

Rosemary Chiavetta, Secretary
PA Public Utility Commission
Post Office Box 3265
Harrisburg, PA 17105

Dear Secretary Chiavetta:

The Rail Trail Council of Northeast Pennsylvania, headquartered in Union Dale, Susquehanna County, represents over 1,700 members. We own a recreational trail extending some 38 miles from Simpson to the New York border. Open to the public, the trail serves walkers, runners, equestrians, snowmobilers, and many others. We have existed for over 15 years.

We are writing to express our opinion on the issue of gas pipeline companies being granted public utility status and thus acquiring the right of eminent domain. We are strongly opposed to such action.

Several gas pipeline companies have expressed interest in acquiring right of way on our trail for the purposes of constructing a pipeline (or pipelines) along part or all of the corridor. We firmly believe that the Rail Trail, our members, the individual landowners who border our trail and the communities that surround us will be best served if negotiations are left to the normal give-and-take of discussions between these companies and the Rail Trail Council. Conversely, pipeline companies who have the right of eminent domain are likely to have little concern for leaving the trail in as-good or better condition than it was prior to construction; they will have little incentive to address issues such as trail disruption during maintenance, placement of appurtenances along the trail, ongoing maintenance of the right of way, removal of pipeline(s) at the end of their useful life, etc.

There are many other concerns which we would be happy to enumerate, if requested. For now, we wish to reiterate our strong objection to gas pipeline companies being granted Public Utility status and hope you will find this communication helpful in your deliberations.

Sincerely,

Kirk W. Newsom
President,
Rail Trail Council of Northeast Pennsylvania