



BOSTON COLLEGE
Program in Global Public Health and the Common Good

Request for an Emergency Congressional Hearing into the North Weymouth, MA Natural Gas Compressor Station

We submit this request for an emergency hearing by the Committee on Energy and Commerce of the US House of Representatives into the North Weymouth, MA natural gas compressor station.

This project has been pushed through the state and federal regulatory decision-making process on the back of a deeply flawed Health Impact Assessment that was later rescinded by its author, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). It has been advanced without thoughtful oversight, due diligence, or concern for its consequences, and over the repeated objections of local citizens and their elected officials.

We request this emergency hearing on the grounds that this compressor station is a threat to human health and the environment, an economic liability to New England's ratepayers, and an affront to democracy and social justice.

History. Spectra-Enbridge, a private Canadian pipeline company, plans to construct a 7,700-horsepower natural gas compressor station in North Weymouth, MA, nine miles from downtown Boston, on the shoreline of Boston Harbor at the mouth of the Fore River. This compressor station will connect to the Northeast Gas Pipeline Grid. It will receive gas from Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia. It will pressurize gas to 1,400 pounds per square inch (psi) and pump it onward for export to Canada and Europe.

The original owner of this project was Spectra Energy, Texas. In February 2017, Enbridge Canada purchased Spectra. Algonquin Gas Transmission, the builder of the compressor, is owned by Enbridge Canada. National Grid and Eversource have a financial stake in the project in that they own the remaining 8% of the Atlantic Bridge project not controlled by Enbridge. Eversource owns 40% of "Class B" shares and 15% of "Class C" shares of Algonquin Gas Transmission LLC and National Grid owns 20% of "Class B" shares of the company." (<https://news.littlesis.org/2019/01/14/five-things-activists-should-know-about-the-weymouth-compressor-station/>)

Both Eversource and National Grid have recently acknowledged that they do not need the North Weymouth compressor station and that they can meet Massachusetts' energy needs without it. This admission reflects the reality that virtually all of the gas that will go through the North Weymouth compressor station is destined for export and not for domestic use. Because FERC decisions are

supposed to be based on "need" and on whether contracts are in place, this admission would appear to undercut the "need" argument.

For more than two years, public health experts, local legislators and residents have drawn attention to the serious health and safety risks of this proposed compressor station. The Massachusetts Medical Society and over 100 municipal boards of health representing more than half the residents of Massachusetts have expressed serious concerns about the health risks of natural gas infrastructure. Medical doctors and public health experts have visited the site, participated in public meetings, met with the leaders of state agencies, and written [three comprehensive reports detailing these serious health hazards](#).

Need for Congressional Investigation. The following are the reasons why a Congressional investigation is needed into the North Weymouth compressor station:

Fire and Explosion Danger and Lack of an Evacuation Plan. The danger of fire and explosion in the North Weymouth compressor station is very real and has not been evaluated. The gas pipeline network is aging and inadequately maintained. An average of 25 explosions occur in pipelines across the United States every year. A series of pipeline explosions in Massachusetts' Merrimack Valley in September 2018 caused more than 80 fires; damaged 131 homes; forced the evacuation of 30,000 people; injured 25 people, including two firefighters; and killed an 18-year-old boy.

Highly pressurized gas in the North Weymouth compressor station could explode and burn in a catastrophic fashion. The North Weymouth station will pressurize gas to 1,400 pounds per square inch (psi). By comparison, the pressure in the Merrimack Valley pipeline was only 0.5 psi; the explosion occurred when the line was accidentally pressurized to 6 psi.

Compressor stations are typically sited in remote locations. The North Weymouth compressor station will be located in a densely populated, low-lying, coastal community that contains six schools with 1,700 students, elderly housing, nursing homes and a mental health facility. It will lie 20 feet from the foot of the Fore River Bridge, which carries 30,000 vehicles per day.

Further compounding the risk of fire and explosion at this site is the fact that 0.4 miles away, across the Fore River in Quincy is Twin Rivers Technology. This company maintains tanks of palm oil, other flammable liquids and has three tanks of hydrogen on their property

There is only one emergency exit route into the coastal peninsula that will hold the compressor station. Timely evacuation in the event of fire will be virtually impossible. Police officers and firefighters will be placed at grave risk.

The danger of fire and explosion was not considered in the Health Impact Assessment of the North Weymouth compressor station.

Interstate Transport and Disposal of Highly Contaminated Soil. Soil at the Weymouth site is comprised mainly of industrial fill dumped there for more than a century by the now defunct Edgar Coal Plant,

nearby factories and the Fore River shipyard. This soil is contaminated with diesel fuel, arsenic, lead mercury and asbestos. Levels of these contaminants exceed Massachusetts and EPA regulatory standards.

Construction of the compressor station will disrupt more than 15,000 tons of contaminated soil. Sea level rise and coastal storms will wash diesel fuel, arsenic, lead mercury and asbestos from excavated soil into Boston Harbor.

Contaminated soil removed from the site will be transported by truck over city streets and state highways. An estimated 1,100 truckloads of dirt will be removed. Some of the contaminated soil will be carried to a waste disposal site in Taunton MA. The remainder will be transported to hazardous waste disposal sites in Rochester, New Hampshire and Norridgewock, Maine. Potential exists for exposure of communities along these transport routes to arsenic- and asbestos-laden dust.

Major increase in Toxic Air Pollutants. Residents of the Fore River Basin are already exposed to elevated levels of hazardous air pollutants, including benzene and formaldehyde, two known human carcinogens. Benzene causes leukemia, including childhood leukemia as well as lymphoma. Formaldehyde causes leukemia and nasal cancer.

The Enbridge compressor station will release additional benzene and formaldehyde as well as 1,3-butadiene, another chemical known to cause of leukemia, into the already polluted air of the Fore River basin. There are no safe levels of exposure to these carcinogens.

Rates of heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, pediatric asthma, lung cancer, laryngeal cancer, leukemia and non-Hodgkin lymphoma in the Fore River Basin are already among the highest in Massachusetts. Lung cancer incidence in Quincy Point and Germantown—two environmental justice communities adjacent to the proposed site — is 39% higher than the rest of the state. By worsening air pollution, toxic emissions from the Enbridge compressor station will further increase risk of cancer and other chronic diseases in North Weymouth and surrounding communities.

Economic Burden on Ratepayers. Massachusetts ratepayers are being asked to finance the North Weymouth compressor station project and also to insure it against catastrophe. If the compressor station should explode, ratepayers and not Enbridge will be required to cover the repair and replacement cost of the Fore River Bridge and the adjacent sewage treatment facility.

The root of this problem is that Enbridge cannot get insurance coverage. Due to the small size of the North Parcel (4.3 acres) where the compressor station will be located, Enbridge cannot meet the GAAP Standards for insurability. Enbridge testified under oath at the Waterways appeal before the Department of Environmental Protection that they needed 10 acres to build such a facility. The compressor building, the two out buildings, and the MWRA pumping station cannot be placed far enough away from one another according to the industry standard. Algonquin can self-insure, but according to an SEC filing, they do not have the assets to cover any damage to the pumping station, the bridge, or any commercial or residential property should there be an accident.

A Likely Stranded Asset. The cost of producing electricity from renewables is falling rapidly. Credible analyses indicate that within 3-5 years it will be cheaper to generate electricity from wind and solar than from gas. The US Energy Information Administration estimates that by 2023 it will cost \$36.60 per megawatt-hour to produce electricity from wind and \$37.60 to produce solar energy, vs. \$40.20 to produce energy from gas. This risk will be compounded if current massive federal subsidies for gas (\$32.6 billion per year) are cut. The likelihood is high that gas - like coal - will soon be a fuel of the past.

Other states are preparing for the transition to a carbon-neutral future. New York has banned fracking and in summer, 2019 passed comprehensive energy and climate change legislation pledging to reduce the state's greenhouse gas emissions by 85% by 2050. To meet this target, New York is developing the country's largest wind farm and collaborating with Ireland and Denmark to improve its electric power grid. It has also created economic incentives for clean vehicles, including trucks and buses, and tax incentives for energy conservation. New York is now creating new, high-paying jobs in renewable energy.

If Massachusetts builds more pipelines and compressor stations, we will divert investment away from renewables. We lock ourselves into gas for years to come. We will fall behind our neighbors.

Social Injustice. Perversion of Democracy. The communities surrounding the Fore River basin are among the poorest communities between Boston and the Cape Cod Canal. They contain large racial and ethnic minorities: 26% Asian, 7% African-American and 5% Latino.

These communities, the Mayors of Quincy and Weymouth and the entire South Shore delegation to the Massachusetts state legislature are all opposed to construction of the compressor station (see attached letter from legislators to the Head of the DEP).

The compressor station creates no local jobs. It conveys no economic benefit to the towns that will surround it.

Construction of a gas compressor station in North Weymouth against the express wishes of these communities and their elected officials is deeply unjust. It is a flagrant example of environmental injustice.

Lack of Regulatory Oversight. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) conducted a Health Impact Assessment of the proposed compressor station. This assessment was limited in scope. It did not consider the danger of fire and explosion. It did not evaluate the risks of coastal flooding. It did not consider emergency access. It failed to consider how toxic chemicals released by the compressor station would add to already elevated levels of pollution and disease. It did not address the effects on human health or the environment of excavating and dispersing highly contaminated soil.

Acknowledging that they took neither climate hazards nor fire and safety risks into consideration in their assessment, MAPC stated unequivocally on February 6, 2019 that they could not support construction of this gas compressor station in North Weymouth.

Despite the rescinding of the conclusions of the MAPC Health Impact Assessment by its authors, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection used this assessment as the basis for their conclusion that the North Weymouth Compressor station will pose no hazard to health and safety.

Conclusion. The North Weymouth natural gas compressor station is a danger to public health and safety; it is also economically reckless and fiscally short-sighted. We request that investigation by the Energy and Commerce Committee consider the following questions:

1. Why were the serious health threats we list above disregarded in the approval process?
2. How will hazardous material from the North Weymouth site be safely transported to NH, ME and Taunton, MA? How will the safety of the local populations, including residents of Boston, be protected from exposure to these carcinogens during transport?
3. Why are ratepayers being asked to finance this project and insure it?
4. PHMSA regulations require natural gas operators to prepare and submit an Integrity Management Plan. These plans describe the steps that operators will take to ensure safe and reliable operations of their pipeline networks.

Enbridge should be required to produce an unredacted copy of their Integrity Management Plan for the Weymouth site, including how fire and explosion will be handled at the nearby existing 700psi-1,500 psi pipelines, metering and regulating station, and the Calpine natural gas power plant. This document should include information indicating when state and federal regulators most recently reviewed and approved the plan.

5. Enbridge should be required to make public a complete and unredacted copy of their current emergency response plan and protocol for the Weymouth site and environs.
6. Enbridge should be required to establish timelines indicating when they will notify nearby residents of an incident or leakage at the site
7. Enbridge should be required to provide detail as to whether any current low-pressure pipeline will be converted to high-pressure pipelines under their plan.