



STATE OF WASHINGTON

## WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

1300 S. Evergreen Park Dr. S.W., P.O. Box 47250 • Olympia, Washington 98504-7250  
(360) 664-1160 • TTY (360) 586-8203

March 23, 2010

Whatcom County Planning Commission  
Becky Boxx, Coordinator  
Whatcom County PDS  
5280 Northwest Drive  
Bellingham, WA 98226

Dear Ms. Boxx:

**RE: Support of Proposed Pipeline Safety & Development Changes -- File #ZON2007-00014**

I write in support of the proposed amendment to various Whatcom County codes (File #ZON2007-00014) to ensure better communication between developers and pipeline companies and better protect public safety.

The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC) is responsible for the regulation of the safety of natural gas and hazardous liquid pipelines in Washington. The presence of a major pipeline forms a relationship between the pipeline operator, safety regulators, local government, property owners and developers. How this relationship is managed can directly affect the safe operation of the pipeline and, consequently, the safety of the surrounding community. None of these relationships, however, speaks directly to managing land use activities which can contribute to the occurrence of a pipeline incident and the exposure to harm of those living and working near a pipeline in the event of an incident.

The UTC has recognized for some time the problems created by development encroaching on existing pipeline corridors. In 2006 the UTC, in concert with city, county, state and industry representatives, issued a collaboratively-written report regarding land use and transmission pipelines. The report, *Land Use in Proximity to Natural Gas and Hazardous Liquid Transmission Pipelines*, recommended that local government officials foster, and enforce if possible, early consultation between pipeline operators and developers of property located near transmission pipelines. The report also advised local governments to consult with pipeline operators when revising their comprehensive plans.

While pipeline safety involves a great many components and players, the procedural processes to review proposed land use actions are the one area in which local governments can exert the most influence in protecting the safety of its citizens. When adapted for use by local governments, concepts such as the ones being proposed for Whatcom County encourage land use practices that foster safe pipelines and protect public safety and health.

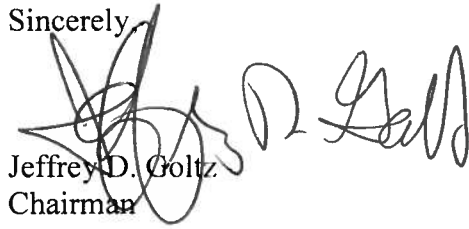


Becky Boxx  
March 23, 2010  
Page 2

Though these processes will require some additional planning and effort on the affected stakeholder's part, based on our earlier study of the issues, such processes will pay off in the long run through wiser land use decisions that benefit pipeline safety. Accordingly, I support the proposed amendments.

The UTC stands ready to provide technical assistance and support of this and any other policy proposal designed to improve public and pipeline safety. If you have any questions or, if we can be of assistance, please contact David Lykken, Pipeline Safety Director, at (360) 664-1219 or [dlykken@utc.wa.gov](mailto:dlykken@utc.wa.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey D. Goltz". The signature is stylized and somewhat cursive, with a large initial "J" and "G".

Jeffrey D. Goltz  
Chairman

cc: Steve King, Director, Safety and Consumer Protection, UTC  
David Lykken, Director, Pipeline Safety, UTC