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Brooklyn residents deliver over 10,000 petition signatures calling on Mayor de Blasio to immediately halt construction of National Grid’s North Brooklyn Pipeline

Photos by Illapa Sairitupac  
Link to more photos  
Link to livestream

Brooklyn, NY - Brooklyn residents held a rally and press conference outside of National Grid’s headquarters opposing the company’s controversial Metropolitan Reliability Infrastructure (MRI) project, a fracked gas transmission pipeline, being built through predominantly Black, Brown, and working-class neighborhoods in North Brooklyn without community consent.

Earlier in the day the No North Brooklyn Pipeline Coalition delivered 10,300 petition signatures to Mayor Bill de Blasio calling on New York City to revoke construction permits for the MRI pipeline and reject future permits for a proposed buildout of National Grid’s Greenpoint liquified natural gas (LNG) depot.
“Mayor de Blasio has said himself that he would not approve any new fossil fuel infrastructure and so we are demanding that he stand by his word,” said Noel Sanchez who lives near the pipeline route in Ocean Hill and is a community organizer with the 6th Street Community Center, a member of the No North Brooklyn Pipeline Coalition. “We will not tolerate negligence and disrespect in the name of maintaining corporate monopolies. Our communities deserve better.”

Despite widespread community and ratepayer opposition, National Grid has continued construction of their MRI pipeline, known locally as the North Brooklyn Pipeline, and plans to have fracked gas running through the first four phases of the project next month.

The corporate utility has requested $185 million in rate hikes to finish the pipeline. Residents and elected officials have opposed the project, saying it continues a racist legacy of environmental pollution, will raise gas bills for those who can least afford it, and will worsen the climate crisis.

“I feel this pipeline is the opposite of investing in human beings. I feel this pipeline is selling out the health, safety, and prosperity of our community,” said Brownsville resident Gabriel Jamison. "This is our time to protect the most vulnerable people among us. This is time to protect our elders, our children, our differently abled people, our chronically ill. We're fighting for civic human rights to live in a safe and sustainable community. We want to create a better future for generations to come. We are Brooklyn and Brooklyn is strong. We can defeat this through sustainable love.”

“If New York State has a chance of meeting our climate goals, we cannot afford to expand our reliance on fossil fuels,” said State Senator Julia Salazar. “Building new fossil fuel infrastructure is a great excuse for National Grid to hike rates for New Yorkers while directly undermining our ability to power our communities with clean, affordable, low-carbon energy sources.”

The controversial pipeline is part of a larger National Grid rate hike proposal that would spend hundreds of millions of ratepayer dollars to expand and extend the life of fracked gas infrastructure.

“I'm here because the community knows we need different tactics,” said Emily Gallagher, democratic nominee for Assembly District 50. “We need a pathway to new ways of doing business. We know National Grid is not going to change, we need a new solution.”

“We can make a clear choice. We can decide to go to the future, a future of renewables solutions. Or we can have a future where we allow multi-national corporations to make millions of dollars by pushing fossil fuels on us while we pay lip service to the climate catastrophe,” said
Assemblymember Robert Carroll. “We can stop this pipeline and we can get public public power.”

In February, the Mayor signed an executive order saying the City would not support new fossil fuel infrastructure, but he has yet to oppose the North Brooklyn Pipeline. New York City is also a party in the rate case proceeding which will determine if the company can raise rates for the pipeline, but has not publicly taken a position on National Grid’s proposal to raise rate to pay for fossil fuel infrastructure. Speakers at the press conference said the Mayor’s failure to oppose the pipeline is tantamount to climate change denial.

“What National Grid is trying to do is criminal. At a time of unprecedented climate emergency they are running a massive pipeline through our borough,” said Greenpoint resident Kevin LaCherra. “When the water comes, National Grid and their shareholders won’t be the ones trying to decide which family photo album to take or to leave behind, they won’t be the ones worrying about the kids and the dog, they won’t be the ones forced out of their homes. It’ll be you. It'll be me.”

National Grid has also proposed an expansion of their Greenpoint LNG depot on Newtown Creek as an alternative way to provide additional gas capacity after the Williams NESE Pipeline was rejected earlier this year by the New York Department of Environmental Conservation. The utility has proposed raising rates to spend $31.5 million dollars to add portable LNG capabilities at the Greenpoint facility, trucking LNG is currently illegal in NYC.

National Grid is one of the parties responsible for the contamination of Newtown Creek and those who are working to clean up the superfund site say the pipeline and LNG expansion will continue that toxic legacy.

“Those industries began over 150 years ago and we are still dealing with the consequences of the footprint that they have left there,” said Willis Elkins, executive director of the Newtown Creek Alliance, speaking of the fossil fuel companies that have polluted the area. “This is not about trying to hold National Grid accountable. That ship has sailed a very very long time ago. This about our elected leaders. They need to do what they say and stop this pipeline.”

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NOTES TO THE EDITOR:

An interactive performance series will be held along the pipeline route on September 18, 19 & 20th and a Brownsville-led community rally will be held on September 26.

For more, explore this media pack and visit https://www.nonbkpipeline.org/