

June 15, 2021

## Whitmer Persists With Line 5 Closure As East Coast Experiences Fuel Shortages

By Jason Hayes

### Summary

The economy and environment of Michigan would benefit if Gov. Gretchen Whitmer stops opposing a plan to move the Enbridge Line 5 pipeline to a cement-lined tunnel far below the Great Lakes.

Main text word count: 682

Over and over again, we see satirical stories that poke fun at silliness in politics and in the media coming true. But if you had planned to satirize the current energy debate in Michigan, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's refusal to even pause her demands to close the Line 5 pipeline would seem too extreme and unrealistic, even for satire. In the light of recent fuel shortages on the East Coast and widespread predictions of job losses and energy restrictions, Whitmer's dogged commitment to closing the pipeline now is no laughing matter.

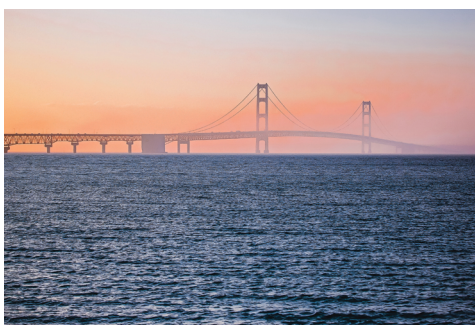
Readers will recall that a May 7 cyberattack shut down the Colonial Pipeline, one of the nation's largest sources of transportation fuels, causing fuel shortages and gas lines reminiscent of the 1979 oil crisis. With fuel shortages and gas lines as the backdrop, Whitmer's deliberate choice to put the residents of Michigan and the entire Midwest into the same precarious position now appears reckless and unjustified.

The governor has carried out a multiyear campaign against Enbridge's Line 5 pipeline, saying it could cause an oil spill in the Great Lakes. No one wants a spill in the Great Lakes, which is why the pipeline has undergone numerous safety and pressure tests and is monitored 24/7 to ensure its safe operation.

It is also why Enbridge, the company that owns and operates Line 5, has already spent over \$100 million on engineering and assessments work to relocate the pipeline to a cement-lined tunnel 100 feet below the bed of the lakes. Moving the pipeline to the tunnel would maintain essential energy infrastructure and protect the waters of the Great Lakes — a win-win situation.

Rather than helping to make the tunnel a reality, the governor has stymied efforts to get it built quickly. Her most recent moves revoked the legal agreement that allows the company to operate the existing pipeline, which crosses the Straits of Mackinac between Michigan's upper and lower peninsulas. She further claimed that if the company continues to operate the pipeline after May 12, it would commit trespass, and the state would pursue all profits associated with those operations after that date.

Enbridge argues that the federal government has jurisdiction in this matter, and the governor lacks the legal authority to enforce her order. Company



Gov. Whitmer should endorse the pipeline tunnel project.

officials said they would continue normal operations as they also continue with ongoing litigation and mediation efforts, only ceasing shipments if ordered to do so by a court. As of early June, the company still appears to be shipping fuels through the pipeline.

Enbridge is not the only one wanting the pipeline to continue working. Numerous government officials, business associations, union and building trade representatives, energy industry experts, and members of the public have said closing the pipeline would be harmful.

In one recent report, the Consumer Energy Alliance showed how closing the pipeline would have a massive impact on Michigan, Ohio, Indiana and Pennsylvania. The report pegs the cost to these four states of a closure at \$20.8 billion in economic activity, \$8.3 billion in gross state productivity, \$2.4 billion in salaries and wages, \$266 million in state tax revenues and almost 34,000 jobs. The report does not touch on predicted economic and energy supply impacts and job losses in the Canadian provinces of Alberta, Ontario and Quebec.

The members of Whitmer's own party and her predecessor, former governor and now Secretary of Energy Jennifer Granholm, appear to agree that pipelines are an essential part of our nation's energy infrastructure. In June last year, 23 out of 51 Michigan House Democrats voted in favor of a resolution calling for "the timely issuing of permits for the construction of the Great Lakes Tunnel Project." Granholm stated that a pipeline is "the best way to go," as she scrambled to address the fallout of the Colonial Pipeline cyberattack and closure.

Pipelines offer a more economically efficient and safer means of transporting the fuels we need for transportation and heating. But Whitmer's refusal to recognize these basic facts appears more like the mark of an anti-energy political campaign than it does a serious effort to protect Michigan's environment.

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