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July 25, 2023

To whom it may concern:

Please accept the attached comment containing new information regarding Gas Transmission Northwest, CP22-2-000, submitted on behalf of the Pipeline Safety Trust.

Thank you for the opportunity to be heard on this important matter. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Erin Sutherland at [erin@pstrust.org](mailto:erin@pstrust.org) or (360) 543-5686 x107.

Sincerely,

*Erin Sutherland*

Erin Sutherland  
Policy & Program Director/Counsel



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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **TC Energy's Columbia Gas Transmission Pipeline Explodes in Virginia**

**A massive explosion and ensuing fireball prompted the closure of Interstate 81. No injuries were reported, but the incident puts the spotlight back on TC Energy's safety culture, just two days before FERC is to decide on the approval of its GTN Xpress Expansion Project.**

BELLINGHAM, Washington [July 25, 2023] – This morning, a little after 8:30 a.m. Eastern Standard Time, TC Energy's Columbia Gas Transmission system exploded in rural Virginia. The explosion caused TC Energy to shut-in a section of the pipeline near Strasburg, Virginia and declare force majeure. Luckily, bystanders who witnessed the explosion reported it to Shenandoah County emergency management services, who were able to contain the fire sparked by the pipeline incident.

Following the blast, TC Energy said it noticed a drop in pressure on its system. The pipeline failed at a critical time for the Canadian energy giant, as this Thursday July 27, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) will decide whether or not to approve its GTN Xpress Expansion Project in the Pacific Northwest.

The proposed GTN Xpress expansion would substantially increase the capacity of TC Energy's GTN Xpress pipeline that runs from British Columbia, Canada to Northern California. If approved, the project would increase the volume of gas transported by the pipeline by another 150 million cubic feet per day. Due to TC Energy's current safety issues and poor safety history, GTN's failure to meet regulatory requirements, and the project's potential to increase methane emissions, Pipeline Safety Trust (PST) has previously submitted a letter to FERC asking the agency to deny TC Energy's application for the GTN Xpress Project.

“In just the last ten years, the Pipelines and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) has initiated 12 Notice of Probable Violation cases, 11 Notice of Amendment cases, 14 Warning Letters, and two Notice of Proposed Safety Orders for the Columbia Gas Transmission system,” PST Policy Director Erin Sutherland said. “This high number of serious enforcement actions taken is extremely concerning, and another demonstration that TC Energy shouldn't have its GTN Xpress application granted.”

In addition to today's explosion on its Columbia Gas Transmission Pipeline, last December, TC Energy's Keystone Pipeline dumped over 500,000 gallons of crude oil into a Kansas Creek. The spill in Kansas was the largest onshore oil spill in the United States since 2013 and the biggest in the Keystone Pipeline's history.

FERC will decide on the approval of TC Energy's GTN Xpress Project at their open meeting, this Thursday July 27 beginning at 10:00 a.m. EST.

[The meeting is open to the public and can be accessed online here.](#)

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**About Pipeline Safety Trust:** The Pipeline Safety Trust is a nonprofit public watchdog promoting pipeline safety through education and advocacy by increasing access to information, and by building partnerships with residents, safety advocates, government and industry, that result in safer communities and a healthier environment.