

Gas Transition Subgroup Meeting Notes

Meeting Details:

- 7/6/22, 3:30-5:00

Council Member Participants:

- Rory Christian
- Mario Cilento
- Donna DeCarolis
- Gavin Donahue
- Dennis Elsenbeck
- Roberta Reardon
- Raya Salter
- Paul Shepson

Meeting Agenda/Topics Covered:

- Presentation from Utility Consultation Group regarding its recommendations for gas system transition
- Subgroup Q&A session with Utility Consultation Group
- Subgroup discussion of Utility Consultation Group presentation
- Discussion of upcoming presentation to CAC on July 11

Key Takeaways:

- The Utility Consultation Group (UCG) emphasized the importance of a safe, reliable, and affordable energy system and the role that gas utilities currently play in reducing emissions. The UCG recommends repurposing the existing gas distribution system, rather than decommissioning it, and supports the use of Renewable Natural Gas and continued hydrogen research and development.
- Subgroup and UCG members expressed the need for a cooperative partnership and the willingness to engage in one.
- The subgroup and the UCG discussed gas utilities' reductions in methane emissions from pipeline leaks from 2011-2020 as reported under EPA's guidelines and the uncertainty of methane emissions accounting. The UCG stated that further reductions are possible through continued leak-prone-pipe replacement and other efforts, like the development of Certified Natural Gas.
- One subgroup member urged the utilities to incorporate emerging research on the health impacts of in-home gas use into their understanding of the safety of gas service.
- The timing of the gas system transition remains a critical issue that the subgroup must address. Several members expressed the desire for the UCG to provide more detail regarding the mechanics and timing of the transition. One subgroup member emphasized that this more detailed timeline will be essential for informing industry to make business and workforce-related decisions. The subgroup member also expressed the need for the gas transition plan to

take impacts on the ground level into consideration and lay out thoughtful steps to make sure we do not leave consumers, industries, or workers behind in the transition.

- Subgroup members questioned the UCG about the readiness of the electric system to accommodate increased load from the electrification of heating and transportation. UCG members noted that buildout of the needed transmission and distribution infrastructure takes many years to permit and construct, and that zero emission technologies are not yet available to replace dispatchable resources, which creates uncertainty about the timing for the electric grid to be able to accommodate large increases in electric load. A UCG representative acknowledged that the UCG is on board with CLCPA goals and suggested that the transition away from gas will require careful phasing to ensure the electric grid is ready to accommodate the additional increase in electric usage with building and transportation sector electrification.
- One subgroup member objected to the UCG’s presentation and characterized it as advocating for the continued use of natural gas, while a UCG member emphasized that they are advocating for the use of the gas infrastructure not the continued use of natural gas. The subgroup member suggested seeking input from renewable energy experts and industries that might present an alternative view.
- One subgroup member suggested inviting DPS and NYISO to present on transmission planning. Another expressed concerns about having too many presentations and the subgroup instead discussed having summary materials prepared and shared with subgroup members in advance of our next meeting on the topics of transmission planning, renewable energy progress in NY, and NYISO reliability studies so that the subgroup members can discuss these topics instead of a formal presentation.
- The subgroup returned to issue of the use of the term “fossil gas” as opposed to “natural gas,” reiterating concerns that “fossil gas” could be misunderstood as encompassing fossil fuels other than the natural gas used in the gas distribution system. Staff clarified that the term refers to the gas distribution system that is regulated by the State, as opposed to propane, oil, or other delivered fossil fuels. The subgroup discussed the need to mitigate the risk of customers transitioning to these other more emissions-intensive fuels as we transition away from the use of the gas distribution system.
- One subgroup member raised the need for analysis of how the use of hydrogen in the gas distribution system would influence future reliance on gas.
 - **Action Item:** Staff will share resources pertaining to NYISO planning and status of PSC renewable energy initiatives.
 - **Action Item:** Staff will circulate slides to share the progress of this Work Group with the full Council at its next meeting.