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Mexico's Pemex opens contract bids for Ramones gas pipeline project

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MEXICO CITY, May 13 (Reuters) - Mexico's state oil and gas monopoly Pemex announced a call for bids Monday on the second phase of the country's flagship cross-border Ramones natural gas pipeline project.

In a statement, the company said the second phase of Ramones will cover 460 miles (740 km) spanning five northern-central Mexican states, and help the country satisfy growing demand by tapping cheap gas imports from the United States.

The project also envisions compression, metering and regulation stations along the route, as well as a new control center.

Pemex calls the \$3.3 billion Ramones pipeline project its biggest energy infrastructure investment in 40 years and will eventually supply a fifth of the country's total natural gas demand.

The first phase of the pipeline, running from the U.S.-Mexico border to the town of Los Ramones about 75 miles east of the industrial city of Monterrey, is expected to be in operation by the end of 2014.

Once fully completed in 2015, the Ramones pipeline will extend 750 miles from Agua Dulce, Texas, across the border and deep into central Mexico's industrial heartland.

Agua Dulce is located near the booming Eagle Ford shale gas play in southern Texas.

Pemex says the project will boost natural gas import capacity from about 1.3 billion cubic feet per day (cf/d) at present to about 3.4 billion cf/d.

The full details of the contract bid process will be made available on May 20, but the contract isn't expected to be awarded until late summer.

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