



Written by [James Murphy](#) on March 14, 2022

Michigan's Whitmer Looks to Shut Down Major Fuel Pipeline as Region Suffers From High Gas Prices.

At a time when American consumers are paying the highest average prices ever for gasoline, Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer persists in efforts to shut down one of the most important pipelines moving fossil fuels between Canada and the United States. Whitmer is seeking to shut down the Enbridge Line 5, which transports synthetic crude, natural gas liquids, sweet crude, and light sour crude between Wisconsin and the states of Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania and the Canadian provinces of Ontario and Quebec.



AP Images
Gretchen Whitmer

Whitmer has been at war with the pipeline for a couple of years now. In November of 2020, the governor revoked an easement for the pipeline in the Straits of Mackinac that has stood since 1953. According to the governor, Enbridge has repeatedly ignored structural problems on the pipeline, making it too hazardous to continue to move fossil fuels through her state.

"Here in Michigan, the Great Lakes define our borders, but they also define who we are as people. Enbridge has routinely refused to take action to protect our Great Lakes and the millions of Americans who depend on them for clean drinking water and good jobs. They have repeatedly violated the terms of the 1953 easement by ignoring structural problems that put our Great Lakes and our families at risk," Whitmer said in 2020.

"Most importantly, Enbridge has imposed on the people of Michigan an unacceptable risk of a catastrophic oil spill in the Great Lakes that could devastate our economy and way of life. That's why we're taking action now, and why I will continue to hold accountable anyone who threatens our Great Lakes and fresh water."

Enbridge denies that the pipeline is in poor shape and has continued to use it despite Whitmer's revocation of the easement. In addition, Line 5 moves more than half a million barrels of oil and natural gas liquids each day throughout Canada and the Great Lakes. A shutdown could be disastrous to gasoline prices, which are already through the roof.

A new [report](#) from the Consumer Energy Alliance estimates that consumers would have to pay at least \$23.7 billion more in the next five years in addition to already-higher prices if Line 5 is immediately shut down.

Fuel prices in the region could rise an additional 9-12 percent should the pipeline be shut down



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immediately with no other viable alternative to move fuel between the western Canadian oil fields and refineries in Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

“Based on previous studies of disaster-related fuel production disruptions, we conservatively estimate that the closure of Line 5 will spark a 9.47% to 11.66% regional (U.S.) increase in fuel prices,” the study finds.

An immediate shutdown would make a significant dent in the amount of fuel readily available in the region: “Refineries in Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Ontario, and Quebec would lose about 45% of their crude oil input in the event of a Line 5 closure.”

With a loss of 45 percent of crude oil input with literally no plan to replace it, trucks and rail would not immediately be able to handle the amount of shipping needed and fears of an accident would increase if such transport systems were utilized.

Whitmer’s concern regarding a possible disaster isn’t completely unfounded. In 2010, a [leak](#) in Enbridge Line 6B caused an environmental disaster along the Kalamazoo River near the City of Marshall in southern Michigan. That disaster caused some 840,000 gallons of crude oil to spill and foul the Kalamazoo River for nearly 40 miles. That disaster caused both Michigan and Enbridge to reassess the safety of their lines. Cleanup took four years and more than \$1 billion. It’s unlikely Enbridge wants to pay another such bill, so it behooves the company to be as careful as possible.

But at a time when consumers are being strangled by the highest gasoline prices ever, Whitmer should not be attempting to completely shut down a reliable source of fuel to her region. Whitmer should back away from this shutdown idea and instead focus on working with Enbridge regarding the safety of Line 5.



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