

December 5, 2023

The Honorable Sam Graves
Chair, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rick Larsen
Ranking Member, Committee on Transportation and
Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Graves and Ranking Member Larsen,

The undersigned organizations represent construction contractors, manufacturers, distributors and other service providers, pipeline operators, labor unions, professionals in surveying, mapping and engineering, and others engaged in construction of underground facilities, and have a vested interest in pipeline safety. These organizations support the Promoting Innovation in Pipeline Efficiency and Safety Act (PIPES Act), and we encourage the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee to approve the legislation before the end of this year.

Section 18 of the PIPES Act addresses the enduring problem with damages to underground facilities during excavation activity. Optimal damage prevention on project efforts begins early in the planning and design stages. Understanding the risk and developing designs that mitigate risk is achieved using industry-driven standards and utility engineering best practices. Providing excavators with well-contrived designs that avoid or mitigate utility conflicts along with standardized digital data on utility infrastructure enables better construction planning and execution by leveraging virtual design and construction technologies that eliminate potential for damages. Moreover, these methods expedite construction, providing tremendous cost savings on projects. A fundamental need is to document utilities properly and in a standardized fashion at the time of installation.

The PIPES Act includes language that would take needed steps toward improved pipeline mapping and underground facility locating. Specifically, the bill would require states to demonstrate that they have adopted or can show progress toward adoption of several leading practices in their damage prevention programs as part of the criteria considered when states apply for PHMSA damage prevention grant dollars. These leading practices include “encourag[ing] the use of commercially available technologies to document and securely share standardized digital data on underground facilities, such as geographic information systems...”

The last pipeline safety reauthorization included language that would require operators of gas distribution pipelines to identify and manage traceable, reliable, and complete records, *including* maps and other drawings. Accurate mapping of underground utility infrastructure facilitates locating, and use of geographic information systems (GIS) is the most effective way to identify and document a wide range of data about the underground infrastructure in a given area.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 provided an unprecedented \$550 billion in *new* investments in American infrastructure, and a significant portion of those dollars will go toward improvements to underground systems. This means an unprecedented amount of excavation activity coming our way. The PIPES Act would take needed steps to encourage states to employ state-of-the-art technologies, such as GIS mapping along with published standards for documenting utility infrastructure, which will only improve the damage prevention process.

Therefore, these organizations support the PIPES Act of 2023 and we look forward to seeing its enactment into law.

Association of Equipment Manufacturers
American Society of Civil Engineers
Distribution Contractors Association
Laborers International Union of North America

Pipeline Open Data Standard Association
Plastics Pipe Institute
United Association of Union Plumbers and Pipefitters