



Outer Loop Utility Project

The Outer Loop Utility Project is an approximately 60-mile new natural gas pipeline designed to connect local gas supply to existing energy infrastructure in San Antonio and surrounding areas. Unlike some pipeline projects that move natural gas to distant markets, the gas flowing through the Outer Loop Utility will be used right here at home – powering local electricity generation and meeting the needs of homes, schools, and businesses.

The pipeline begins in South San Antonio, loops through portions of Guadalupe and Comal counties, and returns to the city's Northside. It's a critical step in ensuring our region has steady, reliable energy supply and is prepared for the future.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a “utility”?

The Outer Loop Utility Project is classified as a public utility. Similar to other public utilities, such as water, sewer, and telecommunications infrastructure, this utility provides essential infrastructure to keep local homes and businesses powered and running smoothly.

Who is building the pipeline?

Howard Energy Partners (HEP) is a local, San Antonio-based company. It was founded in 2011 and is one of the nation's largest private energy infrastructure companies. We are experts in this business and have safely and efficiently built and/or operated nearly 1,500 miles of pipeline in Texas, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, Oklahoma, and Mexico.

HEP will own and operate the pipeline; local electricity providers will use its services to transport critical energy to communities that need it.

A majority of HEP employees live in the zip codes where we are building the Outer Loop Utility. We have a vested interest in the neighborhoods where we live and work.

How was this route selected?

While we are still in the survey phase and have not finalized a route, several factors help dictate our route selection, including potential environmental, wildlife, and community impacts.

What is the timeline for construction?

We expect to start construction in the spring of 2026. Once we have a finalized route and have an updated construction timeline, we will share more information with you.

Is safety important to you as a company?

Safety is something we never compromise. In fact, in 2024 we were recognized with four national safety excellence awards. We integrate safety and environmental stewardship into our business planning and decision-making processes, establishing standards and best practices that minimize potential risks.

We also train and empower each employee to stop any work they believe places themselves, the community or the environment at risk. Last year we provided more than 16,000 hours of safety training to our employees.

FAQs Continued

Are natural gas pipelines safe?

Natural gas pipelines are the safest, most environmentally friendly, and reliable method of transporting the energy we use every day. Alternative ways of transporting energy include via trucks or trains.

How often are pipelines monitored?

Our pipelines are monitored 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days per year.

We constantly check the pressure at thousands of points along our pipeline system and our control room receives automatic alerts of any change in pipeline pressure. We also perform regular pipeline maintenance to ensure the integrity of our pipelines.

What is a pipeline right-of-way?

A pipeline right-of-way is the strip of land over a pipeline.

A right-of-way agreement between a pipeline company and property owner is called an easement. Easements provide pipeline companies with permanent, limited interest to the land to enable them to operate, test, inspect, maintain and protect their pipelines.

What is eminent domain?

Eminent domain is a law that allows public utilities the right to acquire private property – with adequate compensation – when necessary for building or expanding critical infrastructure to serve the overall public good. Public utilities have the right of eminent domain because they provide essential services like electricity, water, natural gas, or telecommunications.

At HEP, the use of eminent domain is a last resort. If an agreement cannot be reached between the company and a landowner, courts or public utility commissions review or approve eminent domain actions. Utilities – like the Outer Loop Utility project - must first demonstrate public necessity and offer fair market value compensation to landowners.

Once the pipeline is built, can I build or dig along the pipeline right-of-way on my property?

Pipeline rights-of-way must be kept free from obstruction, including trees and shrubs. Landowners cannot dig, store or place anything on or near the right-of-way without first having company personnel mark the pipeline, stake the rights-of-way, and explain the company's policies. It's mandatory that you always call 811 before any digging activities.

How do you ensure the pipeline will not rust underground?

The pipe we use is very thick and has a special coating that protects the steel from corrosion. We routinely inspect pipelines from above ground using air, foot, and vehicle patrols. We also inspect the inside of the pipeline with a tool that enables us to see if there are any defects that could affect the integrity of the pipeline. If the pipe is compromised, that segment is repaired or replaced. This testing is part of our compliance with all federal and state regulations.

