

WBI to receive \$500M state financial guarantee to build natural gas pipeline in North Dakota

By: Mary Steurer and Amy Dalrymple, ND Monitor

The North Dakota Industrial Commission has awarded WBI Energy an up to \$500 million financial guarantee to build a pipeline that will bring natural gas to the state’s eastern communities.

WBI’s project, which it calls Bakken East, is expected to transport about 1 billion cubic feet of natural gas per day to eastern North Dakota.

Bringing natural gas from the Bakken to the eastern part of the state will help North Dakota’s overall economy, Gov. Kelly Armstrong said. Right now, the eastern part of the state only gets gas from the Viking Gas Transmission pipeline, which spans the U.S. and Canada, so WBI’s project will give eastern North Dakota a more secure power supply, he added.

“Communities need gas to grow,” said Armstrong, who chairs the Industrial Commission. “We are taking a product that we have in excess that is stranded in the Bakken, and we are going to be able to move it across the state to people who need it.”

The pipeline also will support continued oil and gas development in the Bakken, Armstrong said.

The state has had a program to encourage businesses to build natural gas pipelines connecting to eastern North Dakota for over 15 years, though the program initially lacked funding. The Legislature in 2023 made \$30 million per year in financing available, which the 2025 Legislature then voted to increase to \$50 million per year.

WBI Energy, a subsidiary of MDU Resources, proposes building the first phase of its pipeline from McKenzie County to Washburn, and the second phase from Washburn to Mapleton, just west of Fargo. The company also plans to build an extension from Jamestown to Ellendale. WBI’s timeline is to have phase one in service in November 2029, and phase two in service in November of 2030.

WBI has not disclosed the total project cost. Justin Kringstad, executive director of the North Dakota Pipeline Authority, has said he estimates a project of this scope would cost \$1.2 billion to \$1.6 billion.

The project would be built entirely in North Dakota but would be classified as an interstate pipeline since it would connect with other existing pipelines that leave the state. For this reason, it would be permitted



Kelly Armstrong speaks during the Aug. 21, 2025, Industrial Commission meeting. Photo by Mary Steurer/North Dakota Monitor



Justin Kringstad, executive director of the North Dakota Pipeline Authority, and Agriculture Commissioner Doug Goehring listen to discussion about two pipeline project proposals during the Aug. 21, 2025, meeting of the North Dakota Industrial Commission. Photo by Mary Steurer/North Dakota Monitor

by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, not the North Dakota Public Service Commission.

Intensity Infrastructure Partners also applied for the state support. Representatives of the companies presented their project proposals to the Industrial Commission in July.

The three member commission — which includes Armstrong, Agriculture Commissioner Doug Goehring and Attorney General Drew Wrigley — indicated that it chose WBI over Intensity because WBI said it would commit to completing both phases of its project. Intensity representatives said the first phase of the pipeline from Watford City to Underwood

was firm, but the company was still securing commitments for a second phase to the Fargo area.

North Dakota is purchasing capacity on the pipeline as a financial backstop. The state plans to eventually transfer pipeline capacity to private businesses. According to Kringstad, there are already companies expressing interest.

However, if North Dakota is unable to transfer its pipeline capacity, the Pipeline Authority could work with a gas marketing firm to try to recoup the state’s investment, Kringstad said.

Justin Kringstad, executive director of the North Dakota

N.D. Supreme Court to hear area case

By Nick Vorlage

The North Dakota Supreme Court will hold a review hearing next month to determine the future of a case out of Grand Forks.

In June 2024, Fordville resident Travis Dean Bell, 43, rear-ended a vehicle on Highway 2 outside of the Grand Fork airport. The impact seriously injured the driver, Nicole Louthain, 26, while her passenger and six-year old daughter, Katarina, was severely injured from the impact and later passed away.

Bell was charged with criminal vehicular injury and homicide. Officers did perform a BAC test on him hours after the crash, which revealed his blood-alcohol level was at .13%.

Bell’s lawyers later argued the BAC test shouldn’t be admissible as evidence, as Bell wasn’t charged with DUI, and allegedly took the test under coercion. The judge agreed, and had the test thrown out.

The upcoming Supreme Court hearing will hear an appeal in the case and determine if the BAC test should be allowed at the trial. It will also decide if Bell’s trial will take place in Grand Forks. Back in April, Bell filed for a change of venue.

Bell’s trial was scheduled to begin Aug. 12, but for now has been canceled. The Supreme Court hearing has been scheduled for Sept. 26.

Symposium held for drone tech

By Nick Vorlage

North Dakota Leaders held a symposium last Wednesday at Camp Grafton near Devils Lake to discuss drone technology.

The assembly comes after North Dakota Senator John Hoeven sent a letter to Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth. In the letter, Hoeven nominated the training center as a candidate to serve as a key testing and training range for drones operated through the Department of Defense.

The Camp Grafton Training Center is operated by the North Dakota National Guard. Hoeven stated in the letter the facility has 10,000 acres of flexible training space and already supports unmanned aircraft systems testing activities, including counter-



drone testing by Homeland Security.

The symposium allowed state leaders to discuss where N.D. fits into the United State’s drone technology.

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Message from Sandy Kovar 6:10-6:30 pm
Introduction from ND Thrives 6:35 - 6:50
Closing remarks 6:55 - 7 pm
Walk/Run 7 pm