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ICC Hosts Policy Session on Peoples Gas System Modernization Program

CHICAGO – On Tuesday, the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) hosted a policy session to discuss and summarize a series of workshops led by Commission Staff that focused on the Peoples Gas system modernization program.

Initiated as a follow up to a unanimous Commission action this past December which called for the reevaluation of the regulatory treatment of the Peoples Gas Accelerated Main Replacement Program (AMRP), the six workshops addressed stakeholders' near-term and long-term recommendations for a new Peoples Gas system modernization program.

The Session included stakeholder recommendations on how to proceed with the program, which involves the replacement of cast and ductile iron gas pipes and facilities in the natural gas delivery system with modern polyethylene pipes. The future of the program is to focus on safety and reliability, scope, schedule, cost forecasts and controls, and plans for measuring and monitoring progress.

ICC Public Utilities Bureau Chief Gene Beyer said the primary purpose of the workshops was twofold.

"We wanted to make certain that all parties shared a common understanding of key issues related to the gas system modernization program and provide a forum for stakeholders to fully present their views on each of those topics," Beyer said. "By all accounts, the workshops were successful on both fronts, but they represent only the beginning of the Commission's commitment to reevaluating the Peoples Gas system modernization program."

Stakeholders who provided input at the Session included Andy Hesselbach, VP of Construction, Peoples Gas; Ron Jolly, Assistant Attorney General, Office of the Illinois Attorney General; Ian Elfenbaum, Legal Counsel, Gas Workers Union Local 18007; Julie Soderna, General Counsel, Citizens Utility Board; Paul Foran, Attorney, Illinois Industrial Energy Consumers; and Conrad Reddick, Attorney, City of Chicago.

Deputy Commissioner William Cheaks of the City of Chicago Department of Transportation and George Keck, Project Manager with the City of Chicago's Project Coordination Office, also demonstrated the City's dotMaps Geographic Information System (GIS) application which allows the City's departments and other entities, including utilities, to efficiently utilize resources, align efforts, and coordinate the numerous projects and events occurring daily throughout the city.

With the conclusion of the workshops and Policy Session, ICC Staff will now work to compile a collaborative report to provide the Commission with a complete overview and recommendations regarding the issues and information presented during the workshop process. The report will provide a framework for a future docketed proceeding regarding the program and be presented to the Commission on or before May 31, 2016.

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About the Illinois Commerce Commission

The Illinois Commerce Commission's mission is to pursue an appropriate balance between the interests of consumers and existing and emerging service providers to ensure the provision of adequate, efficient, reliable, safe and least-cost public utility services. The Commission pursues this mission through three bureaus: The Bureau of External Affairs, which provides educational information on utility issues for consumers, governmental entities and communities and through its Consumer Services Division, resolves customer/utility disputes and develops rules on utility service and consumer protection; the Public Utilities Bureau, which focuses on financial and operational analysis, policy development, public safety and enforcement activities related to electric, natural gas, water, sewer and telecommunications companies; and the Transportation Bureau, which includes trucking insurance and registration, railroad safety, relocation towing, safety towing and household goods moving company enforcement activities. The ICC's five commissioners are appointed by the Governor and approved by the Illinois State Senate for five-year terms.