

## **Association of Washington Cities (AWC) Technical Assistance Grants to Communities**

The Association of Washington Cities (AWC), a non-profit organization composed of all of Washington State's 281 cities and towns. AWC has received a Technical Assistance Grant (TAC) to provide technical and other assistance to rapidly-growing communities in the state where hazardous liquid and natural gas transmission pipelines currently exist. These activities will enhance public safety and health in these areas by improving local government land use planning and permitting practices in the vicinity of transmission pipelines.

AWC's partners are:

- Pipeline Safety Trust (PST), a non-profit organization working on pipeline safety issues on behalf of the public
- Washington State Citizens Committee on Pipeline Safety (CCOPS), established by the Washington Legislature to advise state, federal and local government agencies on pipeline safety, routing, construction, operations and maintenance
- Municipal Research and Services Center (MRSC), a non-profit organization providing professional consultation, research and information services to Washington's counties and cities
- Washington State Association of Counties, a non-profit organization composed of all of Washington's 39 counties
- Northwest Gas Association, a trade association of the Pacific Northwest natural gas industry
- Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (WUTC), the state agency that regulates pipelines.

Other groups involved in activities such as pipeline operation, land use planning, property development, and emergency planning and response, as well as community organizations, will be invited to participate in this project.

### **Project Goal and Objectives:**

The goal of the project is to enhance public safety by improving local government land use planning and permitting practices in the vicinity of transmission pipelines. The objectives that will help meet this goal are:

1. Increase local government and developer awareness of safety concerns as lands in the vicinity of transmission pipelines are developed
2. Provide direct technical assistance to local governments in implementing Recommended Practices as far in advance of these lands being developed as possible
3. Establish a structure that fosters long-term collaboration and cooperation between Washington's local governments, pipeline operators, developers, and other affected groups in promoting pipeline safety and resolving issues that may arise in the implementation of these Recommended Practices.

### **Awareness & Technical Assistance**

The majority of the project's resources will be devoted to direct Technical Assistance activities: MRSC and PST staff knowledgeable about and experienced in implementing these Recommended Practices will—at the request of local officials—go into communities to meet with and assist local planners and decision makers in adopting these measures; they also will be providing assistance via e-mail and phone.

To build awareness of the need for these Recommended Practices and the availability of hands-on technical assistance, AWC and its partners will hold sessions on land use planning and pipeline safety at state-wide conferences of local government officials, planning organizations, and similar groups. They will follow up these "awareness" sessions with more in-depth programs—delivered through "webinars" (interactive Internet presentations) to communities wanting to learn more about enhancing pipeline safety through land use practices. These programs will be open to everyone, although they will be aimed primarily at developers, land use planners, and pipeline operators.

All of these activities will be supported and promoted by

1. Development of a comprehensive web site that will increase awareness of these pipeline safety issues, provide an easy-to-locate and understandable reference for the Recommended Practices
2. Establishment of a Listserv that will provide a forum for obtaining and exchanging information about these Recommended Practices
3. Publication and distribution of at least two electronic newsletters.

#### **Risk-based Focus – People, Property and Environment**

All local governments in the state's 39 counties will be encouraged to participate. The project, however, is aimed at areas of urban and suburban growth in the 29 counties that contain 95 percent of the state's population. "Unusually sensitive environmental areas" are likely to exist within these counties. Of significance is that over 50 percent of the state's major pipeline miles are located in nine of the 10 fastest growing counties.

#### **Continuation of Previous Land Use Work**

In 2005, AWC, PST, CCOPS, MRSC, and the WUTC —working cooperatively with pipeline operators, land-use planners and other impacted groups—jointly developed best land-use practices and model planning documents; these materials were disseminated in workshops around the state. In 2006, these project partners issued "Land Use Planning in Proximity to Natural Gas and Hazardous Liquid Transmission Pipelines in Washington State," a report based on their activities and information gathered at these workshops. The work of these organizations became a significant part of the Best Practices developed for PHMSA's Pipelines and Informed Planning Alliance (PIPA).

#### **Commitment to Open Communication**

AWC and its partners have a long and on-going commitment to open communication and represent a broad spectrum of pipeline safety stakeholders. All of the project's activities are a continuation of this commitment. All of these activities will facilitate the exchange of information, as well as build greater understanding and trust between the affected groups. When the project ends, the partners will continue to foster the alliances forged before and during the project.

#### **Project Timeline/Milestones**

The project timeline and milestones are:

- November - Web site and Listserv "go live." On-Line Technical assistance begins. First electronic newsletter published
- December 2009 - On-Site Technical assistance to selected communities begins
- March 2010 - "Awareness" sessions presented at state-wide conferences and to local communities begin
- March/August 2010 - Electronic newsletters published.
- September 2010 – Lessons Learned Report published

#### **Evaluation and Dissemination of Results**

The number of participants in each activity will be tracked and—when possible—surveyed immediately before and after participating. Actual or planned changes in local zoning/development rules also will be tracked. The results from these evaluations will be used to continually improve the delivery of the project's services and be disseminated via newsletter, the web site and Listserv, and through direct communications on a regular basis with involved stakeholders. The partners also intend to share information about the project's activities and outcomes with national organizations of pipeline operators, local government officials, developers and other stakeholders through direct electronic communications, presentations at national conferences, and the on-going availability of the web site and Listserv.

#### **Project Replication Beyond Washington State**

The project can be a model for other states in educating local governments about PIPA Best Practices. All materials developed for this project will be available to requesters. The partners also will provide counsel to other groups across the country wanting to undertake a similar project.