pipeline with a proposed meter building outlet of Independence Pipeline Company to Transco's existing 24-inch-diameter Leidy Lines ''A'' and ''B''; and 30-inch-diameter Leidy Line ''C'' in Clinton County, Pennsylvania (milepost 194.06).
- Replace the impellers on two existing 12,600-horsepower (hp), turbine-driven compressor units at Compressor Station (C.S.) 520 in Lycoming County, Pennsylvania;
- Install two new 15,000-hp turbine-driven compressor units; perform the rewheeling of one existing 12,600-hp turbine-driven compressor unit, and perform impeller replacement on two existing 5,500-hp turbine-driven compressor units at C.S. 517 in Columbia County, Pennsylvania;
- Install one 15,000-hp turbine-driven compressor unit and perform the rewheeling and uprating of an existing 12,600-hp turbine-driven compressor unit to 15,000-hp at C.S. 515 in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania;
- Install one 15,000-hp electric motor-driven compressor unit and perform impeller replacement on two existing 7,000-hp electric motor-driven compressor units at C.S. 205 in Mercer County, New Jersey;[2]

Transco would also perform modifications to:

- Reduce pressure on Transco's 42-inch-diameter Mainline C from 1,200 psig to 800 psig at the existing

[1] Independence Pipeline Company, ANR Pipeline Company, National Fuel Gas Supply Corporation, and Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Corporation's applications were filed with the Commission under Section 7 of the Natural Gas Act and Part 157 of the Commission's regulations.

[2] These facilities or portions of these facilities were previously proposed in Transco's Seaboard Expansion Project in Docket No. CP96–545–000. The Commission staff conducted an environmental review and had planned to publish an environmental assessment (EA) for Transco's Seaboard Expansion Project. Four comments were received during the public scoping period. However, Transco subsequently withdrew its application on April 4, 1997 and the EA was never issued.

Centerville Regulator Station at milepost 0.11 in Somerset County, New Jersey;

- Reduce pressure on Transco's 36-inch-diameter Mainline D from 800 psig to 638 psig at existing Roseland Regulator Station at milepost 1820.66 in Essex County, New Jersey;
- Reduce pressure on Transco's 42-inch diameter Mainline E from 800 psig to 638 psig at existing Linden Regulator Station at milepost 1808.19 in Union County, New Jersey;[2] and
- Inlet/outlet headers at existing C.S. 200 to provide flow control under certain operating conditions on Transco's Trenton Woodbury Lateral in Chester County, Pennsylvania.

The proposed project would deliver about 663,000 Dts/d for nine customers.

A general location map of the project facilities is shown in appendix 2.

Land Requirements for Construction

Construction of Transco's proposed looping facilities would affect a total of about 2,485 acres. Of this total, about 1,604 would be disturbed by construction of the pipeline loops. Of the remaining 881 acres, about 352 acres are proposed for use as extra work spaces; and about 518 acres would be disturbed by construction and operation of the aboveground facilities.

About 150.8 miles of the proposed pipeline right-of-way would parallel existing rights-of-way (about 98 percent of the project). Transco would deviate from existing mainline in several locations to avoid environmental or engineering constraints. Transco states it would require a 85 to 90-footwide construction right-of-way. Transco would retain and operate an additional 35 feet from the south edge of its existing corridor as permanent pipeline right-of-way. About 516 acres would be maintained as new permanent right-of-way. Existing land uses on the remainder of the disturbed areas, as well as most land uses on the permanent right-of-way, would be allowed to continue following construction.

The EIS Process

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires the Commission to take into account the environmental impacts that could result from an action whenever it considers the issuance of a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity. The EIS we are preparing will give the Commission the information to do that. NEPA also requires us to discover and address concerns the public may have about the proposals. We call this ''scoping''. The main goal of the scoping process is to focus the analysis in the EIS on the important environmental issues. By this Notice of Intent, the Commission requests public comments on the scope of the issues it will address in the EIS. All comments received are considered during the preparation of the EIS. We encourage state and local government representatives to notify their constituents of this proposed action and encourage them to comment on their areas of concern. Local agencies are requested to provide information on other projects, either ongoing or planned, which might conflict with, or have cumulative effects when considered in combination with, the Independence Pipeline Project.

To ensure your comments are considered, please carefully follow the instructions in the public participation section on pages 7 and 8 of this notice.

Currently Identified Environmental Issues

We have identified a number of issues based upon our preliminary review of the proposed facilities, the environmental information provided by Transco, and interested parties. Some of these issues are listed below. Keep in mind that this is a preliminary list, and is *not* a complete list of site-specific issues. We may add to, subtract from, or change the list of issues based on your comments and our analysis.

- Geology and Soils
  - —Temporary and permanent impact on farmland soils.
  - —Mixing of topsoil and subsoil during construction.
  - —Compaction of soil by heavy equipment.
  - —Effects to acid soils in Burlington County, New Jersey.
  - —Effect of blasting during trench excavation.
  - —Erosion control and restoration of the right-of-way.
- Water Resources
  - —Crossing of 177 perennial waterbodies (81 in Pennsylvania; 96 in New Jersey).
  - —Crossing of 5 perennial waterbodies over 100 feet wide, including Pine Creek (twice) in Pennsylvania; and the North Branch of the Raritan, Passaic, and Rahway Rivers in New Jersey.
  - —Effect on water supplies, including at least 17 private wells within 150 fee of the construction work area (more to be determined).
- Vegetation and Wildlife
  - —Crossing of 137.3 acres of wetlands, including 41.8 acres forested wetlands.
  - —Clearing of about 146 acres of forest.
  - —Effect of construction on wildlife and fisheries habitat.
  - —Effect on federally listed endangered and threatened species or proposed listed species, including bald eagle, bog turtle, and shortnose sturgeon.
- Cultural Resources
  - —Impact on historic and prehistoric sites.
  - —Native American and tribal concerns.
- Land Use
  - —Use of eminent domain to acquire rights-of-way.
  - —Impact on crop production.
  - —Proximity to schools and residential developments.
  - —Effect on at least 36 residences within 50 feet of the construction work area.
  - —Crossings of septic fields and drains.
  - —Effect on local roads.
  - —Control of unauthorized access to rights-of-way.
- Recreation and Public Interest Areas
  - —Crossing of the Tiadaghton State Forest and Sproul State Forest, Pennsylvania.
  - —Crossing of the Hyner State Park and Lick Run, a Pennsylvania State Designated ''Wild River''.
  - —Crossing of South Branch Nature Preserve, Clinton Wildlife Management Area, in New Jersey.
  - —Crossing of the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge.
  - —Crossing of several municipal parks, and the McEvoy and Passaic River Parks in New Jersey.
- Socioeconomics
  - —Impact on property values.
  - —Effect of construction workforce on demands for services in surrounding areas.
- Air Quality and Noise
  - —Impact on local air quality during construction, and regional air quality during operation, of pipelines and compressor stations.
  - —Noise impact on nearby areas from construction and operation of pipelines and compressor stations.
- Reliability and Safety
  - —Assessment of hazards associated with natural gas pipelines, including placement in vicinity of schools, commercial areas and residential developments.
- Cumulative Impact
  - —Assessment of the combined effect of the proposed project with other projects which have been or may be proposed in the same region and similar time frame.

We will also evaluate possible alternatives to the proposed project or portions of the project, and make recommendations on how to lessen or avoid impacts on the various resource

areas. A number of alternatives have been identified to date, both in filings made by the applicants and in comments received. We will evaluate all feasible alternatives identified.

Our independent analysis of the issues will be in a Draft EIS which will be mailed to Federal, state, and local agencies, public interest groups, interested individuals, affected landowners, newspapers, libraries, and the Commission's official service list for these proceedings. A 45-day comment period will be allotted for review of the Draft EIS. We will consider all comments on the Draft EIS and revise the document, as necessary, before issuing a Final EIS. The Final EIS will treat all comments received on the Draft EIS.

Public Participation and Scoping Meetings

You can make a difference by providing us with your specific comments or concerns about the project. By becoming a commentor, your concerns will be addressed in the EIS and considered by the Commission. You should focus on the potential environmental effects of the proposal, alternatives to the proposal (including alternative routes or compressor station sites), and measure to avoid or lessen environmental impact. The more specific your comments, the more useful they will be. Please follow the instructions below to ensure that your comments are received and properly recorded:

- Reference Docket Nos. CP97–315–000 *et al.*
- Send *two* copies of your comments to: David P. Boergers, Acting Secretary Federal Energy Regulatory Commission 888 First St., NE Washington, DC 20426;
- Label one copy for the attention of the Environmental Review and Compliance Branch, PR–11.1.
- Please mail your comments so that they will be received in Washington, DC on or before September 11, 1998.

In addition to or in lieu of sending written comments, you are invited to attend one or more of the four public scoping meetings being held in the project area. Meetings will be held at the following times and locations:

Date	Time	Location
September 1, 1998	7:00 p.m.	Sheraton Inn, Williamsport, 100 Pine Street, Williamsport, Pennsylvania, (717) 327–8231.
September 2, 1998	7:00 p.m.	Hilton, Allentown, 904 East Hamilton Street, Allentown, Pennsylvania, (610) 433–2221.
September 3, 1998	7:00 p.m.	Sheraton Hotel Tara Parsippany, 199 Smith Road, Parsippany, New Jersey, (973) 515–2000.

The purpose of the scoping meetings is to obtain input from state and local governments and from the public. Federal agencies have formal channels for input into the Federal process (including separate meetings where appropriate). Federal agencies are expected to file their written comments directly with the FERC and not use the scoping meetings for this purpose.

Transco will be invited to present a description of its Market Link Expansion Project. Interested groups and individuals are encouraged to attend the meetings and present oral comments on the environmental issues which they believe should be addressed in the Draft EIS. A transcript will be made of the meetings and will be made part of the Commission's record in this proceeding. Written comments and oral comments will be treated equally in our review.

We are asking a number of Federal agencies to indicate whether they wish to cooperate with us in the preparation of the EIS. These agencies may choose to participate once they have evaluated each proposal relative to their agencies' responsibilities. The list of agencies is provided in appendix 3.[3]

[3] The appendices references in this notice are not being printed in the **Federal Register**. Copies are available from the Commission's Public Reference and Files Maintenance Branch, 888 First Street, NE., Washington, DC 20426, Room 2A or call (202) 208–1371. Copies of the appendices were sent to all those receiving this notice in the mail.

On the above dates we will also be conducting limited site visits to the project area in the vicinity of each scoping meeting location. Anyone interested in participating in the site visit may contact the Commission's Office of External Affairs, identified at the end of this notice, for more details and must provide their own transportation.

Becoming an Intervenor

In addition to involvement in the EIS scoping process, you may want to become an official party to the proceeding, known as an ''intervenor''. Intervenors play a more formal role in the process. Among other things, intervenors have the right to receive copies of case-related Commission documents and filings by other intervenors. Likewise, each intervenor must provide 14 copies of its filings to the Secretary of the Commission and must send a copy to all other parties on the Commission's service lists for these proceedings. If you want to become an intervenor you must file a Motion to Intervene according to Rule 214 of the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure (18 CFR 385.214) (see appendix 4). Only intervenors have the right to seek rehearing of the Commission's decision.

The date for filing timely motions to intervene in this proceeding has passed, having ended June 11, 1998. Therefore, parties now seeking to file later interventions must show good cause, as required by section 385.213(b)(3), why this time limitation should be waived. Environmental issues have been viewed as good cause for late intervention. However, you do not need intervenor status to have your comments considered.

Environmental Mailing List

Anyone offering scoping comments will be automatically kept on our environmental mailing list for the project. If you do not want to offer comments at this time you will be taken off the environmental mailing list.

Additional information about the proposed project is available from Paul McKee in the Commission's Office of External Affairs at (202) 208–1088.

Linwood A. Watson, Jr.,

Acting Secretary.

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DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

Sunshine Act Meeting

FEDERAL REGISTER CITATION OF PREVIOUS ANNOUNCEMENT: July 27, 1998, 63 FR 40116.

PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED TIME AND DATE OF MEETING: July 29, 1998, 10:00 a.m.