

TransCanada's Insidious PR Campaign: Launches Keystone XL "Good Neighbor" Charm Offensive

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[TransCanada](#) has taken a page out of former U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's playbook and deployed a public relations "[charm offensive](#)" in Texas, home of the southern leg of its [Keystone XL](#) tar sands pipeline now known as the [Gulf Coast Pipeline Project](#).



In the 1930s and 1940s, Roosevelt utilized a "[good neighbor policy](#)" — conceptualized today as "[soft power](#)" by U.S. foreign policy practitioners — to curry favor in Latin America and win over its public. Recently, TransCanada announced it would do something similar in Texas with its newly formed [TransCanada Charitable Fund](#).

[TransCanada has pledged \\$125,000 to 18 Texas counties](#) over the next four years, funds it channeled through the [East Texas Communities Foundation](#). In February, the company announced the [first non-profit recipients of its initial \\$50,000 grant cycle](#).

"The fund is designed to help improve East Texas communities and the lives of their residents through grants to qualifying non-profit organizations in the counties where TransCanada pipeline operations and projects exist," [explained a press release](#). "All funded projects and programs fall within three charitable categories: community, safety, and the environment."

TransCanada utilizes the "good neighbor" language in deploying its own public relations pitch.

"At TransCanada, being a good neighbor and contributing to communities is an integral part of our success," TransCanada's Corey Goulet [said in a press release](#).

"The establishment of the fund is another example of our commitment to long-term community investment and our dedication to the people of East Texas."

Fund Launched After Safety Issues Revealed

[Less than a week after](#) Public Citizen [published its November 2013 report addressing safety issues](#) discovered during the construction phase of [Keystone XL's southern leg](#), TransCanada announced the launch of its charitable fund.

[Public Citizen's](#) report, "[Construction Problems Raise Questions About the Integrity of the Pipeline](#)," found 250 miles of the pipelines' 485-mile route had faulty welding, dents and several

parts patched up, among other anomalies.

Julia Trigg Crawford, a Lamar County resident (one of the counties [eligible for TransCanada's grants](#)) best known as the [landowner who filed a major eminent domain lawsuit](#) against TransCanada for Keystone XL South, told DeSmogBlog she believes the timing of the fund's launch is suspect.

"Texans are smart enough to see what's going on here," Crawford said.

"Before the heat got turned up with the Public Citizen report, TransCanada's community involvement consisted of half-page newspaper ads across Northeast Texas saying, '[We want to be more than just a pipeline company. We want to be a trusted neighbor.](#)'"



Environment and Safety Grants

Despite the concerns about the ecological impacts and safety issues related to Keystone XL's southern half (or perhaps because of them), environment and safety are two of the categories TransCanada will give grants to out of the fund.

Safety grant "projects will enable emergency personnel to respond quickly and effectively to local needs and focus on emergency preparedness, accident prevention, and education and training," [says TransCanada on its grant application form](#), while environment grant "programs will conserve important habitat, protect species at risk, and educate individuals about the importance of the environment."

Non-profits are eligible for grants of up to \$5,000.

Not Charming, Rather Offensive

The [\\$125,000 TransCanada has pledged to its charitable fund](#) equates to 0.04 percent of the expense of building Keystone XL South and its ["fork in the road," the Houston Lateral Project](#).

TransCanada says constructing Keystone XL South and Houston Lateral [rang them up to a grand total of \\$3 billion](#) in its 2013 Annual Report. Put another way, that means \$400 for every \$1 million it spent to build it.

The fewer than pennies to the dollar the company has offered as part of its charitable fund is [clearly charming to some of the grantees](#), based on their public reactions after winning the cash.

But to those concerned about [climate change](#) and [ecological costs](#) of sending vast amounts of [tar sands](#) oil via TransCanada's pipelines to Texas refineries on a daily basis — located in towns such as [Port Arthur](#) and [Houston](#) that are akin to "sacrifice zones" — the company's latest PR maneuver is just downright offensive.

As Crawford put it bluntly, "TransCanada's hush money is as dirty as its oil."

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