

To protect the environment, build Keystone XL Pipeline

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(Photo: John Darkow)

President Barack Obama's veto (<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/02/24/us-usa-keystone-idUSKBN0LS2FH20150224>) of the [Keystone XL Pipeline project](http://keystone-xl.com) (<http://keystone-xl.com>) pleased his supporters but it was bad for America.

Obama vetoed the legislation on Tuesday, after months of administration indecision and legislative maneuvering.

The project would provide few long-term jobs, although the construction would create a short-term economic boost. But the environment, not the economy, is the main reason for *approving* the pipeline. It's far better than the most-common alternative: shipping oil by train.

The Associated Press reported on Sunday, "The federal government predicts that trains hauling crude oil or ethanol will derail an average of 10 times a year over the next two decades, causing more than \$4 billion in damage and possibly killing hundreds of people if an accident happens in a densely populated part of the U.S."

The AP also reported: "To get to refineries on the East and West coasts and the Gulf of Mexico, oil shipments travel through more than 400 counties, including major metropolitan areas such as Philadelphia, Seattle, Chicago, Newark and dozens of other cities... ."

"Since 2006, the U.S. and Canada have seen at least 21 oil-train accidents and 33 ethanol train accidents involving a fire, derailment or significant amount of fuel spilled, according to federal accident records reviewed by the AP."

Environmentalists don't want the Keystone XL not because the pipeline is environmentally unsafe but because they don't want the oil being consumed. By blocking access to fossil fuels, they seek to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions and the resulting climate change.

Chris Mooney, in a story Wednesday on The Washington Post's website (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2015/02/25/this-is-the-real-significance-of-obamas-keystone-xl-veto/>), wrote, "the Keystone XL fight is not actually about the Keystone XL pipeline or what its environmental consequences would be. Rather, it's about drawing a line in the sand"

Mooney's article also said: "'Most actions that have been taken on climate change have been about smokestacks and tail pipes,' says Michael Brune, executive director of the Sierra Club. Keystone, he said, 'has been the first major public fight to argue that we have to begin to curtail production.'"

It's discouraging that Obama and so many other politicians have fallen for that argument.

It's like designing a high school with little parking, so as to force students and staff members to avoid cars. That certainly has not worked well, even in the environmentally conscious Pacific Northwest. Teens and adults drive anyway, parking in adjacent neighborhoods if necessary and running out every two hours to move their vehicles and avoid tickets.

It's like fighting the Columbia and Salem river crossing projects to reduce society's dependence on vehicles. The traffic congestion doesn't go away. Rather, commercial and personal vehicles produce *more* pollution while idling in traffic.

When comparing the safety and pollution records of pipelines versus trains, pipelines win. Oil trains are not only inherently more dangerous, but locomotives are huge polluters.

The Keystone Pipeline already brings oil from Alberta's tar sands into Oklahoma. The XL refers to extending that pipeline. The southern part of the extension, connecting with Texas, already is in operation. The controversy is over the northern portion.

Opponents also do not want the U.S. being a transit point for shipping Canadian oil overseas. That is similar to the coal-export debate in the Pacific Northwest, which also seems hypocritical. (For years, Asia has been importing Northwest logs to build the forms for pouring concrete, and for other mundane uses, as well as for some actual construction.) The international economy will decide whether there is a market for Canadian oil.

And certainly, it makes more sense for America to have access to that oil instead of relying on oil import from the Middle East and elsewhere.

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