

OUR VIEW



News Tribune file photo

Activists opposed to Line 3 block an entrance to a worksite where the pipeline crosses Reponen Road near Sawyer on Jan. 22.

Walz: 'We are going to replace an aging pipeline'

Last week, protesters chanted as loudly as they could inside the state Capitol in St. Paul, hoping, they said, that Gov. Tim Walz would hear them from his office down the hall and do something to halt the construction of the Line 3 Replacement Project in northern Minnesota.

A day earlier, however, Walz, in Duluth, reiterated his long-time and clear support for what, really, is a necessary and responsible infrastructure upgrade. The existing Line 3 pipeline is aging, increasing its risk of rupturing and spilling. Replacing it with the latest technology just makes good sense. The governor, like so many of the rest of us, gets that.

"I think I have a very progressive environmental record, but I'm also a realist, and we need to move oil, and we need to move it safely," Walz said in an exclusive interview with the News Tribune Editorial Board. "So, I said, we are going to replace an aging pipeline because that's what the law says. (The project has) stood up in court."

Walz had words, too, for Line 3 protests that have gone well beyond peaceful and have been criminal and dangerous instead.

"We're trying to do this the best we can," he said. "There are going to be folks who are going to protest that, but we need to also say, 'But you're not going to disrupt what is a

legal process'."

Protesters have tried mightily. They have bullied workers, driving them from worksites; they've vandalized and destroyed construction equipment, causing tens of thousands of dollars in damage or more; they've recklessly stuffed themselves into pipes and chained themselves to equipment, even using feces in their locking devices, a health hazard for first responders already leaving their home communities vulnerable and unprotected by having to respond to protesters' manufactured emergencies; and they've blocked roads that belong to all of us and that are supposed to be there for everyone's use, including emergency vehicles.

All of this over a project that's pumping millions into northern Minnesota's economy; that is protecting our environment; that was legally and thoroughly reviewed, approved, and permitted by state and federal regulators; and that has withstood countless legal and other challenges.

Regarding what have been months now of orchestrated Line 3 protests — so well-organized and so well-funded they've included celebrities, long-term camping sites, reinforcements flown in from around the country, and even a concert — Walz added: "There's a responsibility to create a safe space for legitimate First Amendment

protest, whatever your issue is, to be able to protect those constitutional rights. But what I said is that right ends the minute you choose to destroy property and put someone at risk ... (We're) trying to strike that balance."

While the White Earth and Red Lake bands and others recently appealed to the Minnesota Supreme Court, winning for themselves anti-Line 3 headlines, support for the project — including from the Leech Lake and Fond du Lac bands, whose reservations are crossed by the existing Line 3 — has gotten far less attention.

"Additionally, the White Earth Nation was included and invited to be part of the planning and permitting," Enbridge communications specialist in Duluth Juli Kellner said in a statement last week to the News Tribune Opinion page. She emailed in response to Forum News Service's coverage of the protesters at the Capitol. Enbridge owns Line 3 and is making a private investment of \$2.9 billion in North Dakota and

Minnesota for its responsible replacement.

"It is worth noting that Enbridge has demonstrated ongoing respect for tribal sovereignty," Kellner said. "The Minnesota Court of Appeals recently concluded 'the commission reasonably selected a route for the replacement pipeline based upon respect for tribal sovereignty, while minimizing environmental impacts.' As the result of negotiations with tribal leadership, Line 3 was routed outside of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Reservation and through the Reservation of the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. Both Leech Lake and Fond du Lac have written in support of project permits. ... (Also,) in part because of (the) concerns (of the White Earth Nation), Line 3 was routed outside of the Upper and Lower Wild Rice Lake and its watershed."

In addition to all that, construction permits for the project include protections for wild rice waters. And the project features a first-of-its-kind "Tribal Cultural Resource

Survey" led by the Fond du Lac Band, "which managed review of the more than 330-mile route in Minnesota through the 1855, 1837, and 1863/1864 treaty areas," as Kellner pointed out.

"Fond du Lac employed tribal cultural experts who walked the full route, identifying and recording significant cultural resources to be avoided," she said. "The project is now being built under the supervision of tribal monitors with authority to stop construction, (ensuring) that important cultural resources are protected."

All of that ought to be enough for any Minnesotan to wonder what all the shouting and protesting are about — or what they're really about.

As for Walz, last week's Line 3 opponents at the Capitol have been far from the only ones eager to get in his ear. Supporters, too, will confront him: "'Well, I'm for the pipeline'," they say, as he recounted. "I said, 'We're building it!' I said, 'What's your point with me,'" a clear supporter?

CANDIDATE'S VIEW

Duluth can be a magnet for investment, development

Arising tide lifts all boats." President John F. Kennedy didn't pen this, but he quoted it often and it framed his outlook and policies on economic

growth. Simply put, he made the case that a thriving economy created the most opportunities for all people to prosper. There have always been imperfections in its application, but there has never been a more powerful tool to lift people to better lives.

Duluth has all the assets to be a magnet for investment and development. We have four colleges in the Twin ports area. We have a leading medical center that is

expanding to better serve all of northern Minnesota. And our outdoor assets and lifestyle are widely known as among the most robust in the country.

Unfortunately, we also have a reputation for being indifferent (at best) or hostile (at worst) to business and development.

Since the early 1990s, I have traveled to or worked in more than 50 countries, and I have lived overseas for several years. The energy and optimism of the growing economies in the Pacific Rim are infectious and made an impression on me.

Before I moved here, I heard that, "Duluth doesn't like business." In 2018, a Duluth city councilor was quoted as saying that some local business owners were "the biggest babies I have ever seen." While an individual can be forgiven for a one-off outburst, the

fact is, to the best of my knowledge, no effort was ever made (either by the individual or the City Council) to walk back the sentiment. This tone still permeates policy.

There is a narrative firmly in place that being pro-business is inherently anti-environment, anti-arts, anti-Duluth, and so on. The idea that business and lifestyle are diametrically opposed is just wrong. Many cities have mastered the balance. We are primed to do the same — if we choose to.

A second and closely intertwined priority is housing. We have all heard and discussed the problems. I believe, though, that the current strategy is far too simplistic. To be sure, housing in Duluth is scarce and highly priced, but "affordable housing" is not fixed by only

prioritizing low-cost, multi-unit developments. This is only part of the puzzle. There is also a huge gap in mid-price offerings with very, very few of these being built. With limited options for existing homeowners to upgrade, existing entry-level housing is not made available for new buyers. This lack of options in the middle tier will be a problem until our excessively bureaucratic and arbitrary permitting process is fixed. Again, we have heard these stories for years, but city leadership has ignored the problem. The process is in dire need of simplification, streamlining, and predictability. A permit for a new home in Duluth can cost nearly 80% more than in similarly sized cities in Minnesota, as a 2018 study by the Arrowhead Builders

Association and Lake Superior Area Realtors determined.

As I have discussed the election with local leaders, I have heard a similar warning: Duluth will never elect anyone who runs on "development." I don't believe that to be true. To be sure, we need voices from academia and social services and we need to preserve our heritage and natural beauty. It's time, though, for voters who want to see new energy and growth step up to elect a voice that will balance the perspectives on our City Council.

Scot Jenkins is one of eight candidates running for two open At Large seats on the Duluth City Council. Four of the candidates will advance from the Aug. 10 primary to Election Day on Nov. 2. All candidates were invited by the News Tribune Opinion page to write columns.



SCOT JENKINS

READERS' VIEWS

Duluth, beware of ugly new apartments

I moved to Duluth in December 2019, right before the world shut down. Relocating from California took a bit of adjusting, but I've done it well! As luck and timing would have it, I was able to buy a house and set it up as the pandemic raged. The housing market does not appear to be slowing down, which suggests that people are moving here en masse.

More people tend to mean more resources are needed, and, as someone who left a drought-stricken fire zone, that concerns me. My point is, I don't want to see blocks of ugly new apartments, condos, or tract housing to accommodate the influx of new transplants. Duluth is a beautiful, unique, old city, and I'm proud

to be a resident.

**Christina Welch
Duluth**

Stauber more pro-police than Omar

After reading the July 7 letter, "Omar outshines Stauber in supporting police," I felt Minnesotans don't need advice regarding what we should or shouldn't do from those who don't live here and who may not have any clue about who Congressman Pete Stauber is and his background.

The letter stated that the National Association of Police Organization, in its 2019-2020 "Legislative Scorecard," indicated that Stauber voted in line with the association's positions 71% of the time and that Congresswoman Ilhan Omar scored a higher percentage. But it didn't provide information as

to why. I checked, and it seems the representatives' percentages reflected how many times they voted in line with the association's position on seven bills. Omar voted in line with the association on one more bill than Stauber, hence her 86% vs. his 71%, which led to the suggestion in the letter that Omar is more pro-police than Congressman Stauber. The association supported six of the seven bills and didn't support one. Omar voted yea on the bill the association didn't support while Stauber voted nay, in line with the association's position. This suggests to me that Stauber is more in line with the association than Omar.

The letter's suggestion that we need to write to Congressman Stauber to ask him to consult Omar before voting was beyond stupidity. Just watch

the news in Minnesota to hear Omar stating that the Minneapolis Police Department needs to be defunded. As a result of that mentality, Minnesota is ranked second in the U.S. with a 56% increase in crime and

homicides. I don't think that is a record to be proud of.

Let's go back to Minnesota nice and refund our police department.

**Kathy Beede
Duluth**

Readers' Views and Local Views

Letters to the editor are a critical part of the community dialogue, and the News Tribune attempts to publish all letters of opinion meeting our requirements.

Letters are limited to 300 words, must be the original work of the author and must be exclusive to the News Tribune. Letters are edited for style, space, accuracy and civility. Letter writers are limited to one published submission every 30 days.

With rare exceptions, the News Tribune does not publish poetry; letters that are anonymous, libelous or attack other writers; consumer-complaint letters; thank-you letters; or letters generated by political or special-interest campaigns.

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