



July 30, 2019

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Chairman, Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
United States Senate
555 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member, Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
United States Senate
511 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: National Pipeline Mapping System Amendment

Dear Chairman Wicker and Ranking Member Cantwell,

On July 31, 2019, the United States Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation will be marking up legislation to reauthorize the Pipeline Safety Act. Our understanding is that as part of the markup Senator Tom Udall is considering offering an amendment that would change the provisions in the Pipeline Safety Act for submitting information to the National Pipeline Mapping System (NPMS).¹ Specifically, Senator Udall's amendment would eliminate a longstanding exception from the NPMS program requirements that applies to gathering lines.²

Codified as part of the mandate that authorized the NPMS program in the Pipeline Safety and Improvement Act of 2002 (2002 Act),³ the exception for gathering lines dates to a voluntary digital mapping program that the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) developed in the late 1990s.⁴ Congress did not question the need for that exception in

¹ 49 U.S.C. § 60132.

² *Id.* at (a).

³ Pipeline Safety and Improvement Act of 2002, Pub. L. 107-355, § 15, 116 Stat. 2985, 3005 (2002) (codified at 49 U.S.C. § 60132).

⁴ National Pipeline Mapping System, 63 Fed. Reg. 36,030 (July 1, 1998). Created by the Norman Y. Mineta Research and Special Programs Improvement Act of 2004, Pub. L. No. 108-426, 118 Stat. 2423 (2004), PHMSA is the federal agency within the U.S. Department of Transportation that is currently responsible for administering the Pipeline Safety Laws and Regulations. Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, and to the Administrator, Research and Innovative Technology Administration; Establishment and Delegation of Powers and Duties, 70 Fed. Reg. 8,299 (Feb. 18, 2005). Another modal administration within USDOT, the Research and Special Programs Administration (RSPA), was charged with administering the Pipeline Safety Laws when the voluntary digital mapping program went

creating the NPMS program in the 2002 Act or in the three subsequent reauthorizations of the Pipeline Safety Laws that occurred in 2006, 2012, or 2016.⁵ Nor is there any indication that PHMSA is asking Congress to repeal the exception in the current reauthorization, or that requiring gathering line operators to participate in the NPMS would produce justifiable safety benefits.

As the nation's leading trade organization for the gathering industry, GPA Midstream Association (GPA Midstream)⁶ is respectfully requesting that Senator Udall's amendment not be included in the legislation authorizing the Pipeline Safety Act. Most gathering line operators provide appropriate information about the location of their underground pipeline facilities to the authorities responsible for administering State Damage Prevention Programs. Unlike the NPMS, State Damage Prevention Programs do not generally require information to be submitted in a GIS format or with the level of detail that PHMSA is currently seeking from operators of transmission lines.⁷

Perhaps most importantly, the overwhelming majority of gathering line mileage in the United States is located entirely in rural areas. These rural gathering lines present a minimal risk to public safety and have traditionally been outside the reach of PHMSA's regulations.⁸ Requiring gathering line operators to participate in the NPMS program would represent a dramatic departure from the historical norm and impose significant costs on the industry without producing any corresponding benefits.

For these reasons, GPA Midstream is strongly opposed to Senator Udall's amendment. The longstanding exceptions from the NPMS requirements for gathering lines should remain in effect without change. If you have questions, please contact me at (202) 279-1664 or by email at mhite@GPAglobal.org.

Sincerely,



Matthew Hite

into effect in the late 1990s. For ease of reference and to avoid unnecessary confusion, RSPA is referred to as PHMSA in this letter.

⁵ Pipeline Inspection, Protection, Enforcement, and Safety Act of 2006, Pub. L. 109-468, 120 Stat. 3486 (2006); Pipeline Safety, Regulatory Certainty, and Job Creation Act of 2011, Pub. L. 112-90, 125 Stat. 1904 (2012); Protecting Our Infrastructure of Pipelines and Enhancing Safety Act of 2016, Pub. L. 114-183, 130 Stat. 514 (2016).

⁶ Additional information about GPA Midstream is available at <https://gpaglobal.org/>. Prior to April 2016, GPA Midstream was known as the Gas Processors Association.

⁷ Pipeline Safety: Request for Revision of a Previously Approved Information Collection: National Pipeline Mapping System Program, 84 Fed. Reg. 14,717 (Apr. 11, 2019). PHMSA is currently seeking approval from the Office of Management and Budget to collect data on the following pipeline attributes in the NPMS: pipe diameter, wall thickness, commodity details, pipe material, pipe grade, pipe join material, seam type, decade of installation, coating, onshore or offshore designation, in-line inspection capability, most recent assessment method and year, class location, gas high consequence area (HCA), could affect HCA segment, facility response plan sequence numbers, and abandoned pipelines.

⁸ 49 U.S.C. §§ 60101(a)(21)-(22); 49 C.F.R. §§ 192.8(b), 195.1(b)(4).

Vice President of Government Affairs
GPA Midstream Association