



**U.S. Department of Transportation  
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration**

**Natural Gas Distribution Infrastructure Safety and Modernization Grant  
Program**

**Laurens Commission of Public Works, South Carolina**

**Categorical Exclusion Documentation**

**NGDISM-FY23-CE-2024-18**

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## 1. Overview

This document serves as the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration’s (PHMSA) determination of applicability of the Department of Energy’s (DOE) B5.4 categorical exclusion (CE) for repair or replacement of pipelines for the project identified below. Effective July 3, 2024, PHMSA adopted DOE’s CE in accordance with the Section 109 of the National Environmental Policy Act, enacted as part of the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023, which allows a federal agency to “adopt” another federal agency’s CEs for proposed actions.

For projects that PHMSA determines DOE CE B5.4 is applicable, it must: (1) consider the presence of any integral elements at 10 CFR part 1021, subpart D, appendix B (1)-(5); and, (2) evaluate the proposed action for extraordinary circumstances in which a normally excluded action may have a significant effect. If an extraordinary circumstance is present, the agency nevertheless may categorically exclude the proposed action if the agency determines that there are circumstances that lessen the impacts or other conditions sufficient to avoid significant effects.

The project identified below was provisionally awarded federal funding through PHMSA’s Natural Gas Distribution Infrastructure Safety and Modernization (NGDISM) grant program. This document describes the proposed action, the anticipated impacts of that action, any circumstances or conditions that must be implemented to ensure significant effects are avoided, and documents the approval of the project as a categorical exclusion.

## 2. Project Description/Proposed Action

<b>Project Title</b>	Laurens Commission of Public Works Natural Gas Replacement
<b>Project Location</b>	Laurens, South Carolina
<b>Project Description/Proposed Action:</b>	
All project areas are located within the city limits of Laurens, South Carolina. Existing bare steel and pre-code coated steel pipelines along Longview Drive, Clemson Street, Sunset Park/North of Main, and W. Main/Pinehaven/South of Main will be replaced with medium density polyethylene piping (See Attachment A). Directional boring will be used to replace the existing pipe. The dimensions of all ground disturbing activities will be a minimum of 2-feet by 2-feet, not to exceed 4-feet by 4-feet. These excavations will be used to set the bores and perform connections to service tees. Service lines will be installed at a depth from 18 to 36 inches below grade and will require a maximum of two feet width. The project will tie over 356 polyethylene service lines. The construction area will be limited to the existing utility right-of-way and no additional easement acquisition will be required. All pipes will be abandoned in place. Construction activities are expected to last for 35 months following the start of the construction phase. Multiple possible staging areas have been identified for use for this project. Two of the staging areas are located on Laurens Commission of Public Works property.	

<b>Question</b>	<b>Information</b>
Describe the location and dimensions of all ground disturbing activities and provide a map depicting the location(s) where ground disturbance would occur ( <i>e.g.</i> , width and depth of trenching or excavation for borings, location of regulator stations, etc.).	The dimensions of all ground disturbing activities will be a minimum of 2-feet by 2-feet, not to exceed 4-feet by 4-feet. These excavations will be used to set the bores and perform connections to service tees.
If the exact location where new pipe would be installed or where other work would occur, provide the width of the ROW or the general area encompassing the footprint where all work would occur. Include the anticipated footprint and depth of new pipe installation.	All pipes would be installed within existing ROW and utility easement.  Any acquisition of new right of way or easement would adhere to the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970.
Will service lines be replaced?	Yes
Will meters or other equipment be replaced? If so, provide a description detailing what meter components, etc. will be replaced and indicate if this will require ground disturbance, if the equipment will be attached to existing structures, etc.	Yes, 262 meters will be replaced. This will require additional ground disturbance and attachment to existing structures.
What portions of the pipeline will be abandoned? What portions of the pipeline will be removed?	All replaced portions of steel piping will be abandoned in place.

<b>Question</b>	<b>Information</b>
What construction methods will be used?	Directional boring; Replacement adjacent to existing pipe
Does the project require a new right-of-way not currently in the ownership of the utility? If new ROW will occur, please provide a description of the property to be acquired (existing condition and land use).	No new right-of-way or easement needed
How many linear feet of pipe will be replaced or repaired?	63,740.00 Linear Feet

## 2.1. Proposed Pipeline Replacement Details

Existing Pipeline Length in feet	Pipeline Diameter in inches	Pipeline Material (cast iron, bare steel, coated steel, PVC)	Operating Pressure (PSI)	Reduced Pressure if Possible (PSI)	Year installed if known.
63,740.00 feet	2.00	PVC	30.00		Unknown

### 3. Resource Review

The following information represents questions posed to the project proponent identified on the cover page of this document regarding the project that was provisionally awarded grant funds under PHMSA's NGDISM program. The information and justification section includes the applicant's response. PHMSA's conclusions are based on applicant provided information, independently reviewed by PHMSA. The mitigation measures were reviewed and confirmed by the project proponent.

Air Quality	
Question	Information and Justification
Is the project located in an area designated by the EPA as non-attainment or maintenance status for one or more of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) <sup>1</sup> ?	No, the project area is located in Laurens County, South Carolina which is designated by the EPA as in attainment for all National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) based on EPA's Greenbook.
Will the construction activities produce emissions that exceed de minimis thresholds (tons per year)?	No.
Will mitigation measures be used to capture blowdown <sup>2</sup> ?	Yes. Blowdown will be captured using cross-compression technology during construction.
Will project proponent commit to reducing pressure on the segments/lines to be replaced, prior to venting?	N/A
Estimate the current leak rate per mile based on the type of pipeline material. Based on mileage of replacement and new pipeline material, estimate the total reduction of natural gas leakage.	The existing leak rate is estimated to be 25,616 kilograms (kg)/year(yr).  Replacement of pipelines would result in a leak rate of approximately 348 kg/yr or a reduction of approximately 505,371 kg over a 20-yr timeframe.
Is there any other information relevant to the project area or the proposed work as it pertains to Air Quality?	No.

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<sup>1</sup> [Criteria Air Pollutants | US EPA](#)

<sup>2</sup> Blowdown refers to the venting of natural gas in current facilities, in order to begin rehabilitation, repair, or replacement activities.

**Conclusion:**

The project area is located in Laurens County, South Carolina which is designated by the EPA as in attainment for all National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) based on EPA's Greenbook. The proposed project would result in minor air quality impacts associated with construction activities, including the intentional venting of natural gas contained in the existing pipelines prior to replacement. Pipeline blowdowns are typically necessary to ensure that construction and maintenance work can be conducted safely on depressurized natural gas facilities and pipelines. Venting natural gas is required when service is switched from the existing line to the newly constructed line, but the volume of vented gas can depend on the ability to reduce pressure on the pipe segment or other mitigation actions. Vented gas will be captured using cross-compression technology during construction. During project construction, there will be some increase in ambient dust particulate from machinery and soil disturbances. These will be only temporary in nature and all efforts will be made through proper construction methods to ensure dust control and properly functioning equipment. Replacing leak prone pipe with newer, more durable materials will result in the overall reduction of leaking natural gas. Therefore, it is PHMSA's assessment that the proposed project would provide a net benefit to air quality from the overall reduction of leaking natural gas and that no adverse indirect or cumulative impacts would result from the project.

**Mitigation Measures:**

- Use on-road and non-road vehicles efficiently by minimizing speeds and the number of vehicles;
- Minimize excavation to the greatest extent practical;
- Use cleaner, newer, non-road equipment as much as practicable;
- Minimize all vehicle idling and at minimum, conforming with local idling regulations;
- Ensure that all vehicles and equipment are in proper operating condition;
- On-road and non-road engines must meet EPA exhaust emission standards (40 CFR Parts 85, 86, and 89);
- Cover open-bodied trucks while transporting materials;
- Use water or other approved dust suppressants at construction sites and on unpaved roadways, as necessary;
- Minimize the area of soil disturbance to that necessary for construction;
- Minimize construction site traffic by using offsite parking and shuttle buses, as necessary;
- Minimize the idling of equipment; and
- Cross-compression technology will be used to capture vented gas.

Water Resources	
Question	Information and Justification
Are there water resources within the project area, such as wetlands, streams, rivers, or floodplains? If so, would the project temporarily or permanently impact wetlands or waterways? If water resources are present but will not be impacted, please describe how these impacts will be avoided ( <i>e.g.</i> directional boring under the resource, etc.).	<p>Yes, according to United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) National Wetland Inventory (NWI), there are wetlands in the project area. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) maps show that there are special flood hazard areas within the project area.</p> <p>Reedy Fork and Scout Branch occur within the project area. Areas designated as Special Flood Hazard Areas Zones X and AE occur in the project area as well. Areas within and adjacent to Reedy Fork and Scout Branch are classified by the NWI as Riverine and Freshwater Forested/Scrub Wetland.</p> <p>Directional boring would be used to replace the pipeline in the project area near and beneath these water resources. Therefore, there would be no impacts to open water resources or Special Flood Hazard Zones.</p>
Under the Clean Water Act, is a Section 401 State certification potentially required? If yes, describe anticipated permit and how project proponent will ensure permit compliance.	No.
Under the Clean Water Act, is a USACE Section 404 Permit required for the discharge of dredge and fill material? If yes, describe anticipated permit and how project proponent will ensure permit compliance.	No.
Under the Clean Water Act, is an EPA or State Section 402 permit required for the discharge of pollutants into the waters of the United States? Is a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) required? If yes, describe how project proponent will ensure permit compliance.	<p>Yes, construction activities might exceed soil disturbance thresholds and a 402 permit could be required.</p> <p>No, a stormwater prevention plan is not required but will be created, if necessary.</p>

Will work activities take place within a FEMA designated floodplain? If so, describe any permanent or temporary impacts and the required coordination efforts with state or local floodplain regulatory agencies.	FEMA's flood maps <sup>3</sup> indicate the project area is located in FEMA Flood Zones X and AE.  Areas designated as Zones X and AE are considered Special Flood Hazard Areas and correspond to the one percent annual chance of flooding (100-year floodplain).
Is the project located in a Coastal Zone? Will the proposed project activities affect any coastal use or natural resource of the coastal zone, requiring a Consistency Determination and Certification? Please provide any relevant information regarding how the project proponent normally coordinates with the applicable state's coastal zone management agency.	No.
Is there any other information relevant to the project area or the proposed work as it pertains to Water Resources.	No.
<p><b>Conclusion:</b></p> <p>PHMSA reviewed NWI maps, as well as the FEMA national flood hazard maps. Reedy Fork and Scout Branch are present in the project area. Areas within and adjacent to the streams are classified by the NWI as Riverine and Freshwater Forested/Scrub Wetland. Portions of the project area occur in FEMA Flood Zones X and AE. Project activities would not affect the flood-holding capacity of the 100-year floodplain or cause any adverse impacts to the Special Flood Hazard Area. Directional boring would be used to replace pipeline in the water resource areas. There would be temporary impacts from directional boring activities; however, all areas would be restored to pre-construction contours and conditions and there would be no permanent impacts. By avoiding direct impacts to aquatic resources and implementing best management practices during construction, PHMSA does not anticipate any adverse impacts to water resources.</p>	

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<sup>3</sup> [FEMA Flood Map Service Center | Welcome!](#)



**Mitigation Measures:**

- Avoid staging and laydown areas in wetlands or floodplains;
- Reseed disturbed areas with native plant species;
- Restore disturbed areas to pre-construction contours;
- Adhere to additional mitigation measures in accordance with applicable permits;
- Use Best Management Practices during construction to control sediment and erosion and prevent pollutants from entering adjacent waterways; and
- Coordinate with the appropriate FEMA representative or local floodplain coordinator when work will occur in FEMA designated special flood hazard areas, as needed.

**Groundwater and Hazardous Materials/Waste**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Information and Justification</b>
Does the project have potential to encounter and impact groundwater? If yes, describe potential impacts from construction activities.	Yes, due to ground disturbance activities, there is a potential to encounter groundwater during excavation. No impact is expected as no hazardous materials would be in contact with the groundwater.
Will the project require boring or directional drilling that may require pits containing mud and inadvertent return fluids? If yes, describe measures that will be taken during construction activities to prevent impacts to groundwater resources. If boring or directional drilling will not require pits, please describe why these will not be required and how fluids will be contained.	<p>Yes. The project may involve horizontal directional drilling and may require pits. Construction crews would be required to contain all inadvertent returns of drilling fluids via pits, vacuum truck, or other methods and dispose of them properly.</p> <p>Erosion control measures will be implemented to mitigate groundwater/mud runoff as described in the stormwater pollution prevention plan. A groundwater management plan would be developed.</p>
Will the project potentially involve a site(s) contaminated by hazardous waste? Sites identified as containing hazardous waste/materials can be identified through EPA's NEPAAssist tool <a href="https://nepassisttool.epa.gov/nepassist/nepamap.aspx">https://nepassisttool.epa.gov/nepassist/nepamap.aspx</a> or local databases identifying Superfund, Brownfields, etc. If hazmat sites are identified in or near areas where work will occur, describe how the proposed work poses no risk or what mitigative measures will be used to avoid identified sites.	No. Based on review of EPA's NEPAAssist tool, numerous hazardous waste sites were identified near the project area, but no brownfield or superfund sites were identified within the project area. All work will avoid boring/drilling, staging and laydown areas within EPA superfund sites or areas containing known waste.

Is there any indication that the pipeline was ever used to convey coal gas? If yes, PHMSA will work with the project proponent for required studies.	No.
Does the project have the potential to encounter or disturb lead pipes or asbestos?	No. Given the shallow depth of placement for gas main pipes compared to that of other utilities it is not likely that asbestos or lead pipes will be encountered during construction.
Is there any other information relevant to the project area or the proposed work as it pertains to Groundwater and hazardous materials/waste.	No.
<b>Conclusion:</b>  PHMSA reviewed EPA's NEPAAssist to identify any brownfield properties, hazardous waste sites, and superfund sites. There were numerous hazardous waste sites identified near the project area; however, there were no brownfields sites or superfund sites identified in the project area. Hazardous waste information is identified in the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act Information (RCRAInfo), which is a national program that includes an inventory of all generators, transporters, treaters, storers, and disposers of hazardous waste that are required to provide information about their activities to state environmental agencies.	
<b>Mitigation Measures:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A stormwater prevention plan is not required but will be created, if necessary;</li> <li>• Avoid boring/drilling, staging and laydown areas within EPA superfund sites or areas containing known waste;</li> <li>• Adhere to applicable groundwater and soil management plans; and</li> <li>• Develop and implement an HDD Inadvertent Return and Contingency Plan to establish operational procedures and responsibilities for the prevention, containment, and clean-up of inadvertent returns associated with the directional drilling on the project.</li> </ul>	

Biological Resources	
Question	Information and Justification
Based on review of IPaC and NOAA Fisheries database, are there any federally threatened or endangered species or critical habitat potentially occurring within the geographic range of the project area?	Yes, based on review of the USFWS's Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC). In addition, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources state resources were inventoried to identify state listed species. There are state listed species within the geographical range of the project area.

Are there any known State or Federally, listed threatened or endangered species or habitat areas for State or Federally listed species present in or immediately adjacent to areas where work will occur? If yes, describe how project proponent will avoid impacts to listed species or habitat. If there are potential impacts to federally listed species or critical habitat, PHMSA will work with the project proponent to conduct necessary consultation with resource agencies.	No. Due to the nature of construction no impacts are expected. Shallow excavation will be conducted in previously disturbed and developed areas. Minimal sapling tree clearing is foreseen as part of this project. No endangered or threatened species will be impacted.
Will there be any tree clearing or removal of woody vegetation involved with the proposed work?	No.
Is there any other information relevant to the project area or the proposed work as it pertains to Biological Resources?	No.
<p><b>Conclusion:</b></p> <p>The project area is built out and is comprised of previously disturbed developed and residential areas. PHMSA requested an official species list through the USFWS's IPaC website. The following species were identified as potentially occurring in the project area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tricolored bat (<i>Perimyotis subflavus</i>) proposed endangered</li> <li>• Red-cockaded Woodpecker (<i>Dryobates borealis</i>) threatened</li> <li>• Monarch butterfly (<i>Danaus plexippus</i>) proposed threatened</li> </ul> <p>There was no critical habitat identified within the project area.</p> <p>Several state-listed species also occur within the geographical range, however based on the disturbed nature of the project area, no habitat is present for these species.</p> <p>Because these areas are within ROW that has been previously impacted (pipeline laid in the ground in close proximity to the location where new pipes would be laid and subsequently paved), the immediate project area has very limited biological resources present. Therefore, in accordance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), PHMSA's assessment is that the project would have no effect to the red-cockaded Woodpecker. Under Section 7(a)(4) of the ESA, federal agencies must confer with the USFWS if their action would jeopardize the continued existence of a proposed species; therefore, PHMSA's assessment is that the project is unlikely to jeopardize the continued existence of the monarch butterfly or tricolored bat. PHMSA's assessment is that the project would have no adverse impacts to state-listed species and would not cause more than minor adverse impacts to other biological resources in the project area.</p>	

**Mitigation Measures:**

No mitigation measures needed.

**Cultural Resources**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Information and Justification</b>
Please describe all ground disturbing activities associated with the project (including pipeline installation, service line installation, gas meter replacements, metering station construction or demolition, etc.). What is the maximum depth, width and length of excavations for each activity involving ground disturbance?	The dimensions of all ground disturbing activities will be a minimum of 2-feet by 2-feet, not to exceed 4-feet by 4-feet. These excavations will be used to set the bores and perform connections to service tees.
Will ground disturbance take place entirely in existing ROW or utility easements? Will it be restricted entirely to paved areas or will some disturbance take place in grassy, undisturbed, or natural areas?	Yes, all gas main and services will be installed in existing right of ways and easements.  Ground disturbance will take place in grassy areas within the existing right of way.
Has the entire project area (width, length and depth) been previously disturbed by the original installation or other activities? If so, provide documentation or a description of prior ground disturbances, such as road or utility cross sections, plans or as-builts. If documentation is not available provide justification for how the ground was previously disturbed.	Yes.  The construction will be limited to existing right of ways. These areas have been previously disturbed by the construction of roadways and utilities.
Does the project involve any physical impacts to buildings or structures? Please provide a description of the work that may affect buildings or structures and provide addresses and a map showing the locations.	Yes, 262 natural gas meters will be replaced during the project.
Please describe the project area and provide several photographs to show the character of the project area and surrounding properties. Is it a residential or commercial area? Are the nearby properties old or modern? Streetscapes and views looking down the ROW to show flanking properties are preferred. Please provide a photo key or captions to identify where the photos were taken and what they are showing.	The project will take place in residential and commercial areas. Nearby properties include a mixture of older and modern buildings.

Does the project involve construction or installation of any new aboveground components? If so, describe the components, identify their location and provide representative images of the components.	Yes, the project involves the installation of new meter sets at a number of houses.
Are there any nearby properties or resources that either appear to be or are documented to have been constructed more than 45 years ago? <sup>4</sup> Does there appear to be a group of properties of similar age, design, or method of construction? Or are there any designed landscapes such as a park or cemetery? Please provide photographs of any properties that may be more than 45 years in age and would have the potential to be affected by the project (such as properties that include meter replacements, service line replacements or buildings within 10 feet of the areas proposed for pipeline main replacement under pavement). Multiple properties may be photographed together in a streetscape view and if there are many properties over 45 years in age, representative photos may be provided of a neighborhood rather than individual photos of each property.	<p>Yes, four previously documented historic properties are located within the APE:</p> <p>Laurens Historic District  Sitgreaves House  Charles Duckett House  Irby-Henderson-Todd House</p> <p>Yes, there are properties that have been constructed more than 45 years ago that appear to have similar design or method of construction.</p> <p>There are no designed landscapes in the project area.</p>
Will project implementation require removal or disturbance of any stone or brick sidewalk, roadway, or landscape materials or other potentially old or unique features? Please provide a handful of representative photos of the project area to show the character of the roadway and sidewalk materials in the project and staging areas. Include a photo key or captions of what the photos are showing and where they were taken.	No.
Is there any other information relevant to the project area or the proposed work as it pertains to Cultural Resources?	No.

<sup>4</sup> Local tax and property records or historic maps may indicate dates of construction.

**Conclusion:**

PHMSA identified properties based on available information on previously identified historic properties in the APE, including the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) database and data received from the South Carolina Department of Archives and History. PHMSA also conducted research to determine if there are any previously unidentified properties within the APE that are 45 years of age or older and may be eligible for the NRHP.

PHMSA's assessment is that the Proposed Project would not alter any of the characteristics or contributing features of the District that qualify it for inclusion in the NRHP. Project work is limited to the replacement of existing pipelines. The Undertaking would not result in lasting physical, visual, or audible effects to the District. The Undertaking also does not include land acquisition, nor would it limit access to or change the use of the District. In accordance with 36 CFR Part 800.5, PHMSA's assessment is that the project would have No Adverse Effect on historic properties.

A letter was sent on April 4, 2025, to the South Carolina Department of Archives and History State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and all consulting parties outlining the Section 106 process, including a description of the undertaking, delineation and justification of the APE, identification of historic properties and an evaluation and proposed finding of effects. Based on this consultation, PHMSA proposed a finding that the Proposed Action would not adversely affect historic properties. PHMSA has requested comments on the Section 106 process, identification of historic properties, and proposed finding within 30 days of receipt of the letter. Concurrence was received from the South Carolina Department of Archives and History on April 9, 2025.

PHMSA also invited the following federally recognized tribes to participate in consultation by separate letter on April 4, 2025:

- Catawba Indian Nation
- Cherokee Nation
- Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians
- Muscogee (Creek) Nation

**Mitigation Measures:**

- If, during project implementation, a previously undiscovered archaeological or cultural resource that is or could reasonably be a historic property is encountered or a previously known historic property will be affected in an unanticipated manner, all project activities in the vicinity of the discovery will cease and the Laurens Commission of Public Works will immediately notify PHMSA. This may include discovery of cultural features (*e.g.*, foundations, water wells, trash pits, etc.) or artifacts (*e.g.*, pottery, stone tools and flakes, animal bones, etc.) or damage to a historic property that was not anticipated. PHMSA will notify the State Historic Preservation Office and participating federally recognized tribes and conduct consultation as appropriate in accordance with 36 CFR § 800.13. Construction in the area of the discovery must not resume until PHMSA provides further direction. The Laurens Commission of Public Works will strictly adhere to PHMSA's Unanticipated Discoveries Protocols.
- In the event that unmarked human remains are encountered during permitted activities, all work shall halt and the Laurens Commission of Public Works shall immediately contact PHMSA as well as the proper authorities in accordance with applicable state statutes to determine if the discovery is subject to a criminal investigation, of Native American origin, or associated with a potential archaeological resource. At all times human remains must be treated with the utmost dignity and respect. Human remains and associated artifacts will be left in place and not disturbed. No skeletal remains or materials associated with the remains will be photographed, collected, or removed until PHMSA has conducted the appropriate consultation and developed a plan of action. Project activities shall not resume until PHMSA provides further direction.
- All work, material, equipment, and staging to remain within the road's existing right-of-way or utility easement or other staging areas as identified in the environmental documentation. If the scope of work changes in any way that may alter the effects to historic properties as described herein, the grant recipient must notify PHMSA, and consultation may be reopened under Section 106.

Section 4(f)	
Question	Information and Justification
Are there Section 4(f) properties within or immediately adjacent to the project area? 4(f) properties include publicly owned parks, recreational areas, wildlife or waterfowl refuges, and historic sites. If yes, provide a list of properties and a map of 4(f) properties as an attachment.	No, there are no Section 4(f) properties within or immediately adjacent to the project area.

Will any construction activities temporarily impact use of the park including but not limited to access to any portion of the park, parking lots, trails, recreational fields, etc.?	No construction activities would temporarily impact use of a Section 4(f) property.
Will any construction activities occur within the property boundaries of a Section 4(f) property? If so, please detail these activities and indicate if these are temporary or permanent uses of the Section 4(f) property.	No construction activities would occur within the property boundaries of a Section 4(f) property.
Is there any other information relevant to the project area or the proposed work as it pertains to Section 4(f)?	No
<p><b>Conclusion:</b></p> <p>Section 4(f) of the US Department of Transportation (USDOT) Act of 1966 as amended (Section 4(f)) (49 U.S.C. § 303(c)); is a federal law that applies to transportation projects that require funding or other approvals by the USDOT. Section 4(f) prohibits the Secretary of Transportation from approving any program or project which requires the use of any publicly owned land from a public park, recreation area, or wildlife and waterfowl refuge of national, state, or local significance, or any land from an historic site of national, state, or local significance unless:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no feasible and prudent alternative to the use of the land;</li> <li>• The program or project includes all possible planning to minimize harm to such park, recreational area; wildlife and waterfowl refuge, or historic site, resulting from such use.</li> </ul> <p>PHMSA conducted a review of the Project Area and confirmed that there are no publicly owned public parks, recreation areas, national, state, or local significant wildlife and waterfowl refuges, or any historic sites of national, state, or local significance affected by the project. Therefore, there would be no use of Section 4(f) resources.</p>	
<p><b>Mitigation Measures:</b></p> <p>No mitigation measures are necessary.</p>	

Land Use and Transportation	
Question	Information and Justification
Will the full extent of the project boundaries remain within the existing right-of-way or easements? If no, please describe any right-of-way acquisitions or additional easements needed.	Yes, all work on mains would take place within the existing ROW.



Will the project result in detours, transportation restrictions, or other impacts to normal traffic flow or to existing transportation facilities during construction? How long are construction activities estimated to last?	<p>No significant detours or other transportation impacts would occur during construction.</p> <p>Construction activities are expected to last for 35 months following the start of the construction phase.</p>
Will there be any permanent change to existing transportation facilities? If so, what are the changes, and how would the changes affect the public?	No, there will be no permanent changes to existing transportation facilities.
Will the project interrupt or impede emergency response services from fire, police, ambulance or any other emergency or safety response providers? If so, describe any coordination that will occur with emergency response providers? How long will service interruptions last, if applicable?	No, the project will not interrupt or impede emergency response services.
Is there any other information relevant to the project area or the proposed work as it pertains to Land Use and Transportation?	No.
<p><b>Conclusion:</b></p> <p>There will be no permanent changes to land use. The project is replacing/upgrading the existing pipe and would not include new pipeline to serve any additional areas. During construction, there may be short-term impacts to adjacent residences, businesses and normal traffic patterns. Potential impacts include an increase in noise, dust, and transportation accessibility, as a result of construction and construction staging.</p> <p>Local and state regulations guide the transport of machinery, equipment, and automobiles around the construction areas. Temporary traffic impacts may occur on the local road network and adjacent pedestrian routes. Any impacts will be coordinated with local and state agencies.</p>	
<p><b>Mitigation Measures:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restore all impacted areas to pre-construction conditions;</li> <li>• Maintain traffic flows to the extent possible;</li> <li>• Use traffic control measures to assist traffic negotiating through construction areas, as needed;</li> <li>• Coordinate with state and local agencies regarding detours and routing adjustments during construction;</li> <li>• Notify potentially impacted residents and business owners (access, parking, etc.); and</li> <li>• Have a traffic control plan in place, prior to construction, and coordinate with the appropriate agency well in advance of any impacted emergency services or essential agency functions.</li> </ul>	

Noise and Vibration	
Question	Information and Justification
Will the project construction occur for longer than a month at a single project location?	No, construction will not occur for longer than a month at any location.
Will the project location be in proximity (less than 50 feet.) to noise sensitive receivers (residences, schools, houses of worship, etc.)? If so, what measures will be taken to reduce noise and vibration impacts to sensitive receptors?	Yes. Construction activities will only occur during normal weekday business hours. The proposed pipeline route comes close to a church, construction activities will not occur while services are being held.
Will the project require high-noise and vibration inducing construction methods? If so, please specify.	No.
Will the project comply with state and local ordinances? If so, identify applicable ordinances and limitations on noise/vibration times or sound levels.	The project will comply with City of Laurens Ordinance Chapter 18, Article II related to noise.
Will construction activities require large bulldozers, hoe ram, or other vibratory equipment within 20 feet of a structure?	No.
Is there any other information relevant to the project area or the proposed work as it pertains to noise and vibration?	No.

**Conclusion:**

The project is located in the City of Laurens. Ambient noise consists of a combination of environmental noise primarily from road traffic, construction, industry, population density and other sources.

The pipeline replacement project would result in temporary construction noise impacts; however, no vibration impact should occur. Excavators, dump trucks, skid steers, rollers, pavers, and other similar construction equipment would be used to excavate a trench, lay pipe, compact soils and re-pave the affected areas. Construction for the project is anticipated to last 35 months. There are numerous sensitive noise receptors (*e.g.*, residences, schools, houses of worship, etc.) located adjacent to the streets where work would occur. Noise impacts experienced by these receptors would be minor and temporary, and no adverse vibration impacts would result from the proposed work. Construction would be required to abide by local noise control ordinances in the City of Laurens. Noise control measures would be chosen by the contractor and could include the following, as necessary:

- Use low noise emitting equipment;
- Implement noise-deadening measures for truck loading and operations;
- Conduct monitoring and maintenance of equipment to meet noise limits;
- Use acoustic enclosures, shields, or shrouds for equipment; and
- Minimize the use of generators or use quiet generators to power equipment.

**Mitigation Measures:**

- Adhere to all local, city and state noise regulations.

Community Effects	
Question	Information and Justification
Will the project displace existing residents or workers from their homes and communities? If so, what is the expected duration?	No.
Will the project require service disruptions to homes and communities? If so, what is the expected communication and outreach plan to the residents and the duration of the outages?	Yes. Outages are only expected on the day a natural gas service is tied over to a new natural gas main. The disruption to each resident would last between 30 minutes to one hour. The Laurens Commission of Public Works will reach out to residents for outage schedules and duration.
Are there populations with Limited English Proficiency located in the project area? If so, what measures will be taken to provide communications in other languages?	Yes. The Laurens Commission of Public Works will make announcements of communications available in multiple languages if necessary.

Is there any other information relevant to the project area or the proposed work as it pertains to Community Effects?	No.
<b>Conclusion:</b>  The proposed project would result in an overall reduction in leaking natural gas pipelines. Construction activities would result in minor temporary air quality impacts, including the intentional venting of existing distribution lines prior to replacement. Noise impacts associated with construction are anticipated to be minor. The removal of leak prone pipe would reduce leaks and the potential for incidents, will result in an increase in pipeline safety across the system while also improving operation and reliability. PHMSA determined the project would not impact the local community.	
<b>Mitigation Measures:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide advanced notification of service disruptions and construction schedule to all affected parties including residents and businesses adjacent to the project area;</li> <li>• Coordinate service disruptions and construction schedule with local community leaders and groups, as applicable;</li> <li>• Maintain service at temporary facilities, if appropriate;</li> <li>• Promote public engagement to reduce project delivery delays and public controversy; and</li> <li>• Develop outreach plans to involve and engage all populations.</li> </ul>	

Safety	
Question	Information and Justification
Has a risk profile been developed to describe the condition of the current infrastructure and potential safety concerns?	Yes, as described in the Distribution Integrity Management Program (DIMP).
Has a public awareness program been developed and implemented that follows the guidance provided by the American Petroleum Institute (API) Recommended Practice (RP) 1162?	Yes, a public awareness program has been developed and would be implemented by Laurens Commission of Public Works prior to and during construction.
Does the project area include pipes prone to leakage?	Yes, the pipes schedules for replacement under this project are aging leak prone pipes.

Will construction safety methods and procedures to protect human health and prevent/minimize hazardous materials releases during construction, including personal protection, workplace monitoring and site-specific health and safety plans, be utilized? If yes, document measures and reference appropriate safety plans.	Yes, Laurens Commission of Public Works Resolution No. 22-10 describes the safety procedures and plans that would be implemented during construction.
Has an assessment of the project been performed to analyze the risk and benefits of implementation?	Yes, an assessment of the project has determined that it would have a large benefit to the community given the current risk caused by the existing leak prone pipe.
Is there any other information relevant to the project area or the proposed work as it pertains to safety?	No.
<p><b>Conclusion:</b></p> <p>The project would reduce the risk profile of existing pipeline systems prone to leakage from the natural gas pipeline system and would also benefit the local community with the safe provision of natural gas. The project responds to the need to address the aging and leaky natural gas distribution system of pipelines. The repair, rehabilitation, or replacement of pipelines would be constructed in accordance with industry best practices and would comply with all local, state, and federal regulations, including those for safety.</p> <p>The abandonment of the existing pipeline would be conducted in accordance with PHMSA requirements found in 49 CFR 192.727 and 195.402(c)(10). These requirements include disconnecting pipelines from all sources and supplies of gas, purging all combustibles and sealing the facilities left in place. These requirements for purging and sealing abandoned pipelines would ensure that the abandoned pipelines are properly purged and cleaned and pose no risk to safety in their abandoned state. Therefore, PHMSA's assessment is that this replacement project would improve the overall safety of the existing pipeline infrastructure.</p>	
<p><b>Mitigation Measures:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporate public awareness programs, as necessary;</li> <li>• Use standard construction safety methods and procedures;</li> <li>• Ensure DIMP procedures are updated as necessary;</li> <li>• Ensure work is constructed in accordance with industry best practices; and</li> <li>• Comply with all local, state, and federal regulations.</li> </ul>	

## 4. Categorical Exclusion Determination

### Categorical Exclusions to be Applied:

As the proposed action is repair, replacement, upgrading, rebuilding, or minor relocation of pipelines within existing rights-of-way to an existing natural gas pipeline, the following Categorical Exclusion, as listed in the DOE NEPA implementing procedures, 10 CFR 1021, adopted by PHMSA effective July 3, 2024<sup>5</sup> applies:

#### B5.4 Repair or Replacement of Pipelines

Repair, replacement, upgrading, rebuilding, or minor relocation of pipelines within existing rights-of-way, provided that the actions are in accordance with applicable requirements (such as Army Corps of Engineers permits under section 404 of the Clean Water Act). Pipelines may convey materials including, but not limited to, air, brine, carbon dioxide, geothermal system fluids, hydrogen gas, natural gas, nitrogen gas, oil, produced water, steam, and water.

### Eligibility Criteria:

The proposed activity meets the eligibility criteria of 10 CFR 1021.410(b) because the proposed action does not have any extraordinary circumstances that might affect the significance of the environmental effects, is not connected to other actions with potentially significant impacts [40 CFR 1508.25(a)(1)], is not related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(7)], and is not precluded by 40 CFR 1506.1 or 10 CFR 1021.211 concerning limitations on actions during environmental impact statement preparation. The "Integral Elements" of 10 CFR 1021 are satisfied because the proposed action will not:

1. Threaten a violation of statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety, and health, including requirements of DOE and Executive Orders;
2. Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators), but the proposal may include categorically excluded waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment actions or facilities;
3. Disturb hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, or Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA)-excluded petroleum and natural gas products that preexist in the environment such that would be uncontrolled or un-permitted releases;
4. Have the potential to cause significant impacts on environmentally sensitive resources, which includes (i) property (sites, buildings, structures, and objects) of historical, archeological, or architectural significance; (ii) federally-listed and state-listed threatened or endangered species or their habitat, federally-protected marine mammals and essential fish habitat and otherwise federally-protected species; (iii) floodplains and wetlands; (iv) federally and state designated areas (wilderness areas, national parks, national monuments, national natural landmarks, wild and scenic rivers, wildlife refuges, scenic areas, and marine sanctuaries); (v) prime or unique farmland; (vi) special sources of water (sole-source aquifers, wellhead protection areas, and other vital water resources); and (vii) tundra, coral reefs, or rain forests); or

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<sup>5</sup> [Federal Register: Adoption of Department of Energy Categorical Exclusion Under the National Environmental Policy Act](#)

5. Involve genetically engineered organisms, synthetic biology, governmentally designated noxious weeds, or invasive species.

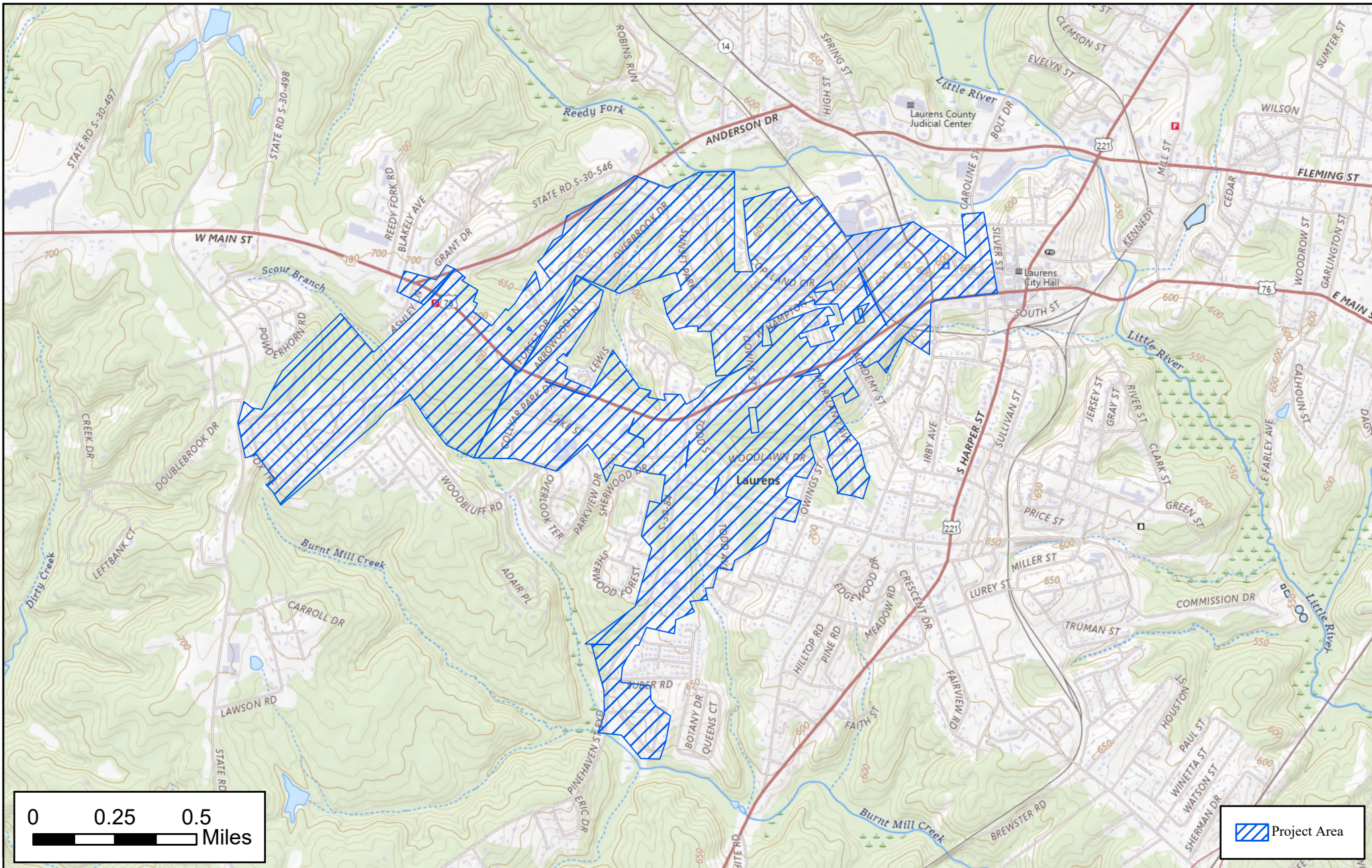
**Compliance Action:**

The proposed action satisfies the DOE NEPA eligibility criteria and integral elements, does not pose extraordinary circumstances, or includes conditions that must be implemented to ensure significant effects are avoided, and meets the requirements for the CE referenced above. Based on my review of the proposed action, I have determined that the proposed action fits within the specified categorical exclusion, the other regulatory requirements set forth above are met, and the proposed action is hereby categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

**PHMSA Approval:**



# Project Area Map



Name: City of Laurens Pipeline Replacement  
Scale: 25,000  
Total Acreage: 861  
Laurens County, South Carolina



**Service Layer Credits:** USGS The National Map: National Boundaries Dataset, 3DEP Elevation Program, Geographic Names Information System, National Hydrography Dataset, National Land Cover Database, National Structures Dataset, and National Transportation Dataset; USGS Global Ecosystems; U.S. Census Bureau TIGER/Line data; USFS Road data; Natural Earth Data; U.S. Department of State HIU; NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information. Data refreshed April, 2024.