

**DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSPORTATION**

**Research and Special Programs
Administration**

[Docket No. 80-6W; Notice 1]

**Transportation of Natural Gas and
Other Gas by Pipeline Petition for
Waiver**

The Columbia Gas Transmission Corporation has petitioned the Materials Transportation Bureau (MTB) for a waiver from compliance with the requirement of 49 CFR 192.327(e) that a gas pipeline crossing a navigable river, stream, or harbor must have a minimum cover of forty-eight inches in soil or twenty-four in consolidated rock. Under the proposed waiver, the petition would replace Transmission Line MA at its crossing of the Susquehanna River, two miles above the Conowingo Dam in Harford and Cecil Counties, Maryland, with a portion of the crossing exposed without any cover.

According to the petition, the replacement of the existing crossing of the Susquehanna River is part of petitioner's plan to replace sections of its twenty-inch MA in Baltimore, Harford and Cecil counties in Maryland. The existing crossing consists of five separate ten-inch lines which were constructed in 1931 and were laid on the river bottom without trenching or cover. The existing five-line crossing will be replaced by a single twenty-inch line, located adjacent to and downstream from the existing crossing. The existing crossing will be disconnected from all sources of gas and will be abandoned in place.

The proposed replacement crossing will be located approximately two miles upstream of the Conowingo Dam. The reservoir is 3,400 feet wide and up to 100 feet deep at the crossing location. A Maryland Geological Survey report (Geological Survey, Harford County) indicates that the bed of the Susquehanna River in this area is dense rock. Visual observations by petitioners of the riverbanks downstream of the Conowingo Dam at low flow conditions confirm the Geological Survey data. Petitioner calculates flow velocity at normal flow conditions to be approximately 0.43 feet per second, and maximum flooding conditions (taken from the Dam Authority's records) are calculated to be approximately 5.1 feet per second.

Columbia Transmission further stated

in its petition that if the waiver is granted, the new crossing will be installed with at least twenty-four inches of cover in consolidated rock for a distance of 100 feet from mean low water line on each side of the reservoir, at which points the water depth is approximately twenty to thirty feet deep. The remaining 3,200 feet of the crossing [sic] would be installed without cover by laying pipe on a bed prepared by removing all obstructions potentially damaging to the pipe. The bottom contour would be confirmed by hydrographic survey and inspected by divers before the pipe is lowered into place. The entire underwater portion of the pipeline will be coated with a concrete coating approximately three inches thick.

The petitioner also stated that in its opinion the proposed construction of the pipeline without cover will in no way impair the future safe operation of the pipeline, inasmuch as the existing crossing had been similarly installed about fifty years ago and safely operated without incident since then. Additionally, if the requested waiver is granted, petitioner promises to use professional divers to visually inspect the pipe on a regular basis.

The extremely difficult and costly construction procedures required to open a trench in solid rock river bottom at water depths up to 100 feet is one consideration for requesting the waiver. Columbia Transmission's preliminary estimate of the construction costs are: \$1,000,000 by the method proposed in the petition for waiver and \$2,500,000 if the waiver is not granted. Furthermore, the granting of the waiver would allow the petitioners to minimize the use of explosives and shorten the construction time, thus reducing the environmental impact and lessening the interference with normal uses of the reservoir.

MTB is considering granting the requested waiver from the requirements of 49 CFR 192.327(e) for the following reasons:

1. The marine traffic in the vicinity of the proposed pipeline is not of the type that constitutes a danger to the pipeline.
2. The recorded maximum current flow, as shown by the records at the Conowingo Dam, would not be sufficient to damage the pipeline.
3. There will be a considerable reduction in construction costs.
4. The proposed construction would require less blasting, thereby reducing the potential environmental im-

pact.

5. The proposed three inch coating of concrete on the pipe would furnish the necessary negative buoyancy to hold the pipeline on the bottom and to protect the pipeline from waterborne debris.

6. Based upon the fact that the existing pipeline was installed in a manner similar to the proposed new pipeline and has been in operation for approximately fifty years without any incident of damage, it does not appear that the proposed new pipeline would be any less safe.

Interested persons are invited to comment on the proposed waiver by submitting in triplicate such data, views, or arguments as they may desire. Communications should identify the Docket and Notice numbers and be submitted to: Dockets Branch, Room 8426, Materials Transportation Bureau, Department of Transportation, Washington, D.C. 20590.

All comments received before September 12, 1980 will be considered before final action is taken. Late filed comments will be considered so far as practicable. All comments will be available for inspection at the Dockets Branch, Materials Transportation Bureau, between the hours of 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., before and after the closing date for comments. No public hearing is contemplated, but one may be held at a time and place set in a Notice in the **Federal Register** if requested by an interested person desiring to comment at a public hearing and raising a genuine issue.

(49 U.S.C. 1672; 49 CFR Part 1.53(a), Appendix A of Part 1 and Appendix A of Part 106).

Issued in Washington, D.C., on August 12, 1980.

Melvin A. Judah,
*Acting Associate Director for Pipeline Safety
Regulation, Materials Transportation Bureau.*

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**DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSPORTATION**

**Research and Special Programs
Administration**

[Docket No. 80-6W; Notice 2]

**Transportation of Natural Gas and
Other Gas by Pipeline; Grant of
Waiver**

The Columbia Gas Transmission Corporation petitioned the Materials Transportation Bureau (MTB) for a waiver from compliance with the applicable requirements of §192.327(e) of the Federal gas pipeline safety standards (49 CFR Part 192) for their transmission line, MA, at its crossing of the Susquehanna River, two miles above the Conowingo Dam in Harford and Cecil counties, Maryland.

The petitioner is replacing five 10-inch pipelines crossing the Susquehanna River with one 20-inch pipeline. The existing pipelines were laid on the river bottom without cover. The petitioner requested that a waiver be granted to permit the replacement line to be laid in the same manner as the existing line.

In response to this petition, MTB issued a notice of a petition for waiver, inviting interested persons to comment (45 FR 54930, August 18, 1980). In this notice, MTB stated that it was considering granting the requested waiver on the basis that the cover required [sic] by §192.327(e) is in this instance not necessary for public safety.

Four comments were received in response to the invitation to comment. All four of the comments supported the granting of the waiver. The commenters stated that, under the conditions proposed by the petitioner, there would not be any reduction in public safety; also, a waiver would result in less impact on the environment, would have a significant impact in reducing the cost, and would be in keeping with the Presidential guidelines to reduce unnecessary costs to the public.

In consideration of the foregoing, MTB, by this order, finds that compliance with §192.327(e) is unnecessary for the reasons set forth in Notice 1, and that the requested waiver would not be inconsistent with pipeline safety. Accordingly, effective immediately, Columbia Gas Transmission Corporation is granted a waiver from compliance with §192.327(e) regarding the crossing of their transmission line, MA, of the Susquehanna River; provided the methods of

installation and inspection, as further described in the petition, are followed.

(49 U.S.C. 1672; 49 CFR Parts 1.53, Appendix A of Part 1, and Appendix A of Part 106)

Issued in Washington, D.C., on December 19, 1980.

Melvin A. Judah,
*Acting Associate Director for Pipeline Safety
Regulation, Materials Transportation Bureau.*

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