

February 19, 2025

The Honorable Pete Hegseth
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000
(703) 545-6700

Subject: Expedite the federal environmental impact statement process for the Line 5 Tunnel project

Dear Secretary Hegseth:

We write to bring to your attention the Line 5 Tunnel Construction project, a critical energy infrastructure project delayed by the previous administration.

Line 5 is a major oil and natural gas liquids pipeline that currently sits on the lakebed of the Straits of Mackinac, a body of water connecting Lake Michigan and Lake Huron. The [pipeline](#), in operation since 1953, has been a constant target for Governor Gretchen Whitmer and Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel. For years, both officials have argued that the pipeline poses an unacceptable risk to the Great Lakes' waters and have pursued a political and legal campaign to shut it down.

In June 2018, an [analysis](#) was completed and submitted to the State of Michigan. This report concluded that “a secure underground corridor for Line 5 beneath the Straits of Mackinac is a feasible replacement alternative to the existing Line 5 crossing.” Enbridge, the pipeline’s operator, and the state agreed that relocating the existing pipeline to a more secure concrete-lined tunnel 100 feet below the lakebed would reduce the risk of a potential leak into the Great Lakes. Enbridge also committed to covering all construction costs as part of the plan — no taxpayer dollars will be spent on this project.

Despite this arrangement, Governor Whitmer and Attorney General Nessel have still worked to shut down the pipeline without offering a viable alternative for supplying energy.

In November 2020, Governor Whitmer revoked Enbridge's easement and ordered the pipeline to cease operations by May 2021. Enbridge challenged the state's authority by filing a lawsuit in federal court, arguing that Michigan lacked jurisdiction to mandate the

pipeline's closure. As the deadline passed, Enbridge continued operations, refusing to shut down without a court order. Neither state nor federal courts have ordered the pipeline's closure, and it remains in operation, continuing to transport vital fuels.

In October 2021, the Canadian government invoked the [1977 Transit Pipeline Treaty](#) between the United States and Canada, strengthening Enbridge's position that the matter should be resolved at the federal level. This treaty prevents either country from unilaterally shutting down pipelines transporting hydrocarbons. Since then, Governor Whitmer has done everything in her power to ensure a drawn-out legal dispute over Line 5.

In spite of her opposition, a key ruling in December 2023, published by Governor Whitmer's hand-selected commissioners at the [Michigan Public Service Commission](#), recognized "a public need for the replacement section of Line 5 and the products it carries" and greenlighted the state permit.

Unfortunately, the Biden Administration, which shared Governor Whitmer's [opposition](#) to the pipeline, did not follow suit. **The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has prolonged the completion of a federal Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Line 5 Tunnel.** An initial draft of the EIS report was expected to be [released in 2023](#). Unfortunately, the EIS process for this essential project has now been under consideration for nearly [four years](#), and broader discussions about Line 5 have been ongoing for a [decade](#).

We request that you encourage your Army Corps of Engineers to expedite the completion of this environmental impact statement. This project aligns with President Trump's January 20, 2025, [executive order](#) "Declaring A National Energy Emergency." The president's order emphasizes enhancing and expediting energy infrastructure projects to promote national energy security and economic stability. **Accelerating the approval and construction of the Line 5 Tunnel would certainly align with those goals.**

Had the project been permitted to proceed when initially proposed, the Line 5 Tunnel could already have been operational. While detractors raise concerns about the potential for a spill in the Great Lakes, ongoing delays have prolonged the presence of the existing Line 5 pipeline in the water. Upon completion, the Line 5 Tunnel will protect the Great Lakes and ensure the ongoing operation of vital energy infrastructure that serves the entire Midwest region.

This critical energy infrastructure is essential for economic prosperity as it supports numerous American jobs and economic activities. The [Mackinac Center for Public Policy](#) and the [Consumer Energy Alliance](#) have demonstrated how the pipeline's continued


operation provides 55% of the propane used by more than 223,000 households across the state of Michigan.

Additionally, the pipeline is essential for transferring feedstocks to refineries in Michigan and Ohio, as well as the Canadian provinces of Ontario and Quebec. The products transported through this pipeline sustain tens of thousands of well-paying jobs and contribute more than \$20 billion to the regional economy.


Please consider the substantial benefits of the Line 5 Tunnel project and the importance of expediting the environmental impact statement to facilitate Line 5's timely construction. It represents a balanced approach to environmental protection and economic development, ensuring the safety of our natural resources while maintaining critical energy infrastructure.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Jason T. Hayes
Director of Energy and Environmental
Policy
The Mackinac Center for Public Policy



Thomas J. Pyle
President
Institute for Energy Research

Cc:

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary of State

The Honorable Doug Burgum
Secretary of Interior

The Honorable Chris Wright
Secretary of Energy

Lieutenant General William H. "Butch" Graham Jr.
Chief of Engineers and Commanding General, United States Army Corps of Engineers