

Petition to President Joe Biden to stop LNG by Rail through Philadelphia

We, the undersigned, call upon President Biden and our federal elected representatives to prevent the transport of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) by rail through Philadelphia for export overseas. The Special Permit (Special Permit DOT-SP 20534) to Energy Transport Solutions for rail transport from Wyalusing PA to Gibbstown NJ should be rescinded. The separately issued federal rule (RIN 2137–AF40, Docket No. PHMSA–2018–0025 (HM–264)) that lifted the long-standing ban on LNG transport in rail tank cars across the nation must also be rescinded. Our communities must be protected from the threat to their safety posed by LNG transportation by rail.

Background:

Trains transporting LNG have been approved to travel through Philadelphia neighborhoods in the coming months. The Trump Administration granted a Special Permit for this hazardous, flammable, and potentially explosive cargo to travel approximately 200 miles from Wyalusing, PA through communities to Gibbstown NJ. Up until now, transporting LNG by rail car was banned to protect public safety. The rail tank cars are substandard and have never been used to transport LNG. A release of LNG from a derailment or other incident in Philadelphia would impact all of the city with the most intense and inescapable harm in black and brown and low income communities bordering the tracks. This injustice cannot be tolerated.

New Fortress Energy and Delaware River Partners want to expand a deepwater port terminal on the Delaware River to export the LNG overseas for sale. Shale gas would be extracted from fracking wells in PA and piped to a liquefaction plant being built in Bradford County, then carried by rail and tank trucks (up to two 100-car trains daily) through populated areas to Gibbstown, just 3 miles downriver from Philadelphia. From there, huge shipping vessels would transport it down the river, passing Delaware and NJ and through the Bay to ports proposed by New Fortress in Ireland, Puerto Rico, and beyond. There has been no environmental impact study of the LNG export project or the rail route. If there were to be a release of LNG, catastrophic impacts could include a fire that cannot be extinguished, a frigid vapor cloud that can kill instantly, and bomb-like explosions that destroy everything in its path. If such a disaster were to happen it is unlikely that New Fortress Energy would be held fully accountable for damages to life and property, risking them walking away with just a slap on the wrist.

LNG is liquefied methane, which is a greenhouse gas 86 times more powerful than carbon dioxide in heating the atmosphere on a 20-year time scale and 104 times more powerful over a 10-year period, the periods of time when scientists say we must reduce GHG emissions to address the climate crisis. Over the past decade, oil and gas infrastructure has been the primary source of methane releases. To produce LNG, more gas wells would be fracked, polluting Pennsylvania communities, and methane will be leaked or vented at every stage, exacerbating climate change.

PHMSA issued a federal rule on July 24, 2020, after the Special Permit for the Wyalusing to Gibbstown rail transport. The federal rule authorized the bulk transportation of LNG by rail tank car for carriers nationwide. In June 2021, the Biden Administration listed two rulemaking actions in its upcoming regulatory agenda – one would suspend the Trump Administration’s federal rulemaking for the transport of LNG by rail and the other would propose a new rule addressing LNG by rail. We urge the Biden Administration to pull back the federal rule and reinstate the ban on LNG transport by rail tank car to protect public safety. The federal rule endangers the nation, just as the Special Permit endangers our communities.

We call for your Administration to rescind the Special Permit and the federal rule authorizing LNG to be transported by rail. All our communities must be protected!

Signature _____ Print Name _____

Address (w/zip) _____ Municipality _____ County _____ ST _____

Email (optional) _____ Phone (optional) _____

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