



Inclusion Through Diversity

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NYSEG Agrees to Consider Alternative Approach to West Dryden Road Pipeline. Draft Analysis Presented to Public Service Commission for Review.

Tompkins County officials today announced that NYSEG has agreed to consider, and has presented to the New York State Public Service Commission (PSC) for review, a potential alternative approach to address area energy and economic development needs as an alternative to the Lansing/Freeville Reinforcement Gas Pipeline Project, also known as the West Dryden Road natural gas pipeline.

The draft analysis now under review includes a “compressor-based solution” to meet immediate gas reliability needs in the Lansing area, as well as potential longer term solutions to address new requests for natural gas. The compressor-based alternative would involve construction of a small compressor station in the Lansing area, to address occasional instances of very low pressure, such as on very cold days.

A second part of NYSEG’s proposal is to solicit creative solutions to reduce current demand for gas and to transition to electric heating systems, countywide, so that the available gas could be targeted to end-users that require the energy qualities of gas, such as industrial operations. Similar to the transformation of New York State's use of electricity as envisioned by Governor Cuomo’s *Reforming the Energy Vision (REV)*, this process would stimulate innovative problem-solving to optimize use of the county's natural gas infrastructure and accelerate the transition away from fossil fuels.

The proposal is the result of discussions over the past several months with NYSEG and the PSC, initiated by members of the Tompkins County Energy and Economic Development Task Force (EEDTF). The EEDTF was convened in 2015 by Tompkins County Area Development (TCAD) at the request of County Legislature Chair Michael Lane, to evaluate how the County could continue economic development while also meeting its greenhouse gas reduction goals. In its final report last June, the Task Force identified the West Dryden Road pipeline as a critical issue and recommended working with the PSC to find alternatives that would support economic growth while reducing local greenhouse gas emissions.

“The task force was a community effort, not a consultant study,” notes TCAD President Michael Stamm. “Community leaders in economic development, energy-related businesses, environmental groups, and local government came together in a true spirit of problem-solving. The first two recommendations were to work with the PSC to reduce reliance on gas, and also to provide reliable energy to local industry. The work with NYSEG and the PSC provides an exciting opportunity for Tompkins County to – once again – be a leader in tackling the important challenges of our day.”

In a letter to PSC Chair Audrey Zibelman, dated January 23rd, NYSEG President Mark Lynch summarized the discussions to date, outlined the potential alternative in detail, and identified a series of steps that could be undertaken to address system reliability as well as current and future service requests. In the letter, Lynch identified three levels of need (which he called “Issues #1, #2, and #3”): (1) meeting reliability needs for existing customers; (2) addressing energy needs for current development proposals; and (3) accommodating future growth beyond current requests.

NYSEG presented its conceptual technical study to PSC staff on February 2nd. The study — describing what is called a unique, first-of-its kind project for NYSEG — will now be reviewed by PSC engineers. After review, PSC and NYSEG will discuss potential outstanding issues, any significant challenges such a project would present, and the next steps in this process. Lynch's letter proposes an aggressive timeline. PSC staff note that the technical study is considered confidential, as it includes detailed critical infrastructure information about the community's gas distribution network.

Should the PSC support the analysis, NYSEG would file a request for expedited approval of the compressor-based solution as a demonstration project under the State's *Reforming the Energy Vision* program. If successful, the compressor would only meet current needs. To accommodate future growth, the second part of NYSEG's proposal is to issue a Request for Proposals to – as stated in the letter – “...provide a longer term view that would consider options to defer, decrease or offset the need for gas infrastructure investment while still meeting the demand noted for Issues #2 and #3.”

“By considering our county's energy needs as an integrated whole, we hope the investment that would have gone into the pipeline can instead be directed toward efficiency measures and retrofits, freeing up gas supply for industry while accelerating our transition away from fossil fuels,” says Martha Robertson, Chair of the Legislature's Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee, and a member of the Task Force.

Addressing energy demands for current proposals (Issue 2), Robertson emphasizes that economic solutions are already available to build without using gas. “We've seen significant local development using heat pumps, in applications from single family homes to large projects such as Breckenridge, Maplewood, and City Centre. The county has already reached out to developers with information about this rapidly advancing technology, and we're eager to work with others as well. Tompkins County welcomes this opportunity to use all available tools to support economic development at the same time that we ‘bend the curve’ to cut our use of fossil fuels.”

“NYSEG is leading the way with this proposed approach—creating a ‘REV for gas’ by stimulating the market to provide creative solutions to lower fossil fuel use in heating, just as the REV is already doing for electricity,” adds Task Force member Irene Weiser, Town of Caroline Councilmember and coordinator of Fossil Free Tompkins. “We are very excited about this direction, and NYSEG's and the PSC's willingness to work with our community on this multi-faceted challenge. None of us knows how this will turn out, but we are prepared to be creative and work hard for the best result possible.”

Ed Marx, Tompkins County Commissioner of Planning and Sustainability notes, “This solution only arose because of the rich interaction and partnership that developed among the utility, its regulator, and the community that the utility serves.” He adds that the Task Force recommendation regarding alternatives to the pipeline “...included three criteria—that solutions be ‘economically viable’; that they can be ‘implemented with existing technology’; and that they will ‘meet the energy needs of the high tech industries located along Warren Road ... that have been seriously impacted by NYSEG's rejection of applications for additional gas service.’ We are committed to trying to meet all these objectives. We have a long way to go but this is a good first step and we are excited about the possibilities. This approach is truly breaking new ground.”

Contact: Legislator Martha Robertson, 607-592-3119; Ed Marx, Commissioner of Planning and Sustainability, 607-274-5560.

Related Materials (attached)

- Fact Sheet: *The Energy and Economic Development Task Force and the West Dryden Road Pipeline*
- Letter from NYSEG President Mark Lynch to New York State Public Service Commission Chair Audrey Zibelman, dated January 23, 2017

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