



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
REGION III**

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1600 John F. Kennedy Boulevard  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103-2852

Kimberly D. Bose, Secretary  
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission  
888 First St., N.E., Room IA  
Washington, DC 20426

Re: Docket No. CP22-44-000; Equitrans, LP; Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Ohio Valley Connector Expansion Project; Greene County, Pennsylvania; Wetzel County, West Virginia; and Monroe County, Ohio; CEQ # 20230011

Dear Secretary Bose:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 3, with support from EPA Region 5, has reviewed the above-referenced document pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act (CAA). The CAA Section 309 role is unique to EPA. It requires EPA to review and comment publicly on any proposed federal action subject to NEPA's environmental impact statement requirement.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC or Commission) has prepared a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) to evaluate the potential environmental impacts associated with the Ohio Valley Connector Expansion Project (Project) proposed by Equitrans, LP (Equitrans). The Project would involve the acquisition of the existing FERC non-jurisdictional Cygrymus Compressor Station in Greene County, Pennsylvania, and install two new turbines. In addition, Equitrans would install one additional compressor unit each at the existing Corona Compressor Station in Wetzel County, West Virginia and at the existing Plasma Compressor Station in Monroe County, Ohio. Equitrans would also construct approximately 5.5 miles of pipeline and ancillary facilities in different locations related to the compressor stations, use temporary access roads and staging areas to support construction activities, and establish new permanent access roads to support operation of the new facilities. The Project would provide an additional 350,000 dekatherms per day of natural gas to mid-continent and Gulf Coast markets.

In our review of Project documents submitted under NEPA, EPA provided FERC with written comments on June 22, 2022, for Project scoping and on November 11, 2022, for the Draft EIS. EPA's comments primarily focused on the Project's expected impacts to Water Resources, Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions, Climate, and Environmental Justice. EPA appreciates FERC's consideration of our comments during the public comment periods and for addressing and incorporating our comments into the environmental documents. However, based on our review of the FEIS, EPA still has concerns regarding incomplete disclosure and the assessment of impacts from GHG emissions. We offer the following comments for your consideration.

**Upstream GHG Emissions:**

EPA appreciates that the Draft EIS and FEIS quantified construction and operational GHG direct and downstream emissions. EPA's comments on the Draft EIS (provided in FEIS Appendix A) recommended including an estimate and analysis of all potential upstream GHG emissions

associated with the proposed Project. EPA reiterates this recommendation, given that upstream GHG emissions are demonstrable, reasonably foreseeable indirect effects of the proposed action, which combusts natural gas, and therefore should be considered under NEPA. Omitting consideration of upstream GHG emissions results in an underestimation of the proposal's impacts.

Information provided to date does not demonstrate that FERC has considered upstream GHG estimates in their decision-making process related to GHG mitigation, as supported by CEQ's final Phase I rulemaking relating to NEPA Implementing Regulations Revisions<sup>1</sup>. Federal agencies have a responsibility to include direct and indirect (e.g., upstream and downstream) emissions caused by the project's production, processing, transportation, and consumption of resources.

EPA maintains FERC can create a general conservative estimate based on national averages for similar projects utilizing the Inventory of U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks (GHG Inventory) and EPA's GHG Reporting Program<sup>2</sup>. It would be appropriate for the project to include, for reference, the total project upstream GHG emissions, as was included for the downstream GHG emissions. Furthermore, it would be consistent with the Council on Environmental Quality's current position as expressed in the preamble to their January 9, 2023, notice of interim guidance "Consideration of Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Climate Change".<sup>3</sup>

EPA recommends FERC document that upstream GHG emissions have been considered within the Commission's decision-making process and include a discussion of whether disclosing the full scope of direct and indirect GHG releases (including upstream) warrants more robust avoidance, minimization, or mitigation efforts.

### **GHG Mitigation Measures:**

Although not mentioned in our Draft EIS comment letter, EPA recommends that the Commission incorporate such mitigation measures into the proposed terms and conditions required as part of certificate issuance. Potential mitigation options to consider include, but are not limited to, methane reduction activities to reduce/minimize pipeline blowdown emissions through technologies and practices such as:

- Route gas to a compressor or capture system for beneficial use;
- Route gas to a flare;

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/04/20/2022-08288/national-environmental-policy-act-implementing-regulations-revisions>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.epa.gov/ghgreporting>

<sup>3</sup> "The term "indirect effects" refers to effects that are caused by the action and are later in time or farther removed in distance, but are still reasonably foreseeable.<sup>83</sup> Indirect effects generally include reasonably foreseeable emissions related to a proposed action that are upstream or downstream of the activity resulting from the proposed action.<sup>84</sup> For example, where the proposed action involves fossil fuel extraction, direct emissions typically include GHGs emitted during the process of exploring for and extracting the fossil fuel. The reasonably foreseeable indirect effects of such an action likely would include effects associated with the processing, refining, transporting, and end-use of the fossil fuel being extracted, including combustion of the resource to produce energy. Indirect emissions <sup>85</sup> are often reasonably foreseeable since quantifiable connections frequently exist between a proposed activity that involves use or conveyance of a commodity or resource, and changes relating to the production or consumption of that resource." "[A]gencies generally should quantify all reasonably foreseeable emissions associated with a proposed action and reasonable alternatives (as well as the no-action alternative). Quantification should include the reasonably foreseeable direct and indirect GHG emissions of their proposed actions. Agencies also should disclose the information and any assumptions used in the analysis and explain any uncertainty.<sup>87</sup> In assessing a proposed action's, and reasonable alternatives', reasonably foreseeable direct and indirect GHG emissions, the agency should use the best available information." <sup>88</sup> Fed. Reg. 1196, at 1204 (2023)

- Route gas to a low-pressure system (by taking advantage of existing piping connections between high- and low-pressure systems, temporarily resetting or bypassing pressure regulators to reduce system pressure prior to maintenance or installing temporary connections between high and low-pressure systems); and
- Utilize hot tapping, a procedure that makes a new pipeline connection while the pipeline remains in service, flowing natural gas under pressure, to avoid the need to blow down gas.

Using these mitigation approaches, EPA's Methane Challenge Partners<sup>4</sup> have reported reducing potential emissions from non-emergency blowdowns by roughly 5.9 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent since 2016. Partner companies have also reported implementing leak monitoring and repair programs. These programs often become more effective at detecting leaks using advanced technologies and aerial surveys to cover large areas.<sup>5</sup>

Thank you for the opportunity to review the FEIS for this project. EPA looks forward to seeing your response to our continued concerns within the Commission's forthcoming Order. As the project moves forward into design phase, we recommend you continue to look for opportunities to avoid or minimize resource impacts. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the comments provided, please feel free to contact Region 3 (WV and PA) lead reviewer Joy Gillespie at Gillespie.Joy@epa.gov or (215) 814-2793, or Region 5 (Ohio) lead reviewer Michael Sedlacek at Sedlacek.Michael@epa.gov or (312) 886-1765.

Sincerely,

Stepan Nevshahirlian  
Environmental Assessment Branch Chief  
Office of Communities, Tribes, &  
Environmental Assessment

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<sup>4</sup> "Methane Challenge Program partners transparently report systematic and comprehensive actions to reduce methane emissions and are publicly recognized as leaders in reducing methane emissions in the U.S. Reducing methane emissions reduces operational risk, increases efficiency, and demonstrates company concern for the environment, with benefits spanning from climate change to air quality improvements to conservation of a non-renewable energy resource." <https://www.epa.gov/natural-gas-star-program/methane-challenge-partners>

<sup>5</sup> More information on these and other potential measures may be found at <https://www.epa.gov/natural-gasstar-program/recommended-technologies-reduce-methane-emissions>