



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Regional Environmental Groups Oppose Southwestern Pa.'s Long-Range Transportation and Development Plan Inclusion of Appalachian Storage Hub, "Smart Moves for a Changing Region" Tonight

Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission Public Hearing

June 24, 2019

4 p.m.

North Meeting Room, 4th floor,

Two Chatham Center, Suite 500, 112 Washington Place, Pittsburgh

Pittsburgh, Pa., – Environmental organizations in the tri-state region will stand together in opposition to the inclusion of the Appalachian Storage Hub (ASH) as a “new energy source” at tonight’s SPC Long-Range Transportation and Development Plan, “Smart Moves for a Changing Region.”

ASH, also known as the [Appalachian Ethane Storage Hub](#), is a proposed massive infrastructure project that would expand unconventional oil and gas drilling (including five or more cracker plants) by allowing natural fracked gas liquids to be stored in underground storage facilities, transported via as many as 15 possible pipelines.

“The inclusion of the endorsement of ASH is an attempt by our state leaders to surreptitiously slip funding in to the plan for petrochemical industry development of a storage hub that would exacerbate climate change and harm public health,” said Matt Mehalik, executive director of the Breathe Project. “The ASH concept is a direct threat to our region’s ability to meet climate change goals, putting our community at risk and giving us a reputation as a destructive, world-wide, climate polluter.”

While many parts of the “SmartMoves for a Changing Region” are laudable – especially its “Clean Air Strategy” that strives to improve the region’s air quality, the inclusion of ASH ([page 63 of the plan](#)) is inconsistent with the overall tenor of the plan.

“The SPC’s endorsement of a petrochemical industry buildout for the region is an affront to public health and the well-being of our communities,” added Jacqui Bonomo, CEO of PennFuture. “A public comment period of seven weeks is insufficient for the many community voices opposed to a fossil-fueled future to be heard. There is a more sustainable future available to us than frack-gas and the toxic petrochemicals industry it will fuel.”

"Support for the Appalachian Storage Hub, infrastructure and associated facilities, is not a Smart Move in the long run," said Sue Seppi, program manager at Group Against Smog and Pollution. "It is a step backward, holding us in a less sustainable place than what could have been."

Breathe Project members will submit a sign-on letter in opposition to the inclusion of ASH as part of the plan. The letter is attached.

[Petrochemical investment in the Appalachian Basin](#) alone is projected to produce almost 1/5th of the new emissions from the United States in the next 30 years. The carbon dioxide emissions enabled by these new drilling projects will prevent our ability to achieve a net decrease in U.S. emissions by 2050. Oil and gas production in the U.S. will be more than many of the next highest countries combined.

The "Smart Moves" plan already reserves \$275 million of highway and bridge funding to remediate the effects of extreme weather on our transportation system. Why would we pursue a strategy that will only exacerbate extreme weather by releasing huge quantities of greenhouse gas emissions while putting our region's reputation at risk?

The Breathe Project asks that SPC not include support for an Appalachian Storage Hub as a backdoor goal of this new plan, and that none of the region's transportation and infrastructure dollars go to supporting this destructive industry that does not create the prosperous future outlined throughout the vast majority of SPC's "Smart Moves" plan.

The people of SWPA built this region to be the energy powerhouse that it is. We stand on the shoulders of the steelworkers and coal miners and industry engineers who helped to build this region. With creativity and innovation, we advocate for a transition to more sustainable and renewable energy industries in support of the health of workers, people and the planet. These goals are outlined elsewhere in SPC's report, and they should be expanded upon and invested in.

The Breathe Collaborative is a coalition of citizens, environmental advocates, public health professionals and academics working to improve air quality, eliminate climate pollution and make our region a healthy, prosperous place to live. The Breathe Collaborative powers the Breathe Project, its community outreach platform.

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